

1950's Brochure

Cover quote: "To make conscious in ourselves the shape of the process of which we are a part, so that we may facilitate its development more efficiently."

Background and Beginning

Braziers Park has been founded as a permanent college for those who wish to understand man's place and part in nature, to discuss with others the social and ethical aspects of his continuing development, and to co-operate in working out, wherever possible, the principles that may facilitate constructive action in the world today.

The School is thus a centre from which, by the interpenetration of ideas and experience, fruitful relationships may be newly perceived or created, and new forms of thought emerge. In this adventure you are invited to participate. Anyone who visits Braziers Park, if only for a weekend, may expect both to learn and to teach something relevant to the betterment of social life.

It is not possible to present a detailed picture of future activities, since these will be continually taking on new forms in response to new contacts; but we should like to tell you something of the ideas that have led to the foundation of the School and to indicate how we may expect these to develop.

INTEGRATION OF SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE

The men and women to whom it has seemed natural to initiate this School of Integrative Social Research recognize in themselves and in others some consciousness of a dual role in life: (1) as an individual striving to obtain from his fellow men the help he needs to enable him to develop his life in a manner satisfactory to himself, and (2) as a member of a social group (or groups) striving to afford such help to the individuals who need it, by improving the conditions of social life.

These two points of view are associated with other antithetic contrast – adaptation of the environment to oneself or of oneself to the environment, extrovert or introvert, material or spiritual, selfish or unselfish, subjective or objective, and many others. Most responsible people suffer from some degree of mental conflict in such matters. It is easy enough to demonstrate logically that both attitudes are necessary for individual satisfaction as well as for the continuance of social progress, but it is emotionally difficult to maintain them both at the same time; there is therefore a tendency to relieve the resulting internal mental stress by externalizing the conflict and trying to take sides and fight it out. The conflict of the rival ideologies that seek to justify the struggle for power between the USA and the USSR affords the outstanding contemporary instance. The founders of Braziers Park have resisted this tendency, and they will continue to try instead to synthesize the extremes. They approach this problem by a special method.

THE SPECIAL METHOD

Many of the problems of today have outgrown the capacity of the single mind of any one man, because they demand a sympathetic subjective understanding simultaneously with a ruthless objective appreciation of fact. But while the individual may find it impossible to give full conscious attention, logical and emotional, both to the self and to the not-self at

the same time, it seems that in suitable conditions a group of individuals will be able to enter into such internal relationships that a unitary group-mind capable of the dual function will emerge. Its members can establish a relationship of mutual respect and confidence between two sub-groups, one of which gives first attention to the preservation of the whole group, the other to the effectiveness of its service to humanity.

This specialization of mental function is the basis of the resistive-sensitive or unitary method, and it will perhaps sufficiently explain why the School calls itself integrative*. It is observable that mature minds tend to differentiate into two main types, whose distinguishing characteristics correspond broadly to two different functions: the executive, and the function that, by analogy with the sense organs, may be called sensory. Division of labour together with close co-operation between these two types has proved fruitful in practice. The name *resistive* is Wilfred Trotter's word, and *sensitive* is developed from his *mentally unstable*.

*integrative: tending to integrate, to unite so as to form a whole.

AN INTEGRATIVE PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy that informs the School of Integrative Social Research has been much influenced by the writings of Wilfred Trotter, Sigmund Freud, Julian Huxley, Lancelot Whyte, and John Macmurray, and by the tradition of many religious thinkers and philosophers of the past. Those responsible for the direction of research in the early stages will expound and develop this philosophy; but since it includes the scientific principle of verification by reference to objective facts, it is ready to be transformed or displaced by any other approach to reality more closely in accord with the whole body of knowledge available for the use of mankind. In the meantime, however, it is intended that our present understanding shall be used as a basis for effective action, in accordance with the resistive-sensitive method.

MAN'S PREVISION AS AN AGENT OF NATURAL CHANGE

This philosophy, in its present form, includes recognition of a natural tendency in the human mind to get together with other human minds, and by specialization of function (resistive and sensitive) and division of labour to form a social organism whose abilities will certainly far transcend those of any existing single mind. It might be expected that this tendency would translate itself, without deliberate aid, into accomplished fact, were it not for other tendencies in human nature that seem destined to destroy the fabric of our cultural life long before the processes of nature can evolve such an organism by simple trial and error.

But the processes of nature now include the prevision and creative thought of man; it is becoming clear that higher forms of life appearing on earth in future will be social forms, taking shape first in the imagination of man.

THE MULTIMENTAL ORGANISM

We seem, indeed, to be presented with the opportunity to initiate a multimental social organism, having the capacity in suitable circumstances to carry us into a new phase of the evolution of life-patterns, by processes similar to those that have brought life from the level of a single free-swimming cell up to that of the multicellular human body.

The Braziers Park workers, believing that such an opportunity does in fact present itself, feel responsible for taking the initiative. At the same time they know that other groups are advancing along similar lines, and that some of these may be further advanced than themselves. If this should prove to be the case, all alike will be concerned to pool their resources and to get busy with the creative work that a sick world needs so urgently. Those consciously and responsibly engaged in such a work of creation may be expected to find themselves obliged, for their own peace of mind as well as for the efficient performance of their task, to submit themselves in all humility to the guidance that is to be gained from study of the whole creative process, including that prior to the appearance of man potentially conscious and responsible within it.

POWER IS NOT ENOUGH

In dealing with matters of such supreme gravity as the future course of evolution, men should be able to set aside questions of priority and prestige and to co-operate wholeheartedly in the search for truth and understanding. This may be difficult if the usual assumption is made, that when it comes down to action it is power that counts – power to coerce, persuade or otherwise compel men to conform to a pattern laid down for them. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the organization of humanity so as to provide a good or even tolerable life for all cannot be achieved by coercion, whether this be exercised by economic, military or political pressure. A world power capable of pursuing each citizen to his home and regulating his actions, words, and thoughts to secure the efficiency of the central control offices would almost certainly become the worst tyranny the world has ever seen.

The hope of resumed progress in the world lies in a deeper understanding of the possibilities of the individual, and of society functioning consciously as a benevolent environment for individuals; and in the centralization of all available experience, both rational and emotional, so that it may be available anywhere in the world when it is needed to inform wise action. Given this, humanity can become organized on a basis of mutually helpful personal relationships, and economic considerations will take their proper place within this higher integrating process.

To this development Braziers Park hopes to make a significant contribution.

CURRICULUM

Braziers park is probably unique (though it may be hoped that it will not continue so) in the breadth of field covered by its integration; no aspect of life, individual or social, can be said to be outside its purview. It offers organized courses of lectures and discussion, and opportunities for research, in a setting conducive to study and to the responsible enjoyment of life. The School is residential, and courses are arranged to cater for men and women who can attend only at weekends, either irregularly or in a series, as well as for those who wish to study for longer continuous periods.

Lectures cover subjects normally included in degree courses on economics, biology, psychology, literature, philosophy, comparative religion, history, sociology and anthropology, and a progressive liaison is planned with the courses of specialized instruction given in the Universities in all the subjects that are closely relevant to the integration of human life; the special contribution of Braziers Park is a technique for that integration. It may be expected that senior students of such subjects from the Universities will be able to make important additions to the factual knowledge available at Braziers Park.

Particular emphasis is laid on the value of discussion, to which much of the time is devoted, and for which new techniques of conference have been and will be evolved. Students are encouraged to participate in research, which includes the development of improved methods of mutual teaching and learning and of living together in the changing community of the School.

(The foregoing paragraphs are reproduced from the original brochure published for the opening of Braziers Adult College in 1950.)