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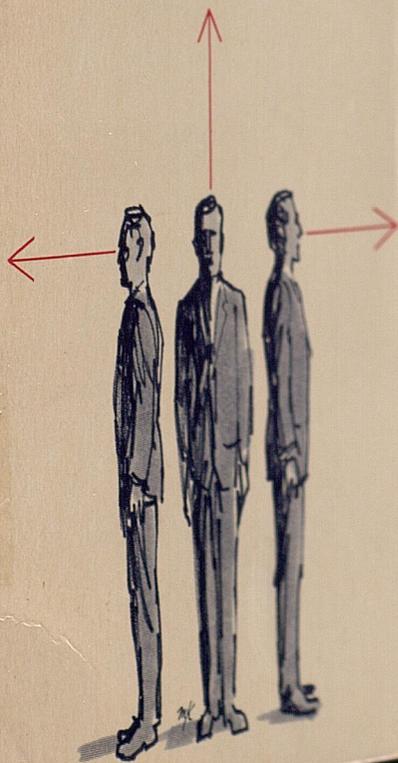
UNABRIDGED EDITION

David Riesman

Individualism Reconsidered

Thirty essays on individualism, freedom, culture, Veblen, Freud, totalitarianism, and method in the social sciences by the author of The Lonely Crowd.

Individualism Reconsidered



A FREE PRESS PAPERBACK

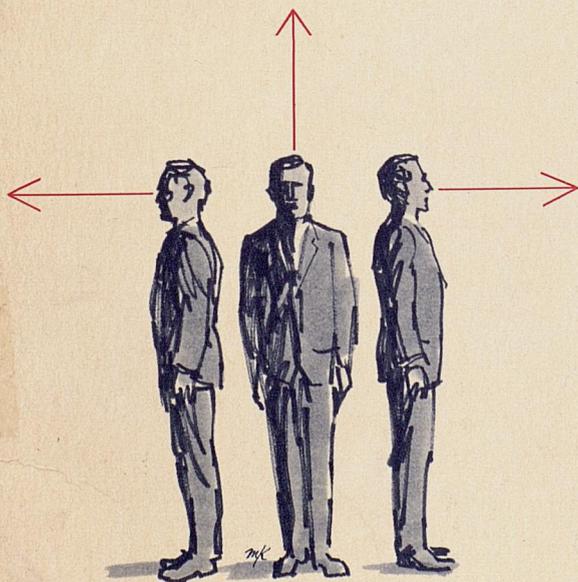


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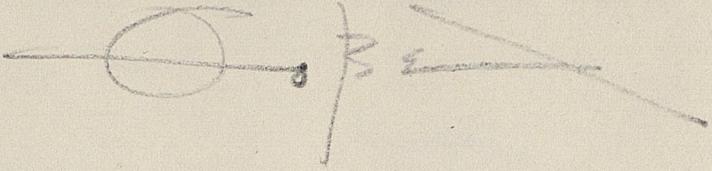
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INDIVIDUALISM RECONSIDERED

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INDIVIDUALISM RECONSIDERED

AND OTHER ESSAYS

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lect and education, nor is there any course we can take which will guarantee victory to the scholar. However, in personal or political life I think there are limits to the usefulness of speculation on ultimate outcomes for oneself, one's group, one's nation, the white race, the Western world, or even the planet. Defeat is not the worst fate. The Athenians were "defeated." So were many other great civilizations. We must recognize the tragedy of every loss, every defeat, without banking too much on the quantifiable measure of longevity as proof of value. To become too fascinated by eventualities of destruction is not only not the way to ward them off but a way to distract ourselves from equally important questions about America: Why, for instance, are Americans often so anxious and unhappy, when Europeans, who live much closer to military or economic disaster are so sanguine in their personal lives, often expressing philosophies of despair with exuberant arrogance? Why are American young people so frequently aimless, lacking private passions and pursuits, when a greater variety of skilled careers are open to them than ever before? Why in intellectual circles is there so much malice, when there are jobs and prestige and tasks enough for everybody and to spare? The American culture, high, low, and middle, nearly always lacks the gamut of qualities our best and most creative spirits have evoked and represented, and the list of reasons for our not having become the promised land is endless—not to be dealt with by such general terms as "loss of faith" or "growth of reaction." Since small actions can have large consequences, the future of America is as bewilderingly open as the present is opaque. Nevertheless, it seems to me that individuals in America have still an undiminished potential for good and great, rich and fortunate lives. In living up to this potential, we express our freedom.

§ POSTSCRIPT

AS THE FOREGOING ARTICLE implies, it represents one side of a debate staged in the pages of *The American Scholar* (the official organ of Phi Beta Kappa) between Archibald MacLeish and me. I had, as a member of the *Scholar's* editorial board, opposed our running an address by Mr. MacLeish entitled "Loyalty and Freedom," for I felt that the views expressed in it were not news to our readers, did not illuminate the issues, and—whatever value these views might have in magazines not read by people like ourselves—would, in the context of other articles previously published in the *Scholar*, only contribute to an atmosphere of resignation, depression, and misunderstanding of the intellectuals' plight. The article was, however, accepted, and I was encouraged to write a reply (something I would have refused