

IS "ART" THE REMEDY?

THE modern critical consciousness is becoming so acute in its perceptions that familiar controversies about value and meaning seem abolished by new levels of generalization. In *Literature and Technology* (Random House, 1968, \$6.95), for example, Wylie Sypher shows that the arts as well as technology have submitted to the fascinations of "method," and that the driving insistence on "efficiency" in industry was paralleled by longings for technical "purity" in both the arts and literature. Misleading preoccupations with form and external brilliance were the result. One of Mr. Sypher's key statements is the following:

Method is craft rationalized, theorized, converted to an abstraction.

The exploitation of a medium for its own sake might be called technical alienation of art, since craft, or the command of a *métier*, is a way of making something, but the methodologist seems more concerned with the expertise of his technique than what is brought into being—which is a way of estranging art from its end. Such an exhibition of method is *techné* inverted upon itself, an act of limited initiative.

The monomania about method has a secondary effect of causing another estrangement: the artist's sense that his work has no use in the community, since it justifies itself only as a technical feat or, as might be said, as an exhibitionism that can only be mannered. The medieval craftsman must have known that his work was in real demand and that his prescribed skill had a social sanction. But the estrangement of the so-called fine arts, in contrast to the so-called applied arts, cast the artist back on himself in an isolation that left him to exercise his *métier* for its own sake.

Illustrations of this isolation in painting and the novel supply Mr. Sypher with a great deal of the material for his book.

We know, in general, how the idea of Method gained its extraordinary popularity. Through the double effect of the scientific revolution—on the one hand it destroyed faith in the pseudo-scientific claims

of inherited religion, and on the other it emerged as practical magic, the means to power—adherence to scientific method became the mode of salvation for modern man.

This was less of a revolution, psychologically, than it seemed on the surface. The religious version of salvation had also been a method, and the religious wars of European history were fought to determine which method was correct. Getting to heaven was held to depend upon embracing the true theology, declaring the proper creed, and performing the saving rituals. Actual discovery of religious truth was reserved for a handful of mystics, and these found it advisable to express their inner experience without disturbing the conventions of orthodox belief. The *method*, after all, was the thing. For the method, applied collectively to the social scene, became the program of social control, more or less as explained by the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

There is of course another kind of religion, but it never openly survives the procrustean demands of the methodologists, and when it comes to writing or talking about it, all the cautions and warnings of Plato's seventh epistle apply.

Meanwhile, a parallel may be drawn between this sort of intuitive or self-reliant mystical religion and science as a mode of discovery; and, again, a clear correspondence shown between organized religion and technology. The two latter activities are systematic and tend to become "official." Both result in social programs with imperatives that, one way or another, must be enforced. Mr. Sypher discusses the social effects of applied science:

Admittedly the distinction between science and technology is treacherous and often denied. We are told that there is no clear line between pure and applied science, for all science, as Bacon said, has the purpose of using nature in the interest of man. Undeniably technology has had beneficial effects that it would be bigoted to depreciate. However, there is a

difference between some motives in pure science and the motives in technology, a difference that sometimes reduces itself to a concern for truth versus a concern for efficiency or immediate results. "The body of technical science," says Bronowski, "burdens and threatens us because we are trying to employ the body without the spirit." Human nature being what it is, science can be diverted from its interest in truth, its attempt to benefit man, into a quest for power, for manipulating people and imposing programs. Insofar as technology is employed to carry out programs, there is a practical difference between science and technology. Since programs are devised or managed by officials, or bureaucrats, the distinction between science and technology (or "applied science") is psychological and procedural. Our doubt about technology is due to our fear of being engineered. The question is not one of pure versus applied science but of how science is applied. Government-sponsored science is hardly pure, and perhaps not science.

The first full-dress anticipation of what a totally "engineered" society would be like was Roderick Seidenberg's *Posthistoric Man* (Chapel Hill, 1950), a book which has few rivals in clarity and controlled desperation. As his title indicates, Mr. Seidenberg argues that the rationalizations of the technological imperative are converting modern society into an entirely predictable machine, in which men are conditioned to behave as obediently moving parts. Decisions will all be made by experts, much as B. F. Skinner suggests in *Walden II*. The perfectly managed technological society will therefore begin the "posthistoric" epoch, during which man "will remain encased in an endless routine and sequence of events, not unlike that of the ants, the bees, the termites." Anti-utopian novels such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* express similar anticipations, and more recent warnings have been Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* and Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*. Mr. Sypher returns to this theme in his concluding chapter:

The special modern form of fatality is the total programming attempted in our technological society. The computer appears to be the most sinister agent in this programming, a more administrative force than the internal combustion engine, about which T. S. Eliot was anxious. The computer reaches decisions, and its decisions are made under the direction of a

technological imperative. Is there any reason to hope that its decisions can be other than technological? Possibly not, unless there is a revolution within technology itself.

A little later, there is this qualification:

The danger is not technology but the official program. The official has been as damaging in the arts as it is in technology; the history of the modern arts has been one of resistance to academic programs. In our technological culture the artist's vocation is resistance to human engineering, which is a perversion of technology. Sometimes his only mode of resistance is insolence. It is an insolence that can be justified only by considering that officials are even more colossally insolent in attempting to engineer human beings. . . .

It may be that art remains our only refuge from a technological order where all can be calculated, formulated, regulated.

It was the scientists who brought us emancipation from the "human engineering" of authoritarian religion, and now, it seems, we are to be saved from technological social control by the artist!

This seems a great deal to ask of the artist. Even apart from the artist's vulnerability to the escapist temptations of method (illustrated again and again by Mr. Sypher), there is the question of the artist's basic role and responsibility: Does it really include spiritual rebirth for the human race? For that, essentially, is what seems implied by the idea that "art remains our only refuge."

So high an expectation of the artists leads one to recall Plato's campaign against the poets, and to remember, as well, what Eric Havelock has pointed out—"that neither 'art' nor 'artist,' as we use the words, is translatable into archaic or high-classical Greek." (*Preface to Plato*.) In short, there were no "artists" as a separate caste or group among the ancient Greeks. (Aesthetics, conceived as an independent discipline, began with Aristotle.) It is only in modern times that the artist has come to be regarded as virtually a secular priest. It is important to notice this difference between Greek culture and our own, since we seek the origins of many of the achievements of our own civilization in Greek art, Greek philosophy, and Greek science.

It is also a matter of interest that Plato's opposition to the poets had much in common with the present resistance to the social programming of technology. As Prof. Havelock points out, in the preliterate society whose customs still dominated in Plato's time, the poets were not originators, innovators and rebels, as they are regarded today, but preservers and expositors of tradition. Thus "poetry," for Plato, was the tribal encyclopedia of the Greeks. Its communications were remembered because they were *performed*. And as Havelock says:

Performance by a harpist for the benefit of the pupils is only part of the story. The pupil will grow up and perhaps forget. His living memory must at every turn be reinforced by social pressure. This is brought to bear in the adult context, when in private performance the poetic tradition is repeated at mess table and banquet and family ritual, and in public performances in the theatre and market-place. The recital by parents and elders, the repetition by children and adolescents, add themselves to the professional recitations given by poets, rhapsodists and actors. The community has to enter into an unconscious conspiracy with itself to keep the tradition alive, to reinforce it in the collective memory of a society where collective memory is only the sum of individuals' memories, and these have continually to be recharged at all age levels. Hence Plato's *mimesis* [imitation], when it confuses the poet's situation with the actor's, and both of these with the situation of the student in class and the adult in recreation, is faithful to the facts.

Summing up this analysis, Prof. Havelock has a passage in which the term "technology" becomes curiously appropriate:

In short, Plato is describing a total technology of the preserved word which has since his day in Europe ceased to exist. . . . its character can be summed up if we describe it as a state of total personal involvement and therefore of emotional identification with the substance of the poetized statement that you are required to retain. . . . A modern student thinks he does well if he diverts a tiny fraction of his psychic powers to memorize a single sonnet of Shakespeare. He is no more lazy than his Greek counterpart. He simply pours his energy into book reading and book learning through the use of his eyes instead of his ears. His Greek counterpart had to mobilize the psychic resources necessary to memorize Homer and

the poets. . . . You yourself became Achilles and so did the reciter to whom you listened. Thirty years later you could automatically quote what Achilles had said or what the poet had said about him. Such enormous powers of poetic memorization could be purchased only at the cost of total loss of objectivity. Plato's target was indeed an educational procedure and a whole way of life.

Plato objected to this sort of poetry because it displaced the critical and reflective powers of the individual, making him into the offspring of established tradition. Such a man was not a morally aware, a *choosing* human being, but a conformist. Plato called such poetry *mimesis* (or imitation) because the term—

focuses initially not on the artist's creative act but on his power to make his audience identify almost pathologically and certainly sympathetically with the content of what he is saying. And hence also when Plato seems to confuse the epic and dramatic genres, what he is saying is that any poetized statement must be designed and recited in such a way as to make it a kind of drama within the soul both of the reciter and hence also of the audience. This kind of drama, this way of reliving experience in memory instead of analyzing and understanding it, is for him "the enemy."

Well, the role of the poet, as hardly needs pointing out, has changed, and the arts, since the Renaissance, have assumed some of the responsibilities of religion. But it is nonetheless necessary to ask where the arts get their inspiration, and how it may be sustained. It can hardly be denied, for example, that the arts of the three great cultures of antiquity, India, Egypt, and Greece, were nourished by religious philosophy and mythic vision. Great art, it seems fair to say, does not arise save in the presence of ennobling conceptions of man. And if modern poets are more often enemies than transmitters of the tribal encyclopedia, modern novelists exercise an influence that cannot pass unquestioned. Writing during World War II, Simone Weil observed in *The Need for Roots* (Putnam, 1952):

Writers have an outrageous habit of playing a double game. Never so much in our age have they claimed the role of directors of conscience and exercised it. Actually during the years immediately

preceding the war, no one challenged their right to it except the savants. The position formerly occupied by priests in the moral life of the country was held by physicists and novelists, which is sufficient to gauge the value of our progress. But if somebody called upon writers to render an account of the orientation set by their influence, they barricaded themselves indignantly behind the sacred principle of art for art's sake.

There is not the least doubt, for example, that André Gide has always known that books like *Nourritures Terrestres* and the *Caves du Vatican* have exercised an influence on the practical conduct of life of hundreds of young people, and he has been proud of the fact. There is, then, no reason for placing such books behind the inviolable barrier of art for art's sake and sending to prison a young fellow who pushes somebody off a train in motion [Translator's note: a reference to a gratuitous act performed by Lafcadio, hero of *Caves du Vatican*, who pushes somebody off a train in Italy to prove to himself that he is capable of committing any act whatever, however motiveless, unrelated to preceding events]. One might just as well claim the privileges of art for art's sake in support of crime. At one time the Surrealists came pretty close to doing so. All that has been repeated by so many idiots *ad nauseam* about the responsibility of our writers in the defeat of France in 1940 is, unfortunately, only too true.

Simone Weil felt that artists must accept responsibility for the kind of influence they exert. But why, in the final analysis, are we drawn to artists when we wonder how to free ourselves from the compulsions of the technological society? One answer may be that while the artist is neither philosopher nor priest, he has certain crucial qualities in common with lovers of truth. His work is *an end in itself*. During the modern age, it has been the artist who, again and again, has denounced ulterior motives, pretensions, and artificiality. The artist, so long as he remains artist, refuses to sacrifice his individual inspiration. He values integrity above appearance. He makes great sacrifices to preserve the meaning of the discovery he feels to be somehow embodied in his work. He is a secular (read "safe") analogue of the searcher for truth.

It is clear from Mr. Sypher's book that he believes that artists may learn to emancipate themselves from the tyrannies of technique and the

vanities of method, and come to exercise a saving influence on culture generally. Initially, to save themselves, he would have artists renounce their "fine arts" egotisms and return to craftsmanship—which, indeed, was what art meant to the ancients. Phidias was a stonecutter. As Mr. Sypher puts it:

Craft is muscular skill; it is not ideological, it is not puritanical; it requires no distanced world of Art, it enables the artist to improvise and to participate. The romantics, who had no coherent methodology, did seek to participate. But the later nineteenth century, intoxicated by its methodologies, distanced art in many ways. Style became a technological artifice.

Yet the major problem—the lack of vision—remains. The artist as craftsman needs a stately spectacle to which he can raise his eyes. For his craft to collaborate with high human longing, that longing must be generated in the hearts of men. Without a field of vision in which to work, the artist is too easily seduced into preoccupation with form, method, and technique, and then the faith of people in the creative impulse—never so strong as it is today—is betrayed by specious fashions and nihilistic "breakthroughs." The Blakes and the Tolstoys—artists who combine both vision and craftsmanship—are too few in number to accomplish alone the needed reforms. Such men, when left without help, are usually martyred for their pains. The world needs a stronger medicine, today, than lonely artists can supply.

REVIEW

TOLSTOY'S THEORY OF PROGRESS

WRITING in 1894, Leo Tolstoy set down his credo for changing the world. It was a central conviction of his later life and he gave it many forms of expression. One suspects that he felt exceedingly lonely, sometimes, as though only he saw the truth of his faith, but this probably deepened his sense of urgency. After denouncing the follies of patriotism, he said:

In order that the conditions of a life contrary to the consciousness of humanity should change and be replaced by one which is in accord with it, the outworn public opinion must be superseded by a new and living one.

And in order that the old outworn opinion should yield its place to the new living one, all who are conscious of the new requirements of existence should openly express them. And yet all who are conscious of these new requirements, one in the name of one thing, and one in the name of another, not only pass over them in silence, but both by word and deed attest their exact opposites.

Only the truth and its expression can establish that new public opinion which will reform the ancient obsolete and pernicious order of life; and yet we not only do not express the truth we know, but often even distinctly give expression to what we ourselves regard as false.

If only free men would not rely on that which has no power and is always fettered—upon external aids, but would trust in that which is always powerful and free—the truth and its expression!

If only men were boldly and clearly to express the truth already manifest to them of the brotherhood of all nations, and the crime of exclusive devotion to one's own people, that defunct, false public opinion would slough off of itself like a dried skin—and upon it depends the power of governments and all the evil produced by them; and the new public opinion would stand forth, which is even now but awaiting that dropping off of the old to put forth manifestly and powerfully its demand, and establish new forms of existence in conformity with the consciousness of mankind.

The wonder of Tolstoy's life is this unshakable conviction of the power of truth.

Where did he get it? His critics argued from various grounds that his faith was romantic, pointing to the docility of men and their easy submission to authority. Tolstoy always replied that this failure was not a failure of truth, but of men who will not use what truth they know. He saw an unerring instinct in the designs of governments and rulers to confine or make ineffectual the power of truth. He declared that a true public opinion could become an unconquerable force, able to accomplish what neither liberal reforms nor violent revolutions have been able to do.

The governments [he said] know this, and tremble before this force, and strive in every way they can to counteract or become possessed of it.

They know that strength is not in force, but in thought and clear expression of it, and, therefore, they are more afraid of the expression of independent thought than of armies, hence they institute censorship, bribe the press, and monopolize the control! of religion and of the schools. But the spiritual force which moves the world eludes them; it is neither in books nor in papers, it cannot be trapped, and is always free, it is in the depths of consciousness of mankind. The most powerful and untrammelled force of freedom is that which asserts itself in the soul of man when he is alone, and in the sole presence of himself reflects on the facts of the universe, and then naturally communicates his thoughts to his wife, brother, friend, with all those with whom he comes in contact, and from whom he would regard it as sinful to conceal the truth.

No milliards of rubles, no millions of troops, no organization, no wars or revolutions will produce what the simple expression of a free man may, on what he regards as just, independently of what exists or was instilled into him.

Tolstoy never retreated from this position. He could no more compromise on his view of the power of truth than he could stop breathing. He found few to agree with him, and he gave his time unstintingly to answering the objections of his contemporaries. The extent of Tolstoy's writings along this line is much greater than commonly supposed. As George Orwell said, "Tolstoy's essays are the least-known of his work." This is

now quite evident from the recently published anthology of all or most of Tolstoy's writings which fall naturally under the heading of *Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*—a 400-page book edited by Mort Bergman (Bergman Publishers: 224 West 20th St., New York, N.Y., \$9.50).

Tolstoy is one of the few intellectual figures of the nineteenth century whose ideas cannot be called dated. On the contrary, the interest in his thought is far more intense today than it was when the material in this book was first set down. Gandhi's references to Tolstoy have a part in explaining this, but the chief reason for the present revival of the Tolstoyan thinking lies in its increasingly clear application to the problems of the modern world. Last February, for example, the editors of the *Atlantic* printed a letter by Tolstoy to a young man, counselling him to refuse military service even if he had to die for it. "All just people," Tolstoy wrote, "must refuse to become soldiers." We are slowly recognizing that he is probably right. Tolstoy was certain that an end can be put to war in no other way, and much of the material in *Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence* is closely reasoned argument to show the futility of peace conferences and pacts among the nations as a means of ending war. As he said in reply to a question about a peace conference called by the Tsar: "The aim of the Conference will be, not to establish peace, but to hide from men the sole means of escape from the miseries of war, which lies in the refusal by private individuals of all participation in the murders of war." Developing this contention, he said:

Liberals entangled in their much talking, socialists, and other so-called advanced people may think that their speeches in Parliament and at meetings, their unions, strikes, and pamphlets, are of greater importance; while the refusals of military service by private individuals are unimportant occurrences not worthy of attention. The governments, however, know very well what is important to them and what is not. And the governments readily allow all sorts of liberal and radical speeches in Reichstags, as well as workmen's

associations and socialist demonstrations, and they even pretend themselves to sympathize with these things, knowing that they are of great use in diverting people's attention from the great and only means of emancipation. But governments never openly tolerate refusals of military service, or refusals of war taxes which are the same thing, because they know that such refusals expose the fraud of governments and strike at the root of their power. . . .

With amazing effrontery, all governments have always declared, and still go on declaring, that all the preparations for war, and even the very wars themselves, that they undertake, are necessary to preserve peace. In this sphere of hypocrisy and deception a fresh step is being made now, consisting in this: That the very governments for whose support the armies and wars are essential pretend that they are concerned to discover means to diminish the armies and to abolish war. The governments wish to persuade the peoples that there is no need for private individuals to trouble about freeing themselves from wars; the governments themselves, at their conferences, will arrange first to reduce and presently quite to abolish armies. But this is—untrue.

Armies can be reduced and abolished when peoples cease to trust governments, and themselves seek salvation from the miseries that oppress them, and seek that safety, not by the complicated and delicate combinations of diplomatists, but in the simple fulfillment of that law, binding upon every man inscribed in all religious teachings, and present in every heart. not to do to others what you wish them not to do to you—above all, not to slay your neighbors.

Armies will first diminish, and then disappear, only when public opinion brands with contempt those who, whether from fear, or for advantage, sell their liberty and enter the ranks of those murderers, called soldiers, and when the men now ignored and even blamed—who, in despite of all the persecution and suffering they have borne—have refused to yield the control of their actions into the hands of others, and become the tools of murder—are recognized by public opinion, to be the foremost champions and benefactors of mankind.

It ought to be noted that the new life for Tolstoy's ideas is coming mainly from *individual* effort. Men filled with similar convictions are acting to affect public opinion. A Mort Bergman puts this book together. A professor of political

science, Ronald V. Sampson, brought by his studies to see the force of Tolstoy's reasoning, translates and prints Tolstoy's powerful essay (written in 1908) attacking the annexation by Austria of Bosnia and Herzegovina (reprinted as the lead article in MANAS for Jan. 11, 1967). An Ammon Hennacy gives the best years of his life to protesting war and violence by his Tolstoyan "one-man revolution." And hundreds of unknown and unsung heroes—young men not sure of many things, but certain beyond all doubt that it is wrong to kill one's fellow human beings—are serving time in prison to contribute to a new form of public opinion that will one day put an end to war.

Tolstoy was a great exhorter. He used all the powers of his enormously resourceful mind to argue for the moral independence of the individual. He had strongly rational answers to support his position. In one place he tells how he was questioned by William Jennings Bryan:

[He, Bryan] asked me how I explained my strange principle of non-resistance to evil by violence, and as usual he brought forward the argument, which seems to everyone irrefutable, of the brigand who kills or violates a child. I told him that I recognize non-resistance to evil by violence because having lived seventy-five years, I have never, except in discussions, encountered that fantastic brigand, who, before my eyes desired to kill or violate a child, but that perpetually I did and do see not one but millions of brigands using violence towards children and women and men and old people and all the laborers in the name of the recognized right of violence over one's fellows. . . . No one has seen the fantastic brigand, but the world, groaning under violence, lies before everyone's eyes.

There are, however, certain things that Tolstoy does not explain. He tells in considerable detail how people are persuaded to rely upon religious and political authority, through instruction by their elders, by custom, by propaganda. He describes at length how the injunctions of great religious teachers are inverted and made to work out in society with consequences exactly opposite to those intended

by the teachers; he gives case after case of apparently good men who have done cruel things all their lives, without feeling any guilt—great novelist and acute observer of human nature, Tolstoy sees all this and describes it faithfully, but he does not tell us how *he* came to penetrate the self-deception and fraud that make men go to war. He cannot reveal, although he tries in his *Confession*, the source of his indomitable moral determination.

Perhaps the mystery will never be made clear. Perhaps this moral determination will simply grow, and spread, as Tolstoy expected, until one day it becomes the rule of life for all.

COMMENTARY

THE FAILURES OF "TECHNIQUE"

TOLSTOY'S attack on the authority and power of government (see Review) becomes less unsettling if we notice that he is mainly concerned with the folly of letting government displace normal moral decision. We say, and we may be right in saying, that Nature, or spontaneous human intelligence, is "not enough" to order a human society, but it does not follow from this that government or any external authority should therefore be made supreme.

Political questions are *not* the ultimate questions of human life, even if they are made to seem so by the abuse of political power. Politics is social technique. It does not of itself embody human meaning or lead to human fulfillment, and the substitution of political formulas for the independent realities of vision and growth is only one more symptom of the externalizing mania of the age.

Everything that Wylie Sypher says in criticism of the technical alienation of art through the "exploitation of a medium for its own sake" applies to the exploitation of politics for its own sake. The failures of political manipulation lie all about—some of them so nightmarish we can hardly bear to think of them.

There is no use in saying that the governments of the "West" stand for precisely those liberties which protect a man from the invasions of politics. They do this in theory, and there is of course *some* freedom left, but Tolstoy's view is basically confirmed by the practice of the United States. A professor at Columbia wrote of the mood on the campus last April:

I saw the students growing more and more desperate under the pressures of the War. The War's large evil was written small in the misery with which they pondered hour by hour the pitiful list of *their* options: Vietnam or Canada or graduate school or jail!

And a Columbia student said:

. . . it isn't a free country. You can't drop out of school because you'd be drafted, and you have to study certain things to get a degree, and you have to have a degree to make it, and you have to make it to get what you want, and you can't even decide what you want, because it's all programmed into you beforehand. You can *say* what you want, but you won't be heard because the media control that, but if you do manage to be heard the People won't like it, because the people have been told what to like. And if they don't like you, they might even kill you, because the government endorses killing by exemplification.

Today's Tribal Encyclopedia is fully as powerful as the one Plato contested. If you read history, you wonder, sometimes, how any bright young man in the fifteenth century could have been willing to take a job with the Inquisition. But then, we have such bright young men, too. As Erich Kahler said in *The Disintegration of Form in the Arts*:

Scholars and scientists, who in their research control most delicate operations, may be seen sometimes lacking in all sense of reason when faced with issues of general human import. Those 600 medical, or rather anti-medical scientists at Fort Detrick in Maryland who prepare the most devilish kinds of genocide, the physical and chemical engineers who work on the refinement of nuclear weapons, the military planners, the "think tanks" who have calculated all rationally foreseeable circumstances and tell us that, given adequate protective measure like getting used to spending our lives in fashionable caves, not the *whole* nation would perish in a third world war, but only a mere 60 to 100 million people—such experts if confronted with the question of broadly human implications, would answer, with the pride of their professional amorality: "These matters exceed our competence; what we are concerned with are purely technical, rational problems."

Tolstoy tells of his conversation with an old Russian soldier who had served under two Tsars—Alexander I and Nicholas I—and who again and again had beaten soldiers to death for insubordination; if they didn't die from one beating they were sent to the hospital to be healed in preparation for more blows:

He told all this, and when I tried to draw from him some expression of remorse for these things, he was at first amazed and afterward alarmed.

"No," said he, "that was all right; it was the judgment of the court. Was it my fault? It was by order of the court and according to law."

He displayed the same serenity and lack of remorse regarding the horrors of war, in which he had taken part, and of which he had seen so much in Turkey and Poland.

He told about children murdered, about prisoners dying of cold and starvation, about a young boy—a Polyak—run through by a bayonet and impaled on a tree. And when I asked him if his conscience did not torment him on account of these deeds, he utterly failed to understand me.

"This is all a part of war, according to law, for the Tsar and the fatherland. These deeds are not only not wrong, but are such as are honorable and brave, and atone for many sins." The only things that troubled him were his private actions the fact that he, when an officer, had beaten and punished men. These actions tormented his conscience. But in order to be pardoned for them he had a resource: this was the holy communion, which he hoped he should be enabled to partake of before he died. . . .

The fact that he had helped to ruin and destroy innocent women and children, that he had killed men with bullet and bayonet, that he had stood in line and whipped men to death and dragged them off to the hospital and back to torture again—all this did not trouble him at all, all this was none of his business, all this was done, not by him, but as it were, by someone else. . . .

So it is government as Sovereign *moral* authority, working hand in hand with traditional "spiritual" authority, that Tolstoy would abolish.

There is no occasion for alarm. It will not happen suddenly. The authority of individual conscience cannot be established by a mass movement guided by revolutionary "experts," for conscience stops being conscience when directed or interpreted by other people. And there would still be politics in a society governed by individual conscience but only as a craft devoid of ideological overtones. In such a society, political pretenders to moral authority would not be

listened to at all. Everyone would know that there is no salvation in technique.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A DESIGNER'S DIAGNOSIS

THE designer and art educator do not need to be told of the importance of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion*, published in 1947 (Paul Theobald, Chicago). They have been using the book for years. For the general reader, however, it may come as a surprise to discover that Moholy-Nagy had a clearer grasp of the basic social, cultural, and educational problems of the present than many of the "experts" who devote themselves to such matters. The book is a magnificent illustration of the importance of a background of creative activity in all education. Moholy-Nagy has a working grasp of the meaning of wholeness in human life. From his days as a teacher at the Bauhaus, one suspects, and later from his experiences in Chicago, he learned that a major defect of the modern industrial age is the eagerness to cash in on specialized skills at the expense of normal human development. *Vision in Motion*, therefore, is not only a pioneering work on the meaning and possibilities of industrial design; it is also a social critique of great clarity which offers educational remedies for what has gone wrong.

Moholy-Nagy begins with an analysis of the impact on society of the Industrial Revolution. Briefly he sketches the rapid development of industrial production and its demand for trained technicians. "Creative abilities," he points out, "concentrated on limited problems, produced stunning results, expanding the boundaries of the capitalistic economy." The craftsman was eliminated by the production-line employee, who "became inanimate, working in a maze of tunnels and gangways of the specialized labyrinths." Then:

With growing industrial opportunities the entire educational system attained a vocational aspect. Schools lost sight of their best potential quality: universality. They lost their sense of synthesis to the extent of a complete separation of the various types of

experience. On the other hand "prosperity" increased, and with it the temptation to enlarge profits. Everyone seemed satisfied. Production figures and balance sheets "spoke for themselves," being sufficient justification of training for profit. High premiums were paid for labor-saving devices, automatic machines. The specialists, proud of their abilities which could be translated into dollars and cents, knew more and more about less and less.

He continues, showing the alienation process at work in unsuspected ways. Specialists thought only of their own achievements, "neutralizing human sympathies, the natural social reflexes of a healthily developed individual." It was an age of isolation, of fierce competition, and "morality" existed only in limited situations. Moholy-Nagy sums up the result:

Irresponsibility prevails everywhere. An advertising artist for instance, makes a layout for the sale of a product. He is responsible for nothing but his own art; that is, his professional standard. The merchant sells the product which is advertised. But he is not responsible for its possibly inferior contents, as it is already packed before it reaches him. The manufacturer is not responsible either because he only finances the production; the formula comes from the hired staff of a research laboratory trained to produce results which will compete with the products on the market. Altogether, responsibility has been subdivided to the evasiveness of the microscope.

Turning to the effects of industrialism on education, Moholy-Nagy points out that a low grade of literacy is necessary for the workers in an industrial society. They have to be able to read printed instructions. The initial result of this urgent stimulus seemed a fulfillment of the democratic dream:

A wholesale literacy seemed at first to open new and happy vistas for everyone. But, paradoxically, mass distribution of schooling accomplished a negative miracle. The speedy dispensation of education for *immediate use* . . . provided the masses with a quick training but threw overboard its purpose namely, that "not knowledge but the power to *acquire* knowledge is the goal of education." (Pestalozzi.) Exactly this was circumvented. The masses received a training by verbalization, emphasizing the process of receiving instead of producing. The goal was not to express oneself, to think independently and be

alert, but to "apply" education for running machines according to instruction.

Added to this reductive influence was what Moholy-Nagy calls "unofficial education"—"the sum total of a thousand forces which try to influence public opinion, from advertising to town hall meetings; from art to science; a mighty propaganda machine run by intricately interwoven interests of lobbyists and pressure groups, monopolists and hired politicians from whose tentacles there is almost no escape." The psychological effect is spelled out:

This service is rapid and versatile and covers a multitude of subjects without being concerned with human or social essentials. It simply stuffs the public with spot news, spectacular but unrelated facts. If there are no "thrillers," they are deliberately manufactured. The emotional life of the individual becomes filled with worthless schemes. Being in the midst of a thousand details, but missing all fundamental relationships, his world becomes shallow. The public is eager to learn; but without having been taught to think analytically, it succumbs to the influence of flash-quick commentators hired by, or unconsciously servile to, pressure groups. They fill the mind with straw and prejudice; they machine-gun their victims with half knowledge, conglomerations of significant and insignificant facts. Not given the tools of integration, the individual is not able to relate all this casual and scattered information into a meaningful synthesis. He sees everything in clichés. His sensibility dulled, he loses the organic desire for self-expression even on a modest level. His natural longing for direct contact with the vital, creative forces of existence becomes transformed into the status of being well informed and well entertained. Typical examples are the radio quiz programs which offer cash to the best memorizer; the comic strips which deal in episodes without any psychological foundation; the round table discussions which always present both sides, with the wittiest and not the wisest drawing the applause; and—above all—the digest mania which tailors fiction and fact till they fit a prescribed number of pages and a predetermined attitude of a group financing the publication. In all these, the public is fed predigested pap by commentators as a substitute for independent thinking. . . .

There is a lot more to this diagnosis, showing its effect in trivializing culture. The gist, for education, is this:

The unofficial education forced men—worker and employer alike—into a fallacious conception of their role in society. They were taught to master a ceaseless competitive rush for the utilization of the earth's treasures and consider money the sole measuring rod of success. They were turned into human machines with record output in specialized fields.

But specializing the individual too early leads to a tragic impasse: to the neglect of physiological and psychological impulses of acquiring and releasing a broad range of emotional and intellectual experiences.

It should be said that this criticism is only a small fraction of the book, which is filled with discussion of design, of education of designers, and is illustrated by many reproductions of student and professional work. The designer's art, as practiced and taught by Moholy-Nagy, becomes a practical therapy for the civilization whose ills he has so clearly understood.

FRONTIERS

New Patterns of Cooperation

THE reader of *Sharing Our Industrial Future?* (London: Industrial Society, 1968) by Roger Sawtell, before finishing this compact and richly informing study, is likely to wonder whether, just possibly, the attitudes and motivations it reports are an anticipation of great socio-economic changes which are to come. The author, a man with considerable experience in business, was asked by William Temple College to develop information on a little-known subject—the participation in decision-making by the employees of industrial enterprises. There is a background of social idealism for the project, since the College, named after Archbishop William Temple, is an educational and research institution "inspired by the view that behind all the contemporary issues of society, government, industry, education and the social services lie fundamental questions of belief about life and work which urgently demand consideration." The intent was to locate and describe examples of participation of employees in the management processes of industry, at every level, and to obtain some idea of the trend, if any, toward further participation of this sort. For this purpose, the operations of twenty-one companies were examined—companies ranging from ten employees to ones with many thousands of workers. Explaining the objects of the research, the author says:

The study starts from the assumption that an extension of participation is likely to be of value to the mature development of an industrial society.

It is not a sociological research project and the companies studied are certainly not a statistical sample of British industry. The companies were selected because most of them were thought to have more than average experience of participation. It is a manager's study for managers rather than an academic study for academics. An attempt has been made to stand between academic people who are able to interpret the evidence and may see the way forward but are not in a position to do anything about it, and the pragmatic industrialists who can do plenty about

it once they are convinced that a realistic way forward is indicated.

It should be said that these businesses are all normally successful businesses and represent widely diverse activities. They include chemical manufacturers, a printer, a shoe manufacturer, and makers of electric heaters. There is also an oil refinery, a steel fabricator, and a large department store organization with sixteen retail outlets. Five of the companies are employee-owned; two are completely nationalized operations, and several have a co-op form of organization. There seems to be no necessary connection between profit-sharing and worker participation. Managers generally agree that while decision-making in collaboration with employees takes longer, the results are more satisfying.

There is a lot of careful definition in this study, the intention being to regard as "decision-making" only activities which can be identified as the exercise of power. It becomes obvious, from the detailed descriptions of each of the companies involved, that the basic prerequisite for genuine participation is mutual confidence. Again and again it is reported that years of effort were required for this trust to be established. The common-sense character of the approach becomes evident in the comment on one of the companies—the department store operation:

Company O is the only large co-ownership company in the study [1868 employees], and indeed the only one in Britain, and the authors conclude that in the fifty years of its existence it has succeeded in its objectives of sharing information and sharing profits, but has been less successful in sharing power. This is corroborated in the present study in which company O has a medium level of participation. The company is aiming to increase the amount of joint consultation and shared decision-making, but this will be more difficult to achieve than for a smaller company, as company O is made up of sixteen scattered branches. Although executive control may be decentralized to each branch it is not easy to see how policy control can be anything but centralized in a concern of this kind. Employees are co-owners of the whole group rather than co-owners of the establishment where they

work. Compared with its competitors, this company has traded profitably and is efficiently managed.

The orientation of the sponsors of the study is suggested by the following:

Those who are concerned with co-ownership and participation will hope that company O will succeed in evolving a pattern of control which will indicate an effective way forward for other large concerns which see the benefits of the high level of participation demonstrated in some smaller companies, but do not yet see a proved method of achieving it without breaking up the large concern into smaller independently owned units. The latter course would be against the trend toward larger groups in order to obtain economies of scale, and so the question of "social cost" arises. How can the social advantages of independently owned small establishments, up to 500 people, be weighed against the economic advantages of larger groups? This leads to further questions about the kind of society we want. Are we prepared to risk a reduction in standard of living to achieve an agreed social maturity, or do we regard a continually increasing standard of living as the dominant objective and make the best we can of the social gains and losses within this objective?

The tendency among the employee-owned companies is to put a definite ceiling on growth, and, instead of expanding, to create new companies of similar size elsewhere. While the author does not see this kind of growth as a typical process, its possible significance is noted:

These companies will continue to be pioneers carried forward by their belief in this form of industrial society, as well as by their economic performance. No society can continue to evolve without such pioneers, and many of the ideas of their predecessors which were considered radical and even "dangerous" in the 1920's are regarded now as conventional practice acceptable to all reasonable men in industry. For example, Mond was a pioneer of positive attitudes toward trade unions, Cadbury was a pioneer of sickness benefit, Renold a pioneer of joint consultation. The rate of change is such that it would be possible for co-ownership to be accepted in less than fifty years, as the standard arrangement for any reputable industrial concern.

It is difficult to convey the many useful and interesting aspects of this study in a brief review, and impossible to detail the emerging forms of

cooperation and integration of purpose that result from efforts of this sort. The author points out that the general public knows little of such pioneering progress in the human relationships of industrial society, so that purchase of this book would be a useful contribution to a good cause. (The price is 125 6d, and the address of the Industrial Society is 48 Bryanston Square, London WI, England.)