

A FORAY OF FAITH

WE have been reading once again Shakespeare's *King Lear*, going over the last scenes, in an effort to understand Harold Goddard's concluding comments on this play in *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. The paragraph that commanded our attention was this:

In this, his version of The Last Judgment, Shakespeare has demonstrated that hatred and revenge are a plucking-out of the human imagination as fatal to man's power to find his way in the universe as Cornwall's plucking out of Gloucester's eyes was to the guidance of his body on earth. The exhibition, in fearful detail, of this self-devouring process is what makes *King Lear* to many readers the most hopeless of Shakespeare's plays. But *King Lear* also exhibits and demonstrates something else. It shows that there is a mode of seeing as much higher than physical eyesight as physical eyesight is than touch, an insight that bestows power to see "things invisible to mortal sight" as certainly as Lear saw that Cordelia lives after her death.

Here Goddard invites us to consider the secret of Shakespeare's genius. It is the poet's conviction of the spiritual reality in human beings. This is more than an ennobling fancy. It is Shakespeare's reading of the meaning of our lives. There seems in him the irrepressible hope that somehow, some day, men will begin to live by the rules of the spiritual life. It is as though Shakespeare is saying with Lear that the dead body he has been carrying is not Cordelia, that she *lives*. Gently, Goddard agrees.

All I have wanted to do is to point out the figures I see moving in this fiery furnace of Shakespeare's imagination, in the hope, naturally, that others may see them too. But if others do not see them, for them they are not there. Far be it from me in that case to assert that I am right and they are wrong. If, as the old King bends over his child and sees that she still lives, he is deluded and those who know that she is dead are right, then indeed is King Lear, as many believe the darkest document in the supreme poetry of the world. And perhaps it is.

There come moods in which anyone is inclined to take it in that sense. But they are not our best moods. And the chief reason, next to the compulsion of my own imagination, why I believe I have done no violence to Shakespeare's text is that I have so often witnessed the effect on youth of this reading of the final scene of his tragic masterpiece. . . . the words of one such young person on first coming under its spell . . . are worth repeating:

"*King Lear* is a miracle. There is nothing in the whole world that is not in this play. It says everything, and if this is the last and final judgment on this world we live in, then it is a miraculous world. This is a miracle play."

But Goddard is not asking us to do something strange or remarkable. He is simply suggesting that the real human—the spirit or soul—survives the death of the physical body. The nobler the human, the more likely we are to adopt this view. Essential justice is involved. We prefer to live in a universe in which justice prevails, and immortality is justice to those who have lived lives that deserve to continue. Writing on this subject in *The Affirmation of Immortality*, John Haynes Holmes said:

What are we to think, for example, when a great and potent personality is suddenly cut off by an automobile accident, a disease germ, or a bit of poisoned food? Must it not be what George Herbert Palmer thought as he looked upon the dead body of his wife, one of the outstanding women of her time—"Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it, and not call the world irrational if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter, it excludes so fair a spirit?"

For Shakespeare, the real life of the human is the moral life, the incidents of our existence being merely external phenomena which may not correspond at all with the events in the life of the soul.

"We know," Goddard says, "that Cordelia is dead."

We do? How do we? And if we do, we know more than Shakespeare. For like a shower of golden arrows flying from every angle and every distance to a single target, every line of the play—almost—has been cunningly devised to answer our skepticism, to demonstrate that Lear is right and we are wrong. Why but to make the old King's dying assertion incontrovertible does Shakespeare so permeate his play with the theme of vision?

In death Cordelia rises transcendent and her true being is felt by the King. "King Lear takes us captive," Goddard exclaims. "That is what it ought to do and what we ought to let it do, for only as we give ourselves up to it will it give itself up to us." The poet knows that and uses the magic of his words to persuade those who have opened the way to conviction.

It is as though Shakespearean drama takes place on another stage, removed from earthly life, its dialogue the speech of hearts. And we, enwrapped in flesh, hear only the faint echoes of these goings-on, through the emancipating beauty of the lines. For beauty, made of the things of the earth, has the power to lift us above the scene of embodied existence, as though we had become dryads or angels and listened for a moment to heavenly choirs. For some short interval, we are no longer incarcerated in flesh, but commune with the sun and the stars. We know then what is real and deal only in the truths of the spirit—until some rude awakening, or rather sluggish forgetfulness, takes place. King Lear says:

You are a spirit, I know. When did you die? . . .
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!

His speech is a mixture of planes, but he cares not. He speaks of the living Cordelia, whom he loves with a regenerated affection, which endues him with the poetry of life. Percy Shelley wrote,

It exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if the poets had never been. . . . What were our consolations on this side of the grave, and what were our aspirations beyond it—if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where

the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar?

W. Macneile Dixon ends his wonderful book, *The Human Situation*, by saying:

How simple then is our duty—loyalty to life, to the ship's company and ourselves, that it may not be through our surrender that the great experiment of existence, whose issue remains in doubt, come to an end in nothingness. "We must not obey," said Aristotle, "those who urge us, because we are human and mortal, to think human and mortal thoughts; insofar as we may we should practice immortality, and omit no effort to live in accordance with the best that is in us."

What a handful of dust is man to think such thoughts! or is he, perchance, a prince in misfortune, whose speech at times betrays his birth? I like to think that, if men are machines, they are machines of a celestial pattern, which can rise above themselves, and, to the amazement of the watching gods, acquit themselves as men. I like to think that this singular race of indomitable, philosophizing, poetical beings, resolute to carry the banner of Becoming to unimaginable heights, may be as interesting to the gods as they to us, and that they will stoop to admit these creatures of promise into their divine society.

Our daily lives may be haunted by such dreams, yet claiming no more attention than phantoms of the night. But if we think about it, we know that we sometimes have more than passing thoughts about matters which have little to do with physical existence. Are these thoughts "real"? Do they relate to a phase of our own being which is only temporarily lashed to the physical body? Consider Macneile Dixon's view of the matter:

The thought of death as the only cure for human ills paralyzes the mind, and puts reason to flight. It denies the world's rationality. Not so, you may say, only our beggarly reason's notion of rationality. . . .

Rational? What could be less rational than that his pen and paper should be more enduring than the saint, that we should have Shakespeare's handwriting but not himself? Raphael's pictures but not the mind that conceived them. . . . Beyond all peradventure it is the thought that death appears to proclaim, the thought of frustration and final unreason at the heart of things, that is itself the root of the pessimist's

despair. The soul must sink when told that human life is mere buffoonery, that the story is without a point, that men must leave the theatre in which they played their sad, incomprehensible parts with their instincts mocked their understandings unenlightened.

Give them assurance that it is not so, and the scene is changed. The sky brightens, the door is left open for unimagined possibilities, things begin to fall into an intelligible pattern. . . .

A future life is, you think unbelievable? How clear it is that death is death for men as for all living things.

Well, I should myself put the matter rather differently. The present life is incredible, a future credible. "Not to be twice-born, but once-born is wonderful." To be alive, actually existing, to have emerged from darkness and silence, to be here today is certainly incredible. . . . If there be a skeptical star I was born under it, yet I have lived all my days in complete astonishment. What does this fine reason of ours tell me to believe or disbelieve? When you come to me with your explanations of all the world contains I am profoundly interested. Not, indeed, in your explanations, which are, of course, like all others, supremely ridiculous, but in the bright-eyed simplicity of the human mind, and its explanatory prattle. . . . "To suppose," wrote that level-headed thinker, John Stuart Mill, "that the eye is necessary to sight seems to me the notion of one immersed in matter. What we call our bodily sensations are all in the mind, and would not necessarily or probably cease because the body perishes." . . .

How many modes of existence are there? I cannot tell you, but I should imagine them to be very numerous. And what kind of immortality is at all conceivable? Of all doctrines of a future life palingenesis or rebirth, which carries with it the idea of pre-existence, is by far the most ancient and most widely held, "the only system to which," as said by Hume, "philosophy can hearken." "The soul is eternal and migratory, say the Egyptians," reports Laertius. In its existence birth and death are events. And though this doctrine has for European thought a strangeness, it is in fact the most natural and easily imagined, since what has been can be again. This belief, taught by Pythagoras, to which Plato and Plotinus were attached, has been held by Christian fathers as well as by many philosophers since the dawn of civilization.

If we go from how we think about such matters ourselves—which after all is what is most

important—to what other people think, or are said to think, we may feel flooded with biographical and historical material. Even today the interest is notable. A little over ten years ago, a well known psychiatrist, Dr. Ian Stevenson, who made a study of reported reincarnations for many years, published in the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* (May, 1977) an article, "The Explanatory Value of the Idea of Reincarnation." After the article appeared, the editor of the *Journal* said: "I must have had three or four hundred requests for reprints from scientists in every discipline." Then there is an excellent anthology on the subject by Joseph Head and Sylvia Cranston, *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, issued in 1977 by Crown. In this book one discovers that through history the believers and teachers of reincarnation have been so numerous among the distinguished thinkers of all time that it would take several pages simply to list their names.

In *The Masks of God*, Joseph Campbell gives the story told of Chuang Tzu, who has been called the Saint Paul of Taoism.

There is an anecdote recounted of the Taoist sage Chuang Tzu; that when his wife died, the logician Hui Tzu came to his house to join in the mourning but found him sitting on the ground with an inverted bowl on his knees, drumming on it and singing. "After all," said Hui Tzu in amazement "she lived with you, brought up your children, grew old along with you. That you should not mourn for her is bad enough; but to let your friends find you drumming and singing—that is really going too far!"

"You misjudge me," Chuang Tzu replied. "When she died, I was in despair, as any man well might be. But soon, pondering on what had happened, I told myself that in death no strange new fate befalls us. In the beginning [of the world] we lack not life only, but form; not form only, but spirit. We are blent in the one great featureless, undistinguishable mass [the universal Tao]. Then a time came when the mass evolved spirit, spirit evolved form, form evolved life. And now life in its turn evolved death. For not nature only but man's being has its seasons, its sequence of spring and autumn, summer and winter. If someone is tired and has gone to lie down, we do not pursue him with

shouting and bawling. She whom I have lost has lain down to sleep for a while in the Great Inner Room. To break in upon her rest with the noise of lamentation would be to show I knew nothing of nature's Sovereign Law."

The anthology on Reincarnation shows that with hardly an exception primitive peoples believed in reincarnation. Here is an extract from *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* by Baldwin Spencer and F.J. Gillen:

In every tribe without exception there exists a firm belief in the reincarnation of ancestors. Emphasis must be laid on the fact that this belief is not confined to tribes such as the Arunta, Warramunga, Binbinga, Anula, and others, among whom descent is counted on the male line, but is found just as strongly developed in the Urabunna tribe, in which descent, both of class and totem, is strictly maternal.

The compilers of *Reincarnation* say:

Frazer commends the researches of Spencer and Gillen, and remarks: "We naturally ask . . . whether the belief in reincarnation of the dead, which prevails universally among the Central tribes, reappears among tribes in other parts of the continent. It certainly does so, and although the evidence on this subject is very imperfect it suffices to raise a presumption that a similar belief in the rebirth or reincarnation of the dead was formerly universal among the Australian aborigines." This seems particularly interesting, because scientists have suggested that the Australian native—coexisting as he does with an archaic fauna and flora to be found practically nowhere else on the globe—probably dates back to an enormous antiquity. Commenting on the religion and mythology of the tribes, Gerland writes: "The statement that the Australian civilization indicates a [previous] higher grade, is nowhere more clearly proved than here, where everything resounds like the expiring voices of a previous and richer age." James Bonwick in *The Wild White Man and the Blacks of Victoria* tells how the life of an escaped white convict "was saved because he was believed to be the embodied spirit of a deceased friend of the tribe. . . . They certainly entertain the idea that after death they will again exist in the form of 'white men'." Bonwick comments that "it is not without consolation to the savage, for when one was being executed in Melbourne he exclaimed, "Very good—me jump up 'Whitefellow'."

For final persuasion we go back to Dixon's book, *The Human Situation*, first published in 1937 as the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow (1935-1937). In his last chapter he wrote:

Hope is the breath of life, and when hope lies dead the final darkness settles down upon the world. There is, then, no food for surprise that Dante wrote in his *Convivio*, "Of all brutal opinions that is the most foolish, vilest and most pestilent which holds that there is no life after this," and entombed in his *Inferno* the philosopher who taught it. Nor do I believe you will find a poet who could he have believed in immortality would have decried it, or who denied a future life for any other reason than despair of its possibility. Hatred of life is bred of this despair.

...

Are there any indications in nature or human nature upon which to found this hope?—the hope that even Schopenhauer could with difficulty forego, when he wrote, "In the furthest depth of our being we are secretly conscious of our share in the inexhaustible spring of eternity, so that we can always hope to find life in it again." . . .

According to Plato's theory of reminiscence, our present knowledge is a recollection of what was learnt or known by the soul in a previous state. You will say, it has no knowledge of its previous lives. But what man remembers every day of his life? And lost memories, as the psychologists will tell you, are recoverable. For the memory appears to be a palimpsest, from which nothing is ever obliterated. . . . Every day and hour had its value and made its contribution to the mind and soul. So it may be with former lives, each of them but a day in our past history. The universe is wide, and life here or elsewhere might on this view be regarded as a self-prescription, a venture willed by the soul for some end and through some prompting of its own, to enlarge its experience, learn more of the universe, recover lost friends, or resume a task begun but not fulfilled. The time has not come to close any of the avenues of thought into the mysteries surrounding us, and unless death finally triumph over life, it may never come. There may even be choice open to the souls in their eternal quest for the highest good.

With that as testimony, and something more, the defense rests.

REVIEW

THE ART OF CHINA AND JAPAN

WHAT is art? The question is an old one and Tolstoy made it the title of one of his books. The book is great, its content somewhat known, but here we shall look into another answer to the question, as good as his or perhaps even better. We have for consideration a small book of 112 pages first published in 1911. It is *The Flight of the Dragon* by Lawrence Binyon, issued by John Murray in London as a contribution to the Wisdom of the East series, which, through the years, has achieved fame.

In reply to our question, Binyon says:

The theory that art is above all things imitative and representative no longer holds the field with thinking minds, but there is no other theory which has won universal acceptance and which controls the ordinary view; and the authority of Aristotle seems to have left a half-conscious bias in the minds of most of us.

In the association of the idea of beauty with the idea of order Greek thought suggests a more fruitful point of departure. For art is essentially a conquest of matter by the spirit; in Bacon's phrase it is a subjecting of things to the mind, as opposed to science, which is a subjecting of the mind to things. But, with the idea of order alone to guide us, we are tempted to impose our conceptions on nature from without, to lose flexibility, and to decline into formalism.

What follows justifies Binyon's subtitle—"An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Art in China and Japan." He goes on:

What did the Chinese consider the fundamentals of art?

We need not resort to inference for an answer, for these were expressly formulated by a painter who was also a critic fourteen hundred years ago. The Six Canons laid down by Hsieh Ho in the sixth century have been accepted and recognized in Chinese criticism ever since.

The Six Canons, or tests of a painting, are as follows. The terms in the original Chinese are extremely concise, and their exact interpretation has

been much discussed; but the main drift of them is clear enough.

1. Rhythmic Vitality, or Spiritual Rhythm expressed in the movement of life.

2. The art of rendering the bones or anatomical structure by means of the brush.

3. The drawing of forms which answer to natural forms.

4. Appropriate distribution of the colors.

5. Composition and subordination, or grouping according to the hierarchy of things.

6. The transmission of classic models.

The first of these canons is the all-important one, for the others are concerned rather with the means to attain the end which the first defines.

Binyon thinks that Chinese art is superior to the art of Persia or India. The great achievement of the Chinese artists, he says, "is to fuse the spiritual and the material." For the Chinese, the subjective element is paramount.

"The secret of art," says a twelfth-century critic, "lies in the artist himself." And he quotes the conviction of an earlier writer that, just as a man's language is an unerring index of his nature, so the actual strokes of his brush in writing or painting betray him and announce either the freedom and nobility of his soul or its meanness and limitation. . . . in the Six Canons we are considering we see that an accurate seizure of structure and a deep correspondence with reality were indispensable, though subordinate to the final aim of rhythm and life.

What then is rhythm? Lawrence Binyon thinks that it grows out of the oldest of the arts, which is Dance. He quotes an Indian text which says of Siva, the Destroyer and Preserver, "that he is the dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn."

In the dance, as so understood, there is the germ of music, of drama, and, in a sense, of sculpture and painting too. . . . In the dance the body becomes a work of art, a plastic idea, infinitely expressive of emotion and thought; and in every art the material is taken up, just in so far as the artist is successful, is merged into idea. . . .

In all the art of China and Japan we find this predominant desire, to attain rhythmical vitality. . . . of Wu Tao-tzu it is said that it seemed as if a god possessed him and wielded the brush in his hand; of another master that his ideas welled up as from a power unseen. It was felt that the true artist, working when the mood was upon him, was brought into direct relation with the creative power indwelling in the world, and this power, using him as a medium or instrument, breathed actual life into the strokes of his brush. And this explains the Sixth Canon, that which speaks of the propagation of classic models; for a masterpiece, once created, was conceived of as capable itself of engendering other works of vital art.

How little the idea of representation, as such, entered into the view of art may be seen in the precept of the painter who said, "Study both the real and the unreal. Use one or the other at a time; your work will always be artistic." For indeed it is not essential that the subject-matter should represent or be like anything in nature; only it must be alive with a rhythmic vitality of its own.

The landscapes of the West which appeal to us give delight through "the virginal beauty of fresh blossoms, in the dewy green of water-meadows, in the shadowy leafiness of great trees, in the eye-reposing blue of remote mountains," but Eastern art is different from this.

It is a far different spirit which animates the Asian landscapes. In these paintings we do not feel that the artist is portraying something external to himself; that he is caressing the happiness and soothing joy offered him in the pleasant places of the earth, or even studying with wonder and delight the miraculous works of nature. But the winds of the air have become his desires, and the clouds his wandering thoughts; the mountain-peaks are his lonely aspirations, and the torrents his liberated energies. . . . It is not man's earthly surroundings, tamed to his desires, that inspires the artist; but the universe, in its wholeness and its freedom, has become his spiritual home. . . . Man is lord of the world, but only because he has gone out into humbler existences than his own and has understood them, and, returning to his own life, has found in that supreme expression the life which animates all things.

When we write—or try to write—about art we come up against the limitation of the medium of words. What is the good, someone may say, of

just *talking* about pictures: we need to *see* them. While that is true enough, Lawrence Binyon has a powerful imagination and already he has lifted us into his subject. Perhaps only the memory of a print or a painted fan has left in our minds an image of Japanese or Chinese art, which now develops under the spell of Binyon's words. To help him in his image-making he goes to Wordsworth and Shelley, and other poets and writers, saying of Wordsworth—

He has indeed a rare sense of the solidarity of the universe: but perhaps to match the free, gay strain of the Chinese wanderer who called "the empyrean my home, the bright moon my companion, the four seas my inseparable friends," we should turn rather to such a poem as Shelley's "Cloud," with its ending note of exaltation:

Then I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the mist and the rain
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

In another poet of that time, in whom we might not have looked for such avowals, in Keats, there are, by the way, phrases and paradoxes that have surprising affinities with Taoist thought. These are to be found, not in Keats's poems, but in his wonderful letters. "The only way to strengthen one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing." "Let us open our leaves like a flower, and be passive and receptive." "The poetical nature has no self—it is everything and nothing; it has no character—it enjoys light and shade. A poet has no identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body." How naturally such phrases as these would have come from a Taoist poet of China!

There have been far-reaching changes in Eastern art, as for example in the coming of Buddhism.

The substitution of the conception of a divine pity in the core of things for the conception of ruthless power shows us the change wrought by Buddhism. . . . Some of the finest Buddhist art is to be found in portraiture, both painted and sculptured. . . . Most of these portraits were made after death, and partook of an ideal character, and only great personalities of saints, sages, and heroes seem to have been thought worthy of portrayal. It was the ideal embodied in the man, rather than his external features, which it was sought to represent. These

Buddhist portraits are remarkable for contained intensity of expression; in them, too, the aim of rhythmical vitality is once again manifested.

For a conclusion we might take a passage from Lafcadio Hearn's *Gleaning in Buddha Fields*, in the chapter titled "About Faces in Japanese Art." After years of living in Japan, Hearn wrote:

I have said that when I now look at a foreign illustrated newspaper or magazine I can find little pleasure in the engravings. Most often they repel me. The drawing seems to me coarse and hard, and the realism of the conception petty. Such work leaves nothing to the imagination, and usually betrays the effort which it cost. A common Japanese drawing leaves much to the imagination,—nay, irresistibly stimulates it, and never betrays effort. Everything in a common European engraving is detailed and individualized. Everything in a Japanese drawing is impersonal and suggestive. The former reveals no law: it is a study in particularities. The latter invariably teaches something of law, and suppresses particularities except in their relation to law.

COMMENTARY

NATURE'S SOVEREIGN LAW

THERE is, Harold Goddard says, "a mode of seeing as much higher than physical eyesight as physical eyesight is than touch." This is confirmed by George Herbert Palmer when, regarding the dead body of his wife, he said,

Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it, and not call the world irrational if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter, it excludes so fair a spirit?

This is a logic which seems irresistible when a certain mood is upon us. Again, as Macneile Dixon puts it:

Rational? What could be less rational than that his pen and paper should be more enduring than the saint, that we should have Shakespeare's handwriting but not himself?

We go on to reflect that our real concerns in life have little or nothing to do with the body—it is our hopes and feelings which engross our attention.

So with King Lear's certainty that Cordelia lives, though he is burdened with her lifeless body. And as Chuang Tzu said to his friend, explaining why he did not weep because his wife was no longer the prisoner of her body:

To break in upon her rest with the noise of lamentation would be to show I knew nothing of nature's Sovereign Law.

Goddard proposes that this is the language of poetry, which is a way of speaking of the language of the soul.

To be a human being, then, is to have two languages—the literal speech which relates to matter, of which the ingredients can be counted, weighed, measured, and the speech which relates to the order of inner meaning, where the counting style of the speech about matter is useless.

In his own way, Moholy Nagy spoke the language of the soul. When a student approached

him with mundane problems he raised the plane of interchange to another level, solving the problem by making it irrelevant, without speaking of it at all.

We all have these two sides in our lives. The strong individual chooses one and is true to it, no matter what happens. The rest of us need the help of a sage, the kind of help one experiences in reading Emerson or Thoreau.

This week's *Frontiers* article illustrates the two sides of the nature of all humans in another way. There is, we may say, an obvious value in turning to the best qualities shown by an individual or a people when other qualities are getting a great deal of attention from the press. The weaknesses and other negative aspects of human behavior are not erased by recognition of the good in the same human beings, but we are no longer blinded to the reality of that good. As a matter of fact, no present-day nation of any size has a history without some very dark pages. Similarly, this is true of each one of us as individuals. We act like gods—and then the opposite of gods—and find ourselves accountable for what we do.

How else can we understand our history?

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves TOTAL TEACHER

AT a conference on industrial design held in New York in 1946, Lazlo Moholy Nagy, formerly a teacher in the Bauhaus in Germany, took pleasure in defending himself against the criticisms of some of the conferees. When one of them accused him of "dabbling" in design, he replied:

I love to dabble. That is what made me what I am today. I was educated as a lawyer, but because I dared to dabble with plastics and wood and so on, I gained a wide experience. Almost every educator, if he is sincere, tries to influence students to try the things he himself missed in his life or in his education. I was educated at a university as a so-called academist. That is how I found out I had a right to educate *the senses* of people. Today I am 25% a scholar, and 75% an artist and a what-not.

Then, in the closing session of the conference, he declared a lasting credo:

Some day we'll grasp the confusion of the Industrial Revolution. On the one hand we make the people literate, and on the other hand we take this literacy away from them by means of advertising, radio and other forms of propoganda which appeal to the lowest standards for profit's sake.

Design is not a profession; it is an attitude—the attitude of the planner. Every high school in this country has better equipment than we have [at the Chicago School of Design which Moholy founded and where he taught] or Harvard has. It is simply prodigious. And what do they do with it? Nothing. It is the spirit which determines the whole thing. We have to develop, step by step, an educational procedure in which the creative abilities and capacities of young people are used. That would mean general education. When any human being works with his hands, whatever he does will be translated into the brain as knowledge. This knowledge in turn, will react on his emotional self. That is how a higher level of personality is achieved.

A few days later Moholy Nagy (his last name is pronounced "Najh") died of leukemia, in November of 1946. He was operating on pure

will and until only the last moment he thought he would recover.

Who was Moholy Nagy? He was born in Hungary in 1895. In 1913 he was enrolled as a law student in the University of Budapest and a year later was sent to the Russian front with the Austro-Hungarian army. He was a victim of shell shock and while recovering made pencil and crayon sketches. He was wounded in 1917 and as a convalescent organized an artists' group that called itself MA, Hungarian for "today." He wrote and did watercolors. Released from the army in 1918, he went back to the university and took a degree in law, but continued to draw and paint. He got acquainted with other artists and continued to draw and paint. In 1922 Walter Gropius invited him to join the faculty of the Bauhaus in Weimar, where he developed the beginning or foundation course. With the rise of Hitler, both he and Gropius quit the Bauhaus. Gropius came to America, Moholy to England and in 1937 to the United States to establish a new Bauhaus. Because of World War II it failed, but Moholy started another school almost at once, and worked in it until he died, at which time the school had 680 students housed in its own building in Chicago. He left two children, girls, and his (second) wife, Sibyl Moholy Nagy, a historian of architecture, and author of a splendid book—*Moholy Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (MIT Press, 1969), of which we are making use here.

Working at the Bauhaus in Germany, Sibyl says, he "discovered the unity of doing and being, the organic oneness of living soundly and producing creatively." In a Bauhaus book published in 1928 he recorded the keynote of his teaching program:

From his biological being every man derives energies which he can develop into creative work. *Everyone is talented.* Every human being is open to sense impressions, to tone, color, touch, space experience, etc. The structure of life is predetermined in these sensibilities. One has to live "right" to retain the alertness of these native abilities.

But only art—creation through the senses—can develop these dormant, native faculties toward creative action. Art is the grindstone of the senses, the coordinating psycho-biological factor. The teacher who has come to a full realization of the organic oneness and the harmonious sense-rhythm of life should have a tongue of fire to expound his happiness.

Sibyl says in her book:

As Moholy became an experienced teacher he discovered that the creative process lent itself poorly to the inevitable routine of the classroom, that it often died of verbalization. It became his conviction that art itself cannot be taught, because young people look for absolutes whereas the artist maintains a precarious equilibrium between self-assertion and self-rejection. Even the teaching of the fundamentals of integrated design, derived from a socio-biological understanding of human needs, demanded from the artist-teacher a total dedication which needed the sustenance of the creative community and the unlimited confidence of the students. Many years later in America he warned against the destruction of native talent in the "resident artist" who is expected to dissect his soul fourteen hours a week under the strict supervision of the Trustees. To teach a new concept successfully, he told his graduates, called for a deep respect for the artist's integrity in any school administration and a high state of self-renunciation in the artist himself, which can only be maintained by a profound love for youth.

Of the Chicago School of Design, Sibyl wrote:

When Moholy died, the Institute boasted workshops which were suited to almost any form of design research, and none of the equipment had been bought.

The results produced during the first two years justified not only Moholy's exhausting efforts but also the contributions made by a dozen small and medium-sized firms. Margaret De Patta, now a leading jewelry designer, utilized Kepes' instruction in the behavior of light to develop a new method of setting stones and pearls into a magnifying matrix, providing brilliant visual effects. Wire-bending exercises were applied by a student cooperative to the production of elastic wire-mesh cushions which, joined together, served as shock absorbers. Orin Raphael gave the mobile and paper-cut structures their logical application in a new longchair, and

Charles Niedringhaus and Jack Waldheim developed a new line of plywood furniture. Within two years the students of the School of Design filed seventeen applications for patents, and an uncounted number of small inventions were incorporated into the daily workshop production.

One designer graduate of the school told how Moholy worked with the members of the school:

Anyone could go into his office and air his grievances, no matter how late the hour or how tired the director. Everyone coming back from these conferences smiled, his spirits heightened and his energies renewed. "Well, what did he say?" we would inquire. "What's his opinion on the case?"

And the complainer would suddenly realize that he hadn't had a chance to speak about his troubles. Moholy had asked him about his health, his family, his living conditions; he had shown his latest picture or photogram. He often asked the visitor's advice on a sentence or an expression in a manuscript or he read a paragraph from his book in progress. Gradually he'd start to discuss the school aims, and the student—although he received no answer to his query—went away with the conviction that Moholy had known his complaint beforehand and had chosen this roundabout way to supply an answer.

At the bottom of the infinite faith we had in Moholy was the fact that he never criticized the work of a student in terms of good or bad. Even the poorest work had a fragment of merit which—Moholy emphasized—could be developed with imagination and industry. Nothing was all bad; each idea contained a spark of quality.

This could have been termed simply as a teaching technique. But it really was much more. It was an expression of Moholy's deep-rooted optimism, based on his faith in the validity of the human mind, and on his inexhaustible joy of constant discovery.

Moholy Nagy was, as his wife put it, a total teacher. Another book about him worth looking at is *Moholy-Nagy*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz, published by Praeger in 1970.

FRONTIERS Israeli Communities

A READER has supplied us with a copy of the pamphlet, *Kibbutz Today*, written by Moshe Kerem. The author was born in the United States and migrated to Israel in 1948, and in the year following he joined at its founding the Kibbutz Geshar Haziv, in which he has been active ever since. Under his former name, Murray Weingartner, he wrote *Life on a Kibbutz*. The pamphlet is published by the Federation of the Kibbutz Movements. According to this writer, the Kibbutz Movement is one embodiment of the Zionist spirit and grew out of its inspiration.

When socialist Jews first began to return to Palestine in the early 1900s, they found a barren country with wasted soil. Kerem says:

The problem was not one of redistributing capital more equitably but rather of creating an entire new society. Here men had to be prevailed upon to become workers. Here a personal revolution based on the ethical value of labor and the creative experience of farming was necessary.

It was in this setting that the idea of the kibbutz was born. It was natural that such people, in creating their community, should from the outset attempt to build it on the vision of a democratic socialist communal society, one which would not have to be altered at a later stage.

The first kibbutz, Kerem says, was founded in 1909 on the banks of the Jordan by a handful of settlers, a mile or so south of Lake Kinneret.

They had been employed on a farm there by the Jewish National Fund, and offered to take it over and make it pay, themselves. . . . Their idea was to set up a communal village. No money was to be used within the community; the group, as such, would assume responsibility for production and for all community services and individual needs. Private property would be abolished. Hired labor would not be taken on. Private trading would not be allowed. All marketing and purchasing would be done by the group as a whole. All profit would be ploughed back into the future of the settlement.

In Hebrew, Kerem explains, kibbutz means group. Since 1909 in Israel the term has come to mean a special kind of group.

The kibbutz movement today comprises some 120 thousand people in more than 250 such villages and settlements, something more than 3.5% of Israel's population. . . . It is this movement, together with the allied moshav (smallholders cooperative) sector, which forms the backbone of Israel's agriculture, and many observers feel that, in its achievements hitherto and in the promise of its future, it has made, and has yet to make, a decisive contribution towards teaching man the world over new ways of community living . . .

The Kibbutz of which I am a member, Geshar Haziv, in the Western Galilee, is an example of this process. Founded in 1949, in the middle of Israel's War of Independence, on the site of an abandoned dilapidated British army camp not far from the border, the group was originally composed of graduates of Zionist movements from abroad who joined with an Israeli counterpart group. This group was made up in turn of young people who had arrived in Israel without their parents as refugees from Germany, and graduates of Zionist youth groups in Israel itself. This group had previously lived in Bet Haarava, a kibbutz situated on the northern shores of the Dead Sea which had experimented in washing salt from the soil in order to make it arable. Bet Haarava was destroyed as a result of the war and so they joined with us (I was a member of the group from abroad) to start anew at Geshar Haziv. Today the original population of 1120 has expanded to close to 500. People have gone and come and of the original group some fifty are still members. The others come from twenty-four different countries.

How do the kibbutzim (plural) operate?

The core of self-administration is a weekly general meeting of the entire membership. Veteran kibbutzim may have two to four hundred members, there are some with far more. Younger ones may have anywhere from sixty or seventy upwards, though there are some with less. The meeting formulates policy, elects officers, authorizes budgets, approves new members, and controls the overall working of the community. Candidates for membership are usually accepted after a year's probation, during which time they are treated in all respects as full-fledged members except for the right to vote or hold office. Acceptance, as a rule, depends on a majority vote of the weekly meeting, though some places are stricter, requiring two thirds of a secret ballot of all members.

Work, Kerem says, "is both a philosophy and a principle in the kibbutz." The idea has been to help the city-bred immigrant to become "a productive worker who will derive satisfaction from his creative work."

The kibbutz member undertakes to work at whatever job he is assigned, whether serving in the dining hall or managing the banana plantation (all members take turns at certain service jobs). His material status is not affected by the task he performs. In the course of time, he usually ends up doing the work he likes to do and, once his job has become permanent, the kibbutz will arrange further technical training for him in his chosen field. . . .

Members who are interested in working at occupations or professions for which there is no room in their own kibbutz (doctors, teachers, nurses, university professors), commute to work outside the kibbutz, turning their income over to the community. . . . My own personal case is an example. After many years both as a farm worker and a teacher within the kibbutz framework itself, I became a university teacher at the University of Haifa and at Oranim the kibbutz movement's Teacher Training College. My obligation to the Kibbutz has meant foregoing complete involvement in academic matters, taking leave for extended periods in order to fulfill tasks in the kibbutz, just as it necessitated sacrificing continuing complete involvement in the kibbutz itself on the other hand.

Today some forty per cent of Israel's total agricultural export volume comes from the kibbutzim. Through the years the economic activity of the kibbutzim has expanded into industry, some of them taking on the use of cotton gins, poultry packing, food-processing and freezing plants. Meanwhile—

The kibbutz assumes complete responsibility for all the needs of its members: from razor blades to housing, from window-curtains to concert tickets, from full medical care to honeymoons, from education to financial aid to dependents outside the kibbutz, from plants for the garden to trips abroad.

Kerem's pamphlet provides good critical discussion of the various issues and problems which occur in the kibbutzim. There is, however, no consideration of the claims of the Arabs who feel they have been unjustly displaced in Israel.

Yet these communities stand for an impressive achievement within the scope of the Zionist ideal. Yet again, perhaps this ideal must be expanded if the vision behind the kibbutzim is to be finally realized. What lies ahead, Kerem says in his conclusion, is a difficult challenge—"the kind of country Israel will turn out to be, over and above its modern technology and military prowess." "The kibbutz today," he concludes, "faces problems its founders never dreamt of."