

A Word With You

THE "egghead"—the scholar, the scientist, the intellectual—has been receiving a lot of attention in this country during the past year—mostly because of our concern (as usual) that Russia is doing a lot with her eggheads.

We deal with the matter as we Americans typically do—all out, one, two, three, let there be light. And the egghead stands there, blinking in the glare of the klieg lights, not quite certain whether this is good or bad.

What is good about it is the effort to integrate the egghead into the life of our society. What is bad about it is the way we're doing it.

I believe God intended that eggheads should not live in a world apart but should get mixed up in this world with the jugheads, knuckleheads and onionheads. They have a part to play in making life richer and more meaningful for mankind, just as the baker and merchant and artisan have theirs.

While civilization is advancing, the egghead does become integrated with society, as the poets and philosophers were in ancient Greece. As Greece declined, the egghead became a misanthrope, or a lackey for the powers-that-be, or he buried himself in academic work.

In the nineteenth century, eggheads not uncommonly were involved with public affairs. Ralph Waldo Emerson went out into the world, John Stuart Mill was a Member of Parliament, Emile Zola crusaded for reform and so did Leo Tolstoy, Richard Wagner participated in revolutions.

More latterly, the egghead has been following the trend of his predecessors during the decline of Greece—there is a schism between the thinker and society. Today's eggheads, more

often than not, form private cults; enamored of their own subtleties, they strive to impress one another. A lot of them fool around with Existentialism and go caterwauling about "man's aloneness in the universe" and other non-existent problems which mean nothing to the toiling billions on this planet.

The eggheads who do care what happens are tragic figures—like Oppenheimer; or Einstein, who thought he would have been more useful as a plumber.

The egghead participation in social affairs that does exist is not particularly gratifying. Scientists in industry are turned loose in a laboratory and are asked to perform like pet monkeys. Scientists in government are not positive shapers of influence but are underlings of state policy. The man of affairs distrusts the egghead, and the egghead distrusts the man of affairs.

While these are symptoms of the choleric times we are living in, the egghead can do something about it—something more constructive than competing on a TV quiz show. He can turn his attention more fully to social problems, he can seek a more creative liaison with the rest of society and try to fill the intellectual needs of the people. And the rest of us can meet him halfway.

—Robert Clancy

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