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THE SORT OF PERSONS WE ARE

TWO courses are open for discussion of Victor C. Ferkiss' *Technological Man: The Myth and the Reality* (Braziller, 1969, $7.95). One would record appreciation of the book's solid accomplishment in distinguishing between the promises and the failures of the technological society. The author has assimilated most if not all of the major critical examinations already pursued—from Jacques Ellul to Lynn White, Jr.—and has shaped them afresh in an analytical structure of his own; and in his last chapter he offers what seem sound philosophical principles for grappling with the enormous problems resulting from technological blindness and excesses.

The other course would be to make it clear that Mr. Ferkiss walks no untrodden path—that among critics he is now practically a middle-of-the-roader, one more competent voice in a swelling chorus. What would be the point of doing this? Only to show that, among the various shortcomings of the society he places under severe criticism, the habit of remaining indifferent to value-based humanist diagnoses until the supporting evidence is *physically* indisputable, may be the most fatal weakness of all.

Well, it might be said, we *do* have to have evidence, don't we? Indeed we do. But how much evidence, and of what sort? Shall we resist all suggestion that a man is sick until we see him lying helpless in the gutter, probably breathing his last? An important item of modern psychological knowledge is the fact that gatherers of evidence tend to see what they are looking for. They are "mission-oriented," as we say. Indeed, it is quite scientific to be selective in research. "How odd it is," exclaimed Charles Darwin, "that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service." So there is nothing technically reprehensible in the fact that hardly a week goes by when some man in public office, or seeking it, does not declare that he takes no stock in the claim that America is a "sick society." Or in the lugubrious melancholy of statesmen who mourn the moral blindness of citizens unable to perceive the necessity of the war in Vietnam. The facts, they say, practicing admirable self-restraint, are plain.

Obviously, waiting until *enough* facts are available to make an irrefutable case against such public follies means to wait either until we are all dead or until those who are not dead can no longer hide from themselves what unspeakable criminals they have become.

So it is manifest insanity to delay decision until all the "objective facts" are in—and, indeed, Mr. Ferkiss makes much of this point. His book seems weak, however, in consideration of other orders of evidence and the problem of making them acceptable. Except for the principles provided in his last chapter—which are rather abstract—he leaves us objectively and statistically identified as Calibans or even Frankensteins, armed with immeasurable power, and apparently determined to do whatever we *can* do. Yet while this author seems armed mainly by humanist desperation, his articulation of "the facts" which, for him, are already "in," at least implies more penetrating ways of seeing:

> From a long-range philosophical point of view the greatest failure of contemporary culture in meeting the challenge of the existential revolution lies in its inability to provide a framework for ordering and assimilating the new discoveries that enable man to affect his own biological nature. But from a short-range practical perspective its greatest inadequacy is its failure to come to grips with the ecological crisis. . . .
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> Now the quarrel has come to an end. Man is standing over the prostrate but still writhing figure of nature, trying to decide whether to kill it, make it his

> slave or free it to become his partner. But regardless of the decision the relationship between man and nature can never be what it was. The difference between the subjective and the objective, between what is observed and what is made, between what is free and what is determined has almost been abolished. We stand on the verge of an era, of a plane of existence, in which there are no more givens and nothing is free save man's own consciousness and will.
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> What will man do with nature and himself? How will he order his relationships? Every conquest of nature now runs the risk of overkill, and the ultimate victim may be man himself. The central practical questions are, of course, political and economic. How many people shall there be? How shall they be distributed over the earth? Who shall decide this and who shall implement the decision? From the answers to these questions there follow in part answers to others. How close shall men live, what proportions of their time shall be spent in work and leisure and how shall these be distributed among men? How much freedom and how much control shall exist within the political and social orders? At what level of society shall it be exercised? How much shall nature be coerced and how much seduced? How much shall man leave to chance and how much shall he determine?

This is a crucial passage by Mr. Ferkiss, perhaps the most important in his book. Surely we can stipulate that he is completely right in his feeling of finality.: For intelligent observers, the quarrel is indeed over, the time of decision here. But what about the declaration, "The central practical questions are, of course, political and economic," which is followed by a quite impossible program of decision-making? We call settlement of the questions he lists "impossible" for the reason that no one now knows the answers to them, and even men bold enough to think they do would find their expert solutions endlessly compromised by the process of political persuasion. Why not set up a humanist first principle: *Human problems cannot be solved by expertise,* and go from there? Neglect of this principle is the moral origin of deception in politics and of special pleading in all social relationships. Mr. Ferkiss knows what such pious deception can lead to; his entire book is an indictment of the flourishing rhetoric of technology.

The judgment that the central practical questions are political and economic creates priorities which have a denigrating effect on other matters. For example, Mr. Ferkiss also says: "We stand on the verge of an era, of a plane of existence, in which there are no more givens and nothing is free save man's own consciousness and will." While the expression, "no more givers," seems obscure, one of its meanings might be that there are no indicators inherent in our situation which can tell us what to do. And then the author lists all those political and economic type questions. Can we conclude from this that we lack "givers" because we find no models in past social experience which are suggestive enough to sway political or economic decision in the right direction? If this is the argument, we are indeed left in a Sartrean condition of existential nakedness, with only our consciousness and our will.

But there *are* givens. We just can't use them politically. It seems too eager a petition in voluntary bankruptcy to imply that only knowledge which can be seen to have immediate political or economic utility is *real.* What sort of ideas have "political utility"? They are ideas which people in large numbers will be impressed by and moved to adopt and act upon collectively. What then causes people to "take up" ideas? A passage recently quoted in these pages from Ralph Slovenko, a professor of law, will do for an answer:

> In knowledge we are "selecting" and "grouping" some small scraps of the vast mass of influences that surround us, being driven to do so by our emotions, feelings, impulses, and interests. . . . on the whole, we tend to "select" and "group" in ways which fall between two extremes, on the one hand the most simple and coherent, and on the other the most comfortable. Just how far they fall towards the one extreme or towards the other depends upon what sort of persons we are, and on what sort of persons we wish to be.

We have gone to some trouble to reach the elementary conclusion that political decision is largely if not entirely dependent upon "what sort of persons we are, and what sort of persons we wish to be." This *moral* factor, then, is an absolute determinant of the quality of political decision. If the moral level of the population is low—low in the conception of self and of human potentiality, low in the measure of individual obligation to the social whole, then political decision will be chained to the floor of that low level. Cries of desperation will not alter the way men behave as a result. Anger and reproach will not change their character.

One could argue that the enormous preoccupation of modern man with externality—with the forces of nature and his command over them, with what he can do to improve his physical condition, enhance his pleasures, entertain himself, etc.—has indeed produced a state of mind in which there seem to be no "givers" concerning who and what we are, and what, conceivably, we have come here to do. The cult of the objective fact has reduced us to the condition of being totally without usable "givens," and political and economic expertise is irrelevant to the needs of people in this condition.

Various works diagnosing the plight of modern—technological—man are serviceable in supplying learned accounts of how this reduction came about. We are instructed in why we came to believe that man is a "thing," the creature of external forces. It is called to our attention by literary critics that the really influential novels of recent years all portray man as *victim*. He is first of all an object, and his sufferings, which are exquisite, form the content of literature. The portrait is as merciless as Calvin's logic of pre-destination. So, naturally enough, the humanists became political reformers and socialists, and the Christians social actionists, all devoted to what must be done *to* or *for* man, neglecting what he must do, in and of himself. Politics is the only real thing. We have not had a heroic literature providing ennobling exemplars of what it means to be a whole man for generations. No wonder we insist that there are no "givens"!

At another level, which might be called the "market place of ideas," a similar measure of "knowledge" has prevailed. The truth-content of a theory, in a world ruled by majority opinion, is determined by what "takes hold." Thus the Freudian view of psycho-dynamics became a kind of holy writ for at least two or three generations of intellectuals. But one has only to consult a book like L. L. Whyte's *The Unconscious Before Freud* to discover potentially much richer conceptions of psycho-dynamics in earlier thinking. But they lack the confirmation of widespread acceptance, which makes them only the subjective imagery of poets, the speculations of philosophers, the intuitions of mystics. Yet they may include our most precious givens. Authentic discoveries have had just such unlikely origins, again and again. The point is that the political or popular exhaustion of what in the past we have accepted as fact and truth does not render us without givens about the meaning and purpose of human life; the breakdown of the objective theory of knowledge does not mean that there is not and never has been any alternative theory, because no other has been equally *popular*. The givens exist, and the absence of mass approval of them means only that their truth-content was too rich or subtle for consensus acceptance when first proposed.

If, then, we abandon the canon of political utility, the givens of our heritage may prove to be ample for other and perhaps far more important needs. In a recent address, W. H. Johns, president of the University of Alberta, spoke of the enormous respect in which scientific fact-finding and curiosity are now held, and then observed:

> I know that curiosity is a major characteristic of the *genus homo* and that the search for absolute truth is unquestionably one of the chief *raisons d'être* of our universities. The motto of my own university, as well as that of several others throughout the world, is *"Quaecumquae Vera,"—"*whatsoever things are true,

> taken from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. We tend to forget, however, that he continued with "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. In our passionate search for truth we tend to forget the other principles and virtues so essential to mankind.

What is the difference between Mr. Ferkiss' charge and St. Paul's? Mr. Ferkiss is concerned with how to create a better world, through answering political and economic questions; St. Paul is concerned with the production of better men. Of course, Mr. Ferkiss wants better men, too; indeed, his book is offered in evidence that technology alone is not going to produce them, but he does not say enough about what might produce them.

Our contention is that "givens" for this enterprise exist and should be conscientiously explored. Plato supplied givens. And since Plato also wrote occasionally about the difference between scientific enterprises and efforts to teach virtue, what he said might be peculiarly useful to us in our present situation. Robert E. Cushman, a modern Plato scholar, has assembled Plato's critique of science in one place in his volume, *Therapeia* (Chapel Hill, 1958):

> The persistent strictures of Plato against technical competence which is indifferent to the moral uses of knowledge are familiar. Plato's scorn is plainly evident when he notes that the city is full of "many and manifold knowledges or sciences." These include the skills of artisans, builders, and horticulturalists. Men are lovers of spectacles. They delight in information and are always eager to hear some new thing. But this cannot be accounted wisdom. Neither do any of the abstract sciences, such as mathematics or astronomy, qualify for the title. According to the *Lesser Hippias*, the possession of mere technical knowledge assures only the doubtful competency of being equally able to instruct or to deceive. As the *Republic*, Book VII, shows, Plato regards sciences, such as arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, and astronomy, as helpful propaedeutic studies. In his scheme of *paideia*, they have an honorable and integral place. They are liberating in function, facilitating emancipation of *nous* from bondage to sense and Becoming. But learning, even of this sort, is no unmixed blessing. Aptitude in the pursuit of these "knowledges," devoid of moral earnestness, can easily be perverted to uses of social evil. Without virtue and love of the Good which measures man, the sciences are nothing, or worse than nothing: "And if we do not know it (the Good) then, even if without the knowledge of this we should know all things never so well, you are aware that it would avail us nothing, just as no possession either is of any avail without the possession of the Good." Later, in the *Laws*, Plato reaffirms his position even more emphatically. Incapacity for the sciences hardly becomes an intelligent man; yet, he says, "complete and absolute ignorance of them is never alarming, nor is it a very great evil, much more mischievous is a wide variety of knowledge and learning combined with bad training." From the beginning, in the *Charmides*, Plato held that all "knowledges," taken together, avail nothing for man's well-being without knowledge of the Good. But knowledge of the Good *is* virtue, and just as certainly virtue is a condition of its apprehension.

One could probably collect enough quotations from contemporary criticism to document practically everything Plato has said here. Are we suggesting that Plato had "the answers" that we need so desperately? Not at all; but that Plato is one source of the "givens" required for constructing workable answers. Among the most evident needs of the time is a concept of discipline for carrying on subjective inquiry. Plato's Dialectic is an illustration of this, and there are others.

But let us turn to Mr. Ferkiss' valuable last chapter, which proposes new ways of looking at ourselves and the world. His principles can be regarded as either inferences or breakthroughs in relation to recent experience. He calls for a "new philosophy" which will be founded on a *"new naturalism,"* asserting "that man is in fact part of nature rather than something apart from it, but that nature is not the rigid, mindless, deterministic machine that earlier eras conceived it to be." He notes that "some scientists have gone so far as to contend that some form of mind exists even in nonliving matter." Man is also the "highest part of nature," its self-determining component within a

semi-determined scheme of things. This leads to a second principle of the new philosophy—the *"new holism,"* declaring the interdependence of everything in life and nature. Finally, arguing from Eastern pantheism and the pan-psychism of some modern biologists, he proposes a *"new immanentism"* for the idea of the divine, in exchange for the traditional Western Judaic-Christian God which, although "the principle of order and change, was primarily outside." This axiom of internal relations implies an ethical corollary:

> What is required is that all participants in technological civilization recognize that there is a whole that they do not totally represent, and that the one intolerable action is the claim of any individual or group within it to dominance and universality, for this would quite literally short-circuit the total cultural process.

Nature cannot be excluded from the moral continuum: "As Albert Schweitzer said, a morality that deals only with the relation of man to man and not of man to nature is only half a morality." There is this general summary of the "new philosophy":

> These three principles—the new naturalism, the new holism and the new immanentism—provide the necessary basis for the outlook that must come to dominate human society if man is to survive the existential revolution already under way. Technological man must so internalize these ideas and make them so much a part of his instinctive world view that they inform his personal, political and cultural life. They in turn lead to certain further principles. If man and nature are one, then society and the environment are one. Therefore, meaningful social policies must be ecological in character, that is, they must be based on a recognition that the interrelationship of men to each other and the total environment means that any decision, any change, affects everything in the total system.
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> Thus, in a sense, nature has rights as well as man, since its activity and that of man are inextricably intermingled. The new holism, with its emphasis on process, means that not only must every decision be seen in ecological perspective, but it must be recognized that there are no individual decisions any more than there are actually geometrical points in the empirical world. Decision-making is part of a seamless process. Man cannot become free by being outside or apart from the process. He is affected by what others do—that is, he is the subject of power—and he exercises power because his actions affect others. For in this holistic process every action of the whole passes through and is modified by the state of every cell or particle. Freedom consists in responding autonomously and authentically to the currents of life and action passing through one; the loss of freedom is not the loss of an impossible complete self-determination—which would necessitate standing outside the universe—but is a synonym for being bypassed and not being allowed to play one's part in shaping the whole.
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> For the whole shapes itself. This is the meaning of the new immanentism.

Who could quarrel with any of this? Yet the givens Mr. Ferkiss himself supplies are not new, but belong to a majestic line of descent from ancient philosophy and religion; although his contribution of some modern language is essential, no doubt, to their fresh realization. What is wanted, now, is a generation of like-minded teachers to spread these ideas around—to "internalize" them, as he says, throughout our civilization. What other means have we for improving the sort of persons we are, and the sort of persons we wish to be—on which, as can be shown, everything else depends?

REVIEW
EVEN IN CHICAGO

THERE are some men whose way of living, thinking, and acting points to meanings above whatever may be said about them, and beyond even what they said themselves. Lazlo Moholy-Nagy was such a man. He resists definition. How should such a man be spoken of? By showing, it seems clear, how he stretched every familiar category of meaning to its limit, and then some. We have for review a book which accomplishes just this—the revised edition of *Moholy-Nagy Experiment in Totality*, by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, first published in 1950 by Harper, and now issued, with new material, by the M.I.T. Press (Cambridge, Mass., $8.95). It often happens that books are discussed here on the assumption that the reader may not find opportunity to read them. An opposite assumption—that the reader will get it and will read it—is required by this life of Moholy-Nagy, since there is no other way to comprehend the importance of what he did.

Born in Hungary in 1895, Moholy-Nagy came to maturity during the years of World War I, in which he was a soldier. He remembered the war with "profound disgust," and the behavior of his fellow officers in the Austrian army turned him into a total abstainer and a nonsmoker. He completed undergraduate studies in law to please his mother, but by that time he knew what he was going to do. He had written in 1919: "It is my gift to project my vitality, by building power, through light, color, form. I can give *life* as a painter."

He offered his services to Bela Kun's communist regime, but was rejected. His family had belonged to the landholding aristocracy and his art was non-representational. Meanwhile, he saw what was really wrong with the revolutionary movement. He wrote in 1920:

> The leaders of this revolution, instead of solving the spiritual and material needs of the wanting masses, were busy with *historical* materialism, with neutral zones and national power. A heap of contradictions!
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> Under their poorly dyed red cover, the revolutionaries forgot the real meaning of a revolution. They forgot to promote the inner revolution of life. They forgot about culture. Their revolution was not a "revolutionary change. Their form of Communist economy does not mean a new system of production and distribution. It merely changes the powers of those who decide about production and distribution. This economic Communism is another form of capitalism, based on trusts, syndicates, state credit, patronage, and a hierarchy of unassailable state leaders.

He went on to elaborate what a real revolution would accomplish. Having this clear understanding of the social question, he wasted no time on politics, but became a teacher—a *total* teacher, his wife called him. His most important book, *Vision in Motion*, published at the end of his life, is probably still the best work on art education that exists, and it displays the same insight into social matters that he revealed in 1920.

Where was the action, for a man with the teaching genius of Moholy-Nagy? It was in industry, which was making the world hideous and suffocating the human spirit. He would try to change that. He devoted his life to bringing what vision and human understanding he could to the products of the machine. Working with others having a similar inspiration, he established the *principle* of what could be done. And he gave example after example of how the principle worked in action—what it could produce. He said early in his career:

> Manufacture in itself doesn't make a better life. Look around: the people are not happy in spite of the machine. Well-being is caused by the spirit that animates technology; it is a socialism of the mind, a dedication of the spirit of the group. Only a proletariat awakened to this grasp of essential communality can be happy.
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> Who will teach them? . . .

Naturally, Moholy-Nagy gravitated to the Bauhaus, which had been founded by Walter Gropius in 1919, and became a leader among the extraordinary teachers there. A Berlin publisher

whom he visited in 1926 years later recalled the meeting, arranged by Moholy-Nagy to get support for the school:

> "His German was abominable, and he had to make up for missing adjectives with expressive gestures. I disliked modern art and I had agreed to give the poor fellow a few minutes only to please one of my art editors. But I became fascinated by Moholy's performance. Under his arm he carried a folder of clippings culled from my own publications. Using a red pencil, he showed me how layout, color scheme, and illustrations could have been a million times more effective. He criticized my desk lamp—smilingly but cunningly—and he promised me a hundred years of healthy existence if only I'd sit in a functional chair and read by functional light. The most striking feature was Moholy's obvious enjoyment of his mission. He had neither the meekness nor the forced cockiness of the typical money-raiser. In the end I made out a check that was much higher than I myself had originally planned."

You could say that every aspect of man's life was a vehicle for Moholy-Nagy's educational intention; he didn't cut human existence up to departments, it was all one thing. Yet he found there were optimum circumstances for teaching:

> 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 teacher-artist a total dedication which needed the sustenance of the creative community and the unlimited confidence of the students. Many years later in America Moholy 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.

Here, luminously expressed, is the clear correspondence between the artist-teacher and the philosopher-teacher. The reason why "trustees" have so much trouble understanding such real teachers is that they have not themselves learned that in education *nothing* matters save that "precarious balance between self-assertion and self-rejection." In *Love and Will*, Rollo May uses other words for the same reality:

> To be guided by your own *daimon* requires a fundamental humility. Your own convictions will always have some blindness and self-distortion; the ultimate illusion is the conceit that you are free from illusion. . . . The moral problem is the relentless endeavor to find one s own convictions and at the same time to admit that there will always be in them an element of self-aggrandizement and distortion. Socrates' principle of humility is essential.

No one can be a good "trustee," and certainly not a good administrator, without having learned this lesson, somehow or other, and schools are wrecked and artists and teachers are destroyed or wasted by the ignorance of men who suppose that a "patron" has no obligations save to put up money and watch how it is spent. A trustee who is not willing to learn to be a teacher, himself, ought to exclude himself from any important educational decision. Artists may sometimes be fools and "impractical," but the story of Moholy-Nagy's time in Chicago should be required reading for all who have even the slightest connection with education. Moholy-Nagy and his band of teachers were the only "practical" people on the scene—as, fortunately, was finally proved.

What then did Moholy-Nagy *do?* In 1937, a Chicago group calling itself the Association of Arts and Industries cabled him in London to say that Walter Gropius had proposed him for director of a new design school which Marshall Field offered to house in his family mansion and which Chicago industrialists would back with money. He came. After a month or so, a very puzzled man, he wrote his wife about the "industrialists " He was entertained in their expensively furnished homes, but the trouble was not merely that they drank too much and lionized him socially:

> Darling, the problem lies somewhere else. It lies, to be honest, in my own bewilderment. The men who invited me are the future trustees of a new Bauhaus if it should come about; they called me here—knowing what I stand for. They wouldn't have gone to all that trouble otherwise. But their homes. . . . What am I to believe? Shall I be an optimist and say: Everyone is a potential student; or shall I be a pessimist and say: Forgive them for they know not what they're doing?

They got rid of him, of course, and closed the school. But not before he was rooted in the hearts of the students. Moholy found a job designing hardware and doing the typography of mail-order catalogs, saved $2500, and then started a new school with the support of a handful of teachers who knew what he wanted to do, declared themselves a part of it, and agreed to work for nothing for a year. It was called the School of Design—put together by will, vision, and sacrifice, and some legitimate panhandling—"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." In time students enrolled by the hundreds, and the practical fruits of this kind of design education became obvious to all.

We leave the reader to learn for himself from Mrs. Moholy-Nagy how the indomitable spirit of this man seeped into other people, and of the works of art he produced while generating new meanings and fields for art and design education in America. It would be a mistake to assume that this book is a book about art for artists and art teachers. This would be Chicago "trustee" sort of thinking. It is a book about the potentialities of all men.

COMMENTARY
FREE TO THE END

IN the Nation for Sept. 22, Richard Stern contributes a brief note on the closing of the Bauhaus, as he heard it from Mies van der Rohe, the distinguished builder. The last man in charge during the school's declining years near Berlin—Gropius and Moholy-Nagy had quit some five years earlier—Mies found the school shut up one morning in 1933. He went to see Alfred Rosenberg to object. This is what happened, as Mies told Stern in 1968, less than a year before the builder died:

> "He [Rosenberg] said to me, 'It's not me that's shut it. I'm an architect myself, have my degree from Riga.' I said 'If you re an architect, how can you sit at such a desk? If I were you I'd throw it out the window.' He said, 'It must be the Gestapo who's closed it. So I went over to the Gestapo. The head of it was then a young fellow, 27 or 28, and I sat outside his office on a narrow bench, day after day, all day long. He kept avoiding me, going out the back door, but one day he came out to call someone, and I went up to him and asked what it was all about. He said, 'There's So-and-So in your group who keeps shooting off his mouth.' 'That may be,' I said 'but that is not our business.' 'Well, all right,' he said, 'we'll let you open, but let's hope you can control things.' And the next day we came and it was open, and I called everybody together and said, 'They've given us permission to reopen. Now I suggest we close it. And we did."

So Mies preserved the free spirit of the Bauhaus, even in its ending. The control the Gestapo wanted was not part of the Bauhaus curriculum, and could not become part of it. The teaching there was according to other principles, as the book discussed in this week's review might suggest.

A reading of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's book, *Experiment in Totality,* would lead naturally to further investigation of what the Bauhaus has meant for modern design and art education. For this purpose the best book is almost certainly *Bauhaus: 1919-1928,* edited by Herbert Bayer, Walter and Ise Gropius, published in 1938 by the Museum of Modern Art and now available from the Charles T. Branford Co., Boston. The book is filled with illustrations of the work of the men who taught at the Bauhaus, and who studied there. The text is by Gropius and the teachers.

It is exciting to find out from this book how an authentic transcendental vision, affirmed pre-eminently by Walter Gropius, was translated into conceptions of architecture and industrial design, and how the spirit of this inspiration was given uniquely individual expression by a number of teachers, each in his own way. Gropius' essay, "The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus," first published in 1923, the fourth year of the school, exhibits a lucid certainty in both diagnosis and remedy, for both ugliness in the products of industry and aimlessness in the practice of the fine arts. The Bauhaus program was the remedy. The Bauhaus teachers, whose names read like a roster of the pioneers of modern art and architecture, tell about their courses, what they sought to accomplish, and why.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HE TRIED TO BE CIVILIZED

WE have a lovely book about children and poetry for children—the kind of book that succeeds in making all things new, so that a fresh start in feeling and thinking seems quite natural and not difficult at all. This, surely, is what is needed most in our educational efforts and time with children, since for them all things *are* new, and their lives are indeed a new start.

The book is *Chrysalis* (Harcourt, 1949, with eleven printings since). The author is Harry Behn, who grew up in Arizona and tells about his boyhood in the first few pages. The main point of the opening chapter is the still living influence on Harry Behn of the Arizona Indians. The boys who grew up in Prescott early in this century didn't want to become cowboys. "To us a cowboy was just a drifter who spent all his wages getting into trouble, shooting out lights in the plaza, chasing us through the cemetery and over the hills, yelping like an Apache. He was our enemy." Harry Behn and his friends got to know the Indians and formed their own "homemade" tribe in town. They learned from the Indians "where to find berries to quench our thirst, how to make bows and arrows or a brush wickiup for our clubhouse, or how to understand birds and animals." Naturally, then—

> By the time a Prescott boy was twelve, he knew he didn't want to be a cowboy or run a mine or a farm or a grocery store or a livery stable like his father. What he secretly had in mind was to join some Indian tribe not too close to home and never go near a town.
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> As soon as I graduated from high school I did exactly that. I lived all one summer with the Blackfoot Indians in Montana, until my parents, assisted by their clergyman friend, lured me into college. When I discovered that education wasn't all chemistry and algebra, I enjoyed it. But nothing has ever meant more to me than the lore I learned as a child from the Indians.
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> What was it they taught me that was so important?
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> A ceremonial response to the earth, to the dancing sun and singing winds; how to live in a world as magical as a dream; to speak with a soft voice as white-wing doves do on evenings in the summer.
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> The Mount Vernon Avenue Long Beargrass Tribe did not know what our parents knew only too well—that only a few years before, the Yavapais had been as wild, as savage, often as cruel as Geronimo's Apaches. When we boys knew them, they had accepted peace. They were our instructors in good manners, in careful observation of natural signs, in being responsive to the spirit in everything that lived and grew upon the earth. These were studies far more absorbing than the practical realities we were taught in school.
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> One thing our parents did not realize any more than we did was how drilled we were in a thoroughly irrational wisdom. For many years I tried to be civilized, but gradually my early training in the ceremonies of innocence became dominant. Today I am dedicated to the primitive business of composing poetry and telling stories, not for grownups but for children. Like all aborigines, children are accustomed to thinking about the beginnings of things, the creation of beauty, and understanding of plants and animals, of how alive stones and stars and wildflowers are, and how different each is from the other.

The book has this quality throughout, and the reader soon finds himself all the way on the side of the writer, another shy candidate for inner emigration to the world of children—one of the few ways, incidentally, of taking sides without becoming a partisan of anything. It should be added, of course, that Mr. Behn's "innocence" is William Blake's brand, something that is at first given, but then has to be fought for and regained.

We have one small quarrel with Mr. Behn. Why must his Indian wisdom be characterized as "thoroughly irrational"? If it leads a man to such enormous good sense, it is not irrational at all! Perhaps he calls it irrational because it moves from premises which are not the same as those used by the familiar rationalizations of Western civilization. But *all* premises, finally, are rooted in

primary feelings about value, about self, about what is good. These premises are *given*—you can't go behind them; they are what we start with, whether we know it or not. And if all starting-places are beyond the region of rational process, then "irrational" is reasonably applicable only to poor thinking afterward. Even the premises of scientific reasoning, when they are obtained by empirical research, are said to result from "brute facts" and could certainly be dubbed irrational. Perhaps Mr. Behn uses the word as a means of declaring that he takes his premises from a world that is thought to be imaginary or unreal by some people. Yet we protest: there is no need to let the opposition think it can dispose of visionary reality so easily.

This writer has a delightful recollection of a small grandson:

> Before one of my grandsons, who was then my youngest knew a dozen words, he loved to be read to, and everyone enjoyed reading to him because of an extraordinary thing that happened when a story came to an end.
>
> He would listen to any tale, *The Snow Queen*, *Peter Rabbit*, or a chapter from *The Hobbit*, preferring fairly long little stories, I think, to hold bedtime at bay. When the last page was turned and the book put aside, he would announce in fluent baby-talk that now *he* would tell a story. And that he would do, with style, gestures, and not one understandable word.
>
> At last he would come to a pause. A crisis. Suddenly, from being the narrator, he would become the hero and *sing* the climax!
>
> When his small triumphant song was sung, a sleepy child would go to bed content.

Well, this minnesinger period didn't last, Mr. Behn says; as the child learned our language he forgot his own. And this brings the writer to mourn the passing of the hero from modern literature. What have we done to our children and to ourselves, by forgetting about heroes, by not really having any? The currently available substitutes are not to Mr. Behn's liking:

> Today, young men are being trained at great expense to be hurled into emptiness and, I suppose, should be considered heroes. They are certainly brave and good and clever. But their adventure doesn't seem to me to have much to do with the race of man on this earth. I don't understand the motivations of governments and scientists who are using them. It is too Roman for me, like some emperor's lust to conquer and humiliate other nations all for a parade called a Triumph. Could it be that we have to have a circus to give ourselves an illusion of importance?

We don't pretend to know much about poetry, but we can't help liking the poetry for children that Mr. Behn writes, and his reasons for writing it. Also his reasons for not reading much of the poetry written nowadays. This small book is a wonderful mine of ideas and inspirations for anyone having to do with the reading and writing of children; and it is valuable to adult readers for its healthy, natural conviction, for its spontaneous generation of an atmosphere that makes all things new.

FRONTIERS

Prophets Without The Law

THE article, "What Would a Scientific Religion Be Like?" (*Saturday Review,* Aug. 2), by H. G. McPherson, brought interesting comments from *SR* readers. One remarked that "if religion is what man does with his solitariness, to quote philosopher Whitehead, there could be as many scientific religions as there are individual scientists." Another reader listed the qualifications of Buddhism for a scientific religion, making especially the point that Buddhist ethics do not collapse with changing human views of knowledge, since the Buddhist conception of knowledge *expects* and *predicts* such changes. These responses from *SR* readers are encouraging evidence of resourceful and open-minded inquiry in the present.

However, there is one commonly neglected difficulty in the idea of a scientific religion which an article contributed by Robert S. Morison to *Science* for Jan. 27, 1967, enables us to explore. In this paper, Dr. Morison gives many examples of the present inadequacy of both parental and traditional guidance in the education of the young. These influences, he points out, are essentially *conservative;* they are fine for maintaining the *status quo,* but they do not prepare people for adaptation to change. It is obvious that everything Dr. Morison says about the breakdown of familiar social controls applies with equal force to the ordering ideas of traditional religion—as, indeed, Holmes Welch showed in his article in the Unitarian-Universalist magazine, *Now,* for last April, in relation to both traditional Buddhism and traditional Christianity.

Having detailed these weaknesses, Dr. Morison devotes the rest of his paper to outlining the moral necessities of the future:

> If all this is even approximately true, it would seem essential to set about devising substitutes or sublimations. Somehow people must be made to expand their sense of loyalty and responsibility to include a larger share of the human race.

Such an expansion of responsibility is pressingly important on other grounds, for, as I hinted above, the advance of biological knowledge has created new misdemeanors if it has not induced new sins. As Waddington (*The Scientific Attitude,* Penguin) and others have shown, it is no longer sufficient to assess our behavior in terms of its results on those immediately around us. Much of what we do has some sort of numerical probability of injuring someone else we have never seen—on another continent, perhaps, or even in a generation yet unborn. As we sum the increasing probabilities of these adversities we find life growing intolerable for a large share of the human race. We are thus becoming statistically responsible for the purity of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the safety of the highways we drive on, but, so far, it is hard for us to feel a statistic. And without the proper feeling, few of us can be moved to change our behavior. Perhaps the most important consequence to be hoped for from our increase in biological knowledge is development of the ability to feel statistical meaning so keenly that we will modify our actions in adaptive directions.

Dr. Morison repeats this idea in various ways:

> As we go up from . . . the village, the tribe, and the state to the comity of nations, the ties that bind derive less and less from instinctive patterns or immediate conscious sensations and more and more from inference and abstraction.
>
> Society has therefore had to invent ways of coupling its needs to the emotional apparatus of the individual. Religion and art were two of the most important of such inventions. In an earlier time a large proportion of artistic production served a patriotic or religious (and, in consequence, a social and moral) purpose—for example, by making the individual feel in his bones the importance of dying for his country, or at a higher and more abstract level, the mystical unity of the brotherhood of man as children of God.
>
> Now we seem to face the unprecedented needs for mobilizing all possible aids to help the individual perceive the needs of society at large and to identify himself with them. Not only have the social and economic developments of the last few centuries made everyone far more dependent on everyone else for the means of subsistence but, as I have tried to show, the responsibility for development of the individual personality, even at very early stages, is shifting from the family to society at large. Conversely, an increasing number of individuals must

> seek emotional security and a sense of significance in roles which greatly transcend the classic limits of family or village.

There are really two major problems here. First is the primary question of the extent to which it is *possible* for human beings to develop "the ability to feel statistical meaning so keenly that we will modify our actions in adaptive directions." The other is selecting the agency to be made responsible for giving educational priority to the most important "statistical meanings," and for designing influences that will produce the desired response.

Concerning this second question, Dr. Morison is exceedingly gloomy about the prospects. He finds most of the members of today's artistic and literary community standing aside "like a Greek chorus, chanting over and over again, 'See the unhappy man who can do nothing other than endure the existential suffering forced on him by a hostile and malformed society'." Modern letters, he finds, "are oriented against society—not, as used to be the case, against a particular society, or a particular outmoded social norm, but against the very idea of society—in other words, against any society at all." He concludes: "As a biologist, I find the predictable consequences of such an attitude terrifying."

Now it is at least possible that this self-pitying alienation and apathy—neither admirable nor excusable, let us admit—has developed partly in direct consequence of the modern scientific reduction of the idea of knowledge to "statistical meanings." But let us scratch the people who indulge in æsthetic and social nihilism as their response to this reduction, and listen to one or two tougher souls who did *not* join the defeatists of Dr. Morison's "Greek chorus." What have such men to say on the question of "statistical meanings"? To a man, they say that threat of punishment is not enough to move human beings to wholeness of life. The warnings coming from the ecologists—the statistics of self-destruction, heaped up, pressed down, running over—are only empirical confirmation of what happens when the faith *we don't have* is violated. The typical response to such warnings—as we *also* know from statistics—is a calculating and weak prudential restraint, not the rebirth of faith, and it is never equal to our need. This is what Joseph Wood Krutch says in "Conservation Is Not Enough," and it is what Aldo Leopold says, after a lifetime working for conservation, in *A Sand County Almanac*. These men and many others declare that you can't scare people into living good lives. (See also the results of the foreign policy of the United States.) You can only scare people into making deals—which is the most ordinary, the most ignominious, and the most easily corruptible form of religion.

The statistical meanings are there; they are, you could say, "true," and we owe a considerable debt to the researchers who show us what we ought to have known in our hearts from the beginning. But these after-the-fact catalogs of sin are not the basis of a new religion. They are only useful footnotes documenting the operation of moral law. They do not affirm the law and it is foolish to expect too much from them.