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THE RULES OF CRITICISM

A LITTLE over twenty-three years ago (in March, 1945), Dwight Macdonald contributed to his magazine, *Politics*, an essay entitled "The Responsibility of Peoples," in which he sought for the causes behind the monstrous and very nearly incomprehensible crime of the Nazi death camps. What will explain this mania for genocide, preceded by an insane, yet—once its assumptions are accepted—technically rational program of dehumanization? *Who* can be held responsible for all this horror? *Why* did an ostensibly civilized people like the Germans tolerate what was done in their name?

Macdonald tried to illuminate the field of possibilities surrounding these questions, but he did not answer them. He did not pretend to answer them. In fact, the implicit point of his essay is the apparent impossibility of answering them. Part of his method in illustrating the difficulty of finding answers is to point to matching infamies, although on a much smaller scale, in the behavior of other nations. The closest he comes, anywhere in his discussion, to providing a new focus of inquiry is in this melancholy paragraph:

> It is a terrible fact, but it is a fact, that few people have the imagination or the moral sensitivity to get very excited about actions which they don't participate in themselves (and hence about which they feel no personal responsibility). The scale and complexity of modern governmental organization, and the concentration of political power at the top, are such that the vast majority of the people are excluded from this participation. How many votes did Roosevelt's refugee policy cost him? What political damage was done by the Churchill-Labor government by its treatment of India, or by last year's Bombay famine? What percentage of the American electorate is deeply concerned about the near starvation of the Italians under the Allied occupation? As the French say, to ask such questions is to answer them.

Well, reading this makes it plain that we have very short memories. That is, even people old enough to remember these cruel apathies will now recall them only vaguely, if at all. You might argue that they *needn't* remember them, since present urgencies of social responsibility should now claim our attention. It is "natural," we say, for people to forget. That is the way they are. But is it really the way *people* are? We can learn from the psychoanalysts, if not from common sense, that individual persons may have almost ineffaceable memories of the wrongs they feel they have done. Traumas of guilt sometimes haunt individuals all their lives, and they have to be cured of these dark memories if they are to enjoy mental health. So it is only people loosely identified as members of vast groups called "nations" that have such bad memories. *They* don't remember. And in this definition, "they" are hardly people at all, but rather low-grade, nominally human units to whom little responsibility attaches because the national self-concept of the member of a nation is itself low-grade, having only slightly coherent moral intelligence. The latter is—or has been made into—a passive, systematically manipulated, and only crudely responsive intelligence—although we sometimes see glorious exceptions. So, when we speak of the "moral responsibility" of a nation, we are talking about the collective behavior of a mass of these low-grade units, as though we had no knowledge of the much more sensitive and morally responsible individuals behind the façade of a vague national unity. But then, when we are aroused to moral indignation, we particularize the aim of our indictment, making "nation" mean personally all those individuals who are involved. We call them bitterly to account, and feel justified in hating them for their crimes.

But they do not hear what we say. They were hardly "there," personally, when the dreadful things we charge them with were done. *They* didn't do those things. The crimes were done over their heads. At the time, some of them say, they didn't even know what was happening. And this, we say to ourselves, is a *terrible* situation, so we make our accusations sharper, our bill of particulars more vividly particular, their guilt even more unmistakable. Then, after a few years, we forget. There are always more up-to-date offenses that require attention.

At the same time, attempting to practice an impersonal objectivity, our psychologists tell us that people get conditioned into acceptance of criminal behavior. It is rationalized, they say. The child reared in the slums has a lot of reasons which seem sound to him for his delinquent behavior. British *honor* required the Opium War. Hatred of *Communism* is behind our adventure in Vietnam. The genocide practiced by American settlers against the Indians was inevitable because they couldn't adapt to *Progress.* Atom-bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved a lot of *lives.*

So, if you believe the psychologists, you have to give up any idea of moral responsibility. And that's *materialism.* Right and wrong are real. We dare not sacrifice our ideals to moral relativism. Civilization would disappear. So the practice of criticism must continue. How could anyone argue that it ought not to continue?

Yet, obviously, we are lacking in stable, impartial canons for the practice of moral criticism. History is full of evidence that moral indignation is often bolstered by the devious collaboration of self-interest. As Avery Craven says, in *The Coming of the Civil War* (Scribner's, 1942):

> The old assumption that the movements against slavery arose entirely from a disinterested hatred of injustice and that their results were good beyond question can no longer be accepted without reservations. Those who force the settlement of human problems by war can expect only an unsympathetic hearing from the future. Mere desire to do "right" is no defense at the bar of history.

One need not accept Mr. Craven's speculation that slavery "may have been almost ready to break down of its own weight," in order to admit, as he says, that, "After Garrison began his crusade from Boston, the Southern opponents of slavery grew increasingly silent," or that, before long, in the North, "Hatred of the South had supplanted love for the Negro!"

It is not a question of wishing that Garrison had remained silent, but of wondering if he could have improved on what he said, or how he said it. In a passage concluding his survey of the Northern criticism of slavery, Craven summarizes:

> Because it combined in itself both the moral and democratic appeal, and because it coincided with sectional rivalry, the abolition movement gradually swallowed up all other reforms. The South became the great object of all efforts to remake American society. Against early indifference and later persecution, a handful of deadly-in-earnest men and women slowly built into a section's consciousness the belief in a Slave Power. To the normal strength of sectional ignorance and distrust they added all the force of Calvinistic morality and American democracy and thereby surrounded every Northern interest and contention with holy sanction and reduced all opposition to abject depravity. When the politician, playing his risky game, linked expansion and slavery, Christian common folk by the thousands, with no great personal urge for reforming, accepted the Abolition attitudes towards both South and slavery. Civil war was then in the making.

How might the Northern critics of slavery have done better? They could, Mr. Craven seems to think, have balanced their denunciations of Southerners with corresponding personal reforms—have found in themselves less dramatic but basically similar faults, and erased them. And, incidentally, they could have learned about these faults from Southern critics of the North. But the Northerners didn't *hear* those criticisms. Why? They were too filled with their own righteousness to hear them; and the Southerners' depravity was objective and great, while the North's offenses were by comparison petty and small. It is a

human habit to measure other people's morality by principle, our own by statistical measures which permit overlooking minor defects.

But what about the practicability of making criticisms which, in the nature of things, are not going to be heard? Is there any obligation to consider the hearing capacity of people whose wrong-doing needs attention? How do you choose a theatre for critical operations?

There is an important sense in which the only criticism that can be realistically expected to have a constructive effect is *self*-criticism. So an intelligent man, writing at the social or political level, is likely to address himself to the flaws in the behavior of his own country, instead of those in some distant land. If he is morally motivated, and wants to do something besides make himself feel delightfully virtuous, he will speak to the moral sensibility of his countrymen. He will feel it inappropriate, as an American, say, to tell the Irish or the French what they ought to do. Of course, he may speak simply as a human being, proposing trans-national conceptions of human good, but then what he says will have a generality which does not single out any national or ethnic group for blame. He speaks then only as a man, and to all men. By moral instinct, moreover, he does not address all men as "sinners"—who is *he* to do that? He appeals, if he wants to be heard, to the potentials for good that he believes to exist in all men. In the town or city where he lives, he may speak specifically of evils that should be corrected, saying that *we* ought to do thus and so. But he includes himself in the "we," which gives him a fair chance of being heard. He does not set himself up as "better" than other people. He may *be* better, but that is irrelevant, and he may try to hide the fact, or—what is more likely—he may not even think of it. If a man feels able to tell others what to do because he thinks he is "better" than they are, they will hear only his claim to virtue, not the counsel offered. They hear the negative self-reference which results, not the good advice.

Some kind of law of moral consciousness is plainly in operation here. It might be formulated: Other things being equal, criticism has a chance of being heard in inverse ratio to the moral self-interest or egoism of the critic. Great moralists, one suspects, have an intuitive recognition of this principle. You accept their criticism because it doesn't set out to fill you with self-contempt.

The fact that this law has so little recognition is good evidence that modern man has only the most primitive conception of morality. He concentrates on being *right*, when the problem, ethically considered, lies in being heard.

This problem crops up in all human relationships—in the family, the community, the nation, the world. It is evident in religion in connection with the idea of "authority" and how the use of religious authority affects the self-conception of the believer. It exploits the believer's insecurity about himself. In abstract terms, for example, the man who conforms completely to external religious authority has no self. His self, as moral agent, has no presence in what he does. What he does is determined by "others"—the authorities. You could even say that he has no morality. It follows that the moralist who wants to rule others with an external or coercive authority can make people "moral" only by obliterating their selves. But he can't really succeed in this, of course; he can only repress the selves of other men; he can only "demoralize" them, and in time they will burst out as nihilists and destroyers, declaring the new identity acquired from the mutilations they have suffered at the hands of authority. They come out of their terrible confinement by a means matching the forces that drove them into it. Statistically, what else can they do? Non-statistically, of course, there are sometimes heroes among them who have been able to preserve inviolate their sense of autonomous being. From such men you get ennobling doctrines of the self such as are taught by a Viktor Frankl, a Gandhi, or a Martin Luther King. We can't explain these men, any

more than we can explain Neros and Hitlers. They are the wonderful exceptions, the men who cannot be victimized except externally. They are the only opponents the Grand Inquisitor has reason to fear. Social science which takes no account of their seminal presence is like *Hamlet* without the Prince.

In the interest of a future science of morality, someone should do a study of the forms of criticism practiced by great moralists—the Tolstoys, the Thoreaus, the Gandhis—and the Martin Luther Kings and the Dolcis. These men are uncompromising in their rejection of evil, yet they locate no real enemies; their condemnations are always impersonal; they find no scapegoats, yet their aim is practically perfect. Lesser critics who think that they must have individual human targets are always going back to these morally distinguished men for ammunition. They borrow, but do not acquire, the moral vision of great critics; and then, because it is not really their ammunition, they don't aim it well. Their self-righteousness causes human targets of imperfection to pop up everywhere. They are all the time shooting; they may hurt a lot of people, but nobody gets any better. As one of the great moralists of all time has said:

> When the Great Tao falls into disuse, benevolence and righteousness come into vogue. When shrewdness and sagacity appear, great hypocrisy prevails. It is when the bonds of kinship are out of joint that filial piety and paternal affection begin. It is when the state is in a ferment of revolution that loyal patriots arise.
>
> Cast off your holiness, rid yourself of sagacity, and the people will benefit an hundredfold. Discard benevolence and abolish righteousness, and the people will return to piety and paternal love. Renounce your scheming and abandon gain, and thieves and robbers will disappear. These three precepts mean that outward show is insufficient, and therefore they bid us to be true to our proper nature,—to show simplicity, to embrace plain dealing, to reduce selfishness, to moderate desire.

How could we possibly *use* this advice? Right in the middle of things, the way we are now? Well, Lao-tse is a master ironist before he is a moralist. He doesn't mean for people to do exactly what he says. He means for them to consider how they *feel,* while they are doing whatever they think they must do.

But Lao-tse was writing for kings and princes, wasn't he? He was discoursing on how to *manage* people, and we don't believe in that; we are a democracy. Well, we may be a democracy, but it is silly to say we don't believe in managing people. This is an election year. Nobody runs for office in this country without trying to find out how to manage people. And how do you suppose the people on Madison Avenue got so rich?

Perhaps we can get out of this difficulty by resorting to Plato. Plato said that there could not be a good society until kings become philosophers, or philosophers kings. In a democracy, every man is a king, so Lao-tse's advice is now for everybody.

A radical candor is required of us in these times of breakdown and failure. We need to admit, for example, that politics has become almost entirely a method for controlling other people. We need some politics, of course, but not the absolute sort of politics we practice now. Politics has never been humanly efficient except as deliberate makeshift and unavoidable compromise; it provides no legitimate absolutes except the rule of self-restraint in political solutions, since every political solution, if pushed too hard, turns into abortive failure in relation to human values. Politics can never take the place of self-criticism and self-reform.

The very limited uses of politics for the purposes of ethics and morality became evident to Plato fairly early in life. The delusion that politics is a way of *making* people behave like philosophers, before they are willing to try, was a delusion in Plato's time and it is a delusion in ours. It is a delusion which makes criticism almost always a criticism of *other people,* and when you criticize other people you are inclined to want to have in the background the power to enforce what

you propose: politics knows no other means. One practical effect of enforcing political solutions is that it eventually turns everybody into either a victim or an executioner; and it is not until people begin to realize that as individual men they live in a society which has made them into *both* victims and executioners, that they begin to look around for better ideas of morality.

What then is good criticism? It is the art of recalling oneself and others to self-reference. For it is only from self-reference that men become willing to change. A philosopher changes himself through self-reference. A mathematician, as Bronowski points out, citing Godel, changes his system of axioms through self-reference. A statesman may begin changes in his nation through reference to the origin of its dignities and responsibilities. That, surely, is the content of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Lao-tse talks about the Tao—which is ultimate self-reference. Where are all the potentialities of good for human beings? They are in the Self. This is the meaning of Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man.* Nothing really good can happen for a man except from his own self-reference. The exercise of freedom is always action as the fruit of self-reference.

So, if criticism is to bring good results, it must lead those criticized to self-reference. And how is this possible unless the criticism includes the idea that the good is in themselves? This takes time, of course. It involves growth, and mysterious existential timing controls growth. And when history closes in, seeming to declare a moratorium on good, because men have refused to declare a moratorium on evil, all that men determined to honor the good, and to honor its potentiality in other men, can do is to work for good by seeming to work outside of history as it is commonly understood. A term for this stance is conscientious objection. It is often called "negative," but theory is the positive aspect of the life of the conscientious objector. He says no to the compulsions of history, but he dare not say no to the counsels of the self, which urge him on to search for the good, which at that moment may be available only as an *idea* of the good, and capable of what others regard as a very limited practice. Yet if it seems that no "action" is possible for him, he still can think. This may be what is needed most, since he has been shut out of history by forms of action which have hardly been thought about at all.

Of course, this sort of analysis is deceiving. Men never escape from the arena of action. We have to theorize and act at the same time. There is never a full vacation from responsibility in action, since action is also thought. And while purity of thought may not eliminate the need for compromise in an imperfect world, it may prevent us from making compromises which are futile or degrading. That may be the best we can hope for, and the best we can do.

REVIEW
THE INSPECTION OF ROOTS

THIS is a time of looking at the roots of human belief, and therefore a time of their withering. Very few roots can survive close examination. The tap root on which all other roots depend lies in consciousness. The man who tries to look into consciousness itself, and in some measure succeeds, is likely to be regarded as dangerous—or would be, if people understood what he is attempting. For the most part, men who investigate consciousness make their reports in an obscure cipher. Researches which trace beliefs to their roots soon show that the language of a belief is useless for describing its origins, with the results that a new language, at first an idiom of paradox and contradiction, has to be constructed. Especially at the beginning is the shock of contradiction apparent in what explorers of consciousness say. This makes it easy for the authorities and spokesmen of belief to make fun of them. Socrates, who all his life examined the roots of human conviction, was for Aristophanes a buffoon to be exploited for laughs.

This is an old pattern of response from the believers. The examiner of roots is a threatener of social stabilities, and this, when the implications of what he finds begin to show, casts him as a hero. Ortega has generalized what happens:

> The hero anticipates the future and appeals to it. His gestures have a utopian significance. He does not say that he is but that he wants to be. Thus, the feminist woman [this passage, from *Meditations on Quixote,* was first published in 1914] hopes for the day when women will not need to be feminists. But the comic writer substitutes for the feminists' ideal the modern woman who actually tries to carry out that ideal. As something made to live in the future world, the ideal, when it is drawn back and frozen in the present, does not succeed in satisfying the most trivial functions of existence and so people laugh. People watch the fall of the ideal bird as it flies over the vapor of stagnant water and they laugh. It is a useful laughter: for each hero whom it hits, it crushes a hundred frauds.

So the hero is a risk-taker; and he risks not only mockery, which a good man can bear. There is also that terrible fear felt by believers when an articulate explorer makes them look a little way into the *abyss*—into places where believers can see no roots at all. For in consciousness only the roots men have grown for themselves are visible.

Yet, in a "practical" age, certain immunities develop, reducing the dangers of exploration. The practical man believes that there is no need to pay attention to philosophers and artists. When *they* explore, and get written up in *Time,* what they say has about the same attention as the ads a man reads on the way to work. This is Marcuse's main point in *One-Dimensional Man.* People who expose the rootlessness of modern culture are regarded as entertainers instead of revolutionaries. Their ideas don't "connect up" because the implications of what they say are not understood.

One of the explorers of consciousness now coming into prominence is E. M. Cioran, the Rumanian-born philosopher who lives in Paris. *Time* calls his book, *The Temptation to Exist,* an argument for "the terrible futility of history," adding that he has "defined the case for total pessimism." In the *New Republic* for May 18, Richard Gilman quotes Cioran and comments:

> "To be conscious is to be divided from oneself, is to hate oneself. This hatred seethes at our roots at the same time it furnishes sap to the Tree of Knowledge." Cioran, as Susan Sontag says in her illuminating introduction, is in one sense only the latest in "that melancholy parade of European intellectuals in revolt against the intellect." Yet he is also an elitist of the intellect, uncompromising in his insistence on standards and on daringness in thought, and committed with all the force of his intellect to struggle against the irreconcilabilities that the mind by its very nature opens up between men and the world. He embodies the dilemma in its most acute form and stands, as Miss Sontag says, halfway between a "reprise" of all the old gestures of complaint against the mind and a "genuine transvaluation" of them.

Which seems a way of saying that Cioran is not "against" the intellect at all, but against its

misuse in establishing shallow certainties. Yet the quotations Mr. Gilman presents make Cioran *sound* as though he were against intellectual operations:

> "Every word is a word *de trop.* Yet the question is: to write. Let us write. Let us dupe each other."
>
> "The history of ideas is no more than a parade of labels converted into so many absolutes."
>
> "One does not withdraw one's confidence from words, nor violate their security, without setting one's foot in the abyss."

What he seems to be doing is declaring a universal credibility gap. This is hardly a new idea. It is at least as old as Buddhism. The Buddhists spoke of the delusion of *namarupa, of* name and form, adding the trap of sensory objectivity to the trap of words—a more complete analysis. One might conclude that Cioran has entered the abyss and lost his balance as a philosopher, but regained it as an artist. What he says seems a flirtation with nihilism, yet his style is so effective that there is a real contradiction between what he says and what he communicates. An energy of consciousness belies his pessimism; just as the vigor of the declaration of meaninglessness in the Theatre of the Absurd forces the audience to search for meaning anyway.

But these are phenomena possible only in a "practical" age. The people of a civilization which took philosophy seriously—whether from innocence or an unimaginable maturity—would not permit these antics at all. They would hold philosophers and artists fully responsible as *men.*

This becomes evident when you ask, What would Cioran and, say, Beckett, do if put in charge of a kindergarten? The children, at least, are *real.* The question invites another sort of practicality—something which the Buddhists understood thousands of years ago. Western intellectuals, who have penetrated to the ground of Eastern pessimism, seem to ignore the working solution of the Buddhists. An English traveler, G. Lowes Dickinson, spelled it out, half a century ago, at Borobudur, from the portrayal of the life of the Buddha along the terraces of the temple. He wrote in his little book, *Appearances* (Doubleday, 1914):

> We see the new-born child with his feet on lotuses. We see the fatal encounter with poverty, sickness, and death. We see the renunciation, the sojourn in the wilderness, the attainment under the Bo-tree, the preaching of the Truth. And all this sculptured gospel seems to bring home to one, better than the volumes of the learned, what Buddhism really meant to the masses of its followers. It meant, surely, not the denial of the soul or God, but that warm impulse of pity and love that still beats in these tender and human pictures. It meant not the hope or desire for extinction, but the charming dream of thousands of lives, past and to come, in many forms, many conditions, many diverse fates. The pessimism of the master is as little likely as his high philosophy to have reached the mind and heart of the people. The whole history of Buddhism, indeed, shows that it did not, and does not. What touched them in him was the saint and the lover of animals and men. And this love it was that flowed in streams all over the world leaving wherever it passed, in literature and art, in pictures of flowers or mountains, in fables and poems and tales, the trace of its warm humanizing flood.

The intellect has its innings in Buddhism. The Zen iconoclasts too often fail to point out that their attack on conceptualization is not a trick of making the mind blank, but a mature recognition of the limits of the cognitive powers after having *reached* them. Zen floats in a sea of Mahayana metaphysics, and this is the case because there is a region of human consciousness which *needs* the orientation metaphysics provides. Ignoring these needs is like caring nothing for children. And not finding out the limits of rational inquiry is like not growing up. But nobody who neglects children can claim to be grown up.

COMMENTARY
EXCEPTIONS TO CRITICISM

NEARLY everything that is said about institutions is subject to exception—*more or less.* Different sorts of people staff institutions, Schism within institutions of higher learning is a bad sign when the institutions are free, respected, and left alone; but schism is a good sign if the institutions are under pressure and in decline. When clear-thinking and morally aroused men like Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Arrowsmith, and Mr. Billington say what they have said about academic institutions (see Frontiers), it stands to reason that the universities are in pretty bad shape. Yet these three work in academic institutions. And giving voice to forlorn hope is a rightful function of the university.

A useful perspective on this question is provided by Mr. Wolff in this week's "Children." Toward the end of his discussion he remarks that students take up design in order to make a living with it. From this point of view, the practice of design is a trade, and the school teaching design is a trade school. So, in such a relation, the teacher of the designing art must fit the student for the practice of his prospective trade. The student will have to earn his living and, says Mr. Wolff, "We should do all in our power to prepare him for this task." Then he adds:

> However, in carrying out this obligation we should never lose sight of the fact that if we prepare him for a job and nothing else, it is always possible that he will end his days with a job—and nothing else. It is our duty above all to see this does not happen.

Similarly, professors of the higher learning have the obligation to fit the young men who come to them to continue the academic tradition. But these teachers also have a profound obligation to *exceed* the requirements of the academic tradition, if only because the academic tradition, according to expert testimony, is already in decay.

Obviously, thinking about the university and its functions is much more complicated than consideration of, say, a design school. The high humanizing mission of *design,* as Mr. Wolff and Walter Gropius think of it, is only a subjective dimension. The teacher of design doesn't *have* to be a philosopher, too. His profession, that is, does not require it. What makes the career of design interesting and exciting is that some teachers of design and some designers revel in the wonderful ambiguity which this subjective dimension adds to everything they do. They are volunteer philosophers, amateurs of meaning.

The university, on the other hand, is not supposed to be a trade school—yet, according to the almost unanimous voice of its critics, that is exactly what it has become, while pretending devotion to untarnished ideals of scholarship and truth. The pursuit of truth is not a means of making a "living."

It might follow that you can learn far more about everything in a trade school that knows and admits it is a trade school—yet has a secret, subjective dimension of transcendence—than you can in the places of higher learning. For these places are overgrown with parasitic trade practices and degraded by professional careerism. For evidence of the "integrity" of the higher learning, we are reduced to pointing to the few men who admit and deplore these goings-on.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
DIALOGUE ON DESIGN

[This is another of the lectures on teaching art and design, given by Robert Jay Wolff in 1948 at Brooklyn College, New York.]

WHAT does Design mean to a high school student? The question cannot be answered until we define what we mean by design and what we mean by high school student. What is a high school student? For one thing he is a young human being who has just recently emerged from a stage of comparative inner freedom, where conformity to external pressures has been cushioned by the paternal environment. As a youngster he was allowed, and even encouraged, in the free play of his imagination, in the pursuit of his innocent curiosities and, without too much interference, in the enjoyment of his ever-expanding sensory and perceptional experience. The external world, the world of stereotyped adulthood, intruding more and more through the years, finally catches up with him as he makes the turn from childhood to adolescence. Somewhere around the age of twelve or thirteen the world of fantasy, of make-believe and imagination, finally separates itself from the real world. The happy identity of the two is broken. The split in the personality begins and with it the life-long struggle to regain the wholeness of childhood. Here starts the conflict between our deepest inner needs and the rigid and often cruel pattern of external social reality. We know that often the one devours the other, leaving wholeness of a queer sort in the form of either a totally dislocated individual or totally standardized individual—either a childish adult incapable of coming to terms with the workaday world or an adult who has lost the gift of reverie, of wonder, of aimless joy in the touch and sight and smell of things. The sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, gives us the secret of his own great triumph over disequilibrium when he says, "When we cease to be children we are already dead." Siegfried Giedion says the same thing in another way: "Today the direct contact, the coherence between feeling and thinking, has vanished."

This is a gloomy picture. But there is no sense in pretending that it is not a true picture. Education has practiced this kind of self-deception long enough. The mental comfort and complacency which teachers of art and design have so long enjoyed is now being paid for in what has become educational chaos. You as designers about to enter the teaching profession—a profession which, by the way, is being deserted like a sinking ship—you new teachers have not much choice. You cannot be complacent, simply because complacency doesn't work any more. There are too many grown-up people who are beginning to re-evaluate their own cockeyed relationship to their fellow man and to their complex environment. They're beginning to wonder whether their education might have left something out and whether it might not be a good idea to find something better for their younger brothers and sisters and their sons and daughters. In other words, whether you like it or not, you will have to begin thinking up ways and means of keeping this young high school student in one piece, to nourish the feeling side of him and to generate the thinking side of him, to open channels of expression through sight and touch, texture, color, space and form, and vivid imagery, while at the same time leading him gradually to the discipline of order and equilibrium, and through technical practice toward mastery, and above all toward an understanding of the past and of his own times, so that he can guide himself in his creative efforts after he has left you. If he has these things he will not have to be a genius to succeed within himself. For it is within ourselves where success must start and where it ends. In this sense art education is a means to a better way of inner living, to a mastery of the difficult relationship between the individual and his environment, a relationship which cannot be mastered by economic success alone without, on the contrary, destroying it. It will take patience to

convince your high school freshman that his happiness does not lie exclusively in the pot of gold at the end of the short narrow road—for instance, the successful cartoonist. He will not thank you for bringing him back to the aimless joys of self-discovery which were food and drink to him but a few short years before. He will see that as kid stuff. He will not believe you if you tell him that more than one of the financially successful specialists he would like to imitate have sickened of their own sterility and have sought to begin again, from the beginning, in schools that train people to feel and to understand and to see things in their full relationship before it begins to train them as designers. He will not believe you, true as it is, so you will have to find other ways and means to guide and propel his enthusiasm.

What are these ways and means? One is led to expect that they lie exclusively in a bag full of fascinating and subtly prepared exercises and workshop programs. If this were all there was to it we could immediately proceed to the pleasant task of program planning and the examination of desirable workshop methods. We have a wealth of material ready for your creative use and we will eventually get to it. But it would be misleading you to allow you to expect a ready student acceptance without knowledge of the primary content of your subject, which is not design but the human being who is reaching for it.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Let us take a typical high school freshman from a typical urban community who is just turned fourteen. He has his heart set on becoming a rich and famous cartoonist in the shortest possible time. Consider first the forces which have set up in him this powerful and fixed incentive. To start with he has an aptitude, a good eye, a feeling for line, and a great capacity to imitate the drawings he admires. His parents are proud of his facility and, with the best of intentions, encourage him in his ambition, seeing there the means to his future security, which is naturally their deepest concern. He is the envy of his young friends who see in him the budding counterpart of their hero who entertains them with the magic of Superman and Terry and the Pirates. His sensitive male pride is fortified by the knowledge that this is a manly art and has none of the sissy aspects of so-called longhair stuff. Beyond the comic strips he has the approval of the entire community, as evidenced in the ubiquitous subway advertisements illustrating the benefits of chewing gum and the disasters which attend men who don't use the proper shaving cream. All this, and then along we come with what we consider a fascinating collection of exercises on all the wonderful things the drawn line can be made to do. There is nothing more devastating in a design teacher's normally devastated life than the sneer that greets him at this point. What, now, are you going to do?

The first thing is to realize that this boy has a gift for image-making, a keen eye and sensibilities which, if led beyond the walls of his cartoon fixation would go down the many roads of self-discovery and visual knowledge which a broad workshop program would create for him. You cannot explain this to him because rationalization is a poor weak thing next to his own confident view which is fortified by his home, his girl, his friends, in fact by everything but the kitchen stove.

It is obvious that there is no way on earth by which you could possibly change this boy's mind. Actually, there is no need to destroy his conviction. It would not even be desirable, for he may very well turn out to be an excellent cartoonist. But it is possible to divert his efforts into a wider range of sensory and æsthetic experience by accepting and using the very fixation you are trying to free him from. Show him Alexander Calder's masterful and witty wire images. Tell the boy that this too is cartooning. I'm sure Calder wouldn't mind. As a matter of fact, Calder's children's classes are fabulously successful. Let the boy fool around with wire. He'll probably amaze himself with his new results and they'll be different enough in form from his mannered drawings to give him new respect for

this process of self-discovery. Show him (but only once) drawings by Toulouse Lautrec and some of the lighter advertisements of Paul Rand. And don't fail to mention that Rand does pretty well financially. Show him a few of the best in children's book illustrations. Point out how the character of the line in all these works differs. Convince him that a potential cartoonist does himself an injustice not to at least examine the possibilities in linear expression beyond his cherished Superman convention. Lead him to observe the lightning stroke in the sky and the rich pattern of the bare branches of a tree in winter. He is not so far from the days when such things absorbed his eye and he may somehow find the bridge over the gap between the things he loved and enjoyed as a kid and the things he would like to do as a man. This would be a beginning, and a pretty rough beginning it is on a teacher. It's hard work and it takes sensitive thinking and insight. There's only one alternative: let him develop in the image that the world of Super Suds and words spelled backwards sets up in him. True, he will be living in this world and he will be earning his livelihood there. It is also true that we should do all in our power to prepare him for this task. However, in carrying out this obligation we should never lose sight of the fact that if we prepare him for a job, and nothing else, it is always possible that he will end his days with a job—and nothing else. It is our duty above all to see this does not happen.

I want to end with a paragraph from a book by Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus:

> As our struggle with prevailing ideas proceeded, the Bauhaus was able to clarify its own aims in the process of getting to grips with the problem of design from every angle and formulating its periodic discoveries. Our guiding principle was that artistic design is neither an intellectual nor a material affair, but simply an integral part of the staff of life. Further that the revolution in æsthetics has given us fresh insight into the meaning of design, just as the mechanization of industry has provided new tools for its realization. Our ambition was to rouse the creative artist from his other-worldliness and reintegrate him into the workaday world of realities; and at the same time to broaden and humanize the rigid, almost exclusively material, mind of the business man. Thus our informing conception of the basic unity of all design in relation to life was in diametrical opposition to that of "art for art's sake" and the even more dangerous philosophy it sprang from: business as an end in itself.

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FRONTIERS

A Time For Amateurs

AT the end of his Commencement Address at Reed College, last May, Lloyd J. Reynolds, who teaches art there, told his listeners:

> A life or a society cannot be built by assembling prefabricated parts—especially when, through habit, some built-in obsolescence would be included. We have to grow it. When it dies we can let it go because new forms are being grown to take its place. It is idolatry to worship empty structures, empty outward signs, which lack any inward and spiritual grace, which is always to be found, any time, any place, for it is within the quick split-second of the present moment, which we ride continually throughout our lives.

This is surely what needs to be said about education, but it needs to be said in particular ways, not just in generalized affirmation. *How* does one set about growing better forms of education? Mr. Reynolds implies that places of learning ought to be organic evolutions of the culture which they express and serve. But if there are built-in obsolescences to be avoided, how shall we mark them? We want to do more than set up new hosts to nourish an old infection.

The trouble is pretty basic. A brief review of what effective critics of higher education have said makes this clear. For example, William Arrowsmith:

> Behind the disregard for the teacher lies the transparent sickness of the humanities in the university and American life generally. Indeed, nothing more vividly illustrates the myopia of academic humanism than its failure to realize that the fate of any true culture is revealed in the value it sets upon the teacher and the way it defines him. *"The advancement of learning at the expense of man,"* writes Nietzsche, "is the most pernicious thing in the world. The stunted man is a backward step for humanity; he casts his *shadow* over all time to come. It debases conviction, the natural purpose of the particular field of learning itself is finally destroyed. It is advanced, true, but its effect on life is nil or immoral." . . .
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> It is my hope that education . . . will not be driven from the university by the knowledge-technicians. . . . Socrates took to the streets, but so does every demagogue or fraud. By virtue of its traditions and pretensions the university is, I believe, a not inappropriate place for education to occur. But we will not transform the university milieu nor create teachers by the meretricious device of offering prizes or bribes or "teaching sabbaticals" or building a favorite image. At present the universities are as congenial to teaching as the Mohave desert to a clutch of Druid priests. If you want to restore a Druid priesthood, you cannot do it by offering prizes for Druid-of-the-year. If you want Druids, you must grow forests. There is no other way of setting about it.

Again, the key word is *grow*. But how? We are offered no details on this, but considerable detail on what we are doing wrong. As James H. Billington said in *Life:*

> The humanistic ideal of involving the whole man in the quest for order and beauty through ennobling exposure to other men's accomplishments has been mostly replaced by the training of task-oriented technicians. . . . In its relentless search for money, the modern university has let concern for "image" replace aspiration for an ideal. Public relations with the outside world has become more important than human relations within the university itself. Plato deliberately left the market-place of ancient Athens to set up his academy; modern America has thrust its academicians back into the commercial arena. Marketability—not truth—has become the criterion of intellectual value.

Well, what is to be done? We freely admit that new forms of education will have to be grown, but who will grow them? How should they begin? Martin Kenner said some two years ago: "I don't have any program for change in our universities because I don't believe we can change our university without changing our society." Is he right?

If he is, we have a chicken-or-the-egg problem, since education is held to be a basic way of changing society. The step that must now be taken is to recognize openly what is abundantly clear from history—that the people who have been instrumental in changing society in the past

did not get their education from its established schools. They may have used the facilities, but they paid no attention to educational authority—and often the "facilities" were only the books they managed to get hold of while serving time in prison. So it is time to question the relevance of continuing all this brilliant criticism—Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Arrowsmith and Mr. Billington are certainly brilliant—and to devote attention to helping people who really want to work for change to educate themselves.

The rebelling students all over the world are doubtless as accurate in their charges against academic institutions as the critics we have cited. They know what is wrong. As William Winter said in a recent (June 17) issue of his *Comments:*

> The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley set the fuse which ignited rebellion across the land and on the other side of the ocean. At the root of the common complaint is totalitarian education. Students to be groomed for decision-making are force-fed knowledge, drilled in rote obedience, subjected to rules made by the Administration.

The students know what is wrong, but do they know what would be right? Mr. Winter thinks that the students "achieved many of their aims" at Columbia, but it is fair to ask whether this made Columbia more "congenial to teaching." If places of higher learning are what critics generally agree they are, and if Mr. Winter is right in saying: "The preservation of the status quo is as much a determination of entrenched educators as it is in the general society the determination of parents and officials"—then how much "realism" is there in hoping to change them? Education requires an inviting, permissive atmosphere. Can it grow into being in universities whose administrators are cowed into conformity by militant student demands and sometimes by riots? People learn rioting from riots, not how to create good schools.

If, as Mr. Reynolds says, it is idolatry to worship "empty structures," how shall we characterize attempts to "reform" them? Is there really any point in trying to fill such structures? Their emptiness as Mr. Winter says, is *entrenched.*

The reforms are needed, and ought to come, but in places as big as the great universities of the United States and other countries, the reversal of the tendencies these critics point out is going to take a long, long time. Perhaps they will have to be, quite literally, "reborn." Kenneth Clark is convinced that this is necessary for the public grade schools of the country (see his paper in the *Harvard Educational Review* for the Winter of 1968). Why should the higher learning be any better off?

It is at least certain that change from within will be far more likely as a result of constructive educational activities pursued outside the existing universities. Exciting models are always more influential than calling people (or institutions) names—even when they deserve it. The only important obstacle to making new models for higher education is that we think of universities as such big places, so that developing models for better ones seems quite impossible for amateurs.

But it is already clear that the professionals are locked in position—"entrenched" is the word—and that amateurs will *have* to do it, if it is to happen at all. Maybe this is the true value and meaning of the paperback book—it puts the nucleus of a good library somewhere within the reach of amateurs.