VOLUME XIX, NO. 49
DECEMBER 7, 1966

THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

[That the President of the Republic of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, is also a scholar and thinker of great eminence—author of a two-volume study of Indian philosophy, and for years Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University—recalls the somewhat similar distinction of several of the Founding Fathers of the American Republic. The comprehensive and synthesizing thought of men who take part in the genesis of a new society almost always has an affirmative and inclusive character, helping to raise a plateau on which future civilizations may be built. This quality in the work of Dr. Radhakrishnan is soon evident to the reader. The present essay, reprinted with his approval, is a small portion of an autobiographical writing contributed to *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnar* (Tudor, 1952), one of a series of volumes forming the Library of Living Philosophers, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp. The complete title of this paper is "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," and the much condensed version reproduced here has also appeared in *Philosophy for a Time of Crisis* (Dutton, 1960). Permission to reprint has been granted by the Library of Living Philosophers, holder of the copyright.]

1. *The Function of Philosophy*

THERE are tasks and responsibilities open to an Indian student of philosophic thought, living in this profoundly meaningful period of history. The prominent feature of our time is not so much the wars and the dictatorships which have disfigured it, but the impact of different cultures on one another, their interaction, and the emergence of a new civilisation based on the truths of spirit and the unity of mankind. The tragedies and catastrophes which occupy so much of the foreground of our consciousness are symbolic of the breakdown of the separatist tendencies and the movement towards the integration of national societies in a world whole. In the confusions of the contemporary scene, this fallible, long-suffering and apparently helpless generation should not overlook the great movement towards integration in which it is participating.

Through her connection with Great Britain, India is once again brought into relationship with the Western world. The interpenetration of the two great currents of human effort at such a crisis in the history of the human race is not without meaning for the future. With its profound sense of spiritual reality brooding over the world of our ordinary experience, with its lofty insights and immortal aspirations Indian thought may perhaps wean us moderns from a too exclusive occupation with secular life or with the temporary formulations in which logical thought has too often sought to imprison spiritual aspiration. We do not seem to be mentally or spiritually prepared for the increasing intimacy into which remote peoples are drawn by the force of physical and economic circumstances. The world which has found itself as a single body is feeling for its soul. May we not prepare for the truth of the world's yet unborn soul by a free interchange of ideas and the development of a philosophy which will combine the best of European humanism and Asiatic Religion, a philosophy profounder and more living than either, endowed with greater spiritual and ethical force, which will conquer the hearts of men and compel peoples to acknowledge its sway?[1]

2. *The Decay of Religion*

Since 1500 mankind has been steadily marching towards the formation of a single society. The two wars have led to a shrinkage of space and contraction of the world. The physical unity of the world requires to sustain it a psychological oneness. The barriers of dogmatic religions are sterilising men's efforts to coordinate their forces to shape the future. Each religion is a rival to others. There are some things which are more important than our particularist allegiances: truth and humanity and that universal religious consciousness which is the common possession of

all human beings by virtue of their spiritual endowment. So long as our group loyalties are strong and overriding we cannot belong to the general human society.

Religion, as it has been functioning, is unscientific and unsocial. On account of these features of traditional religion large sections of humanity are the victims of unwilling disbelief. It is an age of incoherence in thought and indecision in action. Our values are blurred, our thought is confused, our aims are wavering, and our future is uncertain. There are bits of knowledge here and there but no visible pattern. W. B. Yeats refers to our condition in memorable words which we may well ponder:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.

If we are to overcome the dangers that threaten us, we must confront them fearlessly and take the measure of their power to injure us. The issue for religion in our day is not in regard to doctrinal differences or ritual disagreements, but it concerns the very existence of religion. The state of coldness or indifference which ignores religion is more deadly than open rejection.

3. The Need for Integration

The mind of the world requires to be pulled together and the present aimless stare of dementia replaced by a collective rational purpose. We need a philosophy, a direction and a hope, if the present state of indecision is not to lead us to despair. Belief may be difficult, but the need for believing is inescapable. We are in search of a spiritual religion, that is universally valid, vital, clearcut, one that has an understanding of the fresh sense of truth and the awakened social passion which are the prominent characteristics of the religious situation today. The severe intellectual honesty and the burning passion for social justice are not to be slighted. They are expressions of spiritual sincerity. Our religion must give us an energy of thought which does not try to use evasions with itself, which dares to be sincere, an energy of will which gives us the strength to say what we believe and do what we say. If the world is today passing through a mood of atheism, it is because a higher religion is in process of emergence.

The opposite of religion is not irreligion but a counterreligion. When the Buddha denied the Vedic gods, he did so in the name of a higher religion. When Socrates was put to death on the charge of atheism, his offense was the repudiation of an imperfect religion. When Christians were brought into the Roman amphitheatre to undergo martyrdom for their convictions, the pagan mob shouted "The atheists to the lions." Atheism has often been the expression of the vitality of religion, its quest for reality in religion. The fact that man is unable or unwilling to acknowledge God means only that he cannot accept the ideas and beliefs about God framed by men, the false gods which obscure the living and ineffable God. Today the world is very sick, for it is passing through a crisis of the birth of a new religion. . . .[2]

4. The Roots of Religion

The tension in human nature is what makes man interesting. Without it he would not become aware of his utter nothingness, his forlornness, his insufficiency, his dependence, his weakness, his emptiness. His anguish and suffering have a dialectical necessity. The roots of religion are in this inner torment which has to be resolved. He must strive after unity with nature, with man, with himself. Only when he is victorious in his struggle does he attain human dignity. We are seekers, pilgrims on the march for the city that is to be, for we have no abiding city on earth. We must reach out beyond the frontiers of our dual, divided consciousness. We cannot remain content within an impermeable solitude of our own anguished desires. We cannot remain for ever in a state of unfulfilment. Even the lowest forms of life strive after adjustment.

The ancestors of man played an important part in this great drama of cosmic evolution, though they did not understand either the play or their part in it. Man has also to play his part, but with a knowledge of the structure and meaning of the play. By his intelligence he must comprehend the cosmic plan and by his will further it. Human progress does not depend on the slow action of physical or biological laws. It can be speeded up by our effort, if we liberate ourselves from bondage, if we escape from the life that is in part and enter into the life which is whole. The prayer of the Upanishads, "Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality," assumes that we live in a world of fear, of care, of abandonment, of death, of nothingness, and we seek a world of being, of fearlessness, of freedom, of spirit, of eternity. We seek to transcend the finitude of human existence and gain life eternal.

Sometimes we are tempted to go back, become unthinking and unreflective, sink into the simplicity of biological existence, submerge in the elemental animal. This would be a deliberate sacrifice of our wholeness, an abandonment of the attempt to achieve integrity. We cannot reverse the process and throw away our heritage. Self-conscious man cannot become the instinctive animal. Even if he refuses to employ his intellectual consciousness he cannot get back the original integration with the environment. Memory and expectancy will interfere. Job seeks his asylum in sleep but does not succeed. "When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me through visions." We cannot shake off our rationality. We cannot get away from the strains of our self-consciousness. The cure for our unrest is not a relapse into the womb of the unconscious, but a rise into creative consciousness. What we aim at is the enlightenment of the sage and not the inexperience of the new-born babe.

We cannot cure the affliction caused by intellect, the loneliness, the insecurity and the anguish by drugs, by the myths of religion or the dogmas of politics. These plans of escape from the prison of our life may help a few for a little time. If we take opium we may find a few moments beautiful and calm in contrast to the jarring world outside; but they will not last. The unscientific dogmas, the crude superstitions tell us more about the mind of man than about the structure of reality, and cannot save man from scepticism.

If the lonely individual clings to something outside of him, he may gain security, but he does so at the expense of his integrity as an individual. We may renounce freedom of inquiry and bind our eyes from further seeking with the bandage of a final creed. We may thus be saved from making decisions or assuming responsibility for the future. But we will be disturbed and dissatisfied at the root, for the emergence of the individual self cannot be stifled. Happiness is in freedom, and freedom is in greatness of spirit.

It is argued that scientific progress will destroy the feeling of loneliness with which we regard the alien world and terminate the inability of men to determine their own destiny.

We may grant that we can anticipate the course of natural phenomena and even to some extent control it. But nature can never be tamed to do man's will. Her blind caprices, her storms and tempests, her cyclones and earthquakes will continue to shatter his work and dash his dreams. Man cannot alter the limits of his life or his body. "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Increasing knowledge of science without a corresponding growth of religious wisdom only increases our fear of death. Our scientific culture is unparalleled in human history. We have dominated the forces of nature, controlled the seas and conquered the air. We have increased production, combated disease, organised commerce, and made man master of his environment; and yet the lord of the earth cannot

live in safety. He has to hide under the earth, wear gas masks. He is haunted by the fears of wars and lives in the company of uncertainties. This war-haunted, machine-driven civilisation cannot be the last word of human striving. Unless we are blind idiots or self-satisfied morons, we will know that scientific organisation is not the fulfilment of the spirit of man.

5. Fellowship, Not Fusion, of Religions

We must move along a path which shall pass beyond all the differences of the historical past and eventually be shared in common by all mankind. Belief in exclusive claims and monopolies of religious truth has been a frequent source of pride, fanaticism and strife. The vehemence with which religions were preached and the savagery with which they were enforced are some of the disgraces of human history. Secularism and paganism point to the rivalries of religions for a proof of the futility of religion. A little less missionary ardour, a little more enlightened scepticism will do good to us all. Our attitude to other religions should be defined in the spirit of that great saying in a play of Sophocles, where Antigone says, "I was not born to share men's hatred, but their love."

The world is seeking not so much a fusion of religions as a fellowship of religions, based on the realisation of the foundational character of man's religious experience. William Blake says: "As all men are alike (though infinitely various), so all Religions, as all similars, have one source." The different religions may retain their individualities, their distinctive doctrines and characteristic pieties, so long as they do not impair the sense of spiritual fellowship. The light of eternity would blind us if it came full in the face. It is broken into colours so that our eyes can make something of it. The different religious traditions clothe the one Reality in various images and their visions could embrace and fertilise each other so as to give mankind a many-sided perfection.

If religion is the awareness of our real nature in God, it makes for a union of all mankind based on communion with the Eternal. It sees in all the same vast universal need it has felt in itself. The different religions take their source in the aspiration of man towards an unseen world, though the forms in which this aspiration is couched are determined by the environment and climate of thought. The unity of religions is to be found in that which is divine or universal in them and not in what is temporary and local. Where there is the spirit of truth there is unity. As in other matters, so in the sphere of religion there is room for diversity and no need for discord. To claim that any one religious tradition bears unique witness to the truth and reveals the presence of the true God is inconsistent with belief in a living God who has spoken to men "by diverse portions and in diverse manners." God is essentially self-communicative and is of ungrudging goodness, as Plato taught. There is no such thing as a faith once for all delivered to the saints. Revelation is divine-human. As God does not reveal His Being to a stone or a tree, but only to men, His revelation is attuned to the state of the human mind. The Creative Spirit is ever ready to reveal Himself to the seeking soul provided the search is genuine and the effort intense. The authority for revelation is not an Infallible book or an Infallible Church but the witness of the inner light. What is needed is not submission to an external authority but inward illumination which, of course, is tested by tradition and logic.

6. Universal Religion

The mandate of religion is that man must make the change in his own nature in order to let the divine in him manifest itself. It speaks of the death of man as we know him with all his worldly desires and the emergence of the new man. This is the teaching not only of the Upanishads and Buddhism but also of the Greek mysteries and Platonism, of the Gospels and the schools of Gnosticism. This is the wisdom to which Plotinus refers, when he says, "This doctrine is not new; it was professed from the most ancient times though without being developed explicitly; we wish only

to be interpreters of the ancient sages, and to show by the evidence of Plato himself that they had the same opinions as ourselves." This is the religion which Augustine mentions in his well-known statement: "That which is called the Christian Religion existed among the Ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christianity." This truth speaks to us in varying dialects across far continents and over centuries of history. Those who overlook this perennial wisdom, the eternal religion behind all religions, this *santana dharma*, this timeless tradition, "wisdom uncreate, the same now that it ever was, and the same to be forevermore," and cling to the outward and quarrel among themselves, are responsible for the civilized chaos in which we live. It is our duty to get back to this central core of religion, this fundamental wisdom which has been obscured and distorted in the course of history by dogmatic and sectarian developments.

At the level of body and mind, physique and temperament, talents and tastes, we are profoundly unlike one another; but at the deepest level of all, that of the spirit which is the true ground of our being, we are like one another. If religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, if it is to serve as the basis for the new world order, it must become more inward and more universal, a flame which cleanses our inward being and so cleanses the world. For such a religion the historical expressions of spiritual truth and the psychological idioms employed by religions to convey the universal truth cease to be rocks of offence. The barriers dividing men will break down and the reunion and integration of all, what the Russians call *sobornost*, an altogetherness in which we walk together creatively and to which we all contribute, a universal church will be established. Then will the cry of St. Joan in Bernard Shaw's epilogue to that play be fulfilled: "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive thy saints?"

Then will come a time when the world will be inhabited by a race of men, with no flaw of flesh or error of mind, freed from the yoke not only of disease and privation but of lying words and of love turned to hate. When human beings grow into completeness, into that invisible world which is the kingdom of heaven, then will they manifest in the outer world the Kingdom which is within them.

While I never felt attracted to travelling for its own sake, I have travelled a great deal and lived in places far from home, in England and France, America and Russia. For some years, I have spent long periods in England and the qualities of the English people such as their love of justice, their hatred of doctrinairism, their sympathy for the underdog, made an impression on me. All Souls College, which has provided a second home for me all these years, has given me an insight into English intellectual life with its caution and stability, confidence and adventure. Whatever one may feel about the character of the Russian Government, the people there are kindly and human and their lives are filled as anywhere else with jokes and jealousies, loves and hates. Though I have not been able to take root in any of these foreign countries, I have met many, high and low, and learned to feel the human in them. There are no fundamental differences among the peoples of the world. They have all the deep human feelings, the craving for justice above all class interests, horror of bloodshed and violence. They are working for a religion which teaches the possibility and the necessity of man's union with himself, with nature, with his fellowmen, and with the Eternal Spirit of which the visible universe is but a manifestation and upholds the emergence of a complete consciousness as the destiny of man. Our historical religions will have to transform themselves into the universal faith or they will fade away. This prospect may appear strange and unwelcome to some, but it has a truth and beauty of its own. It is working in the minds of men and will soon be a realised fact. Human unity depends not on past origins but on future goal and

direction, on what we are becoming and whither we are tending.

The eternal religion, outlined in these pages, is not irrational or unscientific, is not escapist or a-social. Its acceptance will solve many of our desperate problems and will bring peace to men of good will.

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

New Delhi, India

NOTES

1. See S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought (Ox*ford University Press, 1942), p. 259.

2. Cp. *Amiel:* "Men think they can do without religion, they do not know that religion is indestructible, and that the question simply is, which will you have?" (*Amiel's Journal,* A. L. Burt Co.).

REVIEW
SEDGE IS FOR SEDGIANS

THERE are various ways to put together social or humanistic criticism, the most familiar being to take some anti-human pattern of behavior which has been multiplied into objectivity by a mass-coefficient and hold it up in plain sight. Richard Whalen's devastating study of New York, A *City Destroying Itself* (Morrow, 1965), is strikingly effective criticism of this sort. David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* displays profiles of psychological behavior in terms of categories which seem so faithful to common experience that their validity has not been seriously questioned by anyone. Erich Kahler's *The Tower and the Abyss* is psycho-social commentary informed by intuitive and æsthetic perception, exhibiting the horrors of the present in a way that makes the reader feel personally their violations of the human spirit. Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* is clinical sociology pervaded by a high humanist indignation which gives his sometimes abstruse abstractions far more than scholarly impact.

The artist, who is often an agonized critic (see the chapters "Meanings of Modern Art," in Lewis Mumford's *In the Name of Sanity*), has another means of generalizing his reaction to the times. After a ride on a street car he may go back to his studio and draw faces lined with the pain of accepted failure, or infect his abstractions with the raddlings of frustration, the neurotic glintings of unslaked desire; or he may record in some way the vast physiognomy of a betrayal which nobody understands but everyone feels. He may try to paint the fugue-like movement of soundless but never-absent pain, or, instead, with tongue in cheek, celebrate the "merchandise" with which people are expected to fill the emptiness of their lives. Often, since the dimensions of such things are so forbidding, he will attempt to work without a direct, "human" reference, but this, too, is criticism.

Then there are the Utopias and, more lately, the anti-Utopias. The problem, in reading a utopian romance, is to find out what the writer thinks is the secret of getting people to live in the harmony and happiness he portrays. Is he a perfect-environment-maker, a designer of social machinery like H. G. Wells, or a behavioral alchemist like B. F. Skinner? From what nexus of human transformation does he extrapolate to his ideal social arrangements? Or has he ignored this problem of cause? If an anti-utopian, does he rely on the *fait accompli* loss of individuality, as Huxley does in *Brave New World,* and Orwell in *1984,* for harsh dramatic effect? Is he a Plato who combines individual and social psychology in a way that leaves you wondering which he really meant to investigate or wants you to take seriously, protecting himself from charges of dogma by mythic flights? Does he, like Thomas More, salt a distant splendor with quietly subversive notions, hoping some of his readers will catch on? Or is he concerned mainly with satirizing "respected institutions," the method of Samuel Butler in *Erewhon?*

It is always fair to ask whether the writer of a Utopia wants merely to share with you his contempt for what is, or is engaging to offer some serious instruction; or, better yet, is ruminating over a few perceptive wonderings and uncertain longings he cannot turn away. Every utopian vision squares the circle of social disorder somehow or other and it is of some importance to recognize how the author regards the dynamics behind what he has done—is it a trick, or intended for prophetic demonstration? The Utopians must always be asked where, on their stage, in what act, and by what means, they get their "miracle" performed, turning the society into an ideal instead of a shambles of failing intentions.

When you know, or think you know, how the miracle is intended to work, you are entitled to offer some criticism. You may say, for example, that the trick is an entire fraud and that the work is otherwise so prosy as to be without value as a

provocative to the imagination. Or, if the device for social transubstantiation is, so to speak, innocently omitted, because the writer did not realize that he had to account for it with more than idyllic description, then it must be noted that his tale reports only the shadow of social virtue.

There is a longing for wholeness and completion in every artist and writer, and how this longing gets into his work—spontaneously or by design—is always a matter of special importance. Sometimes the artist's very integrity depends upon it—because he is hoping to *persuade* you of some doctrine by the way he seeks to make things seem whole. The argument about "socialist realism" centers on this issue. One needs to know where the *muscle* is supposed to be. Are, for example, the muscles of Dostoievsky's thinking in his fondness for Greek Orthodox Christianity and PanSlav dominion, or are they in the strength of the unresolved dilemma between Alyosha and Ivan? If you think these somewhat sentimental allegiances are the real Dostoievsky, then you may land on him with both feet; but if you regard them as the least important embodiments of his ideas—a kind of "rounding things off," without critical attention—then you may forgive him, as you would anyone, for not being capable of a fully developed utopian vision. It is a matter of self-consciousness and where the real thrust of a man's work lies, and its true intellectual and social consequences. What you think of Hegel, for example, is likely to depend upon vector analysis of the effect of the dialectic—how it both opened and closed subsequent thinking about the good of man, along with other factors of his influence.

This brings us to one of the most delightful of utopian romances we have seen in years—*Sedge* (Praeger, 1963), by Louis J. Halle. We are not going to labor our notice of this book by using the methods proposed above, but will say simply that Mr. Halle's "canons" seem to be quite plainly Platonic and Taoistic. The narrator of the story (Halle) is invited by a political science research foundation to make an "area study" of Sedge by going to this remote and small country and living there for three years. He went as a kind of exchange scholar, since a Sedgian professor named Pluvis had recently come to the United States. One of the aims of Halle's assignment is to find out what he can of why the Sedgians live such long lives—something that could not be learned from Prof. Pluvis. As Halle explains in his Preface, American social scientists had great difficulty in understanding the Sedgian visitor: ". . . the report that the scientists made, after one meeting with the professor, was that his hypotheses were framed in terms of a methodology unrecognized by American social science, so that there was no point in pursuing the investigation." Accordingly, Halle was chosen by the foundation to go to Sedge as an ordinary, "untrained person," who, "however incompetent he might be, would at least not be a Puritan about methodology."

Sedge turned out to be a mountainous country about twice the size of Nepal. Something of both the difficulties and the delights encountered by Mr. Halle during his three-year stay is conveyed by a single linguistic fact: "the word for *bad* and the word for *big* in Sedgian are the same, and . . . the common word for *little* is the same as the word for *good."* One sees that *Sedge* is going to be playful. Yet the action becomes a very potent kind of play:

> A basic principle of Sedgian social and political life, then, is the avoidance of bigness. A city must not be allowed to get big, and neither must a government, or a school or a hospital. Even in music, an instrumental or vocal ensemble must not be big. The pejorative connotation of *bigness* applies chiefly to whatever involves human beings in association with one another, although it is applied elsewhere (for example, to tricycles). I find a real inadequacy in the language, therefore, when one wants to comment, say, on the imposing size of a mountain (bigness being, surely, a virtue in mountains). One has to say that the mountain is "awe-inspiring" or "imposing," or something of the sort.

There are interesting bits of dialogue between Halle and Pluvis:

> In Sedge, according to Pluvis, thinking occupies the place accorded to research in our society. "You," he said, "start with research, and it sometimes leads to thought. We start with thought and it sometimes leads to research."
>
> I denied that our research ever led to thought. Since our discovery that all thought is subjective we had succeeded, I told him, in eliminating it from our scholarship.

Mr. Halle had his troubles when he returned to the United States. How could he explain Sedgian education to the social scientists who sent him on this research project? The Sedgian educational "system" was structureless—it merely worked; the problem was to describe it without being able to specify any "formal requirements and procedures."

> I tried [Mr. Halle relates] to explain the difficulty to the panel of social scientists who worked on me after my return to America, but the only corresponding concept that they could find in their manuals was a reference to an ancient belief that the spirit of institutions was more important than the form. But even this unworkable concept did not suggest that an institution could be morphologically unstructured. After the panel kept me on bread and water for three days I acceded to their demands, reporting such formal requirements and structuring of the Sedgian educational process as I could think up. These may be found in Volume XXIII of the official report.

Because of what finally happened to Mr. Halle after he dared to record his enthusiasm for the Sedgians in a book, there is not much point in further review. An acute social scientist doing research in educational antiquities one day discovered that *Sedge* had been virtually copied out of Rousseau. The evidence was quite damning. In *Emile*, Rousseau says, "Reverse the usual practice and you will almost always do right." Since by methodically following this advice Halle had constructed an almost perfect Utopia, his offense was clear. One way or another, he had to be punished, and the plagiarism charge needed no supplementary counts for a dramatic trial in behalf of cultural integrity. . . . Oh well. At first it seemed like such a *nice* book!

COMMENTARY
"TO RECOVER PRIMORDIAL JOY"

IT is no coincidence that the rejection by Robert Jay Wolff (see Frontiers) of the confinements of "æstheticism" is of a piece with the spirit of the Bauhaus. Mr. Wolff was one of those who helped Moholy-Nagy to establish the American School of Design in Chicago in the 40's.

This is not to suggest that such views are the result of "influence." All the significant rebirths in the world of art seem to be fundamentally efforts to restore the art spirit to its original ground in the spirit of man. Art, Mr. Wolff feels, is not a "specialty," but a way of exploring and heightening the quality of life. Some observations by Walter Gropius concerning the theatre developed at the Bauhaus make an interesting parallel to Mr. Wolff's reflections. In "The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus," first published in 1923, Gropius wrote:

> Theatrical performance, which has a kind of orchestral unity, is closely related to architecture. As in architecture the character of each unit is merged in the higher life of the whole so in the theatre a multitude of artistic problems form a higher unity with a law of its own.
>
> In its origins a theatre grew from a metaphysical longing; consequently it is the realization of an abstract idea. . . . The Bauhaus theatre seeks to recover primordial joy for all the senses, instead of mere aesthetic pleasure. (From *Bauhaus* [Branford, Boston, 1959] edited by Herbert Bayer and Ise and Walter Gropius.)

The first announcement ("proclamation") of the Bauhaus declared in 1919:

> 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. But *proficiency in his craft is essential to every artist.* Therein lies a source of creative imagination.

Of the Bauhaus students, one who applied immediately, after reading this announcement, said in a letter: "Bauhaus members 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. Some came from the youth movements." The year 1919 was a time of great privation for nearly all Germans, and the student added: "To this day I wonder what most Bauhaus members lived on. But the happiness and fullness of those years made us forget our poverty."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A TOTAL TEACHER

IN *Moholy-Nagy—Experiment in Totality,* Sibyl Moholy-Nagy tells the story of her first meeting with the man she was, a few years later, to marry. She was working for Tobis, a motion picture company in Berlin, to which Moholy-Nagy came in the winter of 1931 in the hope of interesting a producer in his experimental films. When she showed that she had heard of him, Moholy-Nagy was surprised and delighted. In the words of this extraordinary book about her husband, published (Harper, 1950) after he died:

> I had known his name for ten years, I told him. In 1921 my conservative father had warned his daughters to stay away from a subversive art show called *Der Sturm,* which was "polluting" the academic tradition of my native Dresden. The grave old man, a great architect and trustee of the Art Academy, had been particularly peeved by Moholy's collages which he called "the cutouts of a child." Of course I had lost no time in seeing the forbidden show, and I had retained a vivid memory, not so much of specific paintings, but of a symphony of floating, merging, speaking elements of form.
>
> The tone in which I told my reminiscences must have been full of the superiority which my generation felt toward the academic backwardness of their elders. To us they were worth only a contemptuous laugh, which I expected to share with this man whose work had been so ignorantly attacked. But Moholy-Nagy reacted differently.
>
> "I could make your father understand a collage," he said. "I'm sure I could. If I had a chance to explain the basic idea to him—the overlying planes, and the relationship of color and texture—"
>
> He crossed his spread fingers in the form of a grill, a gesture which I later came to accept as the most characteristic expression of his drive toward integration. I was touched by his demonstrative zeal, which, at that moment, was focused on my absent and old-fashioned father—as if it mattered whether or not he understood a collage. As I looked into Moholy's eyes, dark blue and startlingly direct, I realized half-consciously that for him everyone mattered. My supercilious mockery was as incomprehensible to him as Levinson's sarcastic reverence had been a few minutes earlier. Until now, I had never met a total teacher.

This is indeed the quality which emerges for Laszlo Moholy-Nagy from the pages of his wife's book. He is endlessly creative, but above all he is a teacher. Walter Gropius, who had founded the Banhaus at Weimar in 1919, saw this in the young Hungarian friend of Kurt Schwitters who had been painting for years, and was now experimenting with photography and motion pictures. Gropius asked him to join the faculty of the Banhaus in 1923, as "master of the advanced foundation course and the Metal Workshop." Years after, speaking 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 as 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.

Paul Citroen said of him:

> Like a strong, eager dog, Moholy burst into the Banhaus circle, ferreting out with unfailing scent the still unsolved, still tradition-bound problems in order to attack them. The most conspicuous difference between him and the older teachers was a lack of the typically German dignity and remoteness prevalent among the older "Masters," as all Banhaus teachers were called. He never asked what was the impression he made, or whether what he had to suggest would affect anyone's ego. He knew neither toga or cothurnus in his relationship to students, and when first he was often mistaken for a student, he was delighted. . . . There never lived anyone more devoted to an objective cause. His high opinion of the Banhaus remained unimpaired, and he devoted himself to it with such fervor that we started to discuss his possible collapse. . . . Many of us used him for our own advantage and burdened him with tasks we ourselves should have solved. But, with the smiling enthusiasm of a child, Moholy accepted all demands, and his vitality seemed unlimited.

In 1928 the forces that were to elevate Hitler to power were already present on the scene, making themselves felt in the cultural atmosphere. These influences reached the Bauhaus in the form of reduced budget and increasing stress on the "practical." In January of that year, Gropius resigned as head, unwilling to have his vision of the school flattened out by technological expediency. A few days later Moholy resigned for the same reasons. His letter of explanation, as Mrs. Moholy-Nagy notes, has in the years since 1928 "lost nothing of its validity for the acute problem of endowed education." In one place he said:

> Basically one can't object if human power wants to measure itself on the object, the trade. This belongs essentially to the Bauhaus program. But one must see the danger of losing equilibrium, and meet it. As soon as creating an object becomes a specialty, and work becomes trade, the process of education loses all vitality. There must be room for teaching the basic ideas which keep human content alert and vital. For this we fought and for this we exhausted ourselves. I can no longer keep up with the stronger and stronger tendency toward specialization in the workshops.
>
> We are now in danger of becoming what we as revolutionaries opposed: a vocational training school which evaluates only the final achievement and overlooks the development of the whole man. For him there remains no time, no money no space, no concession. . . . The school today no longer swims against the current. It tries to fall in line. This is what weakens the power of the unit. Community spirit is replaced by individual competition, and the question arises whether the existence of a creative group is only possible on the basis of opposition to the *status quo.* It remains to be seen how efficient will be the decision to work only for efficient results.

When, years later, Moholy-Nagy was invited to come to Chicago to create a new Bauhaus, he encountered similar difficulties again and again. On one occasion he felt driven to make this comment:

> The success theory of the profit economy pays a high premium to the anti-artist. Artists are considered effeminate who do not have the stamina to participate in economic competition. This is very tragic, since art is the only field where convention does not completely impair sentiment, and where the omnipotence of thought and independence of emotion are kept relatively intact. No society can exist without expressing its ideas, and no culture and no ethics will survive without participation of the artist who cannot be bribed. . . . The silly myth that the genius has to suffer in order to give his best is the sly excuse of a society which does not care for its productive members, except if immediate technological or economic applications with promising profits are in sight.

What was the Bauhaus, for which, along with Gropius and others, Moholy-Nagy will be remembered—as well as for its second and quite unique incarnation in Chicago (the School of Design) in the 40's? Gropius spoke of realizing a modern architecture which would be all-embracing—a "sovereign, federative union" of the arts, including every branch of design, every technique—all coordinated and helped to find their appointed place. It was to unite in one spirit art, craft, and technology. Among the early teachers were Kandinsky, Klee, and Feininger, and the Bauhaus soon gained the articulate support of men like Mondrian, Giedion, Werfel, Einstein, and many others. It has been, without doubt, the greatest, most absorbing, and representative influence in the education of artists and designers in the entire twentieth century until now, and it is doubtful that any subsequent influence could within decades overtake the importance of the Bauhaus as a liberating, articulating force of visual and plastic intelligence.

FRONTIERS

The Artist and Aesthetics

FOR the past many years I have taken part in more than my share of discussions around the subject of the artist. After having puzzled my way through to any number of precarious conclusions about the nature of the artist, how he differs from ordinary people, his special needs, his habits and attitudes, his place in the world, his relationship to other men—after going through all this, one day I asked myself, "Who is this creature?" And then I made the discovery that I could not really identify any particular human being who could especially and incomparably be set aside as an artist. I found that what I had been doing was setting up an elaborate framework of excuses for my own human foibles, and I found I had recourse to a special brand of whitewash that other similarly bemused people could not touch. I could say that I was an artist. Today I take advantage of the psychological prerogatives of the artist only under extreme pressure when no other means will effectively relieve it. I am addicted to painting but I don't think of myself and my many friends who are similarly involved as "artists." I think of them as a special kind of people whose lives encompass a broader realm of sensory and intuitional experience than others. This is their real identity and their real glory—and it could stop there without diminishing them. Some of these people project this experience in the work of their hands.

Now, if the so-called "artist" as an historically registered professional (such as a doctor or a lawyer) should disappear, there would remain in the market place of art only the monuments, the critics and the entrepreneurs. And maybe this is as it should be.

With regard to that vague and indefinable matter generally referred to as æsthetics, as surely as I am not part of the artist myth, I have never been able to rationalize exalted fragments of my own total experience into what I think people mean when they speak of the æsthetic element. I do not consider the cataclysm that Handel's *Messiah* sets off in me an æsthetic emotion. To me it is the whole of life wrapped up in a few moments. I question whether the æsthetic ingredient can be emphasized here without destroying the fullness of the experience.

There seems to be a general feeling today that it is time to revitalize æsthetic theory by allowing it to penetrate areas of common human experience. This could bring us back to the he-man, barnyard tendencies of the early thirties, and at the same time revive the old ivory tower phobia in people who have been living comfortably in it since the last war. Personally I have nothing against the ivory tower. As a matter of fact I feel rather nostalgic about it. That it is again falling into disrepute perhaps can be attributed to a new intensification of the old dichotomy between the artists clan and ordinary people, between æsthetic theory and the way life today is lived. This is the same old situation. In 1937 the cure was thought to be in muscular art and "pictures of sides of barns painted the way you'd paint the side of a barn." (Today, 1966, the same compulsion has exploded into pop art and the so-called "new realism.")

Actually is it still possible, if it ever was, to revitalize the æsthetic force with words and ideas and phrases? For separation from life has not merely sickened æsthetic theory, it has killed it. And how do you go about revitalizing a dead thing? You can only bury it and start all over again. I think we can admit that the attempt to isolate the æsthetic element has failed and that we must get back to the total human problem even if the word æsthetics is rendered temporarily obsolete and certain specialists lose their professional standing. I understand that scientists—that is, biologists, physicists, economists, sociologists—today question the validity of piecemeal observation, and that technics are sought which can observe facts without amputating them and immobilizing them. Certainly something like this is driving thoughtful

painters to paint as they do today. This motivation cannot be thought of as purely æsthetic. It involves the need to produce evidence of mutuality between one's own sensibilities and some tangible fragment of outside reality—even if necessarily self-created. It stems from the common struggle to come to terms with the vagaries of space and time; to fuse and balance the single, tangible fact with the multiple fact, the point of reference with its galaxy, the self with all that surrounds and penetrates it.

These are not arbitrary or equatable factors. They are compulsive and inescapable. They are what makes painting worth the struggle, even when it fails. They make of it an act that cannot be led or explained by æsthetic theory.

Where then, actually, does the question of pure æsthetic fit in? We can question a painter on the how and why of his particular linear or color quality, the meaning of his imagery, the character of his structure. But you cannot blame him if his answer, if he answers at all, is negative and exasperated. He knows only too well that the main issue has been missed and that without it there is nothing to say. This may explain the traditional hostility between the painter and the professional appraiser, more intense today than ever. Ironically, the conflict, depressing and discouraging as it is to the painter, seems to give the critic a firmer lease on life. It fortifies the old and well known dictum that the painter should work his magic and leave the explanation to qualified Ph.D.s. And if there are places where this explanation is still an issue, maybe this, too, is as it should be.

ROBERT JAY WOLFF

New Preston, Connecticut