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INTERNALIZING INSTITUTIONS

THE parallels between the individual man and society are many, and while important differences have also to be noted, the similarities are so clear that it seems impossible to think about either the individual or society without being influenced by these correspondences. A man's life has the form of a drama: there is a time of preparation for engagement; then feelings of purpose and direction emerge; there is confrontation and struggle, followed by achievement or failure, or partial success; and then decline and death. The life of a society has similar stages. A man's life has a specific character, created by traits and qualities which are distinctively his, in some sense unique. So with the life of a society. Finally, a man's nature finds expression through the formations of his character which he has shaped for action, and these may be excellent, ordinary, or poor. The corresponding formations of society are embodied in institutions—a term which is broad enough to include not only concrete organizational forms, but also customs and attitudes and beliefs common enough to be spoken of as typical or prevailing. "Character" is a similarly inclusive designation. It is the quiet, theologically and ideologically neutral word we use to indicate inner strength, steadiness, human reliability, and other admirable qualities. The term is quite flexible: we may also say that a person has a "rigid" character, that he is dominating, or is weak and flabby in character.

Discussion now becomes difficult, because the better the man, the less serviceable become the ordinary words we use to characterize human beings. For example, we think of a good *man* as a man with strong masculine qualities, yet a *very* good man has a balancing component of the feminine qualities, or rather, he has a symmetrical balance of *human* qualities, independent of the differentiations of sex—the qualities which, in somewhat different proportion, perhaps, inform both good men and good women. So a strong man has strength, but a man of really good character has gentleness, too, or the kind of strength that does not need compensation by its opposite because of an inner balance in the strength itself. We are speaking of what in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is called a "self-governed sage," of the person Confucius referred to as a Superior Man, or, in modern parlance, the individuated person. The "character" of such human beings eludes description in terms of familiar polarities. Such persons are rare, but they occur, and while an account of them is, as we said, difficult, the intuitive feeling that they are real, are natural possibilities, and have occasionally lighted the pages of history, cannot be ignored.

But here, except for myth and the dreams of the utopian imagination, the comparison with societies breaks down. For what a parallel in society to such individuals calls for would be a society with internalized institutions—that is, hardly any external institutions, or an ideal anarchist society, and we have practically no experience of this.

What would it mean to have a society where the institutions are internalized? At best institutions now represent a pooling of the knowledge a society possesses, in behalf of the coordination of behavior for the common good, and in guidance and direction of those who lack the experience and maturity to control and govern themselves. An institution is a device for harmonizing differences where they need to be harmonized; for setting levels below which people ought not to go, and cannot go without offending or harming others; and for facilitating the means of self-education for all members of the society. Institutions are foci for the identification and spread of communicable truth and they serve as

guardians of the public good by acting as filters which cleanse the currency of thought of aimless, foolish, and destructive doctrines or propaganda.

These are all social functions which, in the ideal society—an ideal society meaning one that moves *toward* the ideal—would gradually be taken over by individuals, the individuals who no longer need such external assistance or protection. Robert M. Hutchins once remarked that the ideal administrator is a man who works to eliminate the need for his job. So an ideal institution is one which fully embodies the intention to make itself no longer necessary. A society of self-governed sages would need no government; a society of self-inspired men would need no church; a society in which everyone teaches would need no schools.

We are a long way from such social and moral splendor, yet it should be evident that the only way to make a *good* society out of an ordinary society would be by setting up tendencies in this direction and strengthening them in every way possible. But it is impossible to accomplish anything by tearing down, abolishing, or abandoning institutions before their original purpose or function has been internalized. The external social complexity which we now find turned against us has first to be understood in terms of the internal functions it has displaced or denied development, for tyrannical institutions can be made socially superfluous only after this preparation. Institutions lose their sovereignty only from lack of nourishment. This is not to suggest that vicious institutions will not be destroyed by revolutionary rage, if a society remains indifferent to their growing abuses, but only that revolutions always find it necessary to fill the vacuum left by suddenly interrupted institutional functions. Then, as we know, the new "revolutionary" institutions may go into a decline even more rapidly than the ones replaced. Authentic freedom from institutional abuses depends almost entirely on invisible growth-factors in the people themselves.

Another way to speak of internalizing institutions would be to say that they need to be dematerialized. What might this mean? A step toward internalization is the removal of the coercive power of institutions. A truly wise man needs no power, will not use it, would end his constructive influence if he did. The deliberate separation of wisdom from power would, then, be the beginning of social wisdom, and therefore of the internalization of institutions. Dematerialized schools would be schools which are externally informal, even casual, where children and people go only because they want to learn. Schools would be sought because good and wise men and women are found there. If the confusion of wisdom with power is worse than illiteracy, then literacy had better be a completely voluntary goal. A step in this direction would remove the authority and responsibility for education from the state and return it to the family—which might incidentally help to restore the dignity and importance of the family. This, too, would be a stage in the internalization of institutions.

Another sort of return to the individual of differentiated functions which have become institutionalized might begin by putting an end to conferences between *representatives* of religion and *representatives* of science—conferences which are called to resolve the differences between these allegedly opposed points of view. But a resolution achieved by "experts" in matters of this sort is of little value to the non-experts, and not much good to the experts, either, judging from what has happened during the thirty years or more during which these conferences have been held. The same might be said of the ecumenical movement, which seeks to unite the denominations of religion. The idea is to unite *men,* not the heads or spokesmen of religious clubs or organizations. Brotherhood is a simple idea and should not need much organizational apparatus. When Emerson resigned from the confinements of the Unitarian ministry, he internalized the religious idea and probably did

more for human brotherhood afterward than all the conferences of divines ever convened.

Many people are troubled today by the institution of Science. They have ample reason to be. Even leading scientists are disturbed by the institutional character of the sciences and becoming outspoken on the subject. In a lecture printed in the *American Scholar* for the Summer of 1964, the distinguished anthropologist, Loren Eiseley, spoke of "the deliberate blunting of wonder, and the equally deliberate suppression of a phase of our humanity in the name of an authoritarian institution: science, which has taken on, in our time, curious puritanical overtones." In this lecture, Dr. Eiseley was deploring the "bipolar division between the humanities and the sciences, which C. P. Snow has popularized under the title of the two cultures." Eiseley recalled the warning by George Santayana, who long ago observed that as science objectified the laws of nature in abstractions, the mind seemed to "lose courage and to become ashamed of its own fertility," so that eventually modern man was "more troubled at the thought of being deceived than at the fact of being mechanized or being bored; and he would wish to escape imagination altogether." Writing of science as an institution, Eiseley continued:

> Like all such structures it is apt to reveal certain behavioral rigidities and conformities which increase with age. It is no longer the domain of the amateur, though some of its greatest discoverers could be so defined. It is now a professional body, and with professionalism there tends to emerge a greater emphasis upon a coherent system of regulations. The deviant is more sharply treated, the young tend to imitate their successful elders. In short, an "Establishment"—a trade union—has appeared. . . .
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> What we must realize as scientists is that the particular institution we inhabit has its own irrational accretions and authoritarian dogmas which can be as unpleasant as some of those encountered in sectarian circles—particularly so since they are frequently subconsciously held and surrounded by an impenetrable wall of self-righteousness brought about because science is regarded as totally empiric and open-minded by tradition.

Dr. Eiseley is arguing for a reunion of the imagination with the scientific spirit, for a recognition of the creative aspect of science in "imaginative insight and intuitive perception." Doubtless because he is an anthropologist, he takes as the basis for his lecture an artfully shaped flint head of a hand ax, flaked to symmetrical beauty and usefulness by an ancient Cro-Magnon man. Science and art, for that pre-historic individual, were not alienated undertakings, and, says Eiseley, "Today's secular disruption between the creative aspect of art and that of science is a barbarism that would have brought lifted eyebrows in a Cro-Magnon cave." Well, we may say, the discoverer in science may be an artist in his way, but what about religion? How can religion and science be reconciled? It is not difficult to show the profound sense of wonder, and even of piety, felt by some of the founders of science, but how could religion be seen as scientific? Probably the answer must be that it can't—not, at least, without radical changes in our conceptions of both science and religion. Yet Eiseley has a suggestion here, too:

> John Donne, in the seventeenth century, gave powerful expression to a feeling applicable as much to science as to literature when he said devoutly of certain Biblical passages: "The literall sense is alwayes to be preserved but the literall sense is not alwayes to be discerned; for the literall sense is not alwayes that which the very letter and grammar of the place presents." A figurative sense, he argues cogently, can sometimes be the most "literall intention of the Holy Ghost."

It is not necessary to argue the identity of the Holy Ghost to grasp Donne's meaning. He speaks in behalf of mythic truth, for meanings carried toward visibility by metaphor, by the cipher of poetic ambiguity. The empiricist's reply, of course, will be that even if such possibilities are granted, the problem of verification, of intellectual security, of turning the wonderful content of the scriptural or poetic image into public truth remains unsolved. And that is true, or it is true for now.

But much of the strength of the empiricist's rhetoric derives from an unspoken assumption that the truths revealed by science are fixed and will endure for all time. This is hardly the case, as an inspection of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* will show. The truths of science in a given framework of meaning last only so long as the context of assumption in which they are embedded lasts; when the context changes, the truths change, too. Moreover, the truths of science are conceived, developed, verified, modified, and sometimes abandoned, over the heads of the great majority of humans, who participate in such goings-on largely through more or less skillfully interpreted hearsay. And this, we may say, is not a situation that lends itself to the internalization of science by the rest of the community. It is a problem without a solution, if scientific knowledge is to be regarded as having crucial importance.

There is another way to think comparatively about science and art, or even science and religion. In a posthumously published essay on art, John Stuart Mill wrote:

> Every art has one first principle, or general major premise not borrowed from science, that which enunciates the object aimed at, and affirms it to be a desirable object. The builder's art assumes that it is desirable to have buildings; architecture (as one of the fine arts) that it is desirable to have them beautiful and imposing. The hygienic and medical arts assume, the one that the preservation of health, the other that the cure of disease, are fitting and desirable ends. These are not propositions of science. Propositions of science assert a matter of fact—an existence, a co-existence, a succession, or a resemblance. The propositions now spoken of do not assert that anything is, but enjoin or recommend that some thing should be. They are in a class by themselves. A proposition of which the predicate is expressed by the words *ought* or *should be* is generically different from one which is expressed by *is* or *will be.*

Art, here, has its most ancient meaning, that of skill in doing, while science is restricted to acts of knowing, so that we might argue that technology, under Mill's definition, would fall within the limits of art. Yet the purposive character of art, as an expression of what ought to be, does indeed differentiate it from science as an exact account of what is. The same thing might be said of religion, which expresses the aspiring side of man's nature. Is there then, could there be, a scientific religion—that is, a religion which includes knowledge of how to realize aspiration?

Such a question throws the entire inquiry into history, for it involves consideration of whether there have been human beings who *did* realize what they aspired to realize. Did they practice a science of becoming, as distinguished from a science concerned with what is?

If this is the critical question, it might be asked of the empirically minded skeptic: What would you accept in evidence of realized aspiration? What sort of testimony is credible? Which witnesses are reliable? Verification in science is always by scientists who do it themselves and then make reports. Could the same thing hold in religion? Which are the best reports? How does one tell?

Well, don't we need science in order to know what really is, for then we can tell better what really ought to be?

The question seems entirely reasonable, yet the specification of science is too vague. Science is not metaphysically neutral. Science, in the name of neutrality and what "really is," has outlawed the idea of purpose, of realization, and therefore of meaning, from the universe. This may not be true of individual scientists, but it is certainly true of the methodology. And the spirit of the methodology seeps into the attitudes of many scientists and infects the rest of mankind.

If this is a universe in which fulfillments of a great many sorts are proceeding, and *if* we practice a science which ignores this possibility and cuts the world of nature up into a great many departments for closer study, allowing no room for the dynamics of meaning, then the artist or aspiring religionist who comes along and asks for

guidance will not get any significant help. As Victor Hugo remarked, the stars are no longer mentionable in poetry. The scientist who ignores the possibility of a larger significance than he is able to perceive in nature—who rejects the spirit of meaning and purpose in scientific speculation—risks the sterility of his science.

It is not necessary to forego discipline in science by reason of the admission of transcendental meaning behind the appearances of nature. It did not cost Newton his great discoveries to be, like other seventeenth-century scientists, a teleologist. If the narrow religious beliefs of his age were a confining influence, they also kept him from being a reductionist in doctrine. He said in *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy:* "Blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety of things." Newton's conceptions were leavened by the Platonism of Henry More, he read Jacob Boehme, and there was no compartmentalization of his mind of the sort that now exists in scientific circles. He believed he was carrying forward the work of ancient philosophers such as Thales and Pythagoras, and he thought of himself as a fellow missioner in a long line of prophets. And, as Frank Manuel says in his biography, *A Portrait of Isaac Newton:*

> Though Newton had a consciousness of his special calling as divinely inspired, his insights always had to be verified, even as Maimonides would have the imaginative faculty restrained by the rational in the true prophet as distinguished from the mere enthusiast. The distinction was fundamental for Newton.

While his mathematical system laid the ground-work for modern mechanism, this was not Newton's intent. After noting the influence of religious mysticism and Neoplatonic thought on Newton's physics, another scholar remarked, "It is needless to add that once the doctrine was put into the hands of scientists of a completely different upbringing it escaped the spiritual conditions that gave it birth.

In short, there are no real obstacles to our return to a science which is less institutional, and more open-minded, metaphysically and even mystically speaking. This attitude does not inhibit science, but, as the personal convictions of numerous great scientists show, from Newton to Eddington and Einstein, such philosophical hospitality and reflectiveness gives majestic dimensions to scientific speculation. And as for literature and the arts, there is this comment by Jean Paulhan, quoted by Wallace Stevens in an essay on the relation between philosophy and poetry:

> It comes to this that philosophers (particularly the philosophers of science) make, not discoveries but hypotheses that may be called poetic. Thus Louis de Broglie admits that progress in physics is, at the moment, in suspense because we do not have the words or images that are essential to us. But to create illuminations, images, words, that is the very reason for the being of poets.

REVIEW

CRITIQUE OF SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

THE PORNOGRAPHY OF POWER by Lionel Rubinoff, published by Quadrangle in 1968, is a powerful attack on value-free social science and a qualified return to Plato for the revival of a sense of individual responsibility. The somewhat curious title of this book is based upon an essay by Geoffrey Gorer, the British anthropologist, in which Gorer defined pornography as "the description of tabooed activities with the purpose of inciting hallucinations or delusions for private enjoyment." Sex, Gorer points out, is not the only human taboo, and Rubinoff blames what he calls the pornography of power on the over-simplified humanism of the Enlightenment, in which man was assumed to be entirely rational, needing only education and political freedom to achieve high social and individual goals. Accordingly, evil as a reality in human behavior was neglected, since social reforms and material progress would solve all the basic problems. Eighteenth-century hedonism was the naive psychology on which this belief was founded, and the elimination of the moral struggle in the individual from theories of human nature led to suppression of any recognition of the sources of evil in man. As Rubinoff says:

> My point, in other words, is that the repression of man's demonic nature leads inevitably to a search for substitute forms of gratification not only in fantasies but also in direct experiences, such as the behavior of nihilism and violence—although the latter is often represented as essentially rational in character, as useful or expedient. In fact, this behavior is nothing more than a devious route to the unconscious origins of irrationality, a condition which is one of the chief sources of the pornographic character of our behavior. The most potent instrument through which the self asserts itself is power. But when the self is taken over entirely by the irrational, power ceases to be an instrument and becomes a substitute form of gratification. It becomes a self-stimulating and self-reinforcing end. And just as the fantasy form of pornography is typically grotesque, exaggerated, and sadistic, so pornographic action and behavior take on analogous characteristics.

Mr. Rubinoff calls his approach "phenomenological." By this he means that he seeks to understand rather than to explain. Too often, a "social science" explanation of an action or condition drifts into being its justification. "Scientific behavioralism," he says, "aims to eliminate mystery," while this book is meant to "encounter a mystery, the mystery and outrage of man's bewildering capacity for evil, and the mystery of his even more bewildering capacity for transcendence." Transcendence of evil requires first a recognition and understanding of it, not explaining it away, preparatory to learning to live with it as "normal" or inevitable.

This writer uses the term "myth" in a psychologically analytical way, speaking of the "myth" of rational man, the myth of man as *tabula rasa*, whose nature is wholly determined by his environment, and the contrasting myth of existential man who, starting from "nothing," creates his own character by making moral decisions. Then he says:

> Myths are also covert value judgments which determine the limits of human responsibility. To view the world from a particular mythology is to assume a characteristic moral outlook. Consider, for example, the image which depicts man as a mere effect of environmental stimulation. Many would like to pretend that this image is justified by the evidence at hand. But, more likely, the very selection of evidence, indeed, the entire causal analysis, is itself determined by the image. The argument that the social sciences are value-free *because* they are scientific falls to the possibility that they have become scientific *in order to be value-free.* Suspicion mounts that the driving force of scientism is now fed by the unconscious need to escape from the responsibility of taking a moral stand and of evaluating the human condition from a moral point of view. We have not, in other words, come to deprive a man of responsibility for his own conduct because the evidence requires us to; rather, we have first chosen to embrace this image so that we may discover the evidence and turn consciousness into a mere object. Such an attitude may be reasonable with respect to physical nature, but for human nature it is thoroughly irrational. . . .

> The contemporary sciences, through the bad faith of pretending to be value-free, allow values to creep in unnoticed and to permeate and influence society uncriticized. . . . And there is nothing more dangerous to the health of a society than to be influenced by uncritically accepted values—which is precisely what follows from the dogma that the social sciences are value-free.

To illustrate the process of the corruption of thought by the acceptance of unexamined assumptions or values, Mr. Rubinoff calls attention to the rise of extremism in American political life and social behavior, which Richard Hofstadter called "the paranoid style of living and thinking." In his book on this subject, Hofstadter remarks that it is "the use of paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal, unselfish, and patriotic people that makes the phenomenon significant." (A more recent and perhaps more compelling example of this corruption is now available in Henry Steele Commager's long review-essay, "The Defeat of America," concerned with Richard J. Barnet's book, *Roots of War*, in the *New York Review of Books* for Oct. 5)

A peculiarly insidious corruption sets in, Rubinoff suggests, when a betrayal of traditional ideals and standards obtains sanction from majority approval or tolerance, so that, eventually, the betrayal has social validation and is spoken of in high-sounding terms. When this happens, "Hypocrisy is accepted as a normal property of life." "What the hypocrite may have lost in integrity and a genuine feeling of happiness is made up for by the security of fitting in with the rest of mankind as he knows them."

The drive to national power is typically the means by which this socially approved hypocrisy gains ascendancy. Mr. Rubinoff shows how far the Athenians fell short of the high standards of behavior attributed to them by Pericles, in his famous funeral oration of 430 B.C., when only fourteen years later the brutal punishment of death for all men of military age and enslavement for all women and children was inflicted on the defeated Melians. No longer was it true, as Pericles had claimed, that an enemy need have no shame at being conquered by Athens. As Rubinoff says, this inhuman behavior cannot be blamed on a few generals. "If the behavior of the army was corrupt, it was because the very soul of Athens, whose spirit was represented by the army, was itself corrupt."

Speaking of what has happened in the West—most characteristically in the United States—because of and through its wars, Mr. Rubinoff says:

> The new enemies of mankind are the Establishment intellectuals or realists who have become *moralists* of realism. It is one thing to admit with Machiavelli that morality and politics are simply indifferent to each other, and that sometimes one is forced into evil in order to pursue political goals; it is quite another matter, however, to rationalize one's evil acts in the name of an appropriate morality, to confuse the *expediency* of power with the *morality* of power. At least Machiavelli would admit that evil, even if it aids politics, still remains evil. But for the moralists of realism, . . . the act which serves the goals of power, regardless of its content, is invested with a moral character of its own by the mere fact that it does so. The evil which serves politics ceases to be evil and becomes good, and the *autonomy of morality* is thereby replaced by the *morality of power.*

In the chapter on the nature of man, Mr. Rubinoff shows that humanism has deviated widely from its original expression by Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in which he declared that the human being is free to descend lower than the beasts or raise himself above the angels—it is the *nature* of man, Pico said, to have the capacity to choose between these alternatives. Only the classical humanists—a very small minority, today—retain this view, the typical humanist view being rather that salvation for man lies in happiness and well-being, conditions to be sought through social reform. The focus is on society rather than on man; social psychology instead of individual moral psychology is regarded as the field for investigation. Rubinoff comments:

> All of this may be perfectly true, but I think it misses the mark. It fails to appreciate the possibility that society's restrictions on individuals, including all

> of the so-called corrupting influences, have their origin in man himself. Humanists talk about man's inhumanity to man. But man's inhumanity to man is as much an expression of his human nature as is his humanity.

Mr. Rubinoff is drawn to Plato by the way in which Socrates in the *Phaedo* separates the mechanistic account of causation from the human experience of meaning. This portion of the dialogue ends:

> Fancy not being able to distinguish between the cause of a thing and that without which the cause would not be a cause. It is evidently this latter that most people, groping in the dark, call by the name of cause, a name which doesn't belong to it.

Plato believed that man possesses a rational nature which admires and seeks to do justice, but that he also has irrational appetites which tend to displace or corrupt the function of rationality. Plato held that not only must the irrational side of man's nature be controlled, but the rational or good side must be drawn out and developed. Thus education is not merely socialization, but includes the discipline of self-mastery. Putting Platonic doctrine in modern terms, Rubinoff says:

> The integration of personality is the basis of justice in the individual, and because society is but the outward reflection of the soul, it is the basis of the good society as well. The real concern of justice, writes Plato, is not with external actions but with a man's inward self. The just man will not allow the elements which make up his inward self to trespass on each other's functions or interfere with each other, but, by keeping all in tune, like the notes of a scale, will in the truest sense set his house in order, and be his own lord and master and at peace with himself. When he has bound these elements into a single controlled and orderly whole and so unified himself, he will be ready for action of *any* kind, whether personal, financial, political, or commercial; and whenever he calls any course of action just and fair, he will mean that it contributes to and helps to maintain this disposition of mind, and will call the knowledge which controls such action wisdom. Similarly, by injustice he will mean any action destructive of this disposition, and he will call the mentality which controls such action ignorance.

Education, then, will teach control of the irrational and will inspire expression of the good and the will to justice, through example. At first, the child learns habits of control by imitation; then, as he comes into his inherent capacities for reason and self-determination of intrinsic rightness, he learns by philosophy.

Mr. Rubinoff's only trouble with Platonic philosophy is in the idea of "an unchanging and timeless transcendental truth." How, he asks, could this truth be verified? The question is a difficult one, which is doubtless why Plato left his theory of Ideas obscure. The determination of transcendental truth always begins, it seems necessary to say, with some kind of transcendental insight or mystical awareness, and is not "demonstrable" in any ordinary sense. The validation of such "peak" discoveries probably lies in their consistency with all else that we know and recognize and pursue as truly good.

COMMENTARY
A MODERN SUPERSTITION

IN his *American Scholar* article (which was reprinted by Alfred Kazin in *The Open Form*, a collection of essays), Loren Eiseley remarks that centuries ago scientific investigation excited suspicion. The exploration of hidden and perhaps Satanic secrets made the early scientist—Roger Bacon is an example—a marked man. And today, a similar sort of superstition may have overtaken some of the scientific fraternity, who frown upon too free an employment of the imagination. There is, he says, "a kind of vague fear of that other artistic world of deep emotion, of strange symbols, lest it corrupt, in other words, that crystalline and icy objectivity which, in our scientific guise, we erect as a model of conduct." But this model, Dr. Eiseley remarks, "if pursued to its absurd conclusion, would lead to a world in which the computer would determine all aspects of our existence; one in which the bomb would be as welcome as the discoveries of the physician." A famous scientist-artist, Leonardo, was unconfined by such notions, and the greatest discoveries in science reveal "a deep humility and an emotional hunger which is the prerogative of the artist."

Incidentally, confirmation of what Dr. Eiseley says about the play of intuition in scientific discovery is found in a short account of how Einstein, in the first of his four famous papers published in 1905, explained the photoelectric effect by elaborating the quantum theory of light. This account, given in *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*, a new book by Banesh Hoffman and Helen Dukas (Viking), throws considerable light on the workings of scientific genius. Starting with Planck's constant, which Planck himself distrusted, Einstein used parts of defective theories and other formulas to produce theoretical results, later verified by experiment, which went far beyond what was known at the time. "Imagine," say these writers, "the intimate knowledge of physics that Einstein must have had, and the sure-footed intuition, to be able to pick just those fundamentals that would yield these remarkable results." Einstein, it becomes apparent, traced his way through a maze of half-truths and contradictory doctrines, like a light-footed ballet dancer moving about on a rocky, hazardous terrain, and reached his destination by clues that at the time must have seemed to his colleagues fully as obscure as any "figurative sense" in some ancient scripture. Somehow, he knew or found the way. He might have described his inspiration with an idea similar to the one expressed by Donne: "The substance of the truth is in the great images which lie behind."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
MORE ON BLACK MOUNTAIN

BY happy coincidence, we now have more material on Black Mountain College. Last week we drew on extracts printed by *Change* from Martin Duberman's book, and a day or two later we received in the mail a copy of a Master's Thesis, *The Formation of Black Mountain College as a Visual Arts Center*, by Roy Henry Jarl, a graduate student at California State University in San Francisco. This is a brief paper packed with good material, including a useful bibliography. After some early "history," Mr. Jarl tells of John Rice's decision to make art the basic study at Black Mountain. The year was 1933, and the Nazis had just closed the Bauhaus, setting at liberty Josef Albers, who taught the preliminary Bauhaus course in art. Rice had heard of Albers and wanted him for Black Mountain. When Albers got the telegram inviting him to join the faculty at Black Mountain, he telegraphed back, "I'm sorry, I don't speak a word of English." The reply from Black Mountain was, "Come anyway."

Jarl says:

> The core of the curriculum at Black Mountain was art. Art not as a fringe or nice extra, but as the main academic subject—not as art history or art criticism but as the actual studio work itself. This is where Josef Albers comes in with his course called *Werklehre* (literally, work teaching). It was a course in designing with an unlimited choice of materials. This was the discipline side of Black Mountain College.
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> At the other pole was John Rice with his main course called Plato. This course had nothing to do with Plato or for that matter, with the Greeks except for the method of discussion. It was an open discussion class. Rice was a classics scholar and had taught classics at several colleges before coming to Black Mountain College. But he did not teach in the traditional manner; his Plato class was only guided by him. Rice would ask questions which would of themselves lead to other questions. The students would carry on the discussion, Rice participating as would any other student or, for that matter, faculty member present. Both these courses were undoubtedly the most popular. Both were always filled with at least half of those present not members of the class.

In 1940 Lawrence Kocher, who taught architecture there, designed a seventy-five-room structure including living quarters, studios, and classrooms. Then, with a supervising master-builder and Kocher and two assistants, the students and faculty built the building, doing all the work and finishing it in time for the 1941 fall semester.

During the war the number of students fell off and money was scarce, so the special summer work camp program initiated to help finish this building was continued:

> These sessions were devoted to art, music and the theater and were usually attended by faculty members who were not at Black Mountain during the normal school year. This is how William de Kooning, R. Buckminster Fuller, composer John Cage and dancer Merce Cunningham, for example, became associated with the college.

After the war a shift came in the educational emphasis. Albers and others of the European teachers wanted the college to have more "structure," and, Jarl says, "To the newer members of the faculty, this was a step in the wrong direction." Friction developed and Albers and his wife, Anni, who had been teaching weaving, left the school. The core of the curriculum now became literary, mainly poetry, with Charles Olson and Robert Creeley the leading figures. The *Black Mountain Review*, edited by Creeley, lasted until 1957 but the college was penniless and had to close after the 1956 spring semester. The painter, John Chamberlain, said: "The end was probable like the last big glow of a light bulb before it goes out."

Black Mountain had a very simple organization. There was no board of trustees but a board of fellows made up of six teachers who were elected by the faculty for three years, and one student elected by the student body each year. The board was headed by a rector who served a

year. There was no president. All major problems were settled by the community as a whole, unanimously. The rector had only one vote. "All the faculty members were first of all teachers while as secondary functions carrying on part-time jobs of running the college. There was no administration sitting above the faculty."

Students paid from $300 to $1200 a year, the goal being scholarships for everybody. The college sought students who could both contribute to and benefit from the college and their previous scholastic records "were rarely consulted."

> Courses were developed at the suggestion of students. There were no grades, no credit units, no compulsory attendance and, for that matter, no course examinations. A student, as he explored his own education, was never required to take any course. Since there were no grades, the energy that would normally be diverted in achieving good grades could now be devoted to achieving a good education. The student was free to generalize or specialize as he saw fit, and at whatever time he felt this to be necessary. A student could explore all fields without fear of a bad grade. He could go into drama, into art into literature or into mathematics and, after sampling, could decide in which area he wanted to specialize. And, if not wanting to specialize, he would not have to abandon general education.

Two years were devoted to exploring possibilities. This was called the junior division. When students felt ready to enter the senior division they took an examination and chose the field they wanted to investigate for the next two years.

> Then followed a second examination which qualified them for graduation. It was given by a faculty member from another college. This freed the teacher from authority function and allowed the student to see him as a colleague in learning rather than as someone to please or to convince. Examinations given to the students were designed only to find out if the student "did know what he professed to know." The degree was not an accredited degree, but students rarely found it difficult to get into graduate programs at other institutions.

The students were never numerous, so that classes were never very large, but always active through student participation. The teachers with interesting things to say often found that many of those who came to class were not enrolled in the course. Of the school in general, Jarl says:

> Black Mountain College was more than a school, it was a community in which one was submerged twenty-four hours a day. Meals were communal. If one wanted privacy, one could find it in his studies or in the surrounding woods. The rest of his life was an interaction with the other students and faculty members. Originally everyone lived in the same building and later on the same grounds in several buildings. All the chores of running the college were done by either students or faculty members, without discrimination. Little distinction was made between the learning that would occur in the classroom or the dining hall or on the tennis court or in mowing the lawn or in doing other maintenance work. Except for one janitor, a chef, a kitchen helper and a typist, all work was done by the students or the faculty and without pay.
>
> It appears that there were no pre-established rules governing life at Black Mountain. One conducted oneself strictly with the realization that one had an influence on others and therefore a responsibility for one's actions. The absence of rules to enforce that responsibility contributed to the growth process which was part of the curriculum. Emotional maturity was considered as important as intellectual maturity.
>
> Judging by comments of past members of Black Mountain College, it is safe to say that this college met the major needs of its students. It gave them the relevant education that, thirty years later, students at the University of California, Berkeley, started to demand from their school.

The principle behind Rice's conception of a college was that knowledge is preparation for action. He said: "To read a play is good, to see a play is better, but to act in a play, however awkwardly, is to realize a subtle relationship between sound and movement." Rice was convinced that the separation of learning from action, in modern education, "has led to much of the neuroses we see around us." To know, he said, is not enough. A school is a place where students can meet master teachers—persons who have real knowledge, know how to apply it, and

know how to communicate to others. Western education did not produce such men, Rice believed, so, at Black Mountain, both teachers and students would have opportunity to grow into whole human beings. On these basic conceptions, Rice and Albers were in full agreement.

The accomplishments at Black Mountain seem quite clearly traceable to the intensity of that vision. The failures were perhaps to be expected. They don't matter too much, if it is possible to learn from the positive good the school achieved. In a concluding section, Jarl says:

> Ruth Asawa, a former student, pointed out that Black Mountain College never promised anything outside itself. It never promised an accredited degree, a future job or the skill to find a job. It did, however, offer a chance to develop at the fastest possible rate. So fast, Miss Asawa points out, that Black Mountain was a totally exhausting experience.

It seems obligatory to add here the comment of another student, included in Martin Duberman's study. Black Mountain was a great place for students who brought some maturity to the experience it offered, but for others it may have been a devastating ordeal.

FRONTIERS

Forty-seven Years Ago

A PLEASANT journey into the past, to the pages of the first issues of *G.K.'s Weekly*, founded by G. K. Chesterton, a paper published in London which lasted from 1925 to 1947, was inspired by a reader who was editor of this paper for a while, and who feels that in some respects it resembled MANAS. After looking through the issues of the *Weekly* which appeared from March to September in 1925, we can only agree, being moved by what we have read to take the comparison as a generous compliment.

An editorial rejoinder (in the issue of April 18, 1925) to a critic of an earlier article, one which had attacked the profession and practice of advertising, makes a good illustration of the temper and quality of *G.K.'s Weekly*. The defender of advertising had claimed it to be a "useful service to industry and to the great mass of people who want good goods and want to know how and where to get them," adding:

> Advertising as it is practiced by the great majority of British business men is an essential link in the chain of distribution of commodities. Without it employment could not be found for the massed millions of modern population. Without it those millions could not be economically fed and clothed.

This correspondent concluded by boasting of "the progress towards cleanliness and truth which advertising has made in so short a time."

Replying, the editor notes the writer's contention that "honourable men" are "conducting advertising as a part of the machinery of modern life," remarking that the entire issue turns on this phrase:

> The machinery of modern life cannot be suddenly destroyed, except by a madman. It must, therefore, be used, and preferably by sane men. But there remains all the difference between those who really wish to perfect it and those who really wish to replace it. . . . Our correspondent probably uses advertisements quite decently; just as a feudal lord might treat his vassals quite decently; or as many slave-owners did treat their slaves quite decently. But there is such a thing, as Abraham Lincoln said, "as reposing in the hope that the institution is in gradual process of extinction." Now we could say a great deal more against advertisement in answer to the vulgar materialistic plea for it; but we prefer to meet a reasonable correspondent upon our fundamental ground. There are some who think commercial capitalism can be improved into an institution worthy of mankind. They will quite naturally try to attach ideals to it, almost in the manner of a religion; just as they have already tried to attach loyalty to it, almost in the manner of the feudal vassal. We do not believe that this is possible; we believe that capitalism is a top-heavy and transitory anomaly; not only more of an anomaly than small property, but more of an anomaly than slavery. And we think that one proof of it can be found in the very fact of advertising. We defy any sane human being to say that the ordinary advertisements, which we quoted, seriously told the truth. It is a proof of the impossible compromise that even men who want to tell the truth, or want to boast of telling the truth, find that they cannot do it.

The confessions of an American advertising man, recently published in the Los Angeles *Times*, and quoted here in last week's MANAS, completely confirm the stand taken by the *G.K.'s Weekly* editor.

In the same issue Arthur J. Penty compares the views of Gandhi and Henry Ford. This writer finds Ford saying in his autobiography that he has filled the streets with motor cars and hopes to fill the air with aeroplanes, and Penty wonders if Ford, if he lives long enough, would also attempt to fill the sea with submarines. Gandhi, on the other hand, would outlaw machinery that makes human beings subservient to their production and service. Gandhi was all for spinning wheels and sewing machines, but he denounced the general tendency behind the industrial revolution.

Reading further in Ford's autobiography, Penty learns that while the production of cars on the assembly line is the secret of mass manufacture, Ford himself could not possibly endure the repetitive labor involved. He says so, adding that the *average* worker "wants a job in which he does not have to think." One could argue that mass production, promoted by Ford,

practically guarantees a class or "caste" society, since it condemns a great many people to work that requires no thought. Gandhi, opposing both industrialism and the practices of a traditional caste society, revived the spinning wheel as a symbol of handicraft for all and of human equality. There are, then, these differences between Ford and Gandhi. This writer continues:

> They have, however, one thing in common. They are both pacifists. Here is a something by which we may test them as practical men, which will bring out still more fundamental differences. Gandhi's pacifism is of his essence. It is all of a piece with his other ideals. There is no conflict between his pacifism and the other things he believes in, for if men could be persuaded to follow him entirely peace would certainly reign upon earth. But with Ford it is different. His pacifism is not something that arises from his belief in industrialism and his acceptance of human distinctions, but exists in spite of it. It can only be explained on the assumption that Ford suffers from that alternating consciousness from which businessmen and industrialists invariably suffer; for it has nothing to do with the major activities to which he devotes the most of his life. On the contrary, they do not move in the direction of pacifism but of war. This follows naturally from his ideal of industrial expansion, for such expansion not only brings industrial nations into collision with each other but leads them to exploit small and alien peoples. There is no doubt about this. The quantitative standard of production which on the one hand leads society to degrade men to the level of machines, is on the other a source of international mischief by the need it creates for foreign markets to dispose of surplus production. What are all our foreign politics about but the complications resulting from over-production, foreign loans and oil? The latter today is a serious question. Every additional motor car Ford makes increases the demand for oil and much of foreign politics today is concerned with struggles for the possession of oil fields. Yet Ford is a pacifist, and I do not suppose it has ever occurred to him there is anything contradictory about his position. Our war-mongers talk a great deal about the peril of the East. But if there is any peril it will be because the East adopts Western ideas. There could be no peril if it follows Gandhi.

All this was said in 1925, in *G K.'s Weekly*. The only change in forty-seven years is that its analysis has become more evidently accurate.