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Margaret Mead

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Margaret Mead
“Discipline and Dedication”
March 10, 1959
Portland State College

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HOST: It is virtually impossible for anyone to be an educated person in the United States today and also be altogether ignorant of the contributions of Margaret Mead to the understanding of man and his behavior. Yet, in another sense, an introduction *is* required, for like all other rituals, this is one of those familiar and expected procedures, without which I fear the members of our tribe would not feel that all is quite proper and in tune with the universe. [*laughter*] But I promise you, I shall be brief about it.

I can here mention only a few of the most important of Dr. Mead's numerous and varied achievements and honors. Born in Philadelphia, she was graduated from Barnard College, received her master's degree in psychology, and her doctorate in anthropology at Columbia University. Her extensive researches have ranged from the island peoples of the Pacific to the contemporary cultures of Europe and the United States. Dr. Mead's many books on these subjects are well and widely known, and appreciated by scholars and laymen throughout the world. Many of them, as you know, have been reissued in paper-bound editions to meet the very great popular demand for them. As a teacher and lecturer, Dr. Mead has been associated with *many* distinguished institutions including Vassar College, New York University, and Columbia University. She has served in important assignments with several agencies of the United Nations and of the United States government. Her honorary degrees from four American colleges and universities help to symbolize the recognition of her achievements in the

world of science and letters. Dr. Mead is presently a member of the board of directors of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and she is the president-elect of the American Anthropological Association. Since 1926, she has been on the staff... [audio abruptly cuts out for a few seconds] ...associate curator of ethnology. It is a personal privilege and pleasure for me, on behalf of Portland State College, to present Dr. Margaret Mead, who will address us on the subject "Discipline and Dedication." Dr. Mead.

[applause]

MARGARET MEAD: Mr. Chairman; ladies and gentlemen. I was sitting here thinking, "You know, I'd like to talk about discipline first, but I'm sure the title is *Dedication and Discipline*." I still think maybe it was, but I'm glad you said it the way you did, because I decided that it might go better this way. We probably could cope with discipline and get it out of the way and then go ahead to discuss dedication, which everybody knows is *nobler* and should come later.

[clears throat] I presume that this state has been having the same plethora of recommendations from educational experts that we *ought to go back to discipline*. To the days when everybody learned to spell, and everybody learned arithmetic, and everybody learned to read, and that from which we've strayed, into these horrible fields where we don't teach anything but car driving and marriage adjustment courses in high school, which is a stereotype that's been pretty well-propagated in the country, helped along by the President of Yale, Mr. Bestor, and Admiral Rickover, and a variety of other characters. [laughter] And it's worth looking at this problem, I think, from the standpoint of the anthropologist; there are a great many other ways of looking at it, but my particular area of competence is to compare our culture with what other cultures have done and to use the methods that anthropologists have developed to deal with comparisons between one South Sea island and another, or between the Eskimos and the Hottentots and the Klamath; to use them instead, now, to compare what we did a few years ago with what we're doing now, to give us a certain amount of insight in what's happening in our own society, and a greater degree of control over it.

Is this machine working all right? Everybody can hear in all directions? Good. I've gotten to be very distrustful of them [laughter] [MEAD resumes] So that if one looks, as an anthropologist, at this request that we go back to the good old days and to the proper kinds of discipline, when children had their mouth washed out with soap and when a licking at school meant a licking at home and you were sent to bed without your dinner, put on bread and what water if you couldn't spell "judgment." Or "phthisic." There are probably some people here who remember learning to spell "phthisic," which was really the great test of literacy in my childhood.

[laughter]

And, if we look at this demand that we go back, it's worthwhile considering how we got away from this kind of discipline. What happened in this country that meant that instead of the customary methods of teaching which had been used in all European countries, and used as far as we know in most literate traditions, where children were shut up in school against their will and liberally pounded if they didn't learn, and lashed not only with a cat-of-nine-tails or a properly shaped switch, but lashed by the tongues of their teachers very heavily, and exposed to ridicule and every sort of punishment. What happened that learning shifted in this country from something that was enforced by punishment, to its present state of not being enforced at all by any known methods that anybody knows anything about, virtually. And if we look—and this of course is what an anthropologist will do—we not only look at the aspects of the society that we're *supposed* to be talking about, but we look at a lot of others too, and see how they fit together.

You'll notice that there are several other things that have disappeared in this country beside punishment in school, of the old type. Hell has disappeared almost entirely. A study that was made several years ago for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, right through the country, shows that though 95% of Americans believed in Heaven, practically nobody believed in Hell. The fact that this isn't very consistent, and that it's often difficult to define Heaven without the help of Hell, didn't worry the respondents to this test at all. And, of course, the Devil has disappeared. Hardly *anybody* thinks about the Devil at all. Almost nobody is tempted by him, and no one's thrown an ink bottle at him for couple a hundred years, probably. So Hell and the Devil and punishment went out together, more or less, and instead this period of believing that instead of using punishment to make children learn, we could use reward, came in.

Now, reward came in in a sort of simple-minded kind of way: that if punishment is bad, reward is good, because reward's the opposite of punishment; and of course reward *isn't* the opposite of punishment. The effect of a candy bar or a gold star on one's ability to spell is not the exact opposite of the effect of a very bad whipping on one's ability to spell. The whipping was a great deal stronger, on the whole, than these gold stars that came in, and the children of America decided on the whole, they didn't care much about gold stars. And reward became a weaker and weaker sort of incentive.

Now that we found it's reasonably weak, there is a hue and cry to go back to punishment, which of course we're not going to do. It's very uncongenial to us as a people, and [*raising voice*] *nobody* has the strength of mind to punish anybody today in a simple straightforward way that is labeled as punishment! They may do all sorts of indirect torturing things, but to come out and say, "You are bad because you can't spell..." not "phthisic," because nobody would be expected to spell it, but let's say "satellite," which nobody in the United States knew

how to learn to spell before Sputnik went up. And it's fascinating, the entire United States learned to spell that word in a week. "Missile," too, has gone up considerably, recently, but no one in the United States is really prepared to look at a child who won't learn, and straightforwardly take a whip and lambast them for not learning. This is something that is extraordinarily uncongenial to us.

It exists in other countries in the world still. I've seen schoolmasters' desks in Australia with a whole collection of very good switches up on the wall and being told, "I don't see how you teach in America." And of course, conceivably the answer is, "We don't. But..." [laughter] "...at least we're not going to deal with the switches." So that we are up against the need of constructing *some* new way of persuading children to learn, when we won't use punishment and reward won't work, and we're unfortunately up against it at just the period when the situation's become a little acute. When the kind of tolerance that we were beginning to practice, the kind of forgiveness if you misspell *all* the words, or almost all of them, which was developing in the United States in a warm, friendly atmosphere in which... well, I heard a student in a teachers' college in Chicago say a few years ago, to us and her professor, "You know, if you don't look out, a lot of people in this course are going to flunk!" [laughter]

And we are developing an extraordinary tolerance. I also remember going up to speak in upstate New York, and arriving at something like 7 a.m. on a cold winter morning and standing for 45 minutes 'til the students who were supposed to meet me arrived. And when they arrived, they said, "Well, your secretary didn't say you were going to be at the information desk." So I said, "I'll kill my secretary." And then in the car as we were driving along, I got out the folder and looked up my secretary's letter and she had said just that. So I said to these three students, "Now, were you going to let me go back and scold my secretary because you had said she hadn't said something?" [replying in an incredulous voice] "We didn't think you'd *really* say anything to her..." you see? Which is a standard sort of position; or the taxi driver who takes you in the opposite direction for a couple of dollars and when you mention it, says, "We all make mistakes!" [laughter]

Now this general, warm, friendly tolerance... [laughter continues] has been spreading all over this country. Not only in the schools, but in every other sort of situation. I remember one night I got on a train and I found I had a roomette, which I didn't want, instead of a lower berth, which I did want, and it also cost more, and—which wasn't the main point, but it added to my annoyance—and the railroad official who was taking the tickets said, "Of course you'll pay for it; otherwise the person who made the mistake might have to pay for it. You wouldn't want that, of course." [laughter] No...

This can be multiplied, and if you look carefully through... right through American life, you find this general sense that people ought to be forgiven for lack of precision, lack of accuracy, lack of knowledge; and that if you're nice people, you'll forgive them. And curiously enough, this atmosphere of tolerance is building up. You're supposed to forgive other people for more than you forgive yourself. This is the only safety we have at the moment, because as long as you're willing to forgive everybody else for *always* getting the telephone number wrong when you dial it, but are a little tough on yourself for dialing it right, there's hope, you see, because each person is an executor of a higher standard to themselves than they are to other people.

Well, this is a little difficult to understand, actually. Why, in the midst of this warmth and permissiveness and forgiveness and friendliness, any standards have survived at all, and why people have remained sort of executors of some kind of sanctions against themselves? But this has happened. There's a new study has just been made on... in a sort of... well, modified Kinsey style. It's less prurient and more humane, but nevertheless, it is more or less a questionnaire of pre-marital dating patterns, and one of the very interesting things in this study is that the youngsters who've answered it—I think a few high school and mainly college students—are tougher on themselves than they are on anybody else. You ask them what they will do; well, they wouldn't do *this* under *this* circumstance, and they would do *that*; very fine points are drawn as to whether she's somebody else's girl or yours, and you treat your own girl better than you treat other people's girls; this is another one of the curious complications that's developed, and so almost every girl is treated badly by somebody... [*laughter*] because they're all the same girls, of course, in this system. But, for your own girl, and for your own behavior, you have higher standards; and for other people, "Well," you say, "depends on the situation. One can't judge."

So there is a slight suggestion... it's somewhat slight, but there is a slight suggestion that we are beginning to build up, in the midst of this soft and friendly, warm situation, new standards of judgement which people will use on themselves, which young people who want to go into certain fields will begin to do the kind of study that's necessary to get there, and even though the high school in a wonderful relaxed state hasn't a hope of thinking of getting anybody into anything except the state college, and then it lets the state college kick them out instead of doing anything about teaching them; even in such high schools—and we have thousands of them in this country—there are a fair number of young people who study hard for the particular thing they want to do and succeed in doing it. And suggests that, possibly, we are developing the beginning of the kind of moral climate which will deal quite differently with the problem of learning than the way it's been dealt with in our historical past, when punishment was a principal method of getting people to learn. It's possible we are going to be able to spread to mathematics and languages and all the other things that require discipline, the same

kind of self-imposed standards of work that we now have, for instance, in athletics... that people will *learn* skiing, I mean. *[laughter]* I'm not making any remarks about football coaches at the moment; we'll come back to them later when we have them teaching biology, but... *[laughter continues]* *[some applause; MEAD chuckles]*

That it's quite possible that the next step that we could take in building up a style of learning is, on the whole, a self-imposed standard, which will permit you to be still awfully kind to everybody else, but tough on yourself. So that people will be able to combine the kind of personality that is required of Americans, you know, which is *endlessly* forgiving for an endless number of errors, but we can indulge this to other people exclusively, and turn towards a more rigorous relationship to our own work, because it itself will be internally rewarding. And people will learn that unless they learn in particular ways, they aren't able to do the things that they want to do. And it seems to me it's worthwhile considering this internally self-rewarding system, in which there're no gold stars from the outside and there's no punishment, but the individual autonomously knows what they want to do, and attains some kind of balance between standards set by themselves for themselves, and the general lack of standards in the outside world.

And it's particularly important to consider this at present, because we're just approaching a period when it is going to be absolutely dangerous to have people who aren't as inaccurate as Americans are today. We're trembling on the edge of a world entirely organized with IBM machines. Now, a lot of people talk as if IBM machines are gonna take life over, but of course the people that are going to take it over are the little girls that type things and feed 'em into the machines. Machines don't type 'em, and the machines don't punch them, and we're going to have an army of, I suppose, probably, mainly women, and it'll be a new dedicated profession which we can exploit 'em in... *[some chatter in background]* but we probably going to have an enormous group of people whose one job is to feed cards into an IBM machine; and if they feed your name in wrong, instead of being yourself, why, you're somebody else who lived in another state and probably had the wrong political opinions in 1922. Then you try to get a passport, or something, *[laughter]* and it may take *years* to correct it because nobody can find it! Nobody knows what it's about... *[laughter]* And this is true of tickets, it's gonna be true of taxes. It's true of your paycheck. There're probably people here now who've gotten the wrong paycheck and tried to get it corrected... it takes months, costs thousands of dollars. And if you order anything from a department store today and it gets sort of spinning around inside one of those machines, you may get 30, you know... flour sifters or cribs or almost anything before you're able, anybody's able to stop it; they just keep arriving.

Now, this is just beginning; it's going to get worse every year, and unless we're able to develop something that we have had no respect for because we've seen it as an inordinate demand that shouldn't be made of nice people; unless we're able to develop absolutely perfect precision in most people in our society, we're going to live in a continuously more dangerous world. Probably everybody in this room, if they stop and think a minute, can locate at least one mistake that you could make tonight that would endanger the lives of anybody up to a hundred people. You can think 'em over, but I'm sure you can all work them out. Leaving the stove on when you go out; not fastening this, not settling that, not locking something else, not turning something else off; just a series of mistakes. And of course if we have anybody in the audience who's a mechanic on an airfield, or who's working with the water or gas system of the city, or any of these things, they already hold the lives of thousands of people in their hands all the time, and we're living in an interconnected system where the performance of each person is becoming more crucial to each... just the everyday performance, as well as these girls over the IBM machines that are going to be even more crucial for all of us.

And life is becoming more and more like a parachute jump; and of course, at present, people are shying away from large sections of it, the way the boy did who said he didn't want to be a parachute jumper because you had to get it right the first time! [*laughter*] But more and more of modern life, as we interlock our lives with machines, with various sorts of automatic control, more of our lives is going to require this sort of precision that at present we do not have the moral requirements for developing in people. And at present, our only notion is to shout that we ought to go back to discipline, which, of course, is just a perfectly *useless* method of curing this difficulty that we're in.

Now, the other thing that we're getting a great deal of talk about is the absence of dedication. I understand this word's used a great deal in Oregon. I don't know whether this has got something to do with the centennial or what, but it seems to be used somewhat more in Oregon than it is in other parts of the country. You seem to have quite a few dedicated people here. As nearly as I can figure out from my few informants, but they're very skilled, a dedicated person is anybody who does something good for less money than he would get if he did something less good. [*laughter*] This means *all* school teachers, virtually. Or *almost* all. There are probably a few school teachers that people don't think are dedicated, and if you pursued that little thread, you'd think they also... you wouldn't think they ought to teach. But anyone who teaches today, of course, could do something else, so that makes them dedicated.

Nurses are dedicated; some kinds of doctors are dedicated. I don't know whether the legislators in this state are dedicated or not; I've been confused since I've been here in following some of the discussions in the legislature, I'm too... I'm out of state and I don't

understand all them very well. I can't quite tell whether this move to reinstate the old Oregon territory is literary, or symbolic, or what. But... so I'm not sure whether that your legislators are dedicated or not, but anyway, there're a great many dedicated people around at the moment, and the word's being overused as simply a way of describing that a few people in the country are willing to do things for which they're paid badly, which we think are good things to do.

But we're getting an increasing recognition that it's hard to get people to be dedicated today, and... oh, people are writing textbooks about studies in colleges and questionnaires given students, and *nobody* wants to be dedicated to anything, and no one is interested in any sort of commitment; and even if they do dedicated jobs—that is, the jobs that have been defined as dedicated in the past, meaning the people in them are being exploited for a good cause—they now say they don't go into them, for any reason of dedication. A dean of a large medical school told me recently that any boy, when he interviewed him, who said he wanted to go into medicine because he wanted to cure people, would not be accepted. I mean, this was clearly just cliché, couldn't be true, and it was... he didn't think he'd get in. I've had young people come into my office who were going into technical assistance of one sort and another, and we'd be discussing what they were going to do, and they were gonna go to Burma, build a road or something, and then [*mimicking a student*], "But don't think I've got any kind of dedication or any of that kind of eyewash in this. It pays well, and I can save a lot of money, and I can buy a lot of things in a free port, and that's the reason I'm going," or, "They'll pay for my wife and four children to go over there and, when I get tired, to bring 'em back." But, a general disallowance all through the society of dedication or commitment.

Now, there're great many ways that one could tackle this question. We could tackle it historically and discuss why groups of women, who in the last generation were willing to teach and be nurses, have suddenly rebelled, and—until we have to get most of our nurses from Nova Scotia on the East Coast, I don't know where you get 'em out here—and we could tackle it in that way. Or instead—and this is what I want to do tonight—we can consider what resources we have for defining our society in such a way that dedication will cease to be so unattractive. We can ask why it is that, on the whole, people are retiring to private life and trying to get the kind of job that will permit them to have the kind of private life that they want, and regarding good human relations as a sufficient goal in life, which is overwhelmingly true of the country now. That what boys want is to get a job that will permit them to get married as soon as possible, have the kind of house they want, have the kind of car they want, and four to six to eight children: replicas of themselves. And... [*laughter*] the girls want the boys to have the kind of job that permits them to get married earlier than they could get married otherwise. And with this early going steady that's going on, it means that 16-year-old girls, with their demands for early marriage, are playing a very decisive role in boys' career choices in this country. And a boy

says, "Gee, I'd like... you know, I think I'd like to be an architect." The girl says, "How long will it take?" [*murmurs from the audience*] And he ends up as a football coach... [*laughter*] because he's got... you know, he was good at games, and... [*laughter continues*] we need a lot of 'em.

And, with this flight into private life that is so characteristic of this country and that is so serious in so many ways, because it's serious in terms of our supply of scientists and of artists and of statesmen, of people to work overseas in a period where we need people to work overseas. It's serious in that people feel totally justified today in their flight from the cities into the suburbs, and so that the cities are being abandoned to the old and the rich and the poor and the just married, none of whom are much use in a city, as far as taking responsibility for it, while the whole backbone of our responsible, educated, reasonably affluent (though heavily mortgaged) population moves to the suburbs and just looks after little green patches of its own, and doesn't do anything beyond the borders of that particular suburb, having pushed everybody out they could! People with... who can't afford as good houses, and people who haven't as high incomes, and people who like to live in apartments, and people of the "wrong" ethnic group! Push them all over across the tracks, and then live very comfortably and with *real* community responsibility. We're getting den fathers now as well as den mothers in the suburbs.

Now this, also, has—that's one of the things I found out since I came out here—I cherish it. They're still called den mothers, though, in large meetings, [*laughter*] you understand. Now, this is serious. It's serious at a great many levels. It's serious in terms of our supply of talent for the more important things in the culture, and it's serious in the management in the affairs of the country, and in the abandonment of our cities to disintegration, which leads to spread of juvenile delinquency and things of this sort. We can make an attempt from many different angles, and whichever discipline approaches it will probably come out with a different answer to diagnose what is happening today. But it appears to me that one of the very serious things that is happening is a lack of belief in, or hope for, the future.

That what has happened in the United States is that, now, after three wars—two world wars and the Korean war, and a depression—that almost everybody who is playing an important role in forming their children's ideas, helping them make their choices for the future, feels that we have never had it so good. That we are better off now than we have ever been before and *any* change will be for the worse. Any change at all, of any kind. It's almost impossible, of course; there are a few people that would like somebody in Detroit to make small cars, and there're a few people in favor of small alterations in our society. But on the whole, for the first time in our history, we are afraid that *any* change will be worse than it is now. If we can just stay the way we are now; or as a taxi driver said to me, "Why do they have to use atomic energy now? Let 'em use up all the oil, and let my kids have a nice life before they touch atomic energy." This

position, with a completely static picture and a desire to keep things just as they are, also, of course, is a position within which one, in a way, ceases to believe in a viable future.

Now, our young people are being very heavily accused by the moralists of wanting only security. Everybody, everywhere you turn, you hear about how awful the young people are. They want security. Why, a girl comes in at 21 to get a job and she asks what the pension system is. [*laughter*] And this is supposed to prove they want security; I don't believe they do at all. They just have parents that talk about pensions all the time. When you're 21, that's just about when your parents begin talking about they wish they had... were going to have a better pension than they had, and so that the young people are reflecting. The... adults have their parental position of worrying about pensions, but if you look closer, you'll find that most of them don't believe that there's going to be a very long time to do what they want to do. So they want to get married at once, have a house at once, furnish it completely at once, and have all the children at once. If possible, under 24 is what I'm often told. And this at a point when we're also told how our length of life is stretching out and out, and the average woman can look forward to 25 years of zest and vim and vigor after her children are grown. But if you talk to college students and ask them, "What are you doing to get ready for those long, long years after your children grown up?" they just look at you blankly. They're not getting ready for them. And at the back of most people's minds seems to be an unacknowledged belief that this isn't going to last very long.

Now, how much this comes from fear of atomic warfare, how much it comes from this sense of living on top of a wave that's the best wave we've had yet, how much it comes from the fact that in America, the worst place you can be is the top. It's hard to know. And I want to spell that point out a little bit further. We've never, in the United States, been able to develop a stable upper class. As soon as people get to the upper class, they ruin their children, who start coming down again. And we've always believed that the self-made man who becomes a millionaire, that's fine. He gets up there and, if his wife's lucky, she stays with him, and then they give the children a lot of money and ruin them. Down they go. They can go to Wall Street and pretend they're working, of course, and spend a lot of money on psychiatry, but there is no real convention in the United States for a stable, responsible, or even happy playboy upper class. They drink; they go to the dogs regularly. That is in our general mythology, as we've never had any kind of a cultural mythology that was happy sitting on the top of anything.

So then our upper class was unhappy. The town that stops growing, in the United States, starts to go bad. And this is being shown over and over again. As long as a city is growing, its schools get better, its libraries get better, its... all the criteria of a good community go up, and the criteria for a bad, unsuccessful community tend to go down. The minute it starts to lose

population, this thing reverses. So we only know how to have a growing town be a good town, but we don't know how to make a stable town that hasn't grown for 40 years. We have no idea how to turn such a town into something that is alive. It starts to be dead. So that this may be a very important factor in our present clinging to this tenuous present, where everybody's getting more money than they ever got before, where you can get a house! You can mortgage the next 30 years and live the way your parents couldn't live ever. And this attempt to put our future happiness into physical replication of ourselves. Six children, just like oneself, are the thing that most people are clinging to as the most valuable thing that they know of in the world.

Now, if we are to consider how we're going to get out of this... it isn't a rut, but get off this crest... to a degree that we're able to move again, have some belief in the future, some interest in change, some willingness to invest in change. At present, we have virtually none. The study that was made and was released last week at a very critical and dramatic moment, when one of our satellites was lost and the other little probe was speeding past the Moon—that study that was made by Michigan—showed that 3% of the people of the United States thought that space research had any high priority; just 3%. But medical research had a very, very high priority. So we can sit around and live on in the state we're in, and keep our teeth. [laughter] But an interest in change—and at the moment space is one of the symbols of change—was very slight.

Again, one can look at what each discipline has to contribute; and if we look at the ideas that lie back of this lack of belief in a better future than we could have now, one of the things we find is a growing distrust in human beings: the general feeling we're the last generation that's going to be able to live in this system at all, not only because we might blow each other up, which is a real enough danger, but a general feeling that it's getting too complicated anyway, and the human brain won't stand it. We're getting to have a very low opinion of the human brain. I don't particularly blame us for some of the things we're letting it do at the moment, but the general feeling that civilization is going to be too complicated for man, which gives us a kind of gloom.

Then we also have this overwhelming fear of the population explosion, which is being emphasized everywhere, so now the thing we're most worried about, of course, is that *other* people will have too many children, which is an old fear. In the early days of the Planned Parenthood movement, it always got a lot of nourishment by pointing out that the *wrong* people were having the children, and female college graduates were only having 6/10ths of a child each... or something. [laughter] And this, of course, was the dear dead days beyond recall, but this was a situation. Now today, we are tremendously afraid that the Asians are going to have too many children, and that they may... there are more of them than there are us, now. That used not to worry us, if we could just keep 'em out of the West Coast, it didn't make any

difference whether they had a lot of children in Asia or not. They had lot of nice famines to deal with, and we didn't worry so much, but with the spread of the technological revolution, so that Asian countries are becoming our industrial competitors and our possible enemies; with the rise of nationalism in Africa, and the probability that Africa, too, is going to enter the industrial world, we're beginning to get exceedingly gloomy about the population problem, and this is another picture that makes us hopeless and makes us believe that the human race isn't going to be able to cope with the problems that are going to come up.

And if you read science fiction, you find that—and science fiction is written, after all, by people who are very close to the best advances in the natural sciences, usually, but know very little about the behavioral sciences—you find the general unspoken statement that the only thing to do with man is to have a good mutation. This runs right straight through our science fiction at present. They're scared they won't mutate in a good direction, but with luck, you might, and we might have a different kind of creature who could cope with this world that we don't know how to cope with, that's getting so much bigger and so much more dangerous all the time; and a world in which the individual is feeling more and more helpless. Now, actually, if the American people *really knew* in their bones—which is quite aside from having read it in a book and being able to give the right answer—that there is *no* difference between this audience in their general makeup, in their brains, in their physique, than Stone Age man who couldn't count beyond four, and that we have come all the way from the Stone Age to here with the same brains and the same physique, and that we could go, with the same brains and the same physique, perhaps a hundred times further than from the Stone Age to us, we wouldn't need to have this degree of pessimism about the future. This we don't really know in our bones yet.

It's hard, even for an anthropologist, I find it's... In the middle of New Guinea, I don't find it difficult to think that I could take that awfully bright headhunter, when he was a little boy, and bring him here and educate him until he turned into a first-class physicist or statesman or something else, but I do find it hard to think what it would've been like if Einstein and Darwin, for instance, had been born *there*, or taken there when they were babies, and what would've happened to their minds. This is harder for us somehow to grasp today, and we haven't got quite a realization in our bones yet that everything that we are, that we cherish, and that we think of as the only thing that makes life worth living, for which one would be willing to dedicate oneself to a future that was not limited and personal, is due to what man has learned and taught to other men, and that what any human group have learned, another human group can learn also. If we realized this more, if we had more of a time depth into the past, we would have less trouble projecting ourselves into the future, and we would be able to use such... really, exceedingly optimistic statements, as the statement of the great neurologist Lorente De Nó, that no human being has ever used more than a tenth of his brain. The greatest mind that

we've ever known, operating with the highest civilization, with the most perfect achievement, has never used more than 1/10th of his brain, and that gives us a lot of leeway. It gives every--all of us more leeway than 9/10ths, on the whole. [laughter]

So that the possibilities of what man can do and can learn are so great, and can be measured; if we have a sufficient knowledge of the past, they give us a possibility of projection into the future. And finally, perhaps the other paralyzing situation at present, is that people think that because the apparatus of government, or business, is so big that the individual has become weaker. They talk about "the government," and "How can we keep 'the government' from doing something," as if it was... well, as if it was the Kremlin, actually, when really, with our new mass media, the power of a single individual has never been as great as it is today; and any individual anywhere with a good idea can set in motion the wires around the world. Anyone... any three people in this room that really had a good idea could be on Dave Garroway's show in a week, with an audience that no one ever had before in the whole of human history.

With an audience, very often, that will go right around the world, and if you add to this—which at least I find a rather interesting point—that there are more people alive today than our estimate of all the human beings that have ever been alive since the beginning of *homo sap* to the middle of the 19th century; and think that little populations with which these famous characters in the past operated. The tiny audiences for whom the great musicians played; the few people for whom the great philosophers wrote and taught, and realize that—I mean, you look at it one way—there's this great long procession of very few people coming down through the ages. There is now, today, this enormous horizontal possibility for us to draw on. Far greater... as great a store of genius as the human race had from the beginning of *homo sapiens* to now, is born and living somewhere in the world today. An audience that equals the entire lifetime of the human race and means of reaching that audience in the kinds of mass media we have today.

Then this size, which otherwise is frightening and alienating and paralyzing, becomes instead a way of dignifying the possibilities for action of each human being who is living today, at a time in history when we're more responsible for what's going to happen to the human race than we've ever been before. When, for the first time in history, each people are the keepers of all the other people on the Earth, and we're not only our brother's keeper but our enemy's keeper; then, we needn't let the size of the problem and the extent of the problem dwarf the importance and the possibility of action for each single human being.

[applause; program ends]