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Task of the Intellectuals...

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Task of the Intellectuals....

The first task of an intellectual, whether in peace or war, is - not to indulge in vague and grandiose ~~the~~ rhetorics but to be precise, truthful and realistic. Particularly in a time of crisis, it behoooves all of us to avoid pretentious clichés ~~as they appear so lavishly in the editorials~~ - which are apt to confuse an issue, rather than clarify it - , but to ~~which~~ consider and define, thoroughly and conscientiously, every term we employ.

We have, therefore, to ask ourselves, first of all:

Who is an intellectual?

Is he just a man equipped with ^{a certain} ~~the average~~ amount of brain? - Obviously, this definition is insufficient. For take it for granted that the majority of ~~the~~ men possess enough of that valuable substance - called brain - ^{enabling them} to pay their taxes, to compose a love letter or an editorial.

Is an intellectual", then, a person who ~~has a little~~ happens to be somewhat brighter than the bulk of his fellow-citizens?

Not quite satisfactory either. For, undoubtedly, there are truck drivers who match or even surpass many a judge or college professor as far as wit and common sense are concerned. Yet, we would be inclined to recognize the professor as "an intellectual" - not the truck driver.

It seems that "an intellectual" is an individual who makes his ^{living} ~~life~~ by using his intellect rather than his hands - like a working man - , his feet - like a foot ball champion - , or his charm - like a movie star.

An intellectual is an individual who makes his living by using his intellect.

This sounds like a satisfactory formula. - But, again, how about such men who depend on their fists and muscles as well as on their brains? A sculpturer, for instance - or a surgeon? Are they "intellectuals"?

How about businessmen? Undeniably, they are people who live on their wits. Yet, for one reason or another, they don't quite fit into our scheme. It is not exactly their money-making astuteness we have in mind when ~~referring~~ speaking of "intellect." - - Nor seems our term - "intellectual" - really appropriate when describing a type of people, whom we expect to have vision and imagination rather than a sharp, discriminating intellect. Pure artists - painters, musicians, even certain lyrical poets - hardly belong to the category of intellectuals; for ~~the intellect~~ their reactions are not primarily determined by intellectual considerations. Needless to say that every creative type of man should ~~be on a par with~~ combine both sensibilities - emotional and intellectual. Yet, ~~there~~ there is the question of primacy: Which of these two basic forms of reaction predominates in a particular character? - the emotional or the intellectual? - - A musician is likely to be primarily emotional - while in the character of a writer both elements should be balanced, with a slight predominance of the intellect.

~~turns out~~
You see, it ~~seems~~ to be more ticklish and intricate ~~to~~ than we may have presumed - to define just one seemingly simple notion ~~as we employ it constantly~~ which we see employed on all possible or impossible occasions and constantly employ ourselves.

I suggest, however, - as we ought to come to a conclusion - that an intellectual is a man, - fully aware of his own identity and his responsibility toward the society ~~to~~ to which he belongs; a man - concerned, in a professional way, with the promotion or distribution of certain aesthetic, ethic or scientific values, and whose concern with these values is of an unselfish, idealistic nature.

The quality, then, through which the intellectual differs from the average citizen, is not so much an exorbitantly developed intelligence, but rather his attitude towards intellectual and moral values. While in the career of a businessman ~~the~~ money assumes the central, predominant part - : while the life of a sailor, a farmer or a prize-fighter is almost completely determined by the conditions of his body, or by weather conditions - in short by the forces of nature rather than by the forces of spirit -: it is the duty and the privilege of an true intellectual to devote his energies and talents, more or less completely, to such efforts and endeavours that do not warrant any immediate practical or economic result but are, none the less, vitally important, indeed, indispensable for the sake of certain cultural traditions and spiritual postulates.