

BERNARD SHAW'S LATEST BOOK. Why the Universe Will Not Advertise It.—Column heading.

In Defence of Children.—By Dora Russell.

It is the function of the architect, so far as he is an artist, and not a builder or an engineer, to design buildings of pleasing shapes.—Prof. Bernard Ashmole, in *The Listener*.

Utility and tidiness in excelsis. A Children's Nursery in a German house. Nothing to play with except prickly cactus.—Caption to a photograph illustrating scientific humanist building in *Architectural Design and Construction*.

What did they think of the feelings of a banker at the present time when he was inundated with money which he could not make good use of and could not employ profitably.—The chairman of Lloyds Bank, speaking on *The Trials of a Banker*, reported in *The Times*.

## THE WASTE OF THE PRACTICAL REASON

THOSE who are familiar with the writings of M. Jacques Maritain will remember his summary of the ancient and mediaeval teaching upon art.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of these doctrines was the distinction between the speculative and the practical reason. In the first category were placed philosophy and pure science, in the second, action and making. Any man seeking knowledge, directing his actions or making objects, was equipped for his task by a *habitus*, a virtue which (perfecting and directing his natural gifts) could be perfected itself by correct training and right use.

The maker, artist, or artisan, working in matter, gave it a shape or form already conceived in his mind. The genesis and perfection of this spiritual form de-

<sup>1</sup> *Art et Scolastique*.

pended upon the end in view, the degree of *habitus* in the artist and his sincerity in the use of his gift. The form once achieved, the difficult work of individualising it in matter demanded skill, discipline, technique. The end and principle of the whole operation, however, was the intellectual form without which no art was possible. The genesis of the form requiring a true intellectual *habitus*, a right appreciation of the end in view; the shaping of the matter demanding a just estimate of its possibilities and an adequate ordering of the means to the end, it is clear the basis of the classical theory of making is the reason. Reason being the distinctive mark of man, we may qualify this doctrine as essentially human.

It is the purpose of this article to apply these principles to the realm of modern industry, to the function of the workman under present conditions; to discover how far manufacture is in the truest sense rational.

It is abundantly clear that the ordinary 'hand' in the majority of factories has little occasion to use his reason and gifts in making. He is never called upon to create<sup>2</sup> a form as well as to individualise it. In some cases, *e.g.* building trades, a complete form is communicated to him for materialization. In others, particularly in Mass-Production factories, he has but one small, ever-recurring material task, which when completed is only part of a larger structure. Such men have no occasion fully to use their intelligence in their work. It may be urged they must have their wits about them and know their business. This is undeniable, yet they do not use their wits creatively, but to control and direct their technique. In short, they are acting and therefore prudent, not making and therefore artists. Their work may help to produce a complete and ordered whole, but it is the architect or designer who has thought this whole, and they have been his tools.

<sup>2</sup> The word is here used in its current literary sense, not in its philosophical acceptance.

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There has, therefore, arisen a new aristocracy and a new privilege. In the past the aristocracy of blood was counterbalanced in the people by that of rational workmanship. The absence of such a class in the modern state cannot fail to be a source of social unrest. For it is no exaggeration to say there are in the modern world millions of men naturally unfitted for speculative thinking, but possessing gifts in the realm of making, and who, in their daily work, are prevented from using any but the slightest of these gifts. Here surely is an enormous wastage. Arguing from the principle that specifically human as distinct from animal acts must be rational, we may qualify present-day industry as inhuman in so far as it restrains or impedes such rational action in the vast majority of its servants.

We must allow that such mental energies, wholly or partly in stagnation, tend to produce lack of balance in the individual. It has been said that 'l'ennui de vivre et de vouloir s'arrête à la porte de tout atelier.' Our worker is denied entrance to a true 'atelier.' It is natural he should seek deliverance from the stress of life in sport, cinemas, Sunday papers, and the hundred distractions of our times. The craftsman (in the old acceptance of the word) found repose in the work of his spirit and hands. The intellect of the modern worker, forbidden activity in the only sphere in which it can move with security, turns, in the many, to amusement and sensation, in the few to subversive metaphysical and social doctrines.

Here modern education presents its solution. Since the days of Descartes, it has believed the fields of knowledge and making to be open to all through right method and technique. Its mass instruction and its vulgarisation are the result of the belief that method is the only approach to knowledge, technique the only approach to art. No account of inborn gifts or *habitus* is taken; curriculum and examination are the same for

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all. In actual practice, few teachers fail to realize the diversity of natural gifts and the extreme difficulty of adequately fostering them in the majority of their pupils. Consequently, most men are proud to claim they have forgotten all they were taught at school, save the power to self-discipline. Their education has been of the will and not of the intellect. To produce a generation of disciplined men is no mean achievement, but it is doubtful whether the complex, expensive State system of education is the best means of reaching such a result.

Some maintain the taste for knowledge and study is acquired in the school and later utilised. This is doubtless true in some cases, but not in the majority. Thousands are spent yearly in the ridiculous endeavour to give potential craftsmen a purely intellectual education. In addition, certain notions of social dignity are acquired, particularly in secondary schools, which make such men ashamed to adopt manual labour as a profession.

The Hadow Report suggested a reform. There was to be a central school, where those whose gifts lay in the line of making would receive appropriate training. The idea was excellent, yet it presented a new dilemma. If the instruction in this school was technical in the ordinary sense—*i.e.*, a training in the hundred and one trades of modern industry—the whole question was begged. For, as we have seen, the modern mechanic does not use his gifts in a normal, rational, human way. If, on the other hand, the central school was to be a centre of true craftsmanship, the only instructors capable of fostering the pupil's gifts were master-craftsmen. Our college-trained school-master could not claim such a title. Further, how would our craftsmen, supposing them to be produced, find a living in an industrialised, factory-provided society?

It is often argued that as the modern man has and will have more and more leisure, he should exercise

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his gifts in his spare time. Those genuinely talented will naturally turn to the Schools of Arts and Crafts provided for them by the State. Whilst agreeing that such institutions do present a partial solution and furnish a chance of development to talent that would otherwise be wasted, we may observe certain flaws in their position. It seems unreasonable that a man should be prevented from realising his potentialities in his daily, manual task, and only reach his full human stature outside the factory. The psychological unrest which we have seen is a by-product of industrialism is, in part, allayed by training such as art centres provide, but there still remains the unreasonableness of the daily task. For a man producing for the commonwealth is not in the same position as one producing for his own pleasure. The craftsman is precisely the man whose work and pleasure are identical; he produces rationally and experiences the joy that accompanies rational activity. We may further remark that an objection we raised in the case of the central school is of equal force here—we have no guarantee the instructors are more than teachers of technique. Nor is it justifiable to assume all persons who should profit by such instruction will necessarily do so. We are not dealing with genius which will out, whatever circumstances be against it, but with ordinary talent that may go undiscovered even by its possessor.

We are not exaggerating when we maintain that this wastage of practical intelligence and the psychological and social distortion consequent upon it are grave dangers in a commonwealth. To tamper with nature, whether intellectual or physical, is a perilous pastime. The leisure state by freeing minds, quite unprepared, for the splendid but terrible realm of the metaphysical, opens the way to profound mental and social revolutions. Russia has well seen that the consolidation of her experiment demands the fullest mechanisation of all labour, for the craftsman of the town as the peasant

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in the country is a bulwark of the nation and Christian society.

It may be objected that our contention is justified, but no hope can be entertained of transforming the present system into one of pure craftsmanship. The whole structure of society is based on mechanical supply. The machine has absorbed the craftsman even as the sheep have eaten the ploughman. And indeed every reformer should meditate upon the profound phrase of Pascal : 'recourir aux lois fondamentales et primitives de l'Etat qu'une coutume injuste a abolies, c'est un jeu pour tout perdre.' Hence there will be no attempt here to suggest radical reforms. Our object is to expose a fundamental fault in the structure of modern industry, a fault whose existence is not sufficiently stressed. This error—the lack of intelligent creation in the work of the mechanic—is clearly a metaphysical one, arising from a failure to understand the place of man in the hierarchy of active causes. It can find its correction only in an intellectual reform. Such a reform achieved, practical schemes will suggest themselves.

At a time when economy and wastage are considered only in terms of money and time, when efficiency is largely a question of speed, it may be of some advantage to emphasise this far graver wastage of intelligence and suggest there may still be left branches of industry in which the workman could again become a rational, thinking, planning artisan.

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