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T-135

~~perhaps the worst thing that ever happened to individualism~~

One of your articles on the environmental crisis (Needed: a Rebirth of Community, January 26, p. 47) seems to put the blame for this crisis in part on individualism. Perhaps the worst thing that ever happened to individualism was ~~to be used~~ to be used as an excuse for the misdeeds of vast corporations - which, ~~as the text~~ ~~has~~ are actually little socialist states within a state. A real individualist would never aim for a career as a corporate executive or a government official, because success in such a career demands conformity and team-playing. The blame for environmental deterioration lies not with any individual or with any collection of independent individuals, but with vast organizations - ~~not~~ governments, corporations, etc. - which make helpless pawns of individuals. If people had been more individualistic and less willing to sacrifice their personal autonomy for the sake of expediency, we never would have been pushed into our present ~~own~~ over-technologized mess.

To me, it seems only slightly encouraging that some physicists are becoming concerned about moral issues in the applications of science (Insight, Jan. 26). The fact is that they are still dedicated to the advancement of physics. Even if it is used only for "good" ends, scientific progress makes possible and indeed encourages, the increasing centralization and over-organization of society. Thus individuals gradually become reduced to the status of gears in a machine. ~~But what if we could do it~~

→ When scientists use science for "good" they are giving ^{gentle} ~~gentle~~ _{gentle} treatment to the gears in the machine but the gears are still just gears. I consider the question of whether the gears are well or poorly treated to be of secondary importance. I don't want to be a gear in a machine at all. I don't want to be taken care of by science or society. I want to make ^{for myself} the decisions that affect my own ~~life myself~~ life, rather than having society make them for me. This is possible only in a comparatively loose organized, decentralized society.

I quote Aldous Huxley's Brave New World
Revisited, Chapter III:

"We see, then, ~~that~~ Modern technology has
led to the concentration of economic and
political power, and to the development of a
society controlled (~~and~~ ruthlessly in the totalitarian
states, politely and inconspicuously in the
democracies) by Big Business and Big
Government." - 218

There seems to be an almost religious
conviction among intellectuals that science is
good because science is knowledge, and knowledge
is always good. But let us remember that knowledge is
form of power; and we ought to have
realized by now that too much power in
~~anyone's~~ hands ~~is not good.~~
~~is not good.~~ is not good.