

of Wiener and Von Neumann.

In Classical education, such as the program of the famous mass-producer of geniuses, the Brotherhood of the Common Life, the pupil is guided not to “learn about” a discovery, but rather to relive the original experience of that act of discovery, as reported by the original discoverer, or a suitable substitute for such a source. In that way, the pupil does not master the “formula,” as diploma-mill textbook education prescribes; the pupil takes as the object of his or her attention the successful mustering of those creative-mental processes of his or her own mind, by means of which the original act of discovery is reexperienced. The student with that sort of Classical education knows the mental processes by which a discovery is generated; the victim of diploma-mill textbook education learns the plausible authority of the result of the discovery, not the act of discovery itself.

The victim of diploma-mill education does not know the act of discovery itself. Therefore, for him the authority of the presented discovery lies not in the way in which the idea was generated, but rather in the demonstration that the result foretold is statistically “repeatable.” For this reason, that victim earns his diploma on the authority of what he esteems as “practical” plausibility, not in a scientific way. He has not become familiar with the nature of the act of discovery itself; for that reason he tends to be more readily hoodwinked by what appear to him to be the seemingly elegant deductive-mathematical architecture of hoaxes such as those of Wiener

and Von Neumann.

One must remember, that those veterans on campus back then were in a hurry. They were, for the most part, “regular guys,” who knew the fear of economic depression, “The Bomb,” and what came to be known as “McCarthyism.” That education-in-a-hurry, combined with those fears, became the standard of culture they provided for their children. That had a side-effect. The children knew that their parents were, as the mid-’60s radicals said, “faking it.” Their parents’ hurried avoidance of deeper values signified to many of the children that there were no deeper values. Life became for them a rapid succession of shallow-minded, if passionate transitions away from one banal conformity to the next. The majority of those children grew up to become culturally pessimistic existentialists. If they were literate, they moved quickly from Marx to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche by way of the Nazi Martin Heidegger and his bed-mate Hannah Arendt. Life for them became, “How I feel about my situation.”

It might be proposed, therefore, that if the victims were told the story of how this moral sickness of theirs came about, they might be empowered to free themselves from a disorder whose influence is threatening to destroy our nation and our civilization from within. It is therefore strongly suggested that the still surviving veterans of World War II tell their story at last. What happened to those veterans and their children, on the way to the late 1960s, should be reviewed.

Spreading pessimism: lies of the N.Y. Times

What blame do the American media get for fostering the cultural pessimism that we now see running rampant? Consider the record of that “newspaper of record,” the *New York Times*.

On July 20, 1969, while mankind celebrated the 25th anniversary of the first walk on the Moon, the *Times*’s front-page story was, “Earthly Worries Supplant Euphoria of Moon Shots.” It dredged up every professional pessimist from Pablo Picasso (“it means nothing to me”) to microbiologist René Dubos (space suit technology is a “dreaded portent of what could happen to our lives”).

The *Times* has a long and nasty history of such coverage. In a Jan. 6, 1880 article, it “proved” that electric light could never compete with gaslight. It took one generator to power eight light bulbs, the *Times* argued, so at least 250,000 generators would be needed to light New York. This implied a mammoth investment of \$750 million—obviously out of reach.

Ten days later, in a front-page exposé of Thomas Edison as a fraud, the *Times* cited a “noted electrician” for the conclusion that “after a few more flashes in the pan, we shall hear very little more of Edison or his electric lamp. Every claim he makes has been tested and proved impracticable.”

And so it went with the airplane, as well. After the failure of one of Samuel Langley’s experiments in powered flight, a *Times* editorial on Dec. 10, 1903 proclaimed man’s attempts to fly fruitless: “We hope that Professor Langley will not put his substantial greatness as a scientist in further peril by continuing to waste his time, and the money involved, in further airship experiments.” The *Times* blacked out the success of the Wright brothers for six years.

The *Times* attacked the successful rocket experiments of Robert Goddard in a Jan. 13, 1920 editorial: “That Professor Goddard . . . does not know the relation of action to reaction, and of the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react—to say that would be absurd. Of course he only seems to lack the knowledge ladled out daily in our high schools. But there are such things as intentional mistakes.”—David Cherry