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THE CHANCES FOR UTOPIA

PERIODICALLY, and especially when there is a sense of grave disorder and malfunction in human affairs, it is proposed that the best men among us—the leaders, that is, in all branches of human undertaking—be gathered into some kind of counseling body and invited to make recommendations for the betterment of society. Back in 1936, for example, at the Harvard Tercentenary, this idea took the form of a suggestion of a World Court of Wisdom which would give voice to the *savants* of every land. In an article in the *Atlantic* for September of that year, Alfred North Whitehead sounded a similar keynote, amounting to a challenge to Harvard University, or what he took Harvard to represent. The initiative of learning and progress, he maintained, had moved to the New World. The primary foci of civilization, he said, are along "the long line of American shores." In a conclusion bright with hope, he urged: "Today Harvard is the greatest of cultural institutions," with an opportunity "analogous to that of Greece after Marathon, to that of Rome in the reign of Augustus, to that of Christian institutions amid the decay of civilization." He continued:

> It will be evident that in this summary presentation of the cultural problem the word "Harvard" is to be taken partly in its precise designation of a particular institution and partly as a symbolic reference to the university system throughout the Eastern states of this country. . . . Of these institutions some are larger, some are smaller, . . . some are older and some are younger. But each of them has the age of the group, as moulded by this cultural impulse. The fate of the intellectual civilization of the world is today in the hands of this group—for such time as it can effectively retain the sceptre. And today there is no rival. The Ægean coastline had its chance and made use of it; France, England, Germany, had their chance and made use of it. Today the Eastern American states have their chance. What use will they make of it?

Speaking at Harvard's tercentenary celebration, Etienne Gilson held European scientists and philosophers responsible for the loss of political and social freedom in several of the countries on the Continent. These men, he said, who should have been leaders, failed in their duty:

> Instead of seeking and adhering to universal truths, or the closest approaches to them of which they were capable, and presenting these with a positive emphasis, they would adhere to a variegated array of personal theories and opinions and individual findings from which they would fail to filter out the universal truths they contained.

A few years later, in 1939, Robert Lynd published his impressive challenge to social science, *Knowledge for What?* Here, again, from another stance, was the cry for the practical use of existing knowledge about man. Less Olympian, however, than philosophers like Whitehead and Gilson, Lynd came to grips with cultural and institutional obstacles to the application of science to human problems. His last chapter consists of a series of "Outrageous Hypotheses," of which the one concerned with education makes clear the realism of his analysis:

> *The hypothesis:* If major changes are required in order to cope with present problems in our culture, it is.impossible to rely primarily on popular education to effect such changes.
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> This amounts to saying that one cannot get an operation performed by setting out to teach the masses about appendicitis. The same point applies to teaching ethics and citizenship, and organizing businessmen in clubs devoted to "service," while the institutional strait jacket is left essentially unaltered. While all possible improvements in education and personnel must be pushed for all they are worth, the basic responsibility remains squarely upon the shoulders of social science to discover where fundamental changes in the cultural structures are needed and to blueprint the ways of achieving them. Only when an intricate culture like ours is better structured to support, rather than to obstruct or merely to tolerate, humanly important lines of behavior, can we justifiably expect secondary agencies like education to carry on effectively.

> Our culture is at present proud of its basic hospitality to education. Our definition of education, however, is confused by our undiscriminating adherence to tradition and to democratic slogans. Public education in our schools is largely confined to a traditionally circumscribed area of rather formal knowledge touching only part of the total experience of living. In a helter-skelter democratic spirit, we leave the way open to all manner of agencies, commercial and otherwise, to instil whatever habits they find convenient. If our culture is to be controlled more effectively to democratic ends this *mélange* of educations must be recaptured and redirected. No important area of public ignorance can be left to freedom of exploitation. Again, in answer to the query, "But who is wise enough to do this?" the answer is that, if social science, working with humanities and the arts, does not attempt it, then education will occur at the hands of other less adequate agencies. This simply asserts that intelligence is a better director of education than the *de facto* pressure-groups of a casual culture.
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> Just as social science must be prepared to tell democracy what functions may and may not wisely—that is, in the public interest—be left to various types of democratic action, and under which types of leadership, so it must discover where learning may be left to individual initiative, where and to what extent it should be mandatory in public school education and what types of learning need to be the subject of constant public propaganda, utilizing the best techniques through all possible channels of information. We need to know what kinds of attitudes and overt behavior may be expected to change at what rates in a given cultural environment under what types of education and propaganda. Also what biassed controls—business, religious, and other—need to be removed from education, so that it may flow freely into any infected area in the culture.

Whatever we think of Dr. Lynd's proposals and of his confidence in the competence of social science, he certainly makes clear the apparent character of the problem that will confront *any* seriously conceived program of reform or regeneration. What is that problem? It is to make the locus of wisdom the same as the locus of power. Do we know how to do this? Not at all. And we don't have the faintest idea of how to begin.

Yet we keep trying. We have a letter from a thoughtful reader who addresses himself to the question of how human beings can hope to practice freedom and self-determination despite the uncontrolled energies so lately released upon the world by the progress of science and technology. This reader sets the problem in the terms of a recent MANAS article ("The Daring and Perilous Project," Feb. 10):

> How can man exercise the power, which you say he has, of self-determination in the face of such a terrific threat sprung on him by a force (nuclear energy) he never heard of before? (Scientists themselves have no definition other than the dictionary one for energy.) Especially, how can a democracy expect to function successfully—a democracy in which each individual citizen is supposed to make an *intelligent* judgment about policies? Worse yet, it is only a few years ago that our President acquired a scientist on his staff—a "scientific adviser" to teach him at least the names of some of these forces that were creating problems for his "solution."
>
> Such conditions almost argue for the advantage of a dictatorship or an oligarchy. Or maybe a theocracy—if only God knows the answer.
>
> But let's go back to your idea that man (or his "soul") has some control over his future ("self-determination"). How can he exercise this to avoid the perils that right now threaten him from half a dozen directions?
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> In this country we are quite proud of what we call the progress of our industry. What is responsible for its recent upsurge? Largely research and experiment and along with it planning for the future. Ideas are systematically generated. Put a few expert specialists (of various appropriate experiences and knowledge) together in one room. Ideas will begin to hatch; some good, some finally profitable (by further judicious planning).
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> Why is the American public so afraid of governmental planning, national planning, or even world planning, when before it is the example of its use by all business and industry that succeeds?
>
> What I am proposing is not only planning for today but for what is going to happen 10, 20, or 50 years hence. We are now appalled by the problems we should have foreseen 30 or 40 years ago. But we ain't seen nuthin' yet. We must not suppose that science has now done its worst. Experiments are being made or theories dreamed, today, that will cause our children and grandchildren anxious days

and nights. There is no way of stopping science (nor do we want to), but we can adapt its discoveries for the good of society instead of the evil, if we start studying them in time.

I propose a permanent council (preferably world-wide) of *savants* of all descriptions, including all Nobel prize winners and many others besides, both men and women: Poets, artists literateurs, philosophers, businessmen and labor leaders, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, psychiatrists, biologists, physicists, chemists, to name a few. The three latter classes should not exceed 50 per cent of the membership.

Such a council would not only be a tremendous help in solving today's problems, but further it would look ahead to those of tomorrow. Its members would be in touch with the *beginnings* of developments that will be of utmost importance to the society of 10 or 50 years hence. It would further have the duty of keeping the public early and continuously advised of what was coming. Thus democracies could function with knowledge instead of the guesses of uninformed voters and officials.

The communication of its deliberations to the public and government I would not leave only to the usual channels. For example, as a requisite to the voting privilege there might be required attendance several nights a month in discussion groups organized world-wide under the council's guidance.

An informed electorate is an absolute necessity for an enduring successful democracy today. When our Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution, science was still in its infancy, as was industry. Ninety per cent of the people were small farmers. Our political system will fail unless we adjust to them.

We take the foregoing to mean that the proposed Council of *Savants* would have something like semi-official status. It is not the governing body, yet its findings are regarded as crucial to an informed electorate. In short, the Council's deliveries would have authoritative standing before the public. Contradiction of the Council could lead to social ostracism, loss of one's job, perhaps, and if one failed to attend the sessions described, loss of the vote.

To anticipate what to expect at the hands of technological progress, the Council would function something like a modern Oracle of Delphi, except that its predictions would be scientific instead of sibylline. The other portion of the Council, representative of the arts, literature, and the humanities generally, would have, we suppose, humanistic responsibilities, although these are not defined. Since there is by no means an accord, today, between the advocates of humanistic studies—as represented, say, by Robert M. Hutchins—and a wide range of scientific opinion, the Council would of necessity reflect a wholesome clash of opinion in its deliberations, the fruit of which, one hopes, would reach the public in undiluted, unhomogenized form. To find this rich dissent and lack of a consensus among leading scholars and technicians would contribute a "creative" unrest and loss of confidence in all conventional authority. This would of course be good.

Were Dr. Einstein still among us, he would no doubt be given a place of high honor in the Council. And his judgment, offered in the light of the "progress" of which our correspondent speaks, that it would have been better by far if he had become a pedlar instead of a theoretical physicist, would gain a full measure of the publicity it deserves. Then, as of similar value, such affairs as the Teller-Pauling debate would be given total exposure. The architects of our foreign policy, watching eagerly from Washington, would welcome such controversy as injecting a proper element of uncertainty in all their deliberations, and the people, moreover, profiting from such deep questioning, would happily support the ambivalence of their statesmen in hours of severe trial.

Commercial publishers, impressed by the glorious example of *savants* and politicians, and needled into public responsibility by an intellectually regenerated FBI, would begin printing impartial analyses of the issues before the Council. In time, we should achieve an approximation of that ideal state of affairs which Plato anticipated in the fourth book of the *Republic* (we borrow from Cornford's summary):

> The original aim in constructing an ideal state was to find in it justice exemplified on a larger scale than in the individual. Assuming that four cardinal qualities make up the whole of virtue, Plato now asks wherein consist the wisdom, courage, temperance,

> and justice of the state or, in other words, of the individuals composing the state in their public character as citizens.
>
> Wisdom in the conduct of state affairs will be the practical prudence or good counsel of the deliberative body. Only the Philosophic Rulers will possess the necessary insight into what is good for the community as a whole. They will have "right belief" grounded on immediate knowledge of the meaning of goodness in all its forms. The Auxiliaries will have only a right belief accepted on the authorities of the Rulers. Their functions will be executive, not deliberative. . . . The virtue described in this chapter is what Plato calls "civic" or "popular" virtue. Except in the Rulers, it is not directly based on that ultimate knowledge of good and evil which is wisdom, to be attained only at the end of the higher education of the philosopher.

Among those who have followed the discussion thus far may be those who harbor a few doubts. It might be feared, for example, that political pressures would attend the selection of the *savants* to serve on the Council. There might be persons vulgar enough to insist upon an inspection of the opinions of the candidates. Robert Oppenheimer, for example, might not make it. Dr. Libby might be preferred to physicists more anxious about fall-out and its lethal effects. Economists who are beginning to believe in a guaranteed income for all might be regarded as having the wrong views for membership in such a body. So, from such considerations as these, one might argue that the Council would reflect traces of prejudice, after all the cultural filters had been applied to the qualifications for membership.

But such objections ought not to be taken as reasons for abandoning the idea. There remains the possibility that, should these criticisms have decisive weight, it would still be good to have a council of *savants*, even though it could have no official status. An unofficial body would be entirely free to go against the grain of the times and to maintain a running fire of criticism of the policies and tendencies of the Establishment. It could have no government subsidies, of course, but this, should the council occasionally gain the respect of the people, might give a peculiar value to the judgments of individual members who were thus known to be serving without expectation of public honor or regard. When good men prefer to be unofficial, the question of what is goodness becomes properly sharpened and the dialogue about policy takes on extraordinary life.

And then, if *this* argument were to be developed, you might finally reach a conclusion radically different from that established by Plato—the one which says kings must become philosophers, or philosophers kings. For you might say, at the end, that instead of seeking to make the locus of power identical with the locus of wisdom, the two must be kept absolutely separate. You might say that it becomes impossible to recognize, and therefore to trust, the wisdom that has merged with power.

So there you are, back in the market place with Socrates, wearing your old suit, and in about the same fix as he was, with the possible addition of a mimeograph machine.

But how will you know who the *savants* are? Suppose they turn out to lack the necessary diplomas, or even need a shave?

Just possibly, in order to have a free society, it will be necessary in the future to refuse absolutely to let authority or power give any kind of sanction to wisdom. This would be a far tougher situation than the one Plato was willing to set up in his *Republic*. But you could justify it by saying that Plato didn't have to cope with the control of nuclear weapons.

Or, you could point out that Plato's Guardians had been developed into really extraordinary men. That is, they submitted to conditions of training that very few men, today, whether scholars or scientists, would be willing to endure, and they gave up all claim to personal property. Such men, perhaps, could be trusted to link power with wisdom. But since we don't have such men, and have little chance of getting them from a resuscitated Platonic Academy or Pythagorean School, we'll have to settle for random production of our *savants*, somewhere "out there," and openly acknowledge that we still have the unsolved problem of recognizing them, save by some happy accident in consequence of which we have become wise ourselves.

REVIEW
"TO BE A GOD"

A PHILOSOPHICALLY ruminative article of this title appeared in *Commentary* for July, 1963, and has just come to hand. The writer, Allen Wheelis, is a psychoanalyst whose book, *The Quest for Identity*, as well as his more recent work, has been of special interest to readers who follow the discussions of "third force" psychology. Dr. Wheelis feels that the more extended the experience of the psychoanalyst or psychologist, and the more intense his search for truths concerning the "inner self," the less content can he be to study the mind according to the assumptions of physical science. Dr. Wheelis writes:

> I used to be fluent at this game, facile in reducing a man to psychodynamics; now am silent, can't bring myself to mouth the clichés. Yet it was just this arrogance of psychoanalysis that drew me to it in the first place. For, acting with the conviction of freedom and choice, I would see, later, that I had been driven, and so came in time to the sense of being lived by unknown forces. Psychoanalysis promises insight into this darkness, and, through insight, control. Determinism thus ministers to the quest for certainty; it asserts regularity, denies any fundamental chance or chaos. For the lost security of God in the heavens it substitutes an immutable orderliness, not only in heaven but also on earth, in the mind of man. . . .

In the *Saturday Review* for Dec. 5, 1964, Joseph Wood Krutch indicates the revaluations early twentieth-century science has had to face, just as Dr. Wheelis and other psychologists are having to revalue the systems of thought by which they had hoped to dissect the human "soul." From Mr. Krutch:

> If science began in the Renaissance when men began to put more trust in logical and metaphysical arguments, modern science demands that we reverse the process. In the first place, our senses are of little use because the facts that we are pursuing lead us into the realms of the small, smaller, and yet smaller where first our unaided eye cannot follow then where our optical microscopes cannot take us, and at last into the realm which even the electron microscope cannot wholly penetrate. At best we have only to deduce or infer what we can never expect to see or hear or feel. What is even worse, we are now used to being told that the realist, but invisible world which we cannot reach with our senses, is also not capable of being reconstructed in our minds—even that ultimate reality is not only not understood but quite possibly not understandable. The paradoxes of the metaphysicians, like that involving fate and free will, are no less unsolvable than is, say, that of the wave and the corpuscle. Yet it is to that dilemma which the enterprise of common sense ultimately conducted us.

Important passages from Wheelis' "To Be a God" apply to the essential issues previously isolated by more academic debates on the question of "determinism" versus free will. Dr. Wheelis writes:

> Determinism, declaring no exception, rests solidly on an exception. The idea of freedom is inalienable; if we deny it to ourselves we ascribe it to gods.
>
> So, then, where locate it? There may indeed be a level of observation from which the life of man may be seen as determined; lack of evidence cannot prove its non-existence. Likewise there may, beyond that, be an even higher level of observation from which events at the intermediate level would be predictable. One such, or two . . . or many. Or none. Here knowledge ends in choice: our lives are determined and there is a God; or our lives are free and man is God. This is metaphysics, there is no evidence here; both positions are logical, neither is subject to falsification.
>
> Where lies my heart? Either way I may be wrong; so which error, I must ask, would I rather risk—to be an arrogant puppet who thinks he's god, or a humble god who thinks he's puppet? For me the answer is clear, better try for too much than too little; I elect to believe our future is unwritten, that we create it as we will.
>
> But freedom is not fortuity, does not war with continuity, means only that we may make out of past and present something new, something which is not a mechanical unfolding and cannot have been foretold, that no law limits how far we may go, how wide, how deep. We are gods because we create.

And finally:

> By assuming ourselves to be cogs in a mechanical universe, our lives the ticks of the great

> clock, we encourage ourselves—subtly, unwittingly—to act as we have always acted, to believe as we have always believed. Implicitly we encourage our patients to disparage will, to assume that nothing can be done until insight is complete. We postulate an indwelling essence that determines our lives, regard it as natural law; then come to feel (senselessly, for natural law is that which cannot be disobeyed) that we must act in accord with this essence, as if a break with the past were a breach of decorum. . . .

All this is an expression of the major theme in Erich Fromm's "Man Is Not a Thing." Discussing the limitations of contemporary psychoanalysis, Dr. Fromm shows, as Viktor Frankl has also said, that the "dream of half a century has been dreamt out," that the therapist can no longer in honesty think that he can "fix up" the inner man in a manner similar to the successful ministrations of a surgeon. Another way of putting this would be to say that therapy does not take place until the individual—whom we temporarily call the "patient"—is himself ready for active commitment, which means commitment not to a school of thought or a doctrine, nor even to an improved form of conduct, but to self-initiated transformation of the self.

The history of determinism is a long one, and always, as Dr. Wheelis shows, a history of paradox. Religious determinism weakens the will of man by placing the source of transforming strength and essential goodness in the personage of God, whose will—and only whose will—can be done. Man is marked by evil, and the omnipotent power above, knowing this, is the only agent capable of altering the components of a predestined capacity for sin. So, all talk of "free will" in such a context is nonsense. For the psychological sciences, the paradox of psychological determinism reaches its climactic expression in Freud. Dr. Wheelis writes:

> No one could have been more explicit or passionate than Freud in insisting that every last wisp and shred of psychic occurrence is rigidly determined, that no event of inner life could be other than it is, that nothing of soul escapes the deterministic net, that the fleeting wordless images are in principle reducible to formula and, though infinitely more complex, are no less lawful than the movement of planets, that free will is but a subjective state to be causally explained like any other. Yet it was Freud who found it necessary to say that the object of analysis is "to give the patient's ego *freedom* [his italics] to choose one way or the other." We, as psychoanalysts, expose to a patient why he *has* to be the way he is, then expect him to use this insight to become different from the way we have proved to him he can't help being. We try to climb out of this pit by asserting that causes effecting character change operate not only in childhood but throughout life, that the interpretations of an analyst are one class of such causes, and that these may relieve a neurosis in the same deterministic way that certain other causes produced the neurosis in the first place.

So, in embracing any form of determinism, man defeats himself in search of a spurious certainty. As Dr. Wheelis says:

> We want it too easy, want a routine of creation, a paved road into the unknown, but darkness is our workshop, here creation begins . . . and still time to try.

COMMENTARY
THE NEEDS OF THE POLIS

THE puzzling thing about the letter quoted in this week's lead article is that the writer seems to assume that the recognized authorities of our society have a clear understanding of the good of human beings, and that the knowledge we need has only to be researched, formulated and explained to the people in order for it to be put into practice. There is also the implication that the kind of teamwork in invention practiced by technological specialists will work in the solution of social and human problems.

We find no ground in historical experience for these assumptions. In the first place, truly wise human beings seem unable to combine their wisdom with political authority. Great religious teachers avoided power like the plague. Sages who on occasion gave advice to kings always reserved the right to walk away. Lao-tse, for example, was one who did. People who take the king's shilling and wear the badges of office almost never turn out to be really wise.

Gandhi, to take a modern illustration, avoided any connection with the Indian State, after it was formed, and before that maintained complete moral freedom despite his association with the Congress Party. There is excellent material on this question in an essay by Joan Bondurant, concerned with the "unconventional leadership" of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave (published in *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, edited by Richard Parks, 1959). Vinoba has lately made a big point of the fact that the crucial services to the human community are those which *must* be performed by people without any official or governmental status.

Americans, on the whole, cherish the illusion that *their* state is really different—that the compromises of politics and the devitalizing filters of bureaucratic mediocrity do not affect the ideal behavior of their corporate being. After all, we made the pattern of modern democracy, and of course we can do what nobody else has been able to do! We were *meant* to succeed in everything! Yet we have purchased our most recent successes at the cost of massive indifference to the qualities in human beings which make democracy possible, while pointing to the achievements of technology to show that we are really better than ever. The ends of technology, considered by themselves, as Jacques Ellul points out, are conceived and arrived at in total blindness to authentic human good. This is hardly a process to duplicate in relation to the needs of the *polis.* We already know what the technologists have done, are doing, and what they would do, given a little more authority.

For treatment and prognosis, we prefer Marc Chagall. You cannot say that he has no program. "Changes in the social order," he observes,"as in Art, are perhaps more trustworthy if they come from our souls as well as from our intelligence." Of course, what comes from the soul cannot be made "official." Only the shadows cast by what comes from the soul can be codified and given legal or objective form. So men say that art and poetry, or even philosophy, while "nice," are not a means to get things done. The point is that when people are busy with art and poetry and philosophy, you can't *use* them to get done things that ought not to be done. The practical men never think of this. When they do, they will for almost the first time in history compel artists, poets, and philosophers to take them seriously.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

MORE CREATIVITY IN AN UNPREPARED ATMOSPHERE

AT the top of our stairs is a closet without a door. It runs into a bedroom and from that side is used for another person's clothing. Above the whole business is a long shelf. We have never gotten around to finishing either side with doors, above or below.

Three persons use the two adjoining closets for their clothing and I throw any clean, unused, cardboard boxes up on the shelf (to use at a later time when I collect enough used clothing to fill the boxes and send off to Mississippi).

Being about five feet long and three feet wide, the shelf collects a lot of dust. Our cat loves rummaging around in the boxes; then from the shelf she walks over a 2" by 4" support above the door into another closet (without a door) and leaps down upon our bed. Until last week she was the only one in the family interested in the possibilities of the shelf.

The children were home from school recently on a midwinter vacation. Our oldest worked all week; the two smaller ones were home and in the house for the most part. Brandon, our youngest, from time to time has felt dispossessed of a room—going from his sister's, moving into his older brother's, putting half his things back into his sister's room and generally messing up two rooms instead of one. No matter how things were arranged, we simply couldn't make three rooms out of two and the situation never solved itself.

One day as I sat at my typewriter I heard what I thought was the cat in the boxes. On looking up I saw the boxes were much too orderly for cat's play. My first reaction was uggggg—all that dust flying around up there, and whoever it is, GET DOWN! On second thought I shrugged my shoulders and said what does it matter? Our youngest called down and asked how I liked his fort? I commented it was pretty dusty. After about an hour of being behind boxes and rearranging the shelf, Brandon asked if he could sleep there all night. The shelf was kind of hard, but he said he could put some covers on it.

Needless to say we both became involved for the next couple of hours. First we had to take all the boxes down, dust and wash off the shelf. Finally we moved his mattress off the top bunk onto the shelf. All this took considerable heaving, shoving, tugging. Then I went back to my typing.

Next Brandon involved his father in his need of a ladder to get up into his new bed. Lowell told him to measure the area between two wall studs, to get the saw and hammer and make the ladder himself. Lowell would look in later and see how he did. Once the ladder was finished, Brandon made countless trips up and down with needed objects.

At noon I came upstairs to find him trying to remove a large hook from the middle of our ceiling. What the hook was doing in such a strange place none of us could remember. I asked, "What do you need the hook for?" Dumb question. . . . I should have waited. At this point, looking at the distance from floor to ceiling of a pitched roof, I decided I had better get the hook down. A little annoyed, I took off my shoes, climbed on the bed and stretched up to unscrew the hook. I then went down and fixed lunch. When I came upstairs again the hook was near Brandon's new bed and a cord was running over it down to the floor, attached to a small basket filled with two jars of raisins and apricots. With a little effort he could lie in bed, pull the cord, and the fruit would come up to him.

By afternoon I asked Lowell would he mind if we moved his clothes out of the bottom of the closet and let Brandon have that room for his office. Lowell came up and made a new rod for his clothes on the other side of the room. Serena moved her clothes in with mine and the whole space under the shelf was free.

By late afternoon every particle of Brandon's belongings was moved into the "office." A hinged door he had previously made was screwed to the side of a random shelf we had lying around and it worked just as well to keep us out, as before. On a slip of paper taped to the door was a sign which said *Secretary*. With some more measuring and a little

help from Lowell, he built a desk inside the closet and in the meantime Mother was doing the less creative work of shoveling dirt, unused toys, bits of rocks, dried paper wasps' nests and assorted summer treasures into a trash box to clean up a bit. We call such moves REVOLUTIONS. . . . Such a mess in doing, but a lot better once it is done.

The results of this family upheaval: all three kids' rooms are rather neat for a change. They are delighted to have their own areas to mess up. Brandon says his room is like a cabin on a boat. Serena says his room is too small, but she manages to spend a good deal of time up on his bed, squinched in with Brandon eating raisins.

I remember a couple of times in my childhood when I captured a closet. I wasn't able to sleep in it or build anything extra, as we always lived in rented houses. But I managed to arrange my belongings to please myself.

All this gets me to thinking. We really are much too rigid in our secure, immobile, housing arrangements. A few nights ago as I lay in bed leafing through a *New Yorker* magazine (which a neighbor gives us each week), my eyes lit on an advertisement of furniture for a child's room. (Rather, I should say, an adult's room for a child.) This room was built with small furniture, pleasing colors, attractive arrangement, and soooooo neat. But what does a child do in such a room? Everything is done already. Piles of toys, which are soon rejected as boring, will lie here and there until Mother picks them up. It is the tranquilized sanitary childhood of the middle-class child. Barbi dolls, all dressed, fit into such an atmosphere. The child is already an adult waiting in a crystalized cocoon for adult size to reach him. He can go into suburban life, ranch houses, standardized everything with comparative ease. All is well unless this kind of child (small adult) is confronted with creative thinking or doing. If that happens, he is liable to run in terror. Boredom to him is much safer.

Our whole system no longer educates for open minds. The system is creating closed, bored minds that will object to nothing since they have not a grain of interest in it all.

The education of a child is still a very personal process within a family. If you're interested in the child's freedom, then probably the child will be able to make a free choice. Some of the free schools like Summerhill take over the job that most of us still have to do, if our children are to think and move freely in a semi-closed society.

At the beginning of this recent school vacation both our younger children discussed writing a letter to President Johnson. The nine-year-old said he was going to say that the president was a stinker because in his inaugural address he had said he was for peace and now he was doing the opposite. Our ten-year-old daughter got busy and came up with a letter which began:

> Dear President Johnson
> I am very conserd that is your fault of Viet Nam and Mississippi. In a book called "Let there be a world" Dwight D. Eisenhower said we pay for a single fighter plane with half a million bushels of wheat. . . . . . Is there no other way this world can live? That is what I am asking myself. . . .

When her older brother came home that night she read the letter to him. His comment was, "She's being influenced by her parents." We all laughed, and she sent the letter off after she borrowed a stamp. The truth of the matter was that this letter, unless written by the parent himself, couldn't happen unless the child was free to find fault and was free to express herself as well as the parent. We simply let her express herself as she pleased. We didn't tidy up the room.

VIRGINIA NAEVE

Jamaica, Vermont

FRONTIERS

Why Are We so Anxious?

[This discussion of art and the present by Marc Chagall first appeared in *Bridges of Human Understanding*, a volume edited by John Nef which records the fruit of a conference sponsored by the Center for Human Understanding of the University of Chicago. Chagall came to the United States to participate in this conference, which was held in Washington in April, 1963. Copies of this volume can be obtained from the Center for Human Understanding, 2726 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.—Editors.]

DURING the hundreds and thousands of years that have preceded us it was much easier morally for a man to live. He had a moral foundation of one kind or another, very deeply embedded, fitting exactly into his conception of life. We see this engraved with great clarity in the works of distant areas.

Yet with the passing of the years, increasingly, those older conceptions have revealed their impotence to animate human beings and fill their inner lives, to give them the strength they need, not only for creative work but simply to live.

In speaking of this I am not overcome by sadness for I am not a pessimist. There are no powers capable of dragooning me to lose my faith in the human person, because I believe in the grandeur of all nature. I also know that human will and human conduct are often the result of cosmic forces set in motion by this same nature and by the march of history and the pace of destiny.

Yet, in spite of this faith, how can we prevent ourselves from asking and repeating the question, *Why have we become so anxious in recent times?*

The more audaciously man has freed himself from his so-called chains, the more he feels alone, lost in the multitude, the prisoner of his destiny.

But, as is always true of me, I want to draw closer to Art. I want to speak to you of that.

With the coming of impressionism, a window opened for us. A rainbow began to glow on the horizon. Yet while the world appeared in different and more intense colors, it seems to me that, in general, it became narrower than, for example, the naturalistic world of Courbet, just as the naturalism of Courbet had become, in its turn, narrower than the world of romanticism introduced with Delacroix—and, again, just as the world of Delacroix had been more declamatory and confined than the neoclassical world of David- and of Ingres. At this point I shall stop. . . .

After impressionism came the world of cubism which introduced us into the geometrical tunnels of reality, just as later, abstractionism led into the world of atoms and of matter.

So we have the pitch and the dimensions of a continually contracting scene. In such a sequence as this, one has the impression that as one moves forward the scope of art progressively shrinks. Where are we headed?

Let us try to discover what is authentic in our lives.

The world belongs to us from the moment we are born, and we have the impression of being armed from the beginning.

For about two thousand years we have been nourished by a reserve of energy which has sustained us and given content to life. But during the past hundred years this reserve has broken up and its elements have begun to disintegrate.

God, perspective, color, the Bible, form, lines, traditions, the so-called humanisms, love, caring, the family, the school, education, the prophets, and Christ Himself have fallen to pieces.

Perhaps I too at times have been beset by doubts. I painted pictures upside down. I cut off heads and hacked my subjects to bits, left floating in the air in my pictures. I did this on behalf of a different perspective, of a different kind of composition, of a different formula.

And little by little our world seems to be a smaller world on which we small ones swarm, clinging to the smallest elements in our nature, until we submerge ourselves in the tiny pieces of nature, even in the atom.

Doesn't this so-called scientific gift of nature, by emptying the soul, limit the source of poetry? Doesn't it deprive man of even the physical opportunities for calm and quiet? And doesn't all this deprive his system of any sense of moral direction connected with his life and his creative work?

In the course of recent years, I have often spoken of the so-called chemistry of authentic color, and of matter, as providing the measure of authenticity. An especially sharp eye can recognize that an authentic color, like authentic matter, inevitably contains all possible techniques. It has also a moral and a philosophical content.

If there is a moral crisis, it is a crisis of color, of matter, of blood and its parts, of words and sounds, and all the rest of the elements with which one constructs a work of art as well as a life. For even if a canvas is covered with mountains of color, whether or not it is possible to distinguish an object—even if there are lots of words and sounds—these do not necessarily make the work authentic.

To my mind, Cimabue's combination of color and matter in itself marked a turning point in the art of the Byzantine period. Just as somewhat later Giotto's color was no less authentic—and I would emphasize this word in relation to the chemistry of which I have spoken—because that marked another artistic and moral turning point, as is true of Masaccio and some others. . . .

I should repeat that it is not a new conception of the world, it is nothing literary or symbolic that brings about this change. It is blood itself, a certain chemical process in nature, in things, and even in human awareness. This new *authenticity* is seen in all sides of life.

What gives birth to this so-called chemical change? How is she reared? How does she live? I ask these questions because she is the source of art, of a true view of the world and of life itself.

She is born and lives and is sustained by love and by a genuine simplicity, like nature itself; she cannot endure wickedness, nor hatred, nor indifference.

If we are moved to the depths of our souls by the Bible, for example, this is because above all, even chemically, it is the greatest work of art in the world, containing the highest ideal concerning life on earth. May another authentic chemistry of genius appear, and may humanity follow her as a new conception of the world and a fresh gleam of life.

I make no pretense that these few words of mine can reveal the other, the most diversified values which our history contains. But I do believe that those persons are mistaken who think this chemistry can be found in scientific laboratories or in factories, or that she can be taught in the studios or by theories of art.

No, she is inside us; in our hands, in our soul. She is innate, though also influenced by education.

In order to deal in something more than generalities, to be concrete, I want now to tell you what it is I am doing. I think I shall continue the biblical series I have begun, destined henceforth for a building which is neither a chapel nor a museum, but a place where all who are seeking this new, spiritual, plastic content of which I have spoken can find a home.

I feel that there are among us persons who are seeking this. Some are perhaps here today, and tomorrow there may be others. . . .

While I pretend to no philosophical calling, I cannot fail to feel what today is strangling art and culture and sometimes life itself.

In fact, in this epoch, which is marked by a continual weakening in the intensity of religious belief—into the causes for which I do not care to

enter—we cannot fail to see how, during the same period, the art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appears as a feeble reflection of scientific discoveries. Whereas, up to and including the epoch of the Renaissance, art reflected the religious spirit, or at least illustrated the intense religious feeling of the times. I cannot refrain from saying that so-called scientific art, or the art of pleasure-seeking, like that of cooking, is not a vital value. It can, little by little, fade away.

They say that a good man may be a bad artist. But he isn't and will never be an artist who is not a great and therefore a "good" man.

I know that in our times certain people discredit nature. After Cézanne, Monet, Gauguin, there seems to be no genius to reflect it.

It is a kind of convention now to avoid nature as much as possible. This convention evokes in me the impression I receive from those persons who never want to look you in the eyes; they frighten me and I avert my eyes from them.

There are certain revolutionary people who wish, by means of science, to introduce order into the economic and social life of our world. But, as time passes, all theories that have a scientific character come into partial collision with other theories.

Changes in the social order, as in Art, are perhaps more trustworthy if they come from our soul as well as from our intelligence. If men would read more deeply the words of the prophets, they could find in them some keys to life.

Are there not revolutionary methods other than those in the shadow of which we have been living?

Is there not a foundation for Art other than that offered by the decorative art which exists only to please, or by the art of experience, and by that pitiless art whose purpose is to shock us?

It is childish to repeat the truth, which has been known so long. In all its aspects the world can be saved only by love. Without love, it will die little by little.

If the theoretical and scientific sources of art and of life of which I have spoken could be subordinated to love, their results might become valid and more just. In connection with Art I have often spoken of the color which is Love.

In our atomic era we seem to be approaching certain frontiers. What are they? We shrink back on the edge of the precipice of universal destruction. It has taken me a long life to recognize the role of evil, and to understand how much easier it is to scale Mont Blanc than to transform the human being.

I delight in thinking of the youth in whom our hopes for an echo are focussed, and also in thinking that among you who listen and you who read what we say there may be those who share our anxiety and concern.

And I like to dream that this call will be more than the cry of a voice in the desert.

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