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MATURING INCONSISTENCIES

SOME puzzling things are going on in the world. During a London press conference, last November, Prime Minister Nehru admitted that in India, at that time, some three or four thousand political prisoners were being detained without trial. According to K. P. Ghosh (*Eastern World* for March), there have been lathi charges and firing on peaceful demonstrations, as well as maltreatment of prisoners, in India, and the Government now exercises rigorous censorship over the Indian press.

"Scores of journals," Ghosh reports, "faced with censorship orders, have ceased publication. Hardly a week passes without fresh news of suppression of a journal or the proscription of books and pamphlets." Meanwhile, in the new State of Israel, the Religious Bloc has succeeded in forcing the Government to deny recognition to any religious group within Jewry but Orthodoxy. In the *Jewish Newsletter* for March 31, William Zukerman says: "If any one of the leading Rabbis of the Reformed Synagogue, such as the late Rabbi Stephen Wise, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, Israel Goldstein (all famous Zionists) were to come to Israel, they could not officiate at a marriage ceremony and could not even preach a sermon." The same treatment would be applied to eminent Conservative Rabbis and well-known Jewish scholars and religious leaders in the United States. "If they," Mr. Zukerman says, "were to attempt to propagate their religious convictions in Israel, they would be banned, excommunicated and driven from the community."

From Germany comes the news that former Nazis are actively reviving the slogans and emotional attitudes of racism, and that this new wave of anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism has at least the tolerance if not the blessing of allied officialdom. At the same time, Germans who actually opposed the Nazi regime when it was in power are still in prison awaiting disposition of the charges against them. The plight of General von Falkenhausen, who was sent to a concentration camp by Hitler "for constantly favoring the enemy," is a case in point. "Liberated" by the Americans in 1945, Falkenhausen has spent the time since in "no fewer than 51 camps and prisons in six countries." He is now seventy-one years old, and for the past two years has been in prison at Liege, Belgium, pending a decision as to whether or not he is to be tried as a "war criminal." Falkenhausen was military Governor of Belgium during the German occupation, and has been held by the allied authorities because of that high office, despite the testimony of many Belgians that "it was primarily due to him that Belgium came out of the war relatively unscathed and was the first European country to stage a spectacular recovery." According to Marion Doenhoff, who writes the European Supplement to *Human Events* for April, "A highly placed Belgian last year refused to accept a decoration, giving as his reason that he could not accept this honor so long as Falkenhausen, who had done very much more for Belgium than he himself, was in prison." Falkenhausen was also associated with the German resistance movement headed by General Beck. Many of the "best and most decent Germans," who for years fought against the Nazis, Doenhoff says, are still in prison, while many Nazi officers are free.

In the United States, the fear of Communism and communist infiltration into Government has led, in the words of a *Nation* (April 15) writer, to a breakdown of "the basic processes of civilized law." The Loyalty Order of the President is called "the strongest possible precedent for accepting guilt by association and permitting conviction without cross-examination of the accuser by the accused." The reverse side of the picture—the

provocation of this breakdown, it may be called—is given in the May *Reader's Digest* summary of the Hiss-Chambers case, contained in *Seeds of Treason*, by Toledano and Lasky. This book describes a breakdown of public responsibility and moral integrity in office, which, it might be said, is the logical counterpart of the breakdown of integrity in legal procedure. Similar symptoms include the dubious conduct of the Bridges trial in San Francisco and the recent drive—fortunately unsuccessful—to compel the teachers in the University of California to declare their "loyalty" under oath. According to Norman Foerster (in a letter to the New York *Times* of Feb. 19), "By June, 1949, anti-communist loyalty oaths were required of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools in some twenty-five states, and they were required of college and university professors in twenty states." The irony of these measures becomes evident when it is realized that the avowed political principles of the convinced communist permit him to lie whenever it suits the needs of the Party, and that this has been a major factor in creating fear of Communism in the United States. The loyalty oath program seems specifically designed to "weed out" from the faculties of the schools of the country all teachers of imagination and personal self-respect and integrity, just as the security policy of the Federal Government in respect to research scientists has caused many of the top-ranking investigators to leave the government service.

What, actually, is happening, in these numerous compromises of principle? Has some malign change of character infected the leaders of Free India, that they no longer believe in the liberty that they and their predecessors struggled toward throughout an entire epoch of history? Is there some seed of subversion in the very idea of freedom, that when a centuries-old ideal like that of Zionism is attained, sectarian oppressions and prejudices are almost at once able to gain an upper hand? Is it that Lord Acton was right—that power always corrupts—even power taken for the purpose of ending the tyrannies and injustices of an age?

Some may suppose that these manifest failures bespeak mere accidents of history—that the "wrong men" have somehow been raised to posts of authority—but the pattern of circumstantial dilemmas, leading to moral compromise, is too often repeated, in every part of the world, for it to be explained in terms of personalities. Never have the claims of the anarchists received so much practical support from the facts of current events, yet never, in view of the extraordinary technological development of modern civilization, and the resulting complexities of social and economic organization, have men been less able to adopt the anarchist scheme of human relationships—except, of course, as a program of personal resistance to the present order of society.

Will it ever be possible for human beings to say why these dilemmas arise? It ought to be possible, for there have always been at least a few human beings for whom they do not exist. The thing that seems important to realize about such people is that they find no dilemmas at all in circumstances and things, but only in men—in themselves, perhaps, as well as in others—and this, we think, is the only revolutionary doctrine worth subscribing to. More than a century ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson formulated this doctrine in his essay on War, and the passage of years has served only to make it, if possible, more pertinent, now, than it was when he set it down.

> It is a lesson [he wrote] which all history teaches wise men, to put trust in ideas, and not in circumstances. . . . always we are daunted by appearances, not seeing that their whole value lies at bottom in the state of mind. It is really a thought that built this portentous war establishment, and a thought shall also melt it away. Every nation and every man instantly surround themselves with a material apparatus which exactly corresponds to their moral state, or their state of thought. . . . We surround ourselves always, according to our freedom and ability, with true images of ourselves in things, whether it be ships or books or cannons or churches.

> The standing army, the arsenal, the camp and the gibbet do not appertain to man. They only serve as an index to show where man is now; what a bad ungoverned temper he has; what an ugly neighbor he is, how his affections halt, how low his hope lies. . . .
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> It follows, of course, that the least change in the man will change his circumstances; the least enlargement of his ideas, the least mitigation of his feelings in respect to other men, if, for example, he could be inspired with a tender kindness to the souls of men, and should come to feel that every man was another self with whom he might come to join, as left hand works with right. Every degree of the ascendancy of this feeling would cause the most striking changes of external things. . . .

Emerson here begins a psychological analysis of the dilemmas of both his age and ours, but he does not, it must be confessed, pursue it beyond a statement of the relation between attitudes of mind and outward circumstances. We still want to know *why* we cherish ideas which create the dilemmas that now confront us.

It is a question, basically, of whether or not the Existentialists are right—of whether the world and the laws of nature are against us, or for us, or merely neutral. If we literally can't help but surround ourselves with circumstances that seem to compel us to kill the things we love, to betray the principles we have fought for, there is hardly any use in going on with the struggle.

The "command decisions" of our time are becoming too numerous and too destructive of the things we say we believe in for us to continue to remain indifferent to them. Actually, the problem becomes a case of having to get out into the open the governing ideas of our lives, to see what they are, where they come from, and how they affect our behavior. And here, a brief essay contributed by Richard B. Gregg, a modern pacifist and friend of Gandhi, to the London *Peace News* for March 24, should be of great assistance. Discussing the rapid decline of Western civilization, Mr. Gregg writes:

> Civilizations are based on groups of assumptions, mostly so deep as to be unconscious. These are lived out until all the implications with their mutual inconsistencies, if any, are fully manifested and exemplified and, then the civilization crumbles.
>
> The assumptions are immensely powerful and control the course of events, just as the rules of a chess game control the events of the chess board. And as the assumptions are with most people almost entirely unconscious, their compelling direction cannot be altered.
>
> I believe this unawareness of our fundamental assumptions, together with their power, is one of the chief reasons for the prevailing sense of helplessness over the course of events.
>
> Because of these two factors, I think that pacifists cannot prevent the present series of wars. The depth and momentum of widely held assumptions is too great.

On the question of what *can* be done, Mr. Gregg makes a suggestion that seems to go to the heart of the matter, and it is a suggestion that everyone, pacifist or not, can put to work.

> First of all [he writes] I believe that some of us should find out what are the deepest assumptions of Western Civilization, drag them up to the light of day, examine them and re-think them. . . . In particular, I believe we must examine our assumptions, as well as conscious beliefs, as to the nature of the self, perhaps making a study of comparative metaphysics of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sufism and Taoism. . . .
>
> I think that our assumptions and beliefs (conscious) have an important bearing on . . .our actions, wholly outside of one's attitude toward churches and churchianity. I agree with Collingwood that our absolute assumption is an idea of comprehensive unity that can be called God, Brahma, Allah, Atman, Tao, or what not. This is the deepest reality.

Mr. Gregg is proposing what amounts to the claim that theological or metaphysical conceptions may determine ("have an important bearing on") social ideas and emotional attitudes toward other people. He can hardly develop this thesis with any particularity in the space at his disposal in *Peace News*, and the connection between, say, a loss of civil liberties in the United States and the Calvinist idea of sin may seem so tenuous to some readers

as to be not worth considering. A further objection may be anticipated from those who think that indifference to theological tradition and influence is really a form of "tolerance," and that to subject religious beliefs to philosophic evaluation is by implication an undemocratic procedure.

Such objections, however, can only grow out of the view that a man's first principles—his "absolute assumption" about the nature of unity or "God," his conception of what a human being is, and what is good for man—are really unimportant and sterile, so far as actual moral decision and human behavior are concerned. To look searchingly at a man's beliefs is not the same as persecuting him for his religion. We may look at them to see if they are worth adopting, and in order to decide this we must look at our own beliefs, as well. Tolerance establishes the right of people to look critically at beliefs, not the obligation to be indifferent toward them. We may require our *laws* to be indifferent—that is, impartial—toward beliefs, but, if Mr. Gregg is right in his analysis, laws can remain indifferent to beliefs only so long as men are *not* indifferent to them—only so long as men maintain a personal morality so vital that the State is never tempted to invade the province of religious conviction and to rule there by external controls.

We want morality, we want righteousness and loyalty, and we want these things so much and need them so badly that we are willing to violate the moral law, to do evil, even to be disloyal to our principles in order to get them. How did we arrive at this situation? Is it God's fault, or our own? Is *this* part of the "comprehensive unity" or cosmic plan?

The fact that, for a century or more, Western peoples have not thought this question worth considering may be a shaping cause of the *type* of dilemmas which we now find it so difficult to comprehend.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

INNSBRUCK.—In 1942, both people and industries of the northern and western parts of Germany removed to Austria, at that time a part of the Reich which seemed to offer more safety from air-raids. This immigration grew from year to year and reached a peak in the first months of 1945, when others began to pour into Austria from Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Hungary—countries either conquered by the Red Army or seized by the Communist Party. Of the large number of *Volksdentschen* (Germans, not living under German sovereignty) who after the war and under cruel circumstances were driven out of Czecho-Slovakia, about 300,000 reached Austria. The number of refugees again increased when Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia turned officially into satellites of the Soviet Union—a migration which included, ironically enough, many of the Czecho-Slovakians who had, a few years before, forced the Germans out, and who now, labelled as "Nationalists," were forced out themselves.

Another segment of the population in Austria who are without citizenship are the South Tyroleans who, in consequence of an agreement between Hitler and Mussolini, voted for Germany and emigrated to the region which since has become Austria again.

The presence of the South Tyroleans alone shows how difficult the solution of the problem will be for Austria. As they came at a time when Austria was not an independent state, and thus received the German citizenship, except for those who were born before 1919, they have never been Austrian citizens at all. To treat them as Germans would be more ridiculous, as they are full-blooded Tyroleans and most of them have not even seen a village of Germany. Nevertheless, from 1945 on, the South Tyroleans were treated as foreigners. Last year, the Austrian Government decided that Austrian citizenship could not be offered to them until they had regained their *Italian* citizenship, first. Many thousands filled in the necessary forms and directed their steps to the Italian Consulates, but only a few have received positive answers. The settlers from South Tyrol remain a problem.

But the fate of the Tyroleans is in some respects more favourable than that of the *Volksdentschen.* The latter arrived in Austria without any earthly property, often half-naked, having to seek shelter in stables and barracks. They were treated like outlaws, although most of them had had Austrian citizenship before, because of the fact that their homeland, Bohemia, formed part of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy until 1918. Only during last year, when general conditions had improved a bit, and one could observe everywhere what a highly cultured, diligent and sober crowd these *Volksdentschen* were, did the "public mind" become attentive to their plight. A few weeks ago, representatives of the different Christian churches tried to direct official attention to the situation of the *Volksdentschen,* declaring that, as their occupation and earning possibilities were rather limited (foreigners are not allowed to work without special permission, which is given only in cases where no Austrian, suitable for the work, is at hand), a great percentage of the valuable men would seek engagements somewhere overseas, and that it would be to the interest of the entire Austrian population to offer them better living conditions to keep these specialists in the country.

While both South Tyroleans and the *Volksdentschen* are commonly regarded as inlanders, there is a difference in respect to Hungarians, Yugoslavians and Czechs, who are more or less unlike the Austrians in their way of living, and who speak languages which are not related to German in the least. While there are many people of high character and standing among them, it is, on the other hand, no wonder, in this epoch of European chaos, that doubtful elements have intermixed, and thus destroyed some of the good reputation of these people. There is evidence that a number of black marketeers and political spies—either for or against the Soviet Union—are to be found among these Displaced Persons, and that their presence is identical with a certain subterranean unrest. Most of them, however, are cared for by the I.R.O., an international organisation for assistance to refugees, which either seeks places for them in USA, Canada, Australia and the South Americas, or supports those who are awaiting Austrian citizenship.

As dry as these words may sound, they embrace a millionfold hardship, sorrow, pain and wrong.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
A VIEW OF THE NOVEL

A SOMEWHAT regular mention of Book-of-the-Month Club novels, here, should not be interpreted as an attempt at "coverage" of modern fiction. The logic of talking about fiction at all, in a journal of predominantly philosophical intent, proceeds from the assumption that philosophizing can serve in deepening, refining or clarifying emotional experience—the novel being primarily a communication to man's emotions, which cannot, in fact, serve as "art" if written in terms of intellectual definition and abstraction. Novels are experiences to be contemplated, and Books-of-the-Month are important as means for sharing feeling-experiences with no small proportion of our literate population. The experiences derived from novel reading may not be the best of all possible ones, but they do serve in some fashion as literary common denominators. One might say, perhaps, that the Odyssey of every man's questing intelligence is successfully traversed only when increased meaning is gained from "feelings," or when a breath-of-living contact grows from the use of one's rational faculties.

It is particularly difficult to find a satisfying definition of a "great book." Yet there must be great books—those which enlarge the perceptive capacities of their readers—and if we can discover the essentials of great books, we shall probably then be able to learn more from lesser ones. An unusual commentary on the meaning of the Great Book, and particularly on gifted fiction, is contained in Ortega y Gasset's *Notes on the Novel* (Princeton University Press, 1948). Ortega contends that the novel can never by any possibility become meaningless. Fully cognizant of the pathetic immaturity of much of fiction writing, Ortega yet finds an impregnable defense for novels: "Sublime and beneficent," he calls "the power of this sovereign modern art that multiplies our existence, freeing us from our own self and generously bestowing upon us the gift of transmigration!" Ortega also indicates that in some modern works of fiction we may be witnessing a rebirth of the classic ideal:

> In Greece and in the Middle Ages it was believed that *operari sequitur esse*—actions follow, and derive from, being. The nineteenth century may be said to have established the opposite principle: *esse sequitur operari*—the being of a thing is nothing else than the sum total of its actions and functions.
>
> Should we, by any chance, now be again in the process of turning from action to the person, from function to substance? Such a transition would be indicative of an emerging classicism.

While most of us live principally in our emotions, our basic beliefs are nevertheless the determinants of the quality and varieties of emotional experience we seek. For instance, the emotional themes of the post-1900 novel must be referred to the fundamental assumptions of scientific naturalism. We have studied in detail the circumstances impinging on man, both economic and psychological, yet have produced Hamlet with Hamlet left out—in our art as well as in our technology.

While we would not care to assume the type of omniscience which claims to have discovered a "trend," one current of interpretive thought, beautifully expressed by Ortega in his *Notes on the Novel*, is also discernible in the comments of other observers. Joyce Cary, whose *The Horse's Month* recently elicited favorable BoM commentary, here, gives further indication that thoughtful writers are seeking an understanding of the meaning of art in relation to human maturity. Writing "On the Function of the Novelist," in the New York *Times Book Review* (Oct. 30, 1949), Mr. Cary presents reasons for his marked effort to transcend the conventional in his own works of fiction. He sees the artist as a man charged with both the responsibility and the privilege of "breaking through the crust" of our routinized thought-patterns:

> A very large number of people cease when quite young to add anything to a limited stock of judgments. After a certain age, say 25, they consider that their education is finished.
>
> It is perhaps natural that having passed through that painful and boring process, called expressly, education, they should suppose it over, and that they are equipped for life to label every event as it occurs and drop it into its given pigeonhole. But one who has a label ready for everything does not bother to

observe any more, even such ordinary happenings as he has observed for himself, with attention, before he went to school. He merely acts and reacts.

For people who have stopped noticing, the only possible new or renewed experience, and, therefore, new knowledge, is from a work of art. Because that is the only kind of experience which they are prepared to receive on its own terms, they will come out from their shells and expose themselves to music, to a play, to a book, because it is the accepted method of enjoying such things. True, even to plays and books they may bring artistic prejudices which prevent them from seeing *that* play or comprehending *that* book. Their artistic sensibilities may be as crusted over as their minds.

But it is part of an artist's job to break crusts, or let us say rather that artists who work for the public and not merely for themselves are interested in breaking crusts because they want to communicate their intuitions.

As it is a philosopher's job to make sense of life to the mind, to present it as a rational unity, so it is a novelist's job to make sense of it to the feelings. The function of the novel, in short, is to make the world contemplate and understand itself, not only as rational being but as experience of value, as a complete thing.

To return to Ortega, who certainly corroborates Cary, or vice versa, here is an interesting concluding passage from *Notes on the Novel:*

The possibility of constructing human souls is perhaps the major asset of future novels. Everything points in this direction. The interest in the outer mechanism of the plot is today reduced to a minimum. All the better: the novel must now revolve about the superior interest emanating from the inner mechanism of the personages. Not in the invention of plots but in the invention of interesting characters lies the best hope of the novel.

A subtle contribution of Ortega's discussion, incidentally, is in his suggestion that one is best instructed by the novel which allows us to instruct ourselves. The master novelist, Dostoievsky, did not try to do the work of thinking for his readers; by *indirection*, the reader finds himself shaken from drab conformity and initiated into new experience. Once the novel has been "lived," as Ortega puts it, "it may afterwards evoke in us all sorts of vital repercussions." Further:

It is extremely interesting to watch Dostoievsky in his cunning ways with the reader. To a perfunctory observation, he seems to define each of his personages. When he introduces a figure he nearly always begins by briefly giving a biography of that person and thus makes us believe that we know well enough with what kind of man we are dealing. But no sooner do his people begin to act—*i.e.,* to talk and to do things—than we feel thrown off the track. They refuse to behave according to those alleged definitions. The first conceptual image we are given of them is followed by another in which we see their immediate life, independent of the author's definition; and the two do not tally. At this point, the reader, afraid to lose sight of the personages at the crossroads of these contradictory data, sets forth in their pursuit by trying to reconcile the discrepant facts to make a unified picture. That is, he gets busy to find a definition himself. Now this is what we are doing in our living intercourse with people.... What we have before us is their intricate reality not their plain concept. We are never quite let into their secret, they stubbornly refuse to adjust themselves to our ideas about them. . . . But is not then Dostoievsky's "realism"—let us call it that not to complicate things—not so much a matter of the persons and events he presents as of the way the reader sees himself compelled to deal with these persons and events ?

The essence of what Ortega and Cary are saying seems unmistakably friendly to the view of art shared by both Leo Tolstoi and Lafcadio Hearn—that worthy art inspires an extension of man's moral intelligence, and therefore, of his capacity for richer and more significant relationships with others.

COMMENTARY
THE ALL-OR-NOTHING PARADOX

THE hare, in Zeno's famous paradox, could not possibly overtake the tortoise; but living hares, being innocent of the compulsions of logic, are overtaking and passing tortoises every day of their lives, and thinking nothing of it. Only human beings are puzzled by paradoxes which are created by the abstractions of reason and their embodiments in habits of thought.

Take for example the idea of social or human betterment. One extreme of opinion on this subject is that nothing worth-while can be accomplished without changing *everything*. Another extreme is represented by those who believe that any sort of change in the status quo will be against "natural law." The members of this group are really social Darwinists who think that the human struggle for existence is a sacred process which should be left strictly alone, in order that the fittest—themselves, presumably—will be free to survive.

The great majority of us, however, begin our thinking at some undefined point between these two extremes. We agree with the social Darwinists to the extent of believing that some portion of the status quo is needed as a starting-point for changing other things; but we are also haunted by the sneers of the revolutionists who insist upon a completely new beginning.

Often, disappointments seem to vindicate the revolutionists, and at other times the Darwinists seem to be right, so that, as people get older, they frequently become captives of the all-or-nothing paradox. When an entire society submits to the all-or-nothing paradox, it is liable either to turn Communist or to embrace some religion that teaches salvation by faith and miracle. Such a society has lost its inward sense of growth.

Our series, "New Ideas at Work," attempts to suggest how the all-or-nothing paradox may be resolved by individuals—by people who have discovered some basic principle of human growth and who are putting their discovery to work. These people are not waiting around for the Revolution or the Millennium, and their "reforms" do not depend upon legislative enactment.

The editors, incidentally, will welcome suggestions from readers concerning individuals, groups and movements which might be described in the articles of this series. The chief requirement is a pioneering activity and outlook—an undertaking that individuals can begin, develop and carry through, with effects that serve the cause of freedom in both practice and educational influence.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOT SO long ago, we heard a psychologist argue persuasively that the comics craze among children is simply the juvenile equivalent of adult "escapism." If this is so, we may possibly owe the comics-reading child some gratitude—for, like his parents and aunts and uncles, he could be doing many things of a much more anti-social character. The older generation seeks escape in an ever-increasing consumption of alcohol, the races, etc., etc., etc. And we, the adults, have to hold ourselves responsible for whatever "escape desires" the child has, do we not ?

Certainly, children derive their psychological orientation from the adult world. Even though they may conceivably have brought their own fundamental character or personality traits from some mysterious place, still, they are always literally *conditioned* by the happiness or unhappiness, coldness or warmth, knowledge or ignorance, balance or neuroses, of those around them.

It seems particularly valuable to try to get "children and ourselves" together in the same context when discussing this question of the comics; even the best countermeasures to the tendency of youngsters to depend on comics for emotional sustenance are those which require the parent's understanding of the structure of the comics and the child's desire to read them. The New York *Times Magazine's* page on "Parent and Child" (March 5), for instance, listed a number of home experiments to improve reading tastes. All parents interviewed agreed that "outright bans" against comic reading were not effective. One reason why the prohibition technique will never work satisfactorily is that, being purely negative, it fails to offer a new focus for whatever energies are refused expression through the enforced denial. "Prohibitionism" is always bad for people, even if they are children; and adults do poorly when, as during medieval times, they try to practice a purely negative morality. Christian prohibitions, by classifying so many things as *inherently* evil, denied any hope that a balanced expression of the emotional nature would some day be possible. If parents are not to make a psychologically similar mistake about reading matter for children, they must attempt to understand all the reasons for comic-book reading.

A parent whose experiences are summarized in the *Times* recounted a technique for turning juvenile absorption in television programs (classifiable as similar to comics because both are purely passive recreation) into constructive evaluation—which once again illustrates the type of mental equality between parents and children which is so much worth seeking. This parent says:

> "We went over the programs together one afternoon and each of us decided which programs we wanted to see. Then I discussed the whole thing with them; told them the ones I didn't think would be good for them, and why, worked out the conflicts where one of us wanted one thing, one another. We keep a marked program near the set. So far the system has worked fine."

Carrying this idea a little further, Mrs. Frances Clark Sayers, Superintendent of work with children in the New York Public Library, suggests:

> "Why can't the whole family watch together for a day or a week, discuss the programs, decide which they think are good, which are bad, which they are likely to remember from one day to another? Let the family set up their own standards, decide for themselves what they want to look at and eliminate others."

We discover ourselves constantly reiterating the same principles, in whatever involves "Children" and "Ourselves." Nothing can equal in value that family understanding which is based on recognition of essential moral equality. The most practical suggestions, obviously and mathematically, are those based upon sound theory, and thus it is that a vigilant philosophical

investigation of what constitutes Ideal Education often provides the most practical means for meeting daily problems. And we cannot "educate for democracy" unless we believe that even children can participate in home democracy. As Ernest Tiegs, of the University of Southern California, once put it in the magazine, *Education:*

> How does any individual attain true and realistic knowledge? Obviously, not merely by being told what is true and realistic. Such an attitude is childish, or paternalistic and makes him the victim of every scheming demagogue. Obviously, acquiring knowledge is closely related to the training of the intellect. The individual must be taught how to recognize the adequacies or inadequacies of data, to judge the soundness of authority, to detect evidences of bias, prejudice, or gullibility on the part of writers and speakers, and to recognize hidden absurdities.
>
> In the past we have been very naive in our procedures in this area. Because young children could not think in adult terms, on adult problems, we have withheld from them the privilege of learning to think in terms of and on the level of their own problems which is the only way in which they will ever learn to think effectively. It is the only kind of program that can lay the groundwork for the kind of critical thinking and knowing which the future will demand of them. In the future we must not prolong the period of intellectual infancy. We must train the child to think critically in relation to his own problems.

So, the master-formula might be: (*a*) all human beings, even children, grow best when full opportunity is given them for development of their own discretion; (*b*) since this very "evolutionary" fact makes children and ourselves essentially moral equals, we can expect to find correlations between all children's strengths and failings and our own; (*c*) therefore, if we wish to improve the lives of our children, we must seek to understand their problems in direct relation to our own; and, (*d*) if we are convinced that social harmony grows through a participatory, working relationship between individuals of all ages, we will seek ways to discuss all general problems with our children in *terms that are suitable to them and in relation to their needs.* Their problems are our own problems, even though the terms will be different.

Since comic books are a present focus of interest, they make satisfactory raw material for an educational venture; and the method by which we deal with the question is of much greater importance than any specific decision about who is to read comics, how many and how often. *A philosophy* of method is the primary consideration in education.

FRONTIERS

New Ideas At Work

II

IT would be difficult if not misleading, to attempt to contain the meaning of the lifework of Ralph Borsodi in a word like "decentralization" or a phrase like "education for living." So many things of importance are involved in the movement with which Mr. Borsodi has become identified, as one of its leading protagonists and interpreters, that a brief description of what he has done and is doing should be more useful than any effort at "classification" of his activities.

In 1920, Mr. and Mrs. Borsodi and their two small sons were living in a New York City apartment. He was an advertising and marketing consultant serving such firms as R. H. Macy and the American Cotton Spool Co. This was the year of the great post-war housing shortage, and when the eviction epidemic suddenly rendered the Borsodis homeless in a metropolis where rents were skyrocketing, they decided to try the experiment they had often talked about—to move to the country. They finally bought a small house near Suffern, New York, located about an hour and three quarters (by train) from the city. There were *no* improvements—no running water, no plumbing, gas, electricity or steam heat. They took with them their city furniture, a little capital, and a large amount of daring. While Mrs. Borsodi had spent her childhood until the age of twelve on a Western ranch, Mr. Borsodi had virtually no experience in the practical arts of rural life. But the experiment worked. Mr. Borsodi reports this family adventure in *Flight from the City:*

> Before the end of the first year, the year of the depression of 1921 when millions were tramping the streets of our cities looking for work, we began to enjoy the feeling of plenty which the city-dweller never experiences. We cut our hay; gathered our fruit; made gallons and gallons of cider. We had a cow, and produced our own milk and butter, but finally gave her up. By furnishing us twenty quarts of milk a day she threatened to put us into the dairy business. So we changed to a pair of blooded Swiss goats. We equipped a poultry-yard, and had eggs, chickens, and fat roast capons. We ended the year with plenty not only for our own needs but for a generous hospitality to our friends—some of whom were out of work—a hospitality which, unlike city hospitality, did not involve purchasing everything we served our guests.

During this period—and until 1932—Mr. Borsodi kept on with his business activities. He did not become an all-out "farmer," nor was the program for living which the Borsodis worked out primarily a venture in agriculture. "We quickly abandoned," he says, "all efforts to raise anything to sell." Home production was limited to home consumption, and they "mechanized" as many as possible of the operations of the household economy, for both efficiency and the sake of leisure time.

This was the first stage of the experiment—interesting, suggestive, and a testament to the resourcefulness of both the Borsodis, but hardly of revolutionary implications.

The second stage began, it seems, with Mrs. Borsodi's improbable idea that she could can tomatoes more cheaply than they could be bought at the store. She tried it, and she proved it—that is, she produced the canned tomatoes and Mr. Borsodi produced the economic analysis, covering all costs, which showed that *"the cost of the home-made product was between 20 per cent and 30 per cent lower than the price of the factory-made merchandise."* This discovery led to a lot more thinking. As Borsodi puts it:

> How was it possible, I kept asking myself, for a woman, working all alone, to produce canned goods at a lower cost than could the Campbell Soup Company with its fine division of labor, its efficient management, its laborsaving machinery, its quantity buying, its mass-production economics? Unless there was some mistake in our calculations this experiment knocked all the elaborate theories framed by economists to explain the industrial revolution, into a cocked hat. Unless we had failed to take some element of which I was ignorant into consideration, the economic activities of mankind for nearly two

> hundred years had been based upon a theory as false as its maritime activities prior to the discovery of the fact that the world was round.

Finally, after extended study of the problem, resulting, incidentally, in publication of two books (*National Advertising vs. Prosperity* and *The Distribution Age*) and several articles, Mr. Borsodi formulated his explanation in terms of an economic law: *Distribution costs tend to move in inverse relationship to production costs.* Actually, he found, less than a third of the selling price of goods purchased at retail goes to pay for raw materials and the cost of manufacture. "Transportation, warehousing, advertising, salesmanship, wholesaling, retailing—all these aspects of distribution cost more than the whole cost of fabricating the goods themselves." Mrs. Borsodi's canned tomatoes were "distributed" as soon as they were finished—the point of production and the point of consumption were the same. In *Flight from the City,* Mr. Borsodi generalizes his conclusion:

> All the orthodox economic teachings to which I had subscribed underwent a complete transformation as soon as I fully digested the implications of this discovery.
>
> I discovered that more than two-thirds of the things which the average family now buys could be produced more economically at home than they could be bought factory made;
>
> —that the average man and woman could earn more by producing at home than by working for money in an office or factory and that, therefore, the less time they spent working away from home and the more time they spent working at home, the better off they would be
>
> —finally, that the home itself was still capable of being made into a productive and creative institution and that an investment in a homestead equipped with efficient domestic machinery would yield larger returns per dollar of investment than investment in insurance, in mortgages, in stocks and bonds.

Ostensibly, Mr. Borsodi's inspiration grew out of a successful challenge to one major cultural delusion—the idea that bigger and better factories inevitably mean better and cheaper living for human beings. It is true that the initial statistical support for his conclusions grew out of a dollars-and-cents analysis of home production versus large-scale factory production. But the thing that distinguishes Mr. Borsodi's contribution from ordinary economic analysis is the fact that it represents theory that has been *lived,* so that economics forms only a part—even a subordinate part, perhaps—of the social philosophy developed from this family undertaking. Through the years, the emphasis of Mr. Borsodi's work has grown increasingly educational, until, today, the broad idea of education for living has become the keynote of his approach. In his later works, such as *This Ugly Civilization* (1929), and the compendious edition of *Education and Living* (1948) in two volumes, the discontents and harassments of contemporary life are examined in exhaustive detail. Apparently, Borsodi's expose of the industrial delusion led him to penetrate veil after veil of other delusions of modern civilization.

The writings of Ralph Borsodi are characterized by a persistent social idealism and sympathy for the "average man" which impart an inner dynamism to his fact-minded studies and analyses. They are pervaded, also, with the glow of enthusiasm of one who has personally put his ideas to work, and who is writing, not for college professors, not merely to add to a body of "scientific knowledge," but primarily for other human beings—other men, women, and families—who may make the ideas their own and also put them to work. The values in his books are not "academic," but represent, for many readers, a kind of "El Dorado" dream of release from the artificial, "getting and spending" frame of mind in which the prevailing cultural pattern involves them.

Efforts to apply the principles formulated in Mr. Borsodi's books seem to produce a friendly eagerness to communicate and share the spirit of personal discovery. This is strikingly illustrated in *Normal Living,* an enlarged quarterly edition of

the *Interpreter*. (The *Interpreter* is edited by Mildred Loomis in association with Mr. Borsodi, and published semi-monthly at Suffern, New York.) *Normal Living* for Spring, 1950, contains articles by members of homestead communities which were either established directly from the influence of Mr. Borsodi's ideas, or represent parallel efforts. This magazine is rich in the fertility of personal experience and in the desire to spread the inspiration that seems an invariable accompaniment of the effort to live a natural and individually productive existence.

This Ugly Civilization, issued by Simon and Schuster in 1929, pursues further and develops the themes and questions which are announced with the impact of a personal testament in *Flight from the City*. Here, the author shows his competence not only as an economist, but also as a critic of the psycho-social disorders of modern industrial civilization. Many writers have attacked the social effects of "the machine," but Borsodi is almost unique in pressing his analysis far enough to show what could very well become a new type of revolution through the intelligent use of machinery. As he says:

> It is easy to forget that the distinctive feature of our present industrial civilization is not so much our machine technique as it is our factory technique. It is the impressive use of machinery by the factory that makes us forget that there is a significant distinction between the domestic machine and the factory machine.

A sample of the sort of commentary that one finds in *This Ugly Civilization* is Borsodi's notation of the fact that while the great power laundries have liberated many women from washtubs and ironing boards, their freedom depends upon the condition *"that many other women work in laundries."* He is not interested in a merely private escape from drudgery, but in the evolution of a social community which will help to free all its members from even the possibility of being victimized by industrialization. Instead of wanting to "organize" the proletariat for social revolution, he wants to abolish—wants *us* to abolish—the system which has created a proletariat.

Education and Living is a full-length examination of modern society in all its major aspects, in which conventional institutions are studied in terms of their actual effect upon human beings, not according to their honorific titles. In this work, Mr. Borsodi uses the resources of modern sociology and social philosophy, but again, he avoids the production of a merely academic study. This work does not have the primitive stimulus of *Flight from the City*—and if you read anything of Borsodi's, read *Flight from the City,* first—but it does carry out to broad social and educational conclusions the ideas which were born from practical personal experience.