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**DISALIENATION, DECADENCE,  
AND PATHOLOGY IN ART**

ALIENATION is, perhaps, the most conspicuous social phenomenon of modern, mass society. The Josephsons<sup>1</sup> regard it as the twentieth century's most widespread social pathology. It is a phenomenon which receives expression in a variety of ways, each of which creates some unhappiness, either for the alienated person or for others who fall under his influence or have the task of trying to relate to him. When the alienated individual—either through power or influence—is able to exercise decisions over the lives of others he can do untold damage, and usually does. It is the social pathology caused by the alienated decision-maker which is, perhaps, the chief burden of complaint of the modern social critic. Critics of the alienation of modern mass society spend a great deal of time describing its many forms and suggesting remedies for its dissipation. Not too much time, however, is spent on describing the opposite of alienation in our society, namely, "disalienation", and the pathologies that this latter condition produces in the human community. If alienation can be said to be largely a loss of self and other vital awareness through excessive identification with social and historical accidents, disalienation may be spoken of as a loss of self through an almost complete lack of relatedness to anything at all—persons, places, things, ideas, or situations. Alienation is often a case of mistaken identity. Disalienation is more usually and correctly a case of extensive non-identity.

The present paper has a threefold purpose. Primarily it will deal with certain extreme forms of disalienation in the arts today. These are modes of disalienation that are really forms of social pathology in the contemporary arts. In order to do the subject justice, however, it would make no sense to deal with a morbid form of disalienation in the arts unless we were clear as to what is meant by alienation. Hence the three-fold purpose: first, to discuss the seven forms or archetypes in which alienation receives its major expressions in the twentieth century; then turn to the contradictory social pathology, namely, disalienation and to those extreme forms of alienation which constitute "decadence"; then to conclude by examining certain pathologies in the arts which

are current expressions of the excesses of disalienation. Disalienation and decadence are too important as phenomena to be neglected by those who take our humanist traditions seriously. A healthy humanism—particularly in the arts—demands that we be alert to the pathologies of disalienation masquerading as spiritual release and freedom of expression.

In a general sense, alienation refers to any psychological feeling of separation from persons, groups, institutions, ideas and ideals, places and things. It is characterized by an inability to experience a feeling of organic relatedness to any of these entities. As a result there is no psychological perception of a shared sense of value with the objects of attention, if these are persons, no common concern and consequently no common sense of meaning to sweep up all the persons involved in a joint posture of mutual acceptability and reinforcement. Relatedness, of course, may be unilateral or reciprocal. Unilateral relationships will involve a person, on the one hand, and either an idea, ideal, place, or thing, on the other. Bilateral relationships will, of course, always involve persons. More specifically alienation refers to the spiritual and psychological lacks that have just been mentioned, but always in relation to any one of several distinct forms or archetypes of alienation.

We can regard alienation as existing in seven fundamental forms. First there is alienation from oneself, that is, from that basic pattern of abilities, impulses, and needs that are presumably native to the subject. Where alienation from self has occurred, we have clearly enough had an interruption of the quest for identity. It is this form of alienation that is, in a sense, the essential concern of modern psychiatry. It is a concern which underlies the preoccupation with the type of novel that tends to deal with the unfolding of character, particularly when development is twisted and turned by the force of unexpected circumstance. A classic literary example of a study of alienation from self is Leo Tolstoi's *The Death Of Ivan Ilych*.<sup>2</sup>

Next we can have alienation from the opposite sex, which occurs when a member of either sex fails to understand the psychology and the needs of some or all members of the opposite sex. This deficiency is not dependent upon whether we regard the psychosexual characteristics of the opposite sex as native or as culturally acquired roles. We see a preoccupation with this theme in Ibsen's plays, particularly *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *Rosmersholm*, in which man's inability to understand woman is the central theme. Analogously, the many novels concerned with women who are spiritually confused, and in

their frustration make life a living hell for their men, equally reflect this type of alienation as their central theme.

A third form of alienation, which has exercised several great literary figures from time immemorial, is the alienation of man from his fellow man. This form of alienation is, of course, concerned in a general sense with all forms of mutual human misunderstanding and insensitivity, particularly those which promote injustice, cruelty, and unconcern in the relations between any two persons. Many of the great and powerful novels which have moved us all, such as Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, and many which, although lacking great artistic merit have lasted because of their concern for human misery, e.g. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, are explorations in this form of alienation. The largest number of novels and plays in our Western literary legacy are devoted to some form of the misunderstanding between men. Inasmuch as the number of relationships and mutual dependencies among men are legion, literature as a criticism of life is most fully represented in this area. If one wishes to understand on a more abstract level what an unalienated relationship between men should be like, moving accounts of the most attractive qualities of an unalienated relationship are furnished in Martin Buber's two volumes, *I and Thou*<sup>3</sup> and *Between Man and Man*.<sup>4</sup>

A separate form of alienation, fourth on our list, is the alienation of man from society. Those who deal with this theme are preoccupied with the tragic lives of men and women who are at odds with their society and its culture, who cannot accept either the themes by which the average man in that society lives or the parochial loyalties he demands. These tragic figures are examples of what Colin Wilson calls *The Outsider*,<sup>5</sup> the lonely men and women who are marginal to their cultures, whose hands are turned against the larger world of which they are a part and who occasionally bend their efforts to shatter that world and remould it nearer to their hearts' desires. Alienation from society is, of course, the seedbed of revolution and social reform and, if we are to be truthful, this type of alienation is a form of divine discontent that has led to much desirable social change in the course of human history.

The fifth form of alienation, with which many writers are concerned, is alienation from work. This phenomenon has to do with the bitterness in the lives of men and women chained to bread-and-butter activities which crush them both physically and mentally and also leave them spiritually starved. Harvey Swados, for instance, in *A Radical's America*,<sup>6</sup> emphasizes this theme and so does that apostate from the values of the modern corporation, Alan Harrington, in his *Life In The Crystal Palace*.<sup>7</sup> The rise of public concern with this form

of alienation has, of course, paralleled the rest of modern industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization. This form of alienation was particularly virulent in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution and it was, to some extent, a contributory factor in the class struggles which swept Western Europe in the nineteenth century. It represents a passionate protest against the de-personalization, dehumanization, and robotization of modern man—a protest which regards as immoral and expendable all social attitudes and institutions which encourage or even permit these influences. With the increase of leisure in our time and the voluntary efforts on the part of modern management to humanize work, this form of alienation is very likely to decrease over the next few decades.

A sixth form of alienation which has been brought to public attention in recent decades, is alienation from Nature. This type of alienation refers to a number of different concerns. For one thing, it refers to Western man's loss of a sense of kinship with Nature and with his growing inability to enjoy his natural surroundings and be psychologically refreshed by communion with them. A second meaning for this form of alienation is man's growing indifference to his own ecology and to his dependence upon Nature—a phenomenon which shows up in his destruction of the countryside and his destruction and neglect of the living creatures of field, forest, and stream. In *The Destroyer of America*,<sup>8</sup> Robert E. Cubbedge has catalogued the record of destruction of those who are indifferent to our natural surroundings. Rachel Carson's best seller, *Silent Spring*,<sup>9</sup> stressing one aspect of this second meaning of alienation from Nature, represents a monumental work of scholarship which is, in a sense, a funeral oration over man's alienation from millions of living creatures who have served him well. Finally, a third type of alienation from Nature refers to man's indifference to the social pathology and risk to life and health created by industrial ventures undertaken without thought of their effects and of what the morrow will bring. Lewis Herber's *Our Synthetic Environment*<sup>10</sup> and K. William Kapp's *The Social Costs Of Private Enterprise*<sup>11</sup> are two distinguished works which take note of this form of alienation from Nature.

The last form of alienation in our catalogue is often referred to as alienation from God. More accurately it refers to the inability of modern man to experience what existentialists call "the Mystery of Being". This type of alienation occurs whenever men have lost the ability to wonder how anything ever came to be—a concern, of course, of the modern cosmologist. It also occurs when they cease to marvel at the many forms of human love, whether these reflect *Eros* or *Agape*. We see it once again when men have lost th

ability to witness with respect man's capacity for self-transcendence, his expressions of social altruism and his concern for social justice. In general this form of alienation also includes the inability to experience or understand the religious impulse in others,—those invisible bonds of sentiment and fellow-feeling which prompt men to be concerned with and contribute to one another's welfare. M. C. D'Arcy, in his *The Mind And Heart Of Love*,<sup>12</sup> is one writer who has been concerned with this quality of human striving. When it is absent from the makeup of any man or woman, we are justified in speaking of the individual as being alienated from God.

The alienation of the middle classes in the West is largely a matter of the substitution of the role, the façade, and pecuniary canons of evaluation for a concrete relatedness to, and an awareness of, the Other. The processes which diminish or eliminate such relatedness and awareness represent collectively what the French call *embourgeoisement*. The Other—to which a satisfying, organic relatedness is not properly achieved—may be a person, place, thing, idea, ideal, value, interest, attitude, situation, activity, group, level of aspiration, social cause, or the cosmos itself. A vast literature has sprung up in our time, describing these types of alienation, their social and psychological etiologies, those affected by them, and suggesting programs to prevent their appearance. A few distinguished works along these lines are those of Fromm,<sup>13 14</sup> Ortega y Gasset,<sup>15</sup> Marcel<sup>16</sup> and Ellul,<sup>17</sup> to name but a few. Psychologists have also begun to develop techniques for the elimination of the dysgenic social role and façade and the alienating habits which cut off the individual from the forces of his own unconscious. Two leading techniques in this direction are sensitivity training and the formation of the basic encounter group. The Gibbs,<sup>18</sup> as well as Weschler and Reisel,<sup>19</sup> are among writers who have described the first of these, while Carl Rogers<sup>20</sup> has given us a most interesting account of the second. Some of the overwhelming emotional effects of sensitivity training upon middle-class, behavioural repertoires have been amply described in the literature, and a short discussion of these will be found in a recent issue of a West Coast periodical.<sup>21</sup> Other new methods for arousing awareness are also being developed with considerable success and many of these are being pioneered by the Esalen Institute.<sup>22</sup>

The function of all of these new methods of achieving disalienation is to restore to the individual the full recovery of his potentialities. This restoration can be accomplished in several ways. To the extent that language can mould and freeze perception, the ability to experience the flux of life and to

achieve intense awareness without the intermediation of language becomes important. This language-free awareness is similar in some respects to what Harry Stack Sullivan<sup>23</sup> called prototaxic and parataxic awareness<sup>24</sup> and similar also, in other respects, to the sensory-immersed experience that comes with psychedelic drugs. In another sense the restoration brought about by disalienation also represents an effort to reconnect the individual with the forces of the unconscious from which he has been cut off by over-successful *embourgeoisement*.

Other modes of producing disalienation are preoccupied with achieving moral catharsis, re-awakening the religious impulse in self-centered and over-secularized people, and with trying to sensitize people to the relatedness which their actions have to the effects they produce. Such effects, of course, may be remote in either space or time. Still other objectives of disalienating techniques are to make the individual aware of the moral complexity of decision-making or to make him understand the behaviour called for in specified contexts where he holds certain values which, he believes, apply to these same contexts. There are also regimes of disalienation which are concerned with producing self-understanding and empathy and sympathy for others<sup>25</sup> and with arousing the existentialist passions for authenticity, care and concern, commitment and involvement, and the quest for the basic encounter. Finally, there are techniques of disalienation which have only the very modest aim of increasing moral consistency in the individual and enlarging his sphere of social responsibility.

It is to be noted, however, that there are pathological forms of disalienation which uproot the individual both from himself and the group. They are modes of disalienation in which the individual believes in little or nothing— anomie, marginality and nihilism. There are other modes of disalienation in which the individual rejects not only alienating middle-class virtues, with their attendant roles and façades, but also most group-values. These are forms of moral nihilism and uncritical anarchism in which the forces of disalienation have swung too far in a roleless and rootless direction—a sort of absolute non-relatedness—and when this happens we get the types of phenomena which have traditionally been labeled “decadence”. There are many attributes of decadence. These show up in the fact that the individual seems to believe in nothing and in the fact that he is a “swinger” without ideals and goals. Decadence is present when the individual makes a virtue out of a psychological separatism which is seen as a supreme asset. He is driven to avoid as much relatedness as possible to persons, places, and things. This latter attitude is best summed up by the phrase “I couldn’t care less.” In this type of decadence, so perceptively

examined by Nordau,<sup>26</sup> the individual rejects self-expression in all those modes which are distinctively human, concentrating instead on pecuniary gain, sexual promiscuity and libertinism, escape through drugs, commandeering what he wants out of life through crime, or, perhaps, concentrating power in his own hands and pushing people around. The Greek principle of balance and moderation, the use of the golden mean, is conspicuous by its absence.

One of the most repugnant forms of decadence—particularly when it derives from pathological disalienation—is what the British philosopher, C. E. M. Joad,<sup>27</sup> calls “the dropping of the object”. In this form of decadence, individuals seek varied experience—any kind of experience—for its own sake, regardless of consequences either to themselves or to others. In a sense this type of decadence involves a compulsion to fill up time, regardless of its content. This type of decadence represents, in a very real sense, the emergence of what can only be called the new mindlessness of our own time—a mindlessness that is fast becoming one of the paramount features of sensate culture in this, the seventh decade of the twentieth century. It is unfortunately a mindlessness that promises to become accentuated over the next few decades. It is a mindlessness that has characterized mass-man even before the beginning of the twentieth century, but that mindlessness is deepening for modern mass-man under the onslaughts of science and technology and the complex, social impacts which they are creating for modern, urban life. In particular, it is a mindlessness and a moral insensitivity to the individual and social evils of the modern community. It represents a complete unawareness of the manner in which the unmanaged introduction of science and technology into modern life is deeply associated with the evils of unchecked urbanization. The new public for such mindlessness is made up of the uprooted mass-men of our time, the spiritual derelicts of the big city.

There is no virtue in those forms of disalienation that are really pathological in nature—whether these are only forms of anomie, marginality, erroneously understood anarchism, nihilism, or forms of decadence, whether this decadence is of the Joadian type or not. In our time, however, certain trends in the arts are intended to produce disalienation of the desirable sort but are succeeding only in producing pathological forms of disalienation. Sorokin<sup>28</sup> has devoted a substantial portion of his life to the study of the pathological in the arts, but the modern pathologies with which he was concerned are now more than 25 years old. Since then some more virulent forms of pathological disalienation in the arts have appeared. It is a major tragedy when the functions of the arts—seeking to release the human spirit from dulling forms of

*embourgeoisement* and seeking to arouse life-affirming modes of awareness—turn into their opposites and create spiritual malaise rather than spiritual health. This will be inevitable when humanists and lovers of the arts fail to distinguish between benevolent and malevolent forms of disalienation. To lump together all forms of disalienation because they represent protests against the social maladies of bourgeois society—hypocrisy, a role-playing inhumanity, chronic displays of personal inauthenticity—or to welcome all forms of disalienation because they are at the same time forms of “*debourgeoisement*” is to throw out the baby with the bath-water. Space does not permit an extensive discussion of the many contemporary trends in the arts which constitute examples of pathological disalienation. One of these trends in the arts, however, must be singled out for discussion here, for the very reason that it constitutes a latter-day form of decadence that is being too uncritically accepted, with little concern for its blighting psychological effects on the interested, indiscriminating, and unphilosophical public. This form of pathological decadence is what has come in recent years to be called “The Happening”.

There are a number of contemporary developments in the arts, some of whose practitioners show different degrees of disalienation in the sense spoken of in the preceding section. Among the developments in the pictorial arts and the theatre arts, the following might be included: Pop Art; Discothèque Culture; and the areas of activity which have come to be called the Expanded Arts and which include such forms as Verbal Theatre, Neo-Baroque Theatre, Expanded Cinema, Kinesthetic Theatre, Acoustic Theatre, Neo-Haiku Theatre, Fluxus, Anti-Art, Outlets, and Political Culture. In the area of popular music we might, with some justice, subsume a few of the following techniques as vehicles for promoting questionable forms of disalienation boogie-woogie for piano, bebop, hard bop, Calypso, Pseudo-Dixie, rock'n'roll hootenanny, hill-billy music, swing, Afro-Cuban style, Beatle Music, Baroque Beatle Music, and countless other varieties too numerous to mention here. Certain forms of popular dancing can, perhaps, be regarded as promoting disalienative flights from self. Some of the following might prove eligible: The Lambeth Walk, The Watusi, The Slop, The Twist, Go-Go, The Frug, The Boogaloo, The Shingaling, The Snoopy, and a number of others. Of all the preceding, however, none can exhibit the marks of decadence and of pathological trends in contemporary art so conspicuously as do some current expressions of The Happening.

The Happening has developed chiefly in Western civilization and it



cultures such as that of Japan, that are prone to be highly imitative of Western influences. Susan Sontag feels that The Happening is an "... art form which is designed to stir the modern audience from its cozy emotional anesthesia. . . ."29 Presumably the stuffiness and low-grade consciousness of the middle class, its isolated imperceptiveness and its shallow, hot-house emotions can be dissipated only by a type of allegedly artistic "shock treatment". If we are to *épater le bourgeois* we must do so more forcefully than even before. The new techniques of artistic shock treatment seem to lean heavily towards the pathological in the sense we find in Sorokin's work. So too, apparently, does the content. What, then, is a Happening?

Susan Sontag<sup>30</sup> describes a Happening as follows:

There has appeared in New York recently a new, and still esoteric, genre of spectacle. At first sight apparently a cross between art exhibit and theatrical performance, these events have been given the modest and somewhat teasing name of "Happenings". They have taken place in lofts, small art galleries, backyards, and small theaters before audiences averaging between thirty and one hundred persons. To describe a Happening for those who have not seen one means dwelling on what Happenings are not. They don't take place on a stage conventionally understood, but in a dense object-clogged setting which may be made, assembled, or found, or all three. In this setting a number of participants, not actors, perform movements and handle objects antiphonally and in concert to the accompaniment (sometimes) of words, wordless sounds, music, flashing lights, and odors. The Happening has no plot, though it is an action, or rather a series of actions and events. It also shuns continuous rational discourse, though it may contain words like 'Help!', '*Voglio un bicchiere di acqua*,' 'Love me,' 'Car,' 'One, two, three . . .'. Speech is purified and condensed by disparateness (there is only the speech of need) and then expanded by ineffectuality, by the lack of relation between the persons enacting the Happening (pp. 263-4).<sup>30</sup>

There are some other major attributes of Happenings which must be emphasized here. The event with which the Happening deals is designed to tease and tax the patience of the audience. Members of the audience may be sprinkled with water, have things thrown at them, be subjected to ear-splitting noises, and made to witness the entire spectacle while standing in a crowded space on a broken floor or on boards laid in a few inches of water. Various other types of physical annoyance and abuse may be created for the spectator. The length of time of a happening is unpredictable, since it has no plot, no story and no element of suspense. It may last from ten to forty-five minutes.

The usual Happening is a series of surprises to simulate the timeless logic of dreams. Speech, if present, is a species of echolalia, and, on occasion, may verge on logomachy. Gestures are repetitive and meaningless.

Happenings cannot be repeated. They are intended to be one-shot theatre operations. They emphasize materials; the people in them are frequently made to look like objects and may also, in fact, be treated violently, like objects. The Happening dispenses with a true stage set and takes place in what is called an "environment" which is typically messy, disorderly, and crowded. Happenings have been called "painters' theatre" and this is because most people who do them are painters—including a large number, unsurprisingly, of Pop Artists. For this reason Happenings have been called "animated collages". These animated collages make use of the same sort of materials—the junk of urban civilization—which are celebrated in Pop Art itself.

Some examples of Happenings will illustrate the type of pathology that Sorokin has emphasized in his various writings. We are indebted to *Life* magazine for an account of a few Happenings illustrative of the new pathology. The following is a description of a Happening which occurred in Paris, May, 1965, (*Life*, Feb. 17, 1967, 96-102).

Axes and hammers tear into the car. The car is being sacrificed. Then a roar, and the crowd is running, pushing, laughing, dodging the roar—a motorcycle. The girl on the back of the motorcycle is nude. She clings to the driver, gasping, gasping, eyes clammed shut. The motorcycle cuts through the crowd, roaring, rolling fast. People fall and scramble away. The girl jumps down, the motorcycle spurts up a ramp to the stage. Actors and audience merge—the Happening has turned the auditorium into an arena, and the action is all around. The girl is chased through the crowd, and men in the crowd join in the pursuit of her. The lights go out—shouts and louder laughter in the dark. A spotlight flashes back to the car, dying now like a beached whale in the center of the crowd—axes and hammers have been at it in the dark. Another girl, a blonde face hidden by a white paper death mask, kneels on the car's crushed roof, and a boy stands on the hood: working like a sculptor, kneading, shaping, he covers her body with spaghetti. Sorbonne professors are present, Americans living in Paris with no address, an anonymous, open-faced collection of students—they strain in the crowd, peer, reach out to touch the spaghetti.

The girl scrapes cold pasta from her shoulders and flings it in clump into the crowd. People turn squinting faces bravely up to receive splotch or splat—"Ici! Ici! A moi". Boys begin to rock the car, and the girl shouts and kicks at them. Her shoulders, fragile and bony, shake and flutter—she is laughing behind the mask (p. 88).

Later at the same festival (if, indeed, this is the right word) the following events occur:

“. . . A childbirth film is projected backward, causing the squalling red infant to go headfirst back where he came from, with doctor pushing hard to help, mother finally backing pregnant out the door. Fidel Castro's voice unaccountably booms forth as two girls in cabbage-leaf costumes dance down from the stage, inviting the crowd to salad and producing a happy stampede. A couple inside a burlap bag begin to bounce in the motion of love as Lawrence Ferlinghetti, visiting American beat poet and contributor to the festival, reads from his latest work:

. . . . *I'm sorry officer*  
*I'm sorry mother*  
*That's the only word I know*  
*that works*  
*It's a word of love daddy. . . .* (pp. 88-90)

We are told that this particular Happening “ends with a final fling at the car. It is beaten and torn until even the cylinder block is laid open, and people go triumphantly out in the rain bearing spark plugs and pistons, portaging fenders like broken canoes” (p. 90).

The creator of this Happening, Jean-Jacques Lebel, sees in this type of content and technique the end of repression and the birth of an age of gentle and ecstatic anarchists. “Whom the Gods destroy, they first make mad!”

Yet even this type of material is hardly the bottom of the barrel of pathology in the Happening. The same issue of *Life* tells of a Japanese group, known as The Zero Dimension Group, whose leader Kato explains that the nature of things can be comprehended only by those who can concentrate for two or three years on all that is vulgar. The members of this group submit to a truly monastic regime of contemplation in which they make certain that each waking hour of consciousness is filled with forbidden thoughts or forbidden deeds. One way by which they faithfully express their philosophy is to carry around vulgar flash cards which are consulted on busses and trains.

Still other “specialists” in Happenings will assume the postures of love, while naked, on top of an office building, while they are flooded with spotlights from below. Some of these creative souls—in an effort “to stir the modern audience from its cozy emotional anesthesia”—will submit naked to masochistic whippings in public. There are still others who will walk or crawl naked in public with lighted candles protruding from their bottoms.

Some of the more venturesome leaders in the art of the Happening specialize in "creative vandalism" by hacking pianos to pieces. One variety of these liberators of the human spirit engages in the *blutorgie*. This is a psychologically searing event in which a lamb will be tacked to a white canvas and publicly disembowelled, the blood spattering on the clothes of everyone present. One school of Happiness has revived the Nazi book-burning activity, in which, in the name of art, books are piled high into "Skoob Towers" and burned in public.

If the reader is not yet nauseated or outraged, let him ponder the following description of another Happening in the same issue of *Life*. Muhl, an Austrian specialist in Happenings, enacts the following Happening, with major assistance from a young girl, a teacher:

. . . when the girl comes into the arena of folding chairs, she is veiled in a gauze, and she also wears a graceful smile. She lies down on a bed of moss placed in the center of the room. Muhl shadow-boxes privately under the bright spotlights. Gunter Brus, Muhl's partner from Vienna and the ideological *sprecher* of the evening, circles the room screaming German curses at the crowd. "Wow! The real concentration camp thing!" says a spectator.

Then Muhl comforts the girl in vegetables. Her body is smeared with flour, tomatoes, beer, raw eggs. Melons are smashed inside a gunnysack and Muhl pours the runny results artfully down on the twisting figure. Then comes dry cereal, wheat paste, milk, half-chewed carrots. Volunteers rise from their seats to come forward and chew carrots. Muhl chants and pours in bright powdered paints as he stamps and dances in the spreading salad. Finally he flings himself into the animal-vegetable marriage, embracing the girl, lapping up the milk and beer. An appealing mood of harvest-time merrymaking descends upon the room—the audience is spellbound, the girl is radiant at the bottom of the stew. It is her first Happening—an experience! "At first you're scared and embarrassed", she says, "but afterward it's just so great" (p. 101).

It is in ways such as this that the workers in the cultural underground of the Happening hope to open up new areas of perception. Apparently this is to be done by violating taboos and by rendering concrete and public the sexual fantasies and blood lusts of some of the pathologically discontented members of twentieth-century civilization. In no sense would it be unfair to suggest that, all too often, the Happening can be regarded more appropriately as the type of pathology which exemplifies what Sorokin calls the maladies of the sensate arts. In an equally clear sense a Happening also frequently reflects the decadence involved in Joad's account of a quest for experience for

the sake of experience, regardless of the quality and end-use of that experience. Yet this is the sort of thing that Sontag<sup>31</sup> speaks of as "the new sensibility."

In the preceding indictment of the Happening as one of the current maladies of the sensate arts, we recognize that there are probably Happenings that do not violate margins of good taste—either socially, morally, or aesthetically—and may have something worth saying, to arouse a middle-class audience out of its smug complacency before the ugly realities of contemporary civilization. What we seek to emphasize here, however, is that the trends in Happenings reflect, on the whole, pathological qualities such as those that have been emphasized above. In so doing, they appear to confirm amply the evaluations, charges and predictions concerning sensate pathology and decadence in the contemporary arts—pathology and decadence which have been the focus of concern, respectively, of both Sorokin and Joad.

These trends of disalienation and decadence and of the pathological in the arts will probably not be reversed until the public learns to discriminate between benevolent and malevolent forms of disalienation. In the meantime, however, it is important that humanists—and also contemporary artists and writers—learn, at any cost, to make the necessary distinction among contemporary forms of disalienation. If the humanities were to take the wrong turning, the effort at civilization would become love's labour lost.

#### NOTES

1. Eric and Mary Josephson (editors), *Man Alone, Alienation In Modern Society* (New York: Dell, 1962).
2. The short novel, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, by Leo Tolstoi, will be found in *Quintet* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1956), pp. 113-70.
3. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Scribners, 1958).
4. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
5. Colin Wilson, *The Outsider*. With a new postscript by the author (New York: Dell, 1956).
6. Harvey Swados, *A Radical's America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962).
7. Alan Harrington, *Life In The Crystal Palace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).
8. Robert E. Cubbedge, *The Destroyers of America* (New York: Macfadden Books, 1964).
9. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
10. Lewis Herber, *Our Synthetic Environment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

11. K. William Kapp, *The Social Costs of Private Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).
12. H. C. D'Arcy, *The Mind And Heart of Love* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).
13. Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Avon Books, 1965).
14. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York: Rinehart, 1955).
15. José Ortega y Gasset, *Man And People* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1957).
16. Gabriel Marcel, *Men Against Humanity* (London: The Harvill Press, 1952).
17. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964).
18. Jack R. and Lorraine M. Gibb, "Humanistic Elements In Group Growth", pp. 161-70. Chapter 17 of *Challenges of Humanistic Psychology* (James F. T. Bugental, editor), (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).
19. Irving R. Weschler and Jerome Reisel, *Inside A Sensitivity Training Group*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960).
20. Carl Rogers, "The Process Of The Basic Encounter Group", pp. 261-76. Chapter 17 of *Challenges Of Humanistic Psychology*. *Op. cit.*
21. See *San Diego Magazine*, April, 1967. This particular issue is available from the *Western Behavioral Sciences Institute*, 1121 Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla, California, 92037.
22. See *Esalen Programs*, Winter-Spring, 1968. This item is available by writing to Esalen Institute, P.O. Box 31389, San Francisco, 94131. The Esalen Institute is a centre to explore those trends in the behavioural sciences, religion, and philosophy which emphasize the potentialities of human existence.
23. Harry Stack Sullivan, *Conceptions Of Modern Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953).
24. Prototaxic experiences are early childhood experiences and practically impossible to communicate, usually because they have been acquired by language-naïve, very young children. Such experiences involve very little inner elaboration and consist mainly of discrete series of momentary states which can be neither recalled nor discussed. Parataxic experiences are partly communicable by means of language.
25. See David A. Stewart, *Preface to Empathy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).
26. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: Appleton, 1895).
27. C. E. M. Joad, *Decadence: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).
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29. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation And Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1966).
30. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, pp. 263-4, and the chapter entitled "Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition".
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## ILLUMINATION

*Helen Sue Isely*

I burn to report a piercing light  
 which shelled truth from a mouldy tomb  
 and lusted a shadow's inward name:

When fireless light had forked, our dusky town  
 stood houses up with every roof turned down.  
 While brilliancy refracted earthly hue,  
 my hand reflected what the heavens knew.  
 An untried mountain, luminous in baths  
 of knowledges, revealed perilous paths.  
 Immensity. I was totally found.  
 Then darkness fell into the crash of sound.

Does lightning charge the senses twice?  
 Feel thunder's plunging pulse. Ice.