

THE PHILOSOPHY FORUM

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February 18, 1971

Professor Gyorgy Lukacs
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Dear Professor Lukacs:

Would you be interested in writing a thesis, 10,000 words in length, on this sub-theme: The Civilization of the Future: Ideals and Possibility? It would be one of three articles, the other two being counter-theses to yours on the same sub-theme and of the same length. The other two contributors would use your article as a springboard in the sense that they could oppose or supplement your basic thesis in whatever way they thought best. All three articles would be published in volume XI, No. 4, June, 1973.

Enclosed is a copy of the theme, sub-themes and questions related to them. The questions under each sub-theme are merely suggestive guides for the sort of matters we would like you to discuss. You can choose those that seem to you most interesting, modify them in whatever ways you think best, and add new questions which you think ought to be dealt with. Your sub-theme is marked in red ink.

We ask contributors to write as simply, clearly and untechnically as possible, but this should not be taken to mean that technical language is not to be used. It should be used where required to make essential meanings clear. Illustrations or examples are also to be used--even in abundance--if they help to clarify difficult parts.

After publication in the Philosophy Forum, your article, along with all of the other thesis-counter-thesis articles which appeared in volume XI, will be published as a volume in the series, Current Topics in Contemporary Thought, edited by Dr. Laszlo and myself. The series is published by Gordon and Breach, Science Publishers, Inc.

The Philosophy Forum has a special relationship with a number of Institutes which use the thesis and counter-thesis articles as texts. The Directors of these Institutes often invite our contributors to their Institutes to speak upon, amplify

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and clarify their articles. There is no obligation on your part to do this; and your article will be published as agreed whether you want or do not want to participate in these Institutes. One thing I can say as a quondam participant is that the experience at these Institutes is interesting and worthwhile.

If you agree to accept our invitation, we shall send you immediately all necessary information.

We would appreciate an immediate reply.

Very sincerely yours,



Rubin Gotesky

RG/klm

Enclosure

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Volume XI

MODERN CIVILIZATION: ACHIEVEMENT OR BLUNDER

I. Modern Civilization and Human Survival:

Is there a law of degradation for mankind? Is it possible for a technological civilization to overcome or modify it? Can a technological society indefinitely expand or grow? What are the basic obstacles today in the way of maintaining a self-sustaining societal homeostasis? What are the probabilities that these obstacles can be overcome? What are the hierarchical and practical relations between the rights of individuals, nations and the human collectivity? Do these relations change? Under what conditions?

II. Modern Civilization and Scientific Knowledge:

Scientific knowledge and other modes of knowledge: Are there acceptable, universal criteria for establishing their validity, truth and value? Are there immutable truths of any significance to modern civilization?

Will men everywhere recognize them as valid, true and valuable?

What are the great knowledge achievements of modern civilization? What are its errors, prejudices or illusions? How have the former and the latter manifested themselves in the planetary life of man?

If there are other modes of knowledge, what are they? What contributions can they make in reducing human error, prejudice and illusion? in enriching man's vision of himself and the cosmos?

III. Civilization and Individual Fulfilment.

Has modern civilization increased the possibilities of self-actualization for the individual? In what ways? How do individuals attest to this? What price have individuals paid in availing themselves of such possibilities?

Are there alternative modes than those of a modern, technological civilization, to individual self-actualization? Can these be incorporated into a technological society?

What modern modes of self-actualization--which are the products of modern civilization--will probably continue to be of permanent value to mankind?

IV. The Civilization of the Future: Ideals and Possibility.

Is there an ideal kind of civilization?

Can civilizations, present and past, be cross-culturally compared in terms of achievements and failures? Would the results of such cross-cultural comparison be acceptable to most men? What would be the criteria or parameters used to justify such results? Can modern civilization be more or less preserved as is? Does it require reformation? Must it be scrapped and replaced?

If something must be done, who are the ones who have the will, courage and knowledge to maintain the present or produce a new civilization: are they humanists, artists, scientists, philosophers, the common man, a given social class or combination of social classes? Will there be a civilization of the future?

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