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CHAPTER 10

Stereotyping Man — Wholesale Judgments

In medieval ages it happened on occasion that red-haired women were stigmatized or branded as witches. They were cruelly tortured and persecuted because they had red hair which today is considered so attractive that it is frequently supplied from a bottle. You may know similar unjust beliefs or wrong habits of thinking which are used when all of one group are classified on the basis of a single person or action. One of the most annoying habits of adults is to call all teenagers juvenile delinquents. It is, instead, a plausible attitude in creating school spirit for competitive sports to consider all of your opponents as capable and strong rivals. But it is a dangerous fallacy of thinking to grow up believing that some common denominator justifies collective treatment of a group. Just because one of your group becomes delinquent, you would not want to believe that all of them do. Just because one red-haired woman acted queerly does not justify the belief that all redheads will act in the same manner.

Are you already aware of these mistakes in judgment in relation to your life today? Do you perhaps consider all of those who belong to a certain country club as superior individuals? Have you often felt that those whose skin was a different color from yours were not as bright or as clever as you? Do you believe that all members of a particular race are clannish and money-grubbing? These are all the outward signs or criteria of your false habits of stereotyping. These are the ways in which we judge others in the whole group on the basis of a few individuals, traits, or actions. Such indiscriminate treatment of groups usually consists of summary judgments which have insufficient facts for giving the whole group a common characteristic.