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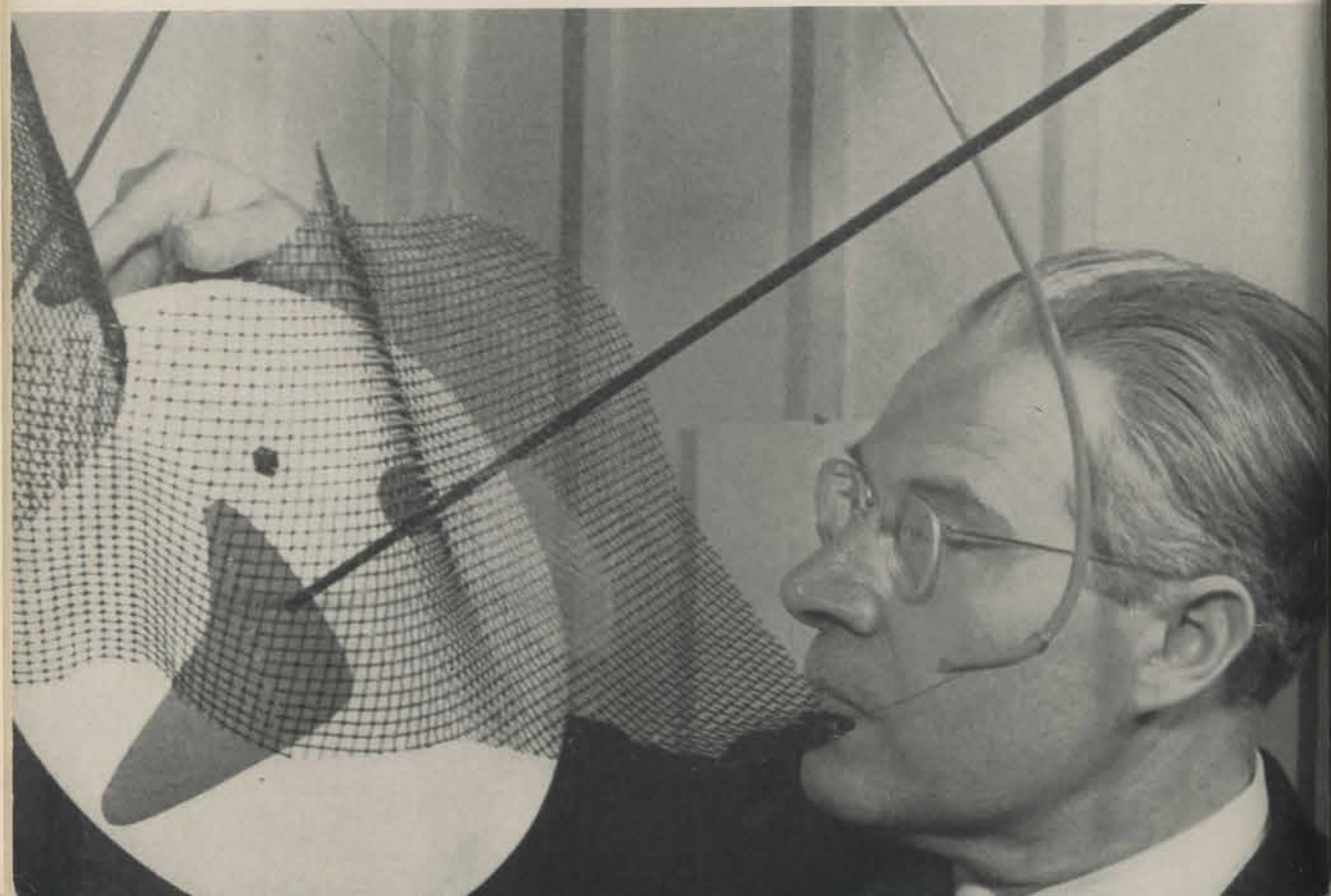
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and  
**Abstract of an Artist**

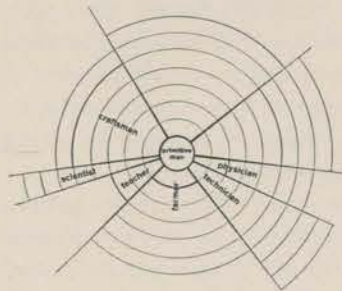
László Moholy-Nagy

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**Sectors of human development.** A human being is developed by the crystallization of the whole of his experience. Our present system of education contradicts this axiom by emphasizing single fields of activity.

Instead of extending our realm of action, as primitive man was forced to do, since he combined in one person hunter, craftsman, builder, and physician, we concern ourselves with a single specific vocation, leaving other capacities unused.



The primitive man combined in one person hunter, craftsman, builder, physician, etc.; today we concern ourselves only with one definite occupation, leaving unused all other faculties.

Today tradition and authority intimidate man. He no longer dares venture into other fields of experience. He becomes a man of one calling; he has no longer first-hand experience elsewhere. His self-assurance is lost. He no longer dares to be his own healer, nor trust his own eyes. Specialists — like members of a powerful secret society — block the road to many-sided individual experience, the need of which arises from man's biological existence.

The choice of a calling is often determined by outside factors: a man becomes a candy-maker or a cabinet-maker because there is a shortage of apprentices in those trades; he becomes a lawyer or a manufacturer because he can take over his father's business.

The accent lies on the sharpest possible development of a single vocation, on the building of specialized faculties. "Market demand" is the criterion. A man becomes a locksmith or a lawyer or an architect (working inside a closed sector of his faculties), and if, after he has finished his studies, he strives to widen the field of his calling, aspires to expand his special sector, he is at best a happy exception.

Here our system of education has been found wanting, despite vocational guidance, psychological testing, and I.Q.'s.

A "calling" today means something quite different from following one's own bent, something quite different from solidarity with the aims and needs of a community. Everything functions — and functions alone — on the basis of a production system which only recognizes motives of material gain. One's personal life must, then, go along outside one's "calling," which is often a matter of compulsion, and regarded with aversion.

**The future needs the whole man.** Specialized training cannot yet be abandoned at a time when production is being put on an economic basis. But it should not begin so soon or be carried so far that the individual becomes stunted — in spite of his highly prized professional knowledge. A specialized education becomes meaningful only if an integrated man is developed in terms of his biological functions, so that he will achieve a natural balance of intellectual and emotional power. Without such an aim the richest differentiations of specialized study — the "privilege" of the adult — are mere quantitative acquisitions, bringing no intensification of life, no widening of its breadth. Only men equipped with clarity of feeling and sobriety of knowledge will be able to adjust to complex requirements, and to master the whole of life.

**The present system of production.** Our modern system of production is imposed labor, a senseless pursuit, and, in its social aspects, without plan; its motive is to squeeze out profits to the limit. This in most cases is a reversal of its original purpose.

The chase after money and power influences the form of life, even the individual's basic feelings. He thinks of outward security, instead of his inner satisfactions. On top of this is the penning up of city people in treeless barracks, in an extreme contraction of living space. This cramping of living space is not only physical: city life has brought, with its herding into barren buildings without adequate open space, an emotional choking of the inhabitants.

Today neither education nor production springs from inner urges, nor from urges to make goods which satisfy one's self and society in a mutually complementary way.

The educational system is the result of the economic structure. During the frenzied march of the industrial revolution, industrialists set up specialized schools in order to turn out needed specialists quickly. These schools in very few instances favored the development of men's power. They offered them no opportunity to penetrate to the essence of things, or to the individual himself. But — to tell the truth — no one was concerned with this because no one could foresee the destructive results.

Not only the working class finds itself in this position today; all those caught within the mechanism of the present economic system are, basically, as badly off. At best the differences are material ones.

**But how about technical progress?** It might be easily supposed therefore that the present system of industrial production, and especially our technical progress, ought to be condemned. Numerous writers and politicians suggest this. But they mix effect with cause. In the XIXth century attempts were made to reach a correct diagnosis, but

suggested a wrong therapy. Gottfried Semper declared in the 1850's, for example, that if iron ever was to be used in building it would have to be used (because of the real nature of iron) in the fashion of the transparent spider-web. But, he continued, architecture must be "monumental," and thus "we never shall have an iron-architecture." A similar mistake was made by the Ruskin-Morris circle in the 1880's. They found that industrial mass production killed quality of craftsmanship. Their remedy was to kill the machine in turn, and go back to handwork. They opposed machines so strongly that, in order to deliver their hand-made products to London, they ran a horse coach alongside the hated railway. In spite of this rebellion against the machine, technical progress is a factor of life which develops organically. It stands in reciprocal relation to the increase in number of human beings. Here is its real justification. Despite its distortion by profit interests, by struggle for mere accumulation and the like, we can no longer think of life without technical progress. It is an indispensable factor in raising the standard of living.

The possibilities of the machine — its abundant production, its ingenious complexity on the one hand, its simplification on the other, have necessarily led to a mass production which has its own significance. The task of the machine — satisfaction of mass requirements — must be held in the future more and more clearly in mind. The true source of conflict between life and technical progress lies at this point. Not only the present economic system, but also the process of production call for improvement from the ground up. Invention and systematization, planning and social responsibility must be applied to this end.

A common error today is to view questions of efficiency from a technical and profit standpoint. The Taylor system, the conveyor belt, and the like remain misinterpreted as long as they turn man into a machine, without taking into account his biological requirements — work, recreation, and leisure.

**Not against technical progress, but with it.** The solution lies, accordingly, not in working against technical advances, but in exploiting them for the benefit of all. Man can be freed through techniques, if he finally realizes their function: i.e., a balanced life through full use of our liberated energies.

Only when it is clear to the individual that he has to function as a productive entity in the community of mankind will he come closer to a true understanding of the significance of technical progress. We should not be blinded by the intricacies of the amazing technical process of production, but should engage our main interest on the sound planning of our lives.

Today we are faced with nothing less than the reconquest of the biological bases of human life. When we recover these, we can then reach a maximum utilization of technical progress in the fields of physical culture, nutrition, housing, and industry — a thorough rearrangement of our present scheme of life. Even today it is believed that less importance needs to be attached to biological requirements than formerly, thanks to our technically exact and calculable ways of dealing with them. It is thought that securing sleep by veronal, relieving pain by aspirin, and so on, can keep pace with organic wear and tear. In this direction the "progress" of civilization has brought with it dangers. Apparent economies may easily deceive. For technical progress should never be the goal, but instead the means.

**Biological needs.** In this book the word "biological" stands generally for the laws of life which guarantee an organic development. If the meaning of "biological" were

conscious, it would protect many people from damaging influences. Children usually act in accordance with biological laws. They refuse food when ill, they fall asleep when tired, and they don't show courtesy when uninterested. If today's civilization would allow one more time in order to follow biological rhythms, lives would be less hysterical and less empty.

The basic biological needs are very simple. They may change or be deformed by social and technical processes. Great care must be taken that their real significance should not be distorted. This often happens through a misunderstood luxury which thwarts the satisfaction of biological needs. The oncoming generation has to create a culture which does not weaken, but which strengthens genuine biological functions.

**Efforts toward reform.** The creative human being knows (and suffers from it) that the inherent values of life are being destroyed under the pressure of moneymaking, competition, and trade. He suffers from the materialistic evaluation of his vitality, from the flattening out of his instincts, from the impairing of his biological balance.

And yet, though the present social structure is a thoroughly unsuitable medium for the balanced outlet of human capacities, in the private life of individuals some glimpses of a functional understanding have already appeared.

The advances in art, literature, the theater and the moving-picture in our time, and various educational movements give important indications of this fact. So does the interest in physical culture, in recreation and leisure, and in treatment by "natural" rather than chemical methods.

Such efforts, taken as a whole, portend a new world. But no small unit of this growth should be studied as an isolated fact. The relations of various subjects (science, art, economics, technical knowledge, educational methods) and their integration must be constantly clarified within the social whole.

**Not the product, but man, is the end in view.** Proceeding from such a basic re-adjustment we may work out an individual plan of life, with self-analysis as its background. Not the occupation, not the goods to be manufactured, ought to be put in the foreground, but rather recognition of man's organic function. With this functional preparation, he can then pass on to action, to a life evolved from within. We then lay down the basis for an organic system of production whose focal point is man, not profit.

**Everyone is talented.** If he is deeply interested in his work, every healthy man has a deep capacity for developing the creative energies in his nature.

Everyone is equipped by nature to receive and to assimilate sensory experiences. Everyone is sensitive to tones and colors, everyone has a sure "touch" and space reactions, and so on. This means that everyone by nature is able to participate in all the pleasures of sensory experience, that any healthy man can become a musician, painter, sculptor, or architect, just as when he speaks, he is "a speaker." That is, he can give form to his reactions in any material (which is not, however, synonymous with "art," which is the highest level of expression of a period). The truth of this statement is evidenced by actual life: in a perilous situation or in moments of inspiration the conventions and inhibitions of daily routine are broken, and the individual often reaches an unexpected plane of achievement.

The work of children and of primitive peoples offers other evidence. Their spontaneous expressions spring from an inner sense of what is right, as yet unshaken by

outside pressure. These are examples of life governed by inner necessities. If we consider that anyone can achieve expression in any field, even if it is not his best outlet, or essential to society, we may infer with still greater certainty that it must be possible for everyone to comprehend works already created in any field.\*

Such receptivity develops by stages, according to disposition, education, mental and emotional understanding. If the broad line of organically functioning life is once established, the direction of all human production is clearly indicated. Then no work — as is often the case today with industrial production and its endless subdivisions — could be felt as the despairing gesture of a man being submerged. All would emerge as an expression of organic forces.

**Conclusions.** In conclusion we may say that the injuries caused by a technical civilization can be combatted on two fronts:

1. By a purposeful observation and a rational safeguarding of organic, biologically conditioned functions — through art, science, technology, education, politics.
2. By relating the single results to all human activities.

In practice these two approaches interlock, though logically step 1 must prepare for step 2.

**The responsibility for carrying out the plan lies with each individual.** There is no more urgent problem than that of realizing our desire to use fully man's constructive abilities. For the last 180 years or so, we have been thinking about the problem, talking about it, and attempting to act on it. Even today our practice is at best a statement of belief, and not a realization. Partial solutions cannot be recommended; we are now too involved in the problems of industrial society. Partial rebellion is only evidence of monstrous pressure, a symptom. Only the person who understands himself, and cooperates with others in a far-reaching program of common action, can make his efforts count. Material motives may well provide the occasion for an uprising or revolution, but they can never be the deciding cause if constructive changes are to be hoped for.

The revolutionist should always remain conscious that the class struggle is, in the last analysis, not about capital, nor the means of production, but actually about the right of the individual to have a satisfying occupation, a life-work that meets inner needs, a balanced way of life, and a real release of human energies.

**Utopia?** Utopia? No, but a task for pioneers. We need Utopians of genius, a new Jules Verne, not to sketch the broad outlines of an easily imaginable technical Utopia, but to prophesy the existence of the man of the future, who, in the realm of the instinctive and simple, as well as in the complicated relations of life, will work in harmony with the basic laws of his being. Leonardo da Vinci, with his gigantic plans and achievements, is the great example of the integration of art, science and technology. It seems that our time will be able to create similar basic conditions, a similar atmosphere, and to produce a similar personality. Our time is one of transition, one of striving toward a synthesis of all knowledge. A person with imagination can function now as an integrator. Of course he has to push aside the desire for the complexity which only a mature epoch can offer. He must be a pioneer in the vast and unbroken territories of our period, where every action could lead to creative solutions. If one

\* Further evidence will be furnished by reference to the basic writings of Heinrich Jacoby, who has made this problem his life-work. He concentrated particularly on the problem of musical and non-musical persons. His writings are among the valuable sources upon which educational work can draw.

doubts that an individual can ever achieve so much, it may be that it will not be individuals alone, but working communities who do. Scientists have already built an international system of research. The next step must be the solidarity of all cultural workers and their conscious collaboration — the major obligation of those who have already arrived at consciousness of an organic way of life. Pioneer work with this aim in view: man's functional capacities must be safeguarded, but not only safeguarded; the outward conditions for their realization must be put at his disposal. At this point the educational problem merges into the political, and is perceptible as such, so far as the student goes into everyday life, and must make an adjustment to the existing order.

**The "Bauhaus".** The Bauhaus, an art university, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919 in Germany, attempted to meet the needs of group work. Although for reasons of convenience a division into semesters was retained, the old concept and content of "school" was discarded, and a community of workers established. The powers latent in each individual were welded into a free collective body. The pattern of a community of students was worked out by students who learned "not for school, but for life."

Such a community implies practice in actual living. Its individuals learn to master not only themselves, but also the living and working conditions of the environment. Their work, although starting out with the arts, must be a synthesis. This is what is meant when Gropius speaks about the "fatal legacy from a generation which arbitrarily elevated some branches of art above the rest as 'fine art' and in so doing robbed all arts of their basic identity and common life. But art is not one of those things that may be imparted . . ."

The educational program of the Bauhaus, or more exactly, its working program, rests upon this.

The first year in the Bauhaus is of decisive importance, especially for those young people who, as a consequence of customary education, have brought with them a sterile hoard of textbook information.

The first year their training is directed toward sensory experiences, toward the enrichment of emotional values, and toward the development of thought. The emphasis is laid, not so much on the differences between the individuals, as on the integration of their common biological features, and on objective scientific and technological facts. This allows a free, unprejudiced approach to every task. After this first year begins the period of specialized training, based on free vocational selection within the workshops. During this period the goal remains: man as a whole. Man — when faced with all the material and spiritual problems of life — can, if he works from his biological center, take his position with instinctive sureness. Then he is in no danger of intimidation by industry, the haste of an often misunderstood "machine culture," or by past philosophies about his creative ways.

**Objectives and methods of Bauhaus education.** The XXth century overwhelmed man with its inventions, new materials, new ways of construction, and new science. The boundaries of given callings were burst. New problems required more exact knowledge, greater control of far-reaching relations and more flexibility than the rigid schemes of tradition permitted.

The multiplication of mechanical appliances, and new methods of research, required a new intellectual orientation, a fusion of clarity, conciseness, and precision.

It is historically interesting that everywhere in the world outstanding new industrial