

They did not infer from their epistemological convictions any optimism concerning mankind's future evolution. Whatever is to be said in favor of correct logical thinking does not prove that the coming generations of men will surpass their ancestors in intellectual effort and achievements. History shows that again and again periods of marvelous accomplishments were followed by periods of decay and retrogression. We do not know whether the next generation will beget people who are able to continue along the lines of the geniuses who made the last centuries so glorious. We do not know anything about biological conditions that enable man to make one step forward in the march of intellectual development. We cannot preclude the assumption that there may be limits to man's further intellectual ascent. And certainly we do not know whether in this ascent there is not a point beyond which the intellectual leaders can no longer succeed in convincing the masses and making them follow their lead.³⁷

³⁷ Ludwig von Mises, *The Historical Setting of the Austrian School of Economics* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1969), p. 38.

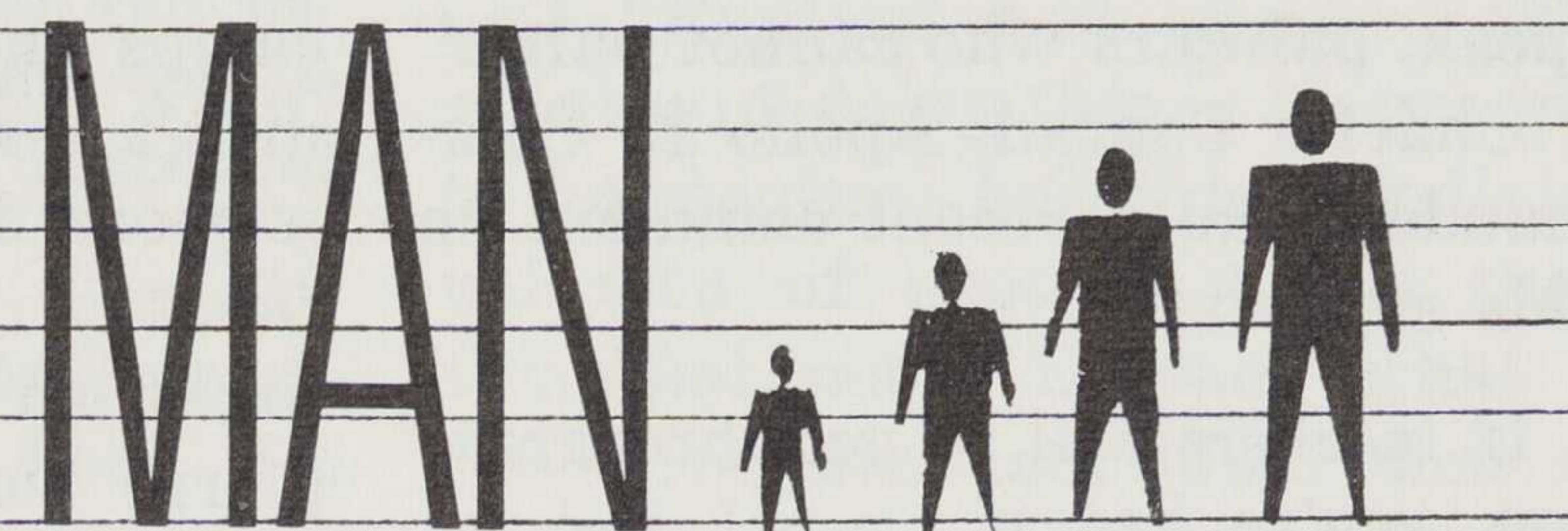
In short, do not try to get more out of pure economic analysis than economic analysis can possibly provide. Most of all, when you see presentations of the exponential curve, with extrapolations made into the next century, remember the words of Professor Nisbet with regard to the use of statistical devices in explaining or predicting human affairs:

Here the Random Event, the Maniac, the Prophet, and the Genius have to be reckoned with. We have absolutely no way of escaping them. The future-predictors don't suggest that we can avoid or escape them — or ever be able to predict or forecast them. What the future-predictors, the change-analysts, and the trend-tenders say in effect is that with the aid of institute resources, computers, linear programming, etc. they will deal with the kinds of change that are *not* the consequence of the Random Event, the Genius, the Maniac, and the Prophet.

To which I only say: there really aren't any; not any worth looking at, anyhow.³⁸

³⁸ Nisbet, *Commentary*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

THE MEASURE OF A



WILLIAM L. EDELEN

ONE of the most insulting cults that exists in our society today is the religion that has as its object of worship the common man. You hear people say, "Oh, he's just a common person; you will like him."

What a pathetic distinction to be known as a person who can't compete with the best, to be known as a common man who is to be classified with the most mediocre, the least informed, the least talented, the most common of society. The word *common* means: "crude; without distinction; second rate; inferior; cheap; trite; below normal; unrefined; inelegant." Can you imagine any greater insult than to be called a "commoner"?

What a paradox we are! We praise commonness, the common

man. Yet, if you have need of highly skilled surgery, you want a very uncommon doctor, not one who is average, inferior, second-rate. If you have need for your life to be defended in court, you want a very brilliant, educated, alert, sharp, talented, very uncommon lawyer. You certainly don't want your life in the hands of a cheap, second-rate, inferior lawyer. In war time you certainly don't want to be in a company commanded by a common, second-rate, average, or inferior officer.

Too many have become common. Our community, our nation, and world are crying desperately for uncommon men and women who are excellent, talented, trained, competent, alert, distinguished. Ernest Hemingway called this "the millennium of the untalented." He said: "We are surrounded by actors who cannot act, authors who cannot write, teach-

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