

All these various names given to our time have been coined and used in the world press, by the radio, on television -- those powerful modern media which have opened the way to such vast new possibilities for mass information. These media have themselves, in fact, wrought a revolution in the life of peoples in some ways just as important, or more important, than the other changes I have mentioned. The possibilities of mass information have, in some cases, been -- and may be -- destructive in their consequences. But they may also be used as powerful instruments for guidance to true democracy and for peaceful development and true understanding between peoples. Experience shows that ruthless leaders may with the help of these instruments work up feelings of hatred both within a nation and between nations. It is for those responsible to use mass information for the opposite purpose. In the world of the mind, and of all those techniques of word and sound and image that reach in mind, it is also important to seek to turn swords into ploughshares.

If I myself were to add to the long list of labels given to our time, I would, in the light of what I have said, suggest that we call it the age of responsibility. The phrase is obviously open to objections for the very same reasons as apply to some of the expressions I have already commented upon: it is in a sense superficial and, in historical perspective, it may be said to be exaggerated. All the same, I feel that the elements of truth reflected in the other labels for our age are sufficiently serious to justify the conclusion that we are now at a juncture where the responsibility of those who are called upon to be leaders is wider and more far-reaching than ever before.

You may ask me: To whom do you address yourself? Who is, then, called upon to be a leader? My reply would be: Everybody who can exert influence -- inside a small group, in his country or all over the world. Herodotus said that of all the sorrows that afflict mankind, the bitterest is this, that one should have consciousness of much but control over nothing. That may be true. Who of us has control over life? But what he said would be misleading and a false expression of defeatism if we were to conclude that because we do not have control, we therefore have no responsibility. The possibility of influence, which rests with everybody, is a sufficient basis for responsibility.

Those who have had the privilege of a university education have a special duty. They have a special obligation to maintain their sense of proportion in judging events inside their community and in relation to other peoples. They have to keep awake their sense of what are the true values. They must respect truth.

They must show that respect for man and life which grows out of a true perspective on man and life. Finally, they must have the humility of one who thoroughly knows his own limitations but also the scope of the demands which face him in our time.

