

Report on the Longhairs

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During the last few years, I have had a certain contact with a group of young people who call themselves the “longhairs.” The time has come for a preliminary report on my general impression of this group. The impression as it stands at the present time is definitely quite mixed. It was my good fortune in the last few years to contact and speak to certain ones selected from out this general group. I was deeply impressed with their general level of intelligence and their response to the spiritual call, in a word, to the call to yoga; and then beyond that, to that most exalted objective of the renunciation of the fruits of the yoga, when attained, to the end that they might bring to others that which they themselves sought. I felt the response so that I know it was there and real, and I was deeply impressed.

There remains, however, the question, do they have the stamina, or do any among them have the stamina, for putting forth a lifetime of effort in complete dedication and living under conditions of at least relative austerity in order to achieve that which appealed to their feelings and aspirations? This can be known only later. But the promise that I found was much greater than I ever expected, and so I would say I know that among these who are called the longhairs there is a portion that is of very superior quality both in intelligence and in moral motivation, and even in spiritual aspiration.

But these were a few out of a large number, and concerning that larger number, my judgment at this time must be very mixed. On average, so far as I know them, they represent persons of a superior order of intelligence, but in general it seems to be an undisciplined intelligence, and, therefore, an ineffective intelligence. This is not a judgment of everybody. There are exceptions of course to all of these general statements, but it is an impression I derive from the general impact.

There is also evident, and this is true in quite a broad sense, of a very considerable idealism—idealism which is normally quite natural to young people. There is a capacity to see that there is a genuine wrongness in the society in which we live and a wish to see it corrected. This does not take to great a skill, for any observer looking over the course of history of this humanity must be impressed with many undesirable features that have made history, on the whole, a dark and somber record. Nonetheless, these young people have seen this and feel that something should be done. This is all to the good, and I commend all of this; but this is only a part of the picture, indeed only, I fear, a minor part of the total picture.

Now, before we go on to considering other sides of the total picture before us, let us say a word about the custom of the male portion of the young people to wear long hair and to grow beards. There is nothing wrong about this. It is, in fact, according to nature. It is not a sign of anything deleterious or wrong. It is simply according to nature, and, therefore, natural enough. In fact, a study has shown that 90 percent of the time from the date of the Christ to the present, men have worn long hair and beards, and the short hair

custom combined with a clean shaven face is only relatively recent. In fact, in our own country, hardly goes back to the Civil War. It is true that it strikes the conventional individual with considerable force, but it's only a mark of a difference and involves no judgment, morally or intellectually, just because of the fact of a different style. It is a condemnation of the habits of the so-called establishment, to be sure, and no doubt that arouses a certain degree of resentment on the part of the establishment; but that is merely prejudice upon the part of the establishment and involves no basis for either moral or intellectual condemnation as such. And further, there are certain figures that stand before some of us, certain ones that stand before probably all of us, who have been longhaired and fully bearded. I would name among these one known as Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan, a man whom I knew personally; the one known as Koot Hoomi, perhaps the predominant figure behind the Theosophical movement with his brother Morya who also has long hair and is fully bearded; and in addition, Sri Aurobindo, one of the very latest and greatest of the Indian sages; and, then, known to all is at least the artist's conception of the Christ as a figure of long hair and full beard. These are figures all of whom I revere and honor. I would aspire to be as they are and would go the way they have chosen to go. There is, thus, no reason to denigrate anybody simply because he lets his hair grow long and permits his beard to grow.

The impact of these five that I have named is of men of great masculine beauty, of lofty intelligence, of great compassion for this humanity. One can say nothing more than that of anybody. They are preeminently, every one of them, men of surpassing dignity. But when we come to the mass of those who are known today as the longhairs, only a few, one here and one there, produces an effect of masculine beauty, of an evidence of strength of character, and of disciplined intelligence. If one takes the total massive effect produced by viewing television reports and photographs taken of masses, one gets the impression of an unkempt, undignified effect, and often, in addition, an effect of dirtiness, of sloppiness, of a general letting down. This is not an indictment, to be sure, of all those who belong to the class of the longhairs, but it is a general effect that one derives from watching mass representations, and this causes one to pause. Here a discrimination must be made. The fact that a male permits his hair to grow long and to let his beard grow as nature designed it is no guarantee that he is a wise individual, that he is a person motivated by lofty considerations. It may be simply the manifestation of a general carelessness, a tendency to be sloppy and unkempt, to let down the discipline of a decent life. That is what it may mean; and, sad to relate, it would appear that perhaps more often than not this is what the longhair is.

Just recently, I received a report of four observers of a "pad" or dwelling place of a couple of longhairs. The description was shocking. The individuals involved were absent at the time. The beds were unmade. Clothes were scattered on the floor. Dirt was everywhere. And the kitchen was a mess. All in all, I got the impression that the place was such that a reasonably respectable pig would have rejected it, and perhaps it represents more nearly the way of life that is normal to a sewer rat. This is an ugly picture. In no sense does it represent a movement towards something better, something superior. It is rather a representation of a tendency toward decay and general degeneration.

How typical is this of the longhairs as a class? I do not know. I hope it is exceptional; but certainly, such persons are totally incompetent to stand in judgment of

that which they call the establishment. Oh, they are not slow to judge. They are daring. They experiment. They refuse to learn from the experience of others and try by their own means. It is even reported that there have been children who have injected into their veins peanut butter in order to experience some strange effect. They promptly died. There's been experimentation among these people very widely in the field of drugs that produce various psychical modifications. This has led to death in many cases, to a breakdown of character, to a disintegration of basic intelligence, and subtle psychical damage that may be long in healing. The drug addict is in no sense any better than the drunkard. Both are using chemical substances to produce psychical effects, and both are experiencing a process of degeneration that leads to a breakdown of character, of intelligence, and of general physical and mental strength. This is merely a manifestation of *cupiditas*, a tendency to indulge weakness. There is no language too strong to condemn any persistent tendency in this direction. To be sure, chemical substances can be used under controlled conditions to produce effects that may be good. One who drinks alcohol at the oxidation rate will never be intoxicated and will not receive from it any harm. I would not go so far as to say there is no condition whatsoever that a chemical substance can ever be used to affect psychical conditions. It may have use in connection with problems of inanity, or it may lead to an understanding of insanity; and in such usage some valuable knowledge may be gained. But as a private practice to indulge oneself in sometimes pleasurable states, it is simply a manifestation of *cupiditas* and is not an advance to something higher. One agonizes over the destruction of so much of promising youth in this day from simply the use of drugs. Most seriously, the drug opens the door—I mean the psychedelic, narcotic type of drug—opens the door to negative forces that are basically destructive of all of the noble efforts of mankind. Because this practice is general, is very widely present among the longhairs, it forms the basis of a very large indictment of them.

They have a lot of bucolic egotism and conceit. They refuse to learn from those who have gone before. They turn down precepts and wildly rush in to those experiences that may be the most dangerous possible. I remember once the question of whether one could learn by precept or only by experience came up. In general in my own work with students, I have concluded that they learn better from experience than from precept. That it's only the few most intelligent ones, those who are most endowed with wisdom, who will learn from precept and avoid the price of painful experience. One time three of us were gathering some hay upon the ranch. One who was an amateur in farming activities was on wagon, placing the hay about while two others of us heaved the hay up. The two of us who had heaved the hay up had had experience. The one on the wagon tramped most dutifully the hay into place, ground it down, and we built up a good load. Then we came, hauled the hay down to the stack where it is the duty of the one in the wagon to unload and pitch it over to the stack. He almost could not lift the hay; he had packed it so tight. We then pointed out to him his error, and then he cried out, "Why didn't you fellows tell me. I can learn from precept." Well, the longhairs generally are highly deficient in the capacity to learn from precept. They take it the hard way. Much of this is due to a vast bucolic conceit, a feeling that they know more than those who have gone before.

Now here is another point. It is true that technically the student of the present day may know in his specialized fields more than the general individual knows. He may know more about his electronics than the average citizen in the world. He may know

more about chemistry, or any other specialty. But that does not mean that he is wise, and that does not mean that he has learned the complex problems of how to get along with other human beings and, in fact, that he knows much about the general problems of society. Many of these things cannot be learned by means of formula or by simple experiment in a laboratory, but are learned through long experience of contact with actual problems that involve the relationship of man to man, and gradually build a kind of wisdom that knows how to deal with these problems with minimum bad effects. This is a kind of learning that takes time; often the span of a lifetime seems not enough to learn this empiric wisdom. This, the longhairs tend to despise, and the result is that they are often hurt needlessly. Furthermore, it is the custom among the longhairs, or at least part of them, to view the authorities that enforce the laws which society has willed for itself, to call these “pigs,” meaning the word in a derogatory sense. This custom has reminded me of something said by Elbert Hubbard long ago to the effect: when you call a man a mean name, you are that thing, not he. I was impressed at the wisdom of Elbert Hubbard as I look upon this practice of a portion of the longhairs. And in addition, as one sees them in the massive manifestations before television one can easily see the justice of the implication.

As I look at the mass of the longhairs, I find that they are not consistent radicals, for their women wear long hair also; and this with the feminine portion of humanity is an expression of radical conservatism, for women have always worn long hair. Also, I notice that they follow their men, which is a well established custom among the feminine side. And, in general, these young women look attractive, and that too is perfectly normal conservatism. I would suggest that if the longhairs, or this particular group of people, were to be quite consistent, the feminine side should proceed in as radical a way as the masculine side, and that would seem to be that they should shave off all their hair. This, then, would lead to a consistent effect. They would no longer be attractive, and, thus, they would be quite radical. In fact, a carrying out of this course could actually serve to alleviate something of the problem produced by the population explosion.

But, now at last I think I have found the key phrase that most largely integrates the whole of the longhair movement. It is the phrase “universal uglification.” As we look at them in their sloppy dress and generally unkempt appearance, we have what we might call physical uglification. And in their moral looseness, in their manifestation, in some instances, of actual killing—not for the sake of acquiring property or because of a personal affect, but simply for the interest in killing as such, for remember, it was a longhair who did this—in their looseness of personal practices, they exemplify an uglification of the moral nature. In their following of the ugliest kind of thinking, such as that represented by Sartre, Karl Marx, Marcuse, Brown, and Abbey Hoffman, they exemplify uglification of the mental processes—so that all together we have a revolt against morality, physical decency of appearance, against clean and beautiful thinking. This is quite radical, it must be admitted, so that our key term would be universal uglification of everything.

Let us look for a moment at the manifestation of this tendency in the field of art. I remember seeing one of the longhairs who had an exceptionally long beard. He used the tip of his beard for constructing his picture. He would dip the beard into paints and then proceed to make dashes upon a sheet of paper that in the end produced an effect that

actually was lower than that which has been produced by certain apes and monkeys. Yes, there is some achievement here, an achievement in going downhill in the direction of the abysmally vile. Sad to relate. Sad to relate.

Now, if there are longhairs who feel that the picture I have here drawn is unjust, let me remind them that these pictures are drawn from certain ones who are also longhairs. And if there are longhairs who are oriented to nobility of character, to the improvement of mankind, it is a matter of the first importance that they segregate themselves away from those longhairs that justify this indictment. It is first of all their responsibility, not the responsibility of the shorthairs. If they want to achieve a reputation for something good or something better, make clear their differentiation from these dark and evil ones who are actually monsters in the human whole.

If there are those among the longhairs who are authentically oriented to peace and love, then it is their duty to sever their connection from those other longhairs who express themselves through the breaking of windows, the setting of campus buildings on fire, the use of explosives to destroy research departments, and, incidentally, research students, from those who advocate violence for the overturn of the society, from those governments who have established themselves by the principles of murder, torture, and brain washing—and here I mean the governments found in Russia, in China, in North Korea, in North Vietnam, in Cuba, and elsewhere, for these governments ground themselves on the most vicious principle possible for establishing their power. Do not imagine that I speak from ignorance. I saw this movement arise in 1917, and in the beginning because of my ignorance, I was sympathetic; but soon became concerned, for things were not going as I saw it. I reserved judgment for 10 years and then evaluated it upon the basis of many reports. And it is my considered judgment after 53 years of observation that there may never have been in the span of our known history, anything so one-sidedly and completely evil and vicious. In Russia, for example, the establishment of this power involved the murder of some 15,000,000 people. The figures are derived from the researches of Koestler, who had been at one time one of the communist intellectuals. We know not how massive the murder may have been in China, but we do know the methods employed by the Chinese Marxists in Tibet. In the Dalai Lama's book *My Country and My People*, it is reported that these men have taken all the masculine members of given villages and forcibly castrated them without anesthetic.¹ It was reported from another source that I trust, that having found a certain racial group in that country that was of a very superior intelligence, and wishing to gain the advantages of the genes that this group carried, they forcibly raped young women and when the child was born they took the child from the mother and then murdered the mother. This is Marxism in action. This is what we are today fighting in Vietnam. And those who champion the other side are either colossally and inexcusably ignorant or they're oriented to the most monstrous evil that has ever been known throughout known history. I cannot respect both the intelligence and the moral decency of anybody who supports these regimes.

¹ This book is actually titled *My Land and My People: The Memoirs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962).