

## WHERE HE STANDS

TOWARD the end of the introduction to their anthology, *The Nature of Man* (Macmillan paperback, 1968, \$2.95), Erich Fromm and Ramon Xirau say:

Summing up: we are only capable of knowing, understanding, and caring for the other if we are also capable of understanding, caring, and knowing ourselves. But awareness does not mean renouncing our own privacy or abolishing the privacy of our fellow men. Love is knowledge, but precisely because it is knowledge, it is also respect. The opacity of the other will become transparent within the limits of possibility if and only if we become transparent to ourselves.

This seems a remarkable distillation from a collection of philosophical extracts (seventy-two in all) which begins with the Upanishads and ends with David Riesman. Something good ought to be said about a period in which so apt a statement of the human situation can be found in the framing generalizations of an anthology, where penetration is usually blurred by the obligation to summarize what a lot of men have thought. Is there some inner logic of human development which brings climactic awareness at times of extreme confusion and trouble? Do ordeals of history precipitate insight into ultimate questions?

What, then, are the nature and boundaries of the knowledge which is also love and respect? It cannot be, at any rate, the "ours to command" sort of knowledge. Perhaps it is the knowledge which combines *being* with knowing—or, from what is now a somewhat dated point of view, we could say that it is knowledge whose objectivity is contaminated with subjective awareness. Obviously, our conception of knowledge is undergoing a curious transformation—its subtlest flowering seems to require the compromise of its most distinctive means.

Finally, the editors say:

The reader is presented with the views of many different thinkers on the nature of man. He may read these different views and be satisfied by knowing who has said what. This would be an unfortunate result of an anthology. All the texts quoted here should have only one function: that of stimulating the reader to make himself sensitive to the problem of the nature of man, to give him food for thought. The reader's aim should be to know: what do *I* think?

Well, these are brave words, and the warning against an "unfortunate result" necessary. Yet in reading this collection—even in reading it carefully—one has somewhat the feeling of a man who has been led to the doorway of an enormous public library, informed of the total number of volumes awaiting his attention (many more than he could read in several lifetimes), and is then grandly invited to inform himself of the meaning and purpose of life.

While the anthology is only one book, and its selections excellent, there is a sense in which the reader's guide has done little more than hang an albatross around his neck. What is required of him is quite impossible. For even if he is or becomes an intelligent reader, he soon realizes that extracts are ciphers, as may also be, more largely, the entire body of the work of a man of another age. To understand this man, the reader must attempt to *become* him—to touch both his limits and his longings, to get behind the masks of the symbols he uses and to feel life as he felt it. Was there, back there in the dark core of his being, a substratum of truth, or is there less and less nourishment, the deeper you go? Perhaps it will eventually seem that simply "knowing who has said what" is not so slight an achievement, after all. In this book, the experienced anthology-monger will probably skip around. Such collections are supposed to afford the reader the best of the best, and the seventy-two thinkers represented make various approaches to the

problem of self-knowledge. But if, after some two thousand years of investigation, the question of the nature of man is as unsettled as ever, then either the books are useless or the answer is not what we expect it to be. So one is entitled to skip around. Discovery, in this department, seems to have a random character.

Yet even if all these people didn't know, but were only looking, their reports may still have value. Often you feel that they think they have reached a certainty, but can't find words for it. It is also the case that a man can live a worthy life, entertain great thoughts, and at the same time have been seriously wrong about a number of things. What happens, one wonders, to the worth of that life? In what sort of "economy," if any, is its value preserved? Is posterity the only savings account for the earnings of our common striving?

A few of the treatises quoted in the anthology, especially the early ones, seem to have been composed in Heaven—that is, as though there were no obstacles except in the readers to explaining just how things are. There are some decisions to make about such sources. If the authors of these works, say the Upanishads, only *thought* they knew, then their extraordinary assurance indicates that they were more confused than we are, and that would be a very serious condition. But they also give evidence of subtle perceptions and a vision that self-deluded people are hardly capable of, so that the theory that they were confused seems a bit silly. On the other hand, the idea that ancient philosophers or spiritual teachers really knew the nature of man presents the problem of having to explain why the knowledge in which we have learned to place confidence seems so different from theirs. This leads directly, of course, to our present uncertainty about what knowledge is. We have all this power over nature, which they lacked or neglected, and it is difficult to believe that they didn't want this kind of knowledge, supposing they knew how it might be obtained. So we tend to let such questions go, even though, at the same

time, the rediscovery of the importance of self-knowledge is leading us to read books like the Upanishads and the sermons of the Buddha with increasing respect.

There is another central problem. If you are going to talk about the human situation, you need to set the stage; that is, you have to describe man's circumstances in order to state his problem. Some kind of "objectivity" is involved here. Man, for example, as the editors say in their Introduction, lives in the physical world and has physical obstacles to overcome like heat and cold, etc. Then there is the world of social or political forces, and he must cope with these, too. So we declare that he has all these skills—tool-making, constitution-making, hypothesis-making—to equip him for life at the several levels of his environment, and that he copes. Criticism then becomes an evaluation of all this coping.

But where you stand in examining these levels may be a crucial consideration. If, for example, you propose that a man—a human being—is fulfilling a destiny, performing a mission, and that the various levels are only incidental to what he has come to do in the world, then the skills in "coping" are relegated to a subordinate scale. The meaning of life gets defined in terms of a unifying, transcendent end; and since the meaning, the mission, is given, all the problems are defined differently.

We are not talking about a man who considers the possibility that he *may* have a mission, as an objective investigator would regard an hypothesis someone else has proposed, but about the sort of man to whom it never occurs to *doubt* that he has a mission to fulfill. The fact is that there have been some men like that—quite a few—and that they have left a deep impress upon human history. Only by deliberately raising the consideration of such men does it become evident that the meaning of being human, as *they* see, remains obscure to other men who feel no corresponding unity of purpose. It follows that certain extraordinary figures of past history have

been understood only vaguely, in some mythic or dreamlike fashion. But we know that the symmetry of the lives of such men and the heroism of their behavior have had an inspiring effect on others.

Yet the dominant influence of thought, today, is of a very different character. For example, we speak a great deal about the importance of knowing "the way things are." We don't want any misrepresentation of the facts of life. If things are terrible, we want to face it, to list the evils properly. And in respect to the human condition, that of man and his circumstances, we demand a similar candor. But if, in getting out all the "objective facts," we do no more than describe the status quo with reference to various levels of "coping," we may wholly overlook the normative values of life conceived as a *mission*. We may ignore the possibility that we are deep in an "ugly duckling" situation. Since it is in failures in coping, or injustices suffered in attempts at coping, that we experience extreme pain, our accounts of the way things are may lack the Promethean vision. In short, the *values* of these accounts will tend to be values entirely based upon the goals of various projects of coping. They may turn out, in the end, to have been only humanitarian disguises for sophisticated hedonism on a collective scale.

Coping, for the man with a sense of mission, may encompass only means which have suffered enormous moral exaggeration from long centuries of blindness to ends. *He* may see, in the inequities practiced by powerful individuals and groups, symptoms of something more terrible than the misuse of power—neglect and denial of the human mission. He may look with bifocal sight at a status quo which we are willing to define only as *we* feel its shortcomings, and see both limitations and possibilities undreamed of by our habitual definitions.

Emerson is a good example of a man with a sense of mission. Others could be added, but Emerson is in this anthology and his contribution,

from "The Conduct of Life," seems especially pertinent:

Thus we trace fate, in matter, mind, and morals—in race, in retardations of strata, and in thought and character as well. It is everywhere bound or limitation. But Fate has its lord limitation its limits; is different seen from above and from below; from within and from without. For, though Fate is immense, so is power, which is the other fact in the dual world, immense. If Fate follows and limits power, power attends and antagonizes Fate. We must respect Fate as natural history but there is more than natural history. For who and what is this criticism that pries into the matter? Man is not order of nature, sack and sack, belly and members, link in a chain, nor any ignominious baggage, but a stupendous antagonism, a dragging together of the poles of the Universe.

Such, for Emerson, is the nature of man. Well, Emerson lived a hundred years ago. Perhaps he had no idea how overpowering Fate could become, nor how impotent man. Yet his proposition holds, Fate is nonetheless different when seen from above. The difficulty, for us, is to agree upon how the world or the status quo might look when seen "from above." Some measure of the difficulty is given by asking how Prometheus might have converted his brother, Epimetheus, to the Promethean point of view.

The matters here involved are not "objective" at all, yet they do not seem hopelessly obscure to the people of Emerson's persuasion. He has not exactly Upanishadic certainty, but something akin to it. For at times Emerson could not suppress in himself the need to read off to anyone who would listen the true facts about the transcendental laws of nature! Who ordained him into this high priesthood? How can we be sure he knew all that? We can't. Yet if a man such as Emerson had somehow learned to love and respect Nature better than most of his fellows, who is to say he did not gain some knowledge not yet known to them?

If more contemporary testimony is wanted, anyone with four or five hours' listening-time might ask Buckminster Fuller what he means by

saying that man is the anti-entropic force in the Universe. Apparently, he means exactly what Emerson meant in declaring that Man is a "stupendous antagonism" to Fate.

All through the pages of the anthology on the nature of man, one's reading may be disturbed by the fading of the objective focus and the sharpening of the subjective focus of the writer: we sense his sudden rising to some existential elevation where he looks down on fate instead of up. What are the clues to such occasions? Well, the writer somehow makes it known. As Emerson says:

He is a strong man who can hold down his opinion. A man cannot utter two or three sentences, without disclosing to intelligent ears precisely where he stands in life and thought, namely whether in the kingdom of the sense and the understanding, or, in that of ideas and imagination, in the realm of intuitions and duty. People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character.

For his conclusion, Emerson chooses a quotation from the prophet, Mohammed: "There are two things which I abhor, the learned in his infidelities, and the fool in his devotions." This is obviously a text for our times. For a hundred years or so the learned have preached the leveling gospel of "objectivity," of the democracy of sense, that statistics are the only avenue to social truth, while at the same time denouncing moral insight as prejudice, metaphysics as a chimera, and calling philosophy the plaything of irresponsibles. So, today, it is natural that the fools in their devotions are the most successful of the pied pipers in the seduction of the young. The loss of one's children is a hard way to learn philosophy, since it is a lesson which comes too late.

Another contribution to the anthology, one of undeniable power, is by Jean Paul Sartre. Whatever can be said critically about Sartre—and there is much, apparently, that might be said—he joins issues in a way that makes the existential vacuum self-evident. He may be guilty of wrong choices, but he will not evade decision. In this extract he tells about a student who came to him

during the war. The youth was faced with deciding whether he should leave France and join the Free French forces in England, or stay with his mother—a woman whose husband had been suspected of collaboration with the Nazis, whose other son had been killed in 1940, and who had no interest in life save her remaining son. What was the young man's duty? His duty to his mother was simple, but limited to the welfare of one person; his duty to France was a larger calling, but of dubious effect. Sartre discusses:

Who could help him choose? Christian doctrine? No. Christian doctrine says, "Be charitable, love your neighbor, take the more rugged path, etc., etc." But which is the more rugged path? Whom should he love as a brother? The fighting man or his mother? Which does the greater good, the vague act of fighting in a group, or the concrete one of helping a particular human being to go on living? Who can decide *a priori*? Nobody. No book of ethics can tell him. The Kantian ethics says "Never treat a person as a means, but as an end." Very well, if I stay with my mother, I'll treat her as an end, not a means; but by virtue of this very fact I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting as means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and, by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means.

If values are vague. and if they are always too broad for the concrete and specific case that we are considering, the only thing left for us to trust is our instincts. That's what this young man tried to do; and when I saw him, he said, "In the end, feeling is what counts. I ought to choose whichever pushes me in one direction. If I feel that I love my mother enough to sacrifice everything else for her—my desire for vengeance, for action, for adventure—then I'll stay with her. If, on the contrary, I feel that my love for my mother isn't enough, I'll leave."

Sartre now asks:

But how is the value of a feeling determined? What gives his feeling for his mother value? Precisely the fact that he remained with her. I may say that I like so-and-so well enough to sacrifice a certain amount of money for him, but I may say so only if I've done it. I may say "I love my mother well enough to remain with her" if I have remained with her. The only way to determine the value of this affection is, precisely to perform an act which

confirms and defines it. But, since I require this affection to justify my act, I find myself caught in a vicious circle.

From this illustration Sartre develops his claim that act produces essence—realized value results from act:

Actually, things will be as man will have decided they are to be. Does that mean I should abandon myself to quietism? No. First, I should involve myself; then, act on the old saw, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." . . . Quietism is the attitude of people who say, "Let others do what I can't do." The doctrine I am presenting is the very opposite of quietism, since it declares, "There is no reality except in action." Moreover, it goes further, since it adds, "Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life."

But why not say, then, that the essence of man is mission seeking fulfillment? This does not really interfere with Sartre's insistence on a dynamic conception of man, instead of regarding him as some sort of static "substance," which seems to be what Sartre is objecting to, as too easily becoming a justification for resting on unearned and therefore nonexistent laurels. When Sartre declares, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself," he but repeats what Pico, in a Platonic context, urged nearly five hundred years ago in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. And to say that "Man is nothing else than his plan" is a compelling invitation to metaphysics, since for everyone—excepting only those rare souls who see their plan clearly by reason of initial existential elevation—there remains the problem of choosing the plan. Here Sartre is completely agnostic, for historical—one could also say empirical—reasons of which we are all aware. Yet one of the functions of the existential vacuum seems to be to exhaust the validity of merely historical reasons for a hardened skepticism. When the illusions and lies against which skepticism defended us are themselves in a state of collapse, what, then, can we *do* with our tough-minded denial? It begins to devour itself.

Shall we then call Sartre to account for his omissions, for his alienating negation? This seems unhistorical and aimless, so far as he is concerned. Sartre has never pretended to be a classical teacher of other men. It would be better to see Sartre as Rollo May sees him—one of "the shock troops of the humanist movement." Shock troops are men who pay a price in loss of symmetry for their limited historical role. One can appreciate and learn from them without adopting their desperation or imitating their polemical extremes.

## *REVIEW*

### THE LONG, SLOW YEARS

PEARL BUCK'S novels about China are richly informing about the daily life of the people, and despite the far-reaching political changes of recent times, an underlying continuity in human attitudes is bound to survive. *Kinfolk*, first published by John Day in 1949 (with a pocket book edition now available), is the story of the sons and daughters of an aristocratic Chinese scholar who has gained eminence in the West as a university professor and lecturer on Confucian philosophy. A man of refinement but also much petty self-indulgence, he justifies his failure to return to China by saying that the domestic disorders in that war-torn land would make it impossible for him to pursue the contemplative life of a Confucian sage. On the whole, Dr. Liang is a pathetic figure, perhaps intended by Mrs. Buck to typify the weaknesses of traditional Chinese culture.

Liang's son, James, trained as a surgeon in American medical schools, goes to China filled with longing to put his talents in the services of the Chinese people. The other children, a younger brother and two sisters, now grown, join him a year or two later, and the story develops around the mixed reactions of these young people to James's ideal of working for the improvement of the common people. James and the older of the two girls, Mary, who is a teacher, visit the ancestral village of the Liang family and decide to settle there, he to open a clinic, she a school. Little by little they learn how to adjust to custom, overcome prejudice, and win cooperation. The younger daughter, Louise, made miserable by the differences between life in China and what she has been used to, escapes by marrying an American and going home with him. James's younger brother, Peter, is enrolled as a college student in Peking at the time of a family conference about their objectives, in which Dr. Chen, a young friend of James who has allied himself with the Liangs, also participates. Discussion focuses on what they will do in the village:

"I shall begin by teaching a few of our own Liang children how to read," Mary said. "Then others will join us. And I shan't ask Uncle Tao."

"I think I shall not begin on our own family," James said thoughtfully. "And I will ask Uncle Tao."

Chen laughed. "We will see how far each of you goes," he said.

Peter had been listening and now he suddenly broke forth as though he could not contain what was in his thought. "You are all foolish—as if it matters what you do in one little village to a handful of people among so many millions!"

His angry young voice stilled them in the midst of their pleasure in the coming spring and in each other.

"What do you suggest?" Mary asked. She put the bitter question in English for Peter had cried out in that tongue.

"It's all rotten," Peter cried. "Nothing will be any use except a clean sweep from top to bottom." He got up and walked about the room and sat down again but this time out of the sunshine and beside the table.

"Go on," James said, "tell us what you think. None of us know."

"I don't know what to think," Peter said. "I have been trying to find out. The dirt—the disease—the stupidity!" He stared at them all in a sort of rage. "I shall never forgive Pa as long as I live—letting us believe that everything was wonderful, hiding it all under a Confucian mist! No wonder he doesn't come back!"

"I suppose you wish you hadn't come back," Mary flung at him.

But Peter would not accept this. "I don't wish that. I am glad I came back. If this is the way things are in my country I'd rather know it."

"Still you wish they weren't," Mary argued.

"Of course I wish they weren't!" Peter reared his head like a young stallion and glared at them. "I wish the president of my college weren't a pussy-footing old fool! I wish he didn't love tea parties and flattering sycophantic professors—and women! I wish we had a decent government! I wish we needn't be afraid of secret police sneaking everywhere like rats in sewers! I wish I didn't have to see my college mates jailed—tortured—killed! I wish we even had the guts to rebel—and stand together—which we haven't—because we're all rotten through and through—"His voice broke, tears rushed to his eyes, and he turned away his head.

James had listened, his eyes steadily on his young brother's flushed face. Now he spoke. "We all wish that some things were different. It is like coming home from college and discovering that your parents can't read and write. But they are still your parents. We have to take our people as they are and change them as we can."

"They won't change," Peter muttered.

"I suppose we have to prove to them that change would be better," James said reasonably.

"How can you prove anything to a lot of village dolts?" Peter demanded.

"What else can you do?" Mary demanded in return.

Peter gave her a strange dark look. "There are other ways," he said.

The Americans, one might conclude from this, have been the darlings of history. *Their* revolution presented no such frustrating problems. Small American communities in colonial days were host to a great deal of resourceful innovation. While the past affected the colonists as it does all men, they were also eagerly breaking with some aspects of the old world; indeed, many of them had come to America with this in mind. And as for the sweeping changes of the sort Peter demanded—well, the Sons of Liberty in colonial America were mainly interested in being left alone by the mother country. The changes were already made, or going on, and only outside political authority was trying to prevent their realization. Conceivably, a very misleading optimism concerning what can be accomplished by armed uprising has been spread by a failure to understand the much deeper roots of the American Revolution.

Something along these lines seems implicit in the comment of the young Chinese doctor, after Peter had left the room:

"The innocents!" he murmured. "We must pity them. But they are terrible in their innocence—and dangerous."

"What do you mean?" Mary asked.

"Peter is American," Chen said. "He has been brought up innocent. He believes that anything can be done and done quickly. You do it by force, either of money or arms. What can the innocent understand

of the long slow years, the thousands of years? What can they know of the incorruptible people?"

A subordinate theme in *Kinfolk* is the contrast between the learned Dr. Liang and his uncomplicated, peasant-like wife, who turns out in the end to have far more sense and even practical wisdom, whatever Liang's high-sounding Confucian posturings. Such comparisons of character raise the question of the entire meaning of education, just as Peter's outburst and Chen's response raise the question of the entire meaning of "progress." It can be said, of course, in defense of James's plan to work in "one little village" for the benefit of "a handful of people among so many millions," that it was bound to do some good, and could not harm. But what is to be said in reply to the angry assertion that "Nothing will be of any use except a clean sweep from top to bottom"?

Usually, nothing. Advocates of "total revolution" imagine it possible to give formal structure to desperation and believe they can convert hopelessness and frustration into a growth-process by means of authoritarian organization. They will hear of no other "solution." The bitter truth is that some historical situations seem to close out the possibility of rational change, giving the catastrophists a clear field. Yet those who, like Chen, grasp intuitively that humane civilizations are the fruit of "the long slow years" can never be counted among the makers of total revolutions. And Viktor Frankl is our instructor in the fact that determined search for meaning in individual human life may be undertaken only under the compulsion of seemingly hopeless social situations.

In such dark days, the search for a reality which transcends the fatalisms of history is sometimes renewed. Intellectuals who regard their own moral impatience as a sufficient antidote for any cultural weakness often denounce this hungering as a "failure of nerve," but it is also a kind of questioning to which fortunate historical epochs give little provocation. And it may actually be the case that ideas of an enduring individuality are the only remedy, in the long run, for the crimes potential in all collectivist claims.

## *COMMENTARY*

### WHAT REALLY WORKS

MOHOLY-NAGY (see *Frontiers*), as Mrs. Moholy-Nagy says in her biography of him (Harper, 1950), was "a total teacher." His entire life was animated by an irrepressible sense of mission. (We hope soon to have for review the new MIT edition of this life of Moholy-Nagy.)

One cannot help but contrast the fertile educational environment generated by such men with the suffocating atmosphere of the colleges known to the writers of this week's "children" article. Why this enormous difference? The rarity of people like Moholy-Nagy is part of the explanation, but a basically stultifying system is also involved. Actually, if there is any one reason for the weakness and petty tyrannies of conventional education today, it almost certainly lies in habitually reductive and mechanistic opinions of the nature of man. Moholy-Nagy had an opposite view: he cherished "a profound, deeply serious faith in the perfectibility of each human being."

Whatever the tough-minded responses to this conviction, its consequences for education are momentous. The influence of schools like the Bauhaus and the Chicago School of Design can be described as a process of *seeding* a mediocre and declining culture with multiple forces of independence, vision, and individual action. Yet we have no *working* theories about this process—indeed, our educational practices seem to work in a reverse direction.

What are these practices? They often appear to be an incompatible mix of degraded conceptions of scientific method, in terms of which students are objectified into normal distribution curves, the resulting scheme being fired like a triumphant salvo at *everybody* of school or college age, in proud fulfillment of the Utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number.

The Utilitarian goal wouldn't be so bad, except that it gets defined according to the oversimplified "moral psychology" of the Enlightenment—pleasure is good, pain is bad—and this is especially true in the United States, where material pleasure has been fairly easy to obtain, and where the activity of getting it is the practically sacred dynamic of the free enterprise system.

Well, all this has been said before. If there is anything at all to the claim that Americans respect what "really works," a study of the educational activities of men like Moholy-Nagy should be undertaken at once.



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### EDUCATION AND THE IRRELEVANCE OF BEING HUMAN

#### II

A TEACHER'S intellect is embedded in a career. The career integrates other aspects of the teacher's personality with his intellect. The student is not in the same position. He has no guild, may not intend to join one. If, following his teacher's expectations, he preoccupies himself with intellect, he finds a disappointing emptiness. Whole reaches of himself are left untouched. Rewarded by his intellect, the teacher cannot understand the student's disappointment. He attributes it to orneriness, stupidity, or sloth. He responds by tightening up the intellectual expectations and bearing down with grades. This improves the teacher's credit rating, it makes him more believable professionally, but it also widens the gap between teacher and student. Swamped with hormones, confused by a multiplicity of new experience, the student feels himself reduced to a structured vacuity. To make things worse, this treatment comes from those who profess to know how the world works.

It is a well established principle that a human being tends to become what other human beings, of importance to him, expect him to become. The disturbing thing is that students often accept the professional view of themselves, even to the point of acquiring a slave mentality. They feel uncomfortable unless overworked. If you try to lighten the chores in order to give them time to think, your course is branded Mickey Mouse or something equally contemptuous. "With each passing year," writes Freedman in *The College Experience*, "students in the colleges seem more like Israelites groaning under the Egyptian's lash—humorless, leisureless, guilt-ridden drudges."

A student may quickly learn that to satisfy a teacher is to alienate his fellow students sitting at

his side in class. The classroom becomes a battleground of values. Both teachers and students recognize this and have ways of carrying on the fight. One of the recognized student accommodations is the performance, otherwise known as conning the professor. With the help of his fellows, a docile student learns each teacher's tastes and works to satisfy them all. His life is ruled by a kaleidoscopic catechism of drudgery. He speaks up in class, he writes papers, but he does these things with such intense awayness that he cannot make use of even accidental insights that occur. Still gripped by the expectations of parents, friends, and social class, a student may feel compelled to get good grades. At the same time he sees little point to what he is asked to do to get those grades. A variety of forces are at work to institutionalize the performance. What is indirectly taught the student in this way is far more consequential than the subject matter of the performance. He learns to value extrinsic rewards and perfunctory undertakings; he learns to ignore his own vitality in favor of the clamorous demands of others; he learns nuances of anxiety; he learns to hate himself for failing, and to hate others for succeeding in his place; he learns to be mediocre, shallow, split down the center; like one of those strange creatures that extrudes its stomach when it eats, he learns to extrude his whole being and live in shadowy realms outside himself.

Students have trouble seeing how their college career connects with experience before and after college. School is an interlude in gang life, games, experience, and genuine learning. In high school, the continuity of family life may remain unbroken. The residential college takes away the family and the gang without putting anything in its place. In loco parentis is no substitute. It would be different if the student could see why his courses are intrinsically important as well as productive of a degree. To make a thing intrinsically important is to make it a part of your experience. The few students who anticipate careers as scientists or scholars may find the way laid down for them, but the rest are left to

struggle with a split between experience and discourse which matriculation builds into their lives. When students respond by forming cliques—preps, hippies, grinds, frets, jocks—far from congratulating them for their ingenuity in coping with a problem which we helped create, we cluck about the asocial behavior which may result from those groups.

A representative of a business firm was visiting a college to interview prospective candidates for jobs. A student asked, "Does it make a difference to you what I majored in?" The employment man said, in effect, that the subjects which a student studies are irrelevant. Only graduation counts. Graduation proves that one is able to survive in an authoritarian society while under pressure to do things whose meaning is not clear. A man with qualifications like that can go far in business.

Statements of college aims anticipate changes of fundamental scope. The student is to emerge from his four years a broader, more mature human being, with an appreciation of man's struggle to understand himself and his place in the world, and an ability to reason about contemporary issues in the light of this new grasp of history. When you look at what is done to realize these aims, you discover a touching faith that men can be talked into breadth, talked into history, talked into being men. If we could assume that students come to us with their commitments made, or come to us to be made over into professionals, this emphasis would make sense. Neither of these assumptions is true for the liberal arts college in the U. S. today. Most students do come expecting important things to happen. The dropout is the guy who has discovered that important things are more likely to happen outside of than inside the college walls. It is the dropout, leaving us behind, who often remains true to the high, humane ambitions we extol, and it is we, loaded down with routine and with rhetoric, who each day fail the students and ourselves anew.

Freedman has this to say:

Much unrest and conflict on college campuses may be explained as the attempt by students to bend educational procedures to their own requirements and to influence faculty members and administrators for new personal and social ends. These goals are fourfold: (1) the restoration of viable communities in colleges and universities and in society at large (2) the introduction of unity into the intellect and the personality; (3) the establishment of the ethic of social service as a powerful motive in modern life; (4) the freeing of the impulse life of man—the release of what Henry Murray calls "the erotic imagination."

Rebelliousness and demands for more autonomy are by no means all that is involved in student movements. Students also desire more affiliation with the faculty. They are demanding of administrators, and particularly of teachers, that they join with them to establish that "community of scholars" one hears so much about and so seldom sees.

Culture has such broad shoulders that to blame culture spoils the fun. Yet some aspects of culture lie so deep and are so determinative that they must be discussed.

The classic function of educational institutions is to serve society. They are established by society for society's perpetuation; accordingly, they are designed to scissor personalities to fit the social system. As we in the U.S. center our houses on a public thoroughfare rather than on a private patio, so we turn our education outward toward "objective" things, toward public selves. Picture-window education assumes that the private self is irrelevant, that each person should give no more attention to himself than is required for discovering the truth which lies outside of him. In this way, we hope to abolish all the problems which uniqueness, privacy, aloneness breed.

T. S. Eliot says somewhere that human beings cannot bear very much reality. He might have added that a symptom of this may be preoccupation with technique. Techniques which begin as devices for coping with the complexity of reality may end by abolishing that complexity. This is exemplified by science. While it is legitimate to say, "I am not interested in questions

to which my scientific techniques are not applicable," this point of view imperceptibly merges with another which says, "Questions to which my scientific techniques are not applicable are not worth asking." Any expert may use his technique for abolishing complexity. This tendency to use techniques as ends rather than as means besets us all. It acts as a kind of gravitation present in all human institutions. We teachers must find ways of resisting this universal pull downward into stupidity.

Rationalizations are plentiful. Rule-boundness is thought of as precision, techniques are construed as tools, intellect is passed off as reason. A good beginning student who has not been socialized to this world may have the uncomfortable feeling that he is being asked to think straight about curved lines and to draw hard-edged pictures of fuzzy situations. Once he learns to play this game, he loses his ability to detect the difference between straight and curved, sharp and fuzzy.

The family and the school traditionally socialize for life outside of them, for life in the larger society. If there is little sense of a larger way of life, of common U.S. goals into which transcendence may take place, transcendence ceases. Children in a family are taught to get along in that family; what's done next door may seem quite strange. Institutional narcissism also besets the schools and adds to the problems raised by picture-window education and technicism. Freshman are made over into docile members of the college. They are taken into the college. Taken into also means taken in by. By the time they are sophomores, their prefabricated roles take precedence over their education, most of the intrinsic meaning seeps out of what they do, and they become bored and cynically disposed to believe what upperclassmen have told them all along: college lets you down.

Cultures are make-believe. Successful cultures make the make-believe come true; they are mass, self-fulfilling prophecies. One of our

make-believes is that if you work hard today, tomorrow you will have your reward. The fruit of life is never here, in the present, but out there, in the future, and it has to be won by sweat, drive, ingenuity. Children are led to feel that school will bring some great reward. They enter school. They feel unchanged. That's disquieting. In time, they too become seniors, yet do not feel around themselves the aura they saw around their predecessors. So it goes. From grammar school to junior high, from junior high to high school, from high school to college, each time the dream is renewed. Each time vague disappointment follows. College promises the most. At least, students leave their nagging parents. Professors now walk into classrooms with the worlds of science, art, and the humanities at their backs. Nevertheless, the story ends in a familiar way. The college, which might wake the student from his dream, drives him deeper into it and transforms it into a nightmare. It may be, as Jules Henry says, that every culture has to have its nightmare. It is more difficult to believe that nightmares are essential for the educated man.

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## *FRONTIERS* The New Bauhaus

IN these days of burgeoning experiments in education, there should be value in recalling the best of earlier adventures. Germany in 1919 was a defeated and impoverished nation—hardly a place where one would expect to find new departures in education. Yet that was the year in which Walter Gropius opened the doors of the Bauhaus, a new art school in Weimar, conceived as a means of achieving organic unity between industry and design. Gropius said in his announcement:

Art is not a "profession." There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, moments beyond the control of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art.

Attracted by such ideas, and by the graphics of Lyonel Feininger, many students applied. One of these said later:

Bauhaus students came from all classes. They made a vivid appearance, some still in uniform, some barefoot or in sandals, some with the long beards of artists or ascetics.

Of the difficulties of the time, this correspondent remarked: "To this day I wonder what most Bauhaus members lived on. But the happiness of those years made us forget our poverty."

*Bauhaus*, edited by Ise Gropius and Herbert Bayer (Branford, Boston, 1959), recaptures the spirit of the Bauhaus better than any other volume, and is a means of discovering the enormous importance of the modern design movement for both art and education, to say nothing of its effect on industry. Many volumes would be needed to give full credit to the influence exercised by the Bauhaus, far beyond the years of its brief existence (it was closed by the Nazis in 1933). For example, the idea of ever widening applications of design lies behind the present-day association of art and ecology, in

various recent publications, and in the founding of a new school in Los Angeles, The California Institute of the Arts (sponsored by Chouinard's), which will begin its educational program in Valencia, California, in 1970.

An important step for the spread of the Bauhaus idea was taken by the Hungarian-born artist, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, one of the principal teachers at the Bauhaus, when he came to Chicago late in the 1930's. Something has been said about the students attracted by Bauhaus ideals, but more important was the quality of the teachers. Of what Moholy-Nagy gave to the Bauhaus, Gropius wrote:

We might well call the scope of his contribution "Leonardian," so versatile and colorful has it been. He was successful at once as a thinker and an inventor, as a writer and as a teacher. . . . Constantly developing new ideas, he managed to keep himself in a state of unbiased curiosity from which a fresh point of view could originate. With a shrewd sense of observation he investigated everything that came his way, taking nothing for granted but using his acute sense for the organic.

Moholy-Nagy died in 1946, but his last nine years, spent in Chicago, were a peak of educational achievement, even though filled with frustration. In an article in the *Los Angeles Times Calendar* (Aug. 10), his widow, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, describes the highlights of those years. Here, surely, are essentials of successful innovation and reform in education:

Moholy loved America and had boundless faith in its future because as a lifelong fugitive from political oppression he had been given a chance here to be all of himself—an artist, a teacher, a highly sociable man. . . . His school, first called the New Bauhaus and later the School of Design, was part of the great Utopian dream which every European born before World War II harbors about America. Here everything was to be man to man, free and equal, without conventions. In Moholy this dream was sustained by an optimism that would have verged on naïveté if it had not been generated by a profound, deeply serious faith in the perfectibility of each human being and in the certainty of his own guiding gifts. Nothing—absolutely nothing—was permitted

to come between him and those who were willing to be taught.

Disappointments, however, came thick and fast:

Moholy's American dream went to pieces when the Association of Arts and Industry failed a year after the New Bauhaus had opened.

"As long as I have one student I will teach," he said, and founded the School of Design in an abandoned bakery on East Ontario Street with \$2,500 and the support of his closest faculty: Gyorgy Kepes, George Fred Keck, Robert Jay Wolff, Andy Schiltz and three professors from Robert Hutchins' "Unity of Science" group: Charles Morris, Carl Eckart and Ralph Gerard. They all agreed to work for a full year without any salary, and they did: The decisive support, the financial cement that had to go into the foundation, was still missing.

How many great schools began in this way?

We repainted the abandoned commissariat, tried to exterminate the cockroaches as touchingly tame as pets, and sewed some 80 yards of black darkroom curtains for the former baking ovens. The school was ready to open in February 1939. Moholy had to hock his wristwatch with the headwaiter of the Swedish restaurant to which he had invited us the night before the opening in order to pay for our Smorgasbord dinner.

We got some 80 or 90 day and night-time students who have to this day retained contact and conceptual loyalty to Moholy's ideas in such fields as architecture, product design photography, film and teaching.

But other shocks were in store. The war came and both students and teachers were called up. Raw materials needed for instruction in the shops could not be obtained, and finally a great friend and supporter, Walter Paepcke, president of the Container Corporation of America, sadly told Moholy-Nagy that the School must close because of "the war effort." That night Moholy-Nagy sat up until 4 a.m. composing a wartime program for the School and the next day delivered to Paepcke elaborate plans for (1) rehabilitation of wounded soldiers through creative work-therapy, (2) a camouflage scheme for the waterfront installations on Lake Michigan, and (3) the outline of an

experimental laboratory for inventing new ways to make products for which the usual raw materials were claimed by the war. Some of the latter proved quite practical—bedsprings fabricated of plywood, for example, which were a financial success! So the School was kept going, mainly by the sheer determination and will to teach of Moholy-Nagy.

Yet there were other defeats, aimed more at the heart of the enterprise, which are too depressing in character to relate here, and irrelevant for the reason that this man's inspiration lives on in other men. These final years, as his widow says, were also the time when Moholy-Nagy wrote his most important book, *Vision in Motion*, a text on education, and completed his most beautiful plexiglas sculptures.