The roles of philosophy and techniques in the future of encyclopedias are sketched out by the Editor of ABS, Professor of Government at New York University.

A THEORY OF ENCYCLOPEDISM

by Alfred de Grazia

Taking the broadest view possible of encyclopedism, we would conceive it as the servicing of man as a symbol system of inputs and outputs. The three basic classes of symbols entering and emerging from man as the center would, from the logic of social policy, be the present system of inputs and outputs, the system desired by the individual, and the system considered socially desirable by philosophy X. In the case of a barely literate and socially passive person, the most striking regular inputs would be perhaps some movies, TV, some comics, a few headlines and what he "hears" from his family, co-workers, and daily encounters. In the case of a specialized professional, a lawyer, say, the regular inputs would be prospective and actual clients bringing cases, a few reference books, some court opinions, a trade magazine or two, a newspaper and general magazine or two, movies, TV, and what he "hears" from a somewhat broader set of encounters of a more skilled and informed symbol-emitting type. A tiny minority, perhaps two hundred thousand Americans, have an elaborate set-up to receive, screen, and emit symbols over a wide range of specialized fields of concern and, with some overlapping, perhaps another two hundred thousand persons may be comparably organized for reception and output of general signals.

The first grouping of persons would have very little desire for a reform of its situation. The second would have a little more zeal, partly for vocational reasons, but also because of reasons of general power and prestige. The third grouping, the symbol elite (they *have* more and *know* more of symbols), splits into two factions, already implicit in their habits: those who have an intense need for improved specialized information retrieval and specialized means of symbol expression, and those who, while they must depend upon the first faction, must popularize both their intake (so as to understand it) and their output, in order to command power, respect, and wealth.

Encyclopedism, to a completely relativist philosopher, might stop at this point, its goals assured. Any considerable fulfillment of these desires would be success. Since a terrifically complicated welter of desires would be involved, however, no single effort

or even any manageable group of efforts could satisfy many tastes or have significant influence upon the whole. Thereupon, three principles bring about the creation of that race of encyclopedists who are non-relativists (and to whom, we may as well admit, we are partial): The first principle is that the grouping and reduction of somewhat different wants is satisfying financially, provides power and earns respect. The second principle is that there is convenience, that is, managability, in the reduction of a problem. Call this the efficiency principle, perhaps, and remember that it is probably fundamentally related to the desire for control and *ergo* may be a derivative of the first principle. Most encyclopedism is a crude sum of reduction operations, following these two principles. The third principle is a non-relativistic ethic that prefers one behavior to another and therefore attempts to censor inputs and govern outputs of symbols in society. Whatever the pure ethical impulse may be, we should appreciate that its force derives in large part from alliance with the exponents of the first and second principles, more or less unconsciously converting not-so-lofty motives into the currency of higher philosophy by the authority of intelligence.

The nobility of man lies in the extraordinary efficacy of the third principle of encyclopedism—the intelligent ethic—which, acting as a kind of holding-company, pyramids the infinite discrete activities of men into an aesthetic and significant shape. Yet, almost never is there a consensus among the philosophers on the "good life" and therefore almost never do we discover a universal encyclopedism. That of St. Thomas Aquinas and that of Diderot's group are rare exceptions, even though limited by the scope of their cultures. We find more exceptions if we search for the "unwritten encyclopedias," those wonderful systems of customs, beliefs, prescriptions, and consultants that are found in integrated societies, both primitive and multi-segmental.

The Ethical System

Is there an ethical system that is integrated, acceptable, and usable? To establish and define such would be beyond the scope of this paper, but it is obvious that there need not be some absolute agreement among all the encyclopedists of the world to produce one and move ahead with it. The regrettable fact is that a fear that one's own system is not acceptable to all operates to prevent otherwise courageous and independent minds from advancing towards important encyclopedic work. Here, for purposes of illustration, is a set of doctrines that might be made the basis of an encyclopedic effort that could be directed at the whole of society or any of the essential audiences of the society.

The world is not "real" but is a set of orders created by man.

The creator of man is the greatest mystery of the universe.

All human and physical relations are social relations.

All action is ethical and all applied science (which includes practically all that is ordinarily called "science") is a manipulation of the world for a moral purpose.

Man operates in the world; that is, he receives and gives forth symbols all of which are basically related, and which define and order the world, from religion to tying a shoelace.

Man's good is his nature, and the search for his nature is good activity.

Man's evil is his failures to find his nature, and all of the behaviors and institutions proceeding from those failures, so long as they last.

The most useful descriptions of the world, in aid of man's quest, are those that are part of his very operations, and which do not deviate and obscure.

The goal-time for framing human plans is the millennium.

The goal-space is wherever man may be.

All men are to be given equal consideration in all applications and decisions.

All men are to be encouraged to test the limits of their good natures, that is, to be creative.

Institutions and customs are to emphasize well-intentioned diversity and promote autonomy and free choice among important possibilities of ideas and activities.

Political action (very broadly defined as social action) is entitled to occur wherever good choices and good activities can be promoted.

Strictures should be constantly provided against useless, destructive, simplistic, formalistic, categorical, and unimportant modes of action, whether personal or group.

Science is instrumental thought and holds valid for all human activities, whether in hardware design or the plastic arts, in politics or mechanics. (All disciplines are the "humane disciplines.")

The Executive System

Once the ethical system to be inculcated by means of an encyclopedic effort is determined upon, a large range of problems, even major ones, take their logical place, and are susceptible to definition and solution. That these latter should usually be considered primary rather than regarded as planning and executive problems is a consequence of a refusal to face, or an inability to achieve, the demands of an ethic. Thereupon encyclopedism becomes a series

f committee meetings over alphabetism *vs.* topic headings, writing down *vs.* writing up, historicism *vs.* contemporaneity, group writing *vs.* individual contributions, five million words *vs.* ten million, illustrations *vs.* text, bound books *vs.* contrivances other than books, national *vs.* world references, how much art "exists" *vs.* how much science "exists," and information *vs.* exhortation. All of these are what I should call the important questions for executive decisions, but not the primary decisions of encyclopedism.

If a set of doctrines of this kind were to be elaborated, it would provide an adequate basis for the primary decisions of the encyclopedist. It would provide the major criterion, also, for making executive decisions. A number of executive decisions could, of course, be determined almost entirely on technical grounds, granted that any one of the several alternatives might be almost equally conducive to the goals of the ethical system. An illustration of an executive system of an encyclopedic effort may help to explain both the connections between the ethical and executive and wide range of choices of the executive system.

A Hypothetical Encyclopedic System

Let us suppose that we wish to serve a grouping of persons who conform to the traits of some of the tiny minority of 400,000 we described above: they are highly specialized or intensively general and spend most of their life dealing in symbolic communication. We decide that whatever other qualifications they may have, they must pay $1000 a year in dues to the encyclopedia club being formed. Perhaps 10,000 subscribers can be counted on, half of the highly specialized type, half of the intensively general type. So we have professors, researchers, psychotherapists, medical doctors, foundation executives, businessmen, lawyers, governmental executives, writers, and publicists. These are each provided with MAPPMIOS.

The Multiple All-Purpose Personal Media Input-Output System provides by several techniques a versatile intelligence screening, retrieval, reproduction, supply, and storage system for individual clients, who are simultaneously afforded assistance in projecting their own symbols. It consists of a central clearinghouse, ruled by the encyclopedists, a wide net for receiving materials, and a network of office-size systems on the premises of the subscribers.

The key elements of the system would be the general directives operating upon the central clearinghouse staff, and the prescriptions of the individual · clients. The prescriptions would begin with an analysis, based upon questionnaire and interview, of the functions of the client in society, these being largely vocational in most cases with our hypothetical system. The priest-salesmen who are the personal "physicians" set a diet for the client and he regularly receives materials in convenient form designed to let him perform his functions well and in coordination with the larger philosophy of the operation. The materials might be in a special as well as regular language; they might be on tape, film, phonograph, looseleaf sheets or other fugitive-bound forms; the clients would have a basic library and code, receiving and transmitting equipment of a simple sort, and a personal library and filing system. Individual problems would be taken care of as they arose, and provisions for periodic amendment of the prescriptions would be made. It is doubtful that the basic library materials would be bound; the bound book is, after all, an incident of the history of the human mind, an instrument that should not be allowed to outlive its usefulness; it is functional in certain parts of the social intelligence system at certain times and for limited purposes; it should not be permitted for minor technical reasons to become a fetish of the communications sphere; its main advantage is that it cannot easily be torn apart, which is also its main disadvantage.

The underlying philosophy of MAPPMIOS may permeate its operations and materials with generally beneficial effects upon its users. If better men are made by using better "literature" then the clients will be the gainers. At the same time the efficiency of a man's system of learning, remembering, and producing will be greatly enhanced, and the role of the encyclopedist will be broadened. The goals of a great many present-day encyclopedists, if we may interpret them, would be more concretely realized here than under any of the existing forms of encyclopedism, unless we speak of the influential philosopher or university president with an idea of the complete academic community.

MAPPMIOS is a speculative model of an encyclopedia system intended for one grouping of society. Different models can be constructed for any or all other social groupings. And it may be true, as has been implied by the remarks of some of our colleagues, that there will be discovered some grouping always present in society to whom a hard sell of a beautiful set of books, periodically revised, will be the best technique of purveying the chosen philosophy. If so, all to the good, for the end is the pyramid of good ideas, not the form of the medium. Yet we should be foolish to compromise our aims unduly or to limit our scope and influence unnecessarily, merely because a short-range market situation tells us to do so. The encyclopedist is too important to subject to so rigid a role. And, besides, the markets of yesterday are not the markets of tomorrow. Few blacksmiths own stock in General Motors.