VOLUME XV, NO. 42
OCTOBER 17, 1962

TOLSTOY ON ART

[These are days of rapid change in art forms and of much confusion concerning what is "art." Tolstoy took what is usually regarded as an "extreme position" concerning the arts. His views are not well accepted today, yet there is a power in what he wrote on the subject. We print here a compilation of extracts from his long essay, "What Is Art?", pub1ished by The Great Books Foundation in the *Gadfly* for September, 1962.]

ART, in our society, has been so perverted that not only has bad art come to be considered good, but even the very perception of what art really is has been lost. In order to be able to speak about the art of our society, it is, therefore, first of all necessary to distinguish art from counterfeit art.

There is one indubitable indication distinguishing real art from its counterfeit, namely, the infectiousness of art. If a man, without exercising effort and without altering his standpoint, on reading, hearing, or seeing another man's work, experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with other people who also partake of that work of art, then the object evoking that condition is a work of art. And however poetical, realistic, effectual, or interesting a work may be, it is not a work of art if it does not evoke that feeling (quite distinct from all other feelings) of joy, and of spiritual union with another (the author) and with others (those who are also infected by it).

It is true that this indication is an *internal* one, and that there are people who have forgotten what the action of real art is, who expect something else from art (in our society the great majority are in this state), and that therefore such people may mistake for this aesthetic feeling the feeling of divertisement and a certain excitement which they receive from counterfeits of art. But though it is impossible to undeceive these people, just as it is impossible to convince a man suffering from "Daltonism" that green is not red, yet, for all that, this indication remains perfectly definite to those whose feeling for art is neither perverted nor atrophied, and it clearly distinguishes the feeling produced by art from all other feelings.

The chief peculiarity of this feeling is that the receiver of a true artistic impression is so united to the artist that he feels as if the work were his own and not someone else's—as if what it expresses were just what he had long been wishing to express. A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist; nor that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art.

If a man is infected by the author's condition of soul he feels this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has effected this is art; but if there be no such infection, if there be not this union with the same author and others who are moved by the same work—then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of excellence of art.

The stronger the infection the better is the art, as art, speaking now apart from its subject-matter, *i.e.,* not considering the quality of the feelings it transmits.

And the degree of the infectiousness of art depends on three conditions:—

(1) On the greater or lesser individuality of the feeling transmitted; (2) on the greater or lesser clearness with which the feeling is transmitted; (3) on the sincerity of the artist, *i.e.,* on the greater or lesser force with which the artist himself feels the emotion he transmits.

The more individual the feeling transmitted the more strongly does it act on the receiver; the more individual the state of soul into which he is transferred the more pleasure does the receiver

obtain, and therefore the more readily and strongly does he join in it.

The clearness of expression assists infection, because the receiver, who mingles in consciousness with the author, is the better satisfied the more clearly the feeling is transmitted, which as it seems to him he has long known and felt, and for which he has only now found expression.

But most of all is the degree of infectiousness of art increased by the degree of sincerity in the artist. As soon as the spectator, hearer, or reader feels that the artist is infected by his own production, and writes, sings, or plays for himself, and not merely to act on others, this mental condition of the artist infects the receiver; and, contrariwise, as soon as the spectator, reader, or hearer feels that the author is not writing, singing, or playing for his own satisfaction,—does not himself feel what he wishes to express,—but is doing it for him, the receiver, a resistance immediately springs up, and the most individual and the newest feelings and the cleverest technique not only fail to produce any infection, but actually repel.

I have mentioned three conditions of contagiousness in art, but they may be all summed up into one, the last, sincerity, *i.e.*, that the artist should be impelled by an inner need to express his feeling. That condition includes the first; for if the artist is sincere he will express the feeling as he experienced it. And as each man is different from everyone else, his feeling will be individual for everyone else; and the more individual it is,—the more the artist has drawn it from the depths of his nature,—the more sympathetic and sincere will it be. And this same sincerity will impel the artist to find a clear expression of the feeling which he wishes to transmit.

Therefore this third condition—sincerity—is the most important of the three. It is always complied with in peasant art, and this explains why such art always acts so powerfully; but it is a condition almost entirely absent from our upper-class art, which is continually produced by artists actuated by personal aims of covetousness or vanity.

Such are the three conditions which divide art from its counterfeits, and which also decide the quality of every work of art apart from its subject-matter.

The absence of any one of these conditions excludes a work from the category of art and relegates it to that of art's counterfeits. If the work does not transmit the artist's peculiarity of feeling, and is therefore not individual, if it is unintelligibly expressed, or if it has not proceeded from the author's inner need for expression—it is not a work of art. If all these conditions are present, even in the smallest degree, then the work, even if a weak one, is yet a work of art.

The presence in various degrees of these three conditions—individuality, clearness, and sincerity—decides the merit of a work of art, as art, apart from subject-matter. All works of art take rank of merit according to the degree in which they fulfill the first, the second, and the third of these conditions. In one the individuality of the feeling transmitted may predominate; in another, clearness of expression; in a third, sincerity; while a fourth may have sincerity and individuality, but be deficient in clearness; a fifth, individuality and clearness, but less sincerity; and so forth, in all possible degrees and combinations.

Thus is art divided from not art, and thus is the quality of art, as art, decided, independently of its subject-matter, *i.e.*, apart from whether the feelings it transmits are good or bad.

. . .

How in art are we to decide what is good and what is bad in subject-matter?

Art, like speech, is a means of communication, and therefore of progress, *i.e.*, of the movement of humanity forward toward perfection. Speech renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the knowledge discovered by the experience and reflection, both of preceding generations and of the best and foremost men of their own times; art renders accessible to men of the latest generations all the feelings experienced by their predecessors, and those also which are being felt by their best and foremost contemporaries. And as the evolution of

knowledge proceeds by truer and more necessary knowledge dislodging and replacing what is mistaken and unnecessary, so the evolution of feeling proceeds through art,—feelings less kind and less needful for the well-being of mankind are replaced by others kinder and more needful for that end. That is the purpose of art. And, speaking now of its subject-matter, the more art fulfills that purpose the better the art, and the less it fulfills it the worse the art.

And the appraisement of feelings *(i.e.,* the acknowledgment of these or those feelings as being more or less good, more or less necessary for the well-being of mankind) is made by the religious perception of the age.

In every period of history, and in every human society, there exists an understanding of the meaning of life which represents the highest level to which men of that society have attained,—an understanding defining the highest good at which that society aims. And this understanding is the religious perception of the given time and society. And this religious perception is always clearly expressed by some advanced men, and more or less vividly perceived by all the members of the society. Such a religious perception and its corresponding expression exists always in every society. If it appears to us that in our society there is no religious perception, this is not because there really is none, but only because we do not want to see it. And we often wish not to see it because it exposes the fact that our life is inconsistent with that religious perception.

Religious perception in a society is like the direction of a flowing river. If the river flows at all, it must have a direction. If a society lives, there must be a religious perception indicating the direction in which, more or less consciously, all its members tend.

And so there always has been, and there is, a religious perception in every society. And it is by the standard of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been estimated. Only on the basis of this religious perception of their age have men always chosen from the endlessly varied spheres of art that art which transmitted feelings making religious perception operative in actual life. And such art has always been highly valued and encouraged; while art transmitting feelings already outlived, flowing from the antiquated religious perceptions of a former age, has always been condemned and despised. All the rest of art, transmitting those most diverse feelings by means of which people commune together, was not condemned, and was not tolerated, if only it did not transmit feelings contrary to religious perception. Thus, for instance, among the Greeks, art transmitting the feeling of beauty, strength and courage (Hesiod, Homer, Phidias) was chosen, approved, and encouraged; while art transmitting feelings of rude sensuality, despondency, and effeminacy was condemned and despised. Among the Jews, art transmitting feelings of devotion and submission to the God of the Hebrews and to His will (the epic of Genesis, the prophets, the Psalms) was chosen and encouraged, while art transmitting feelings of idolatry (the golden calf) was condemned and despised. All the rest of art—stories, songs, dances, ornamentation of houses, of utensils, and of clothes—which was not contrary to religious perception, was neither distinguished nor discussed. Thus, in regard to its subject-matter, has art been appraised always and everywhere, and thus it should be appraised; for this attitude toward art proceeds from the fundamental characteristics of human nature, and those characteristics do not change.

I know that according to an opinion current in our times religion is a superstition which humanity has outgrown, and that it is therefore assumed that no such thing exists as a religious perception, common to us all, by which art, in our time, can be estimated. I know that this is the opinion current in the pseudo-cultured circles of to-day. People who do not acknowledge Christianity in its true meaning because it undermines all their social privileges, and who, therefore, invent all kinds of philosophic and aesthetic theories to hide from themselves the meaninglessness and wrongness of their lives, cannot think otherwise. These people intentionally, or sometimes unintentionally, confusing the conception of a religious cult with the conception of religious perception, think that by denying the cult they get rid

of religious perception. But even the very attacks on religion, and the attempts to establish a life-conception contrary to the religious perception of our times, most clearly demonstrate the existence of a religious perception condemning the lives that are not in harmony with it.

If humanity progresses, *i.e.,* moves forward, there must inevitably be a guide to the direction of that movement. And religions have always furnished that guide. All history shows that the progress of humanity is accomplished not otherwise than under the guidance of religion. But if the race cannot progress without the guidance of religion,—and progress is always going on, and consequently also in our own times,—then there must be a religion of our times. So that, whether it pleases or displeases the so-called cultured people of to-day, they must admit the existence of religion,—not of a religious cult, Catholic, Protestant, or another, but of a religious perception,—which, even in our times, is the guide always present where there is any progress. And if a religious perception exists amongst us, then our art should be appraised on the basis of that religious perception; and, as has always: and everywhere been the case, art transmitting feelings flowing from the religious perception of our time should be chosen from all the indifferent art, should be acknowledged, highly esteemed, and encouraged; while art running counter to that perception should be condemned and despised, and all the remaining indifferent art should neither be distinguished nor discouraged.

The religious perception of our time, in its widest and most practical application, is the consciousness that our wellbeing, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among all men—in their loving harmony with one another. This perception is not only expressed by Christ and all the best men of past ages, it is not only repeated in the most varied forms and from most diverse sides by the best men of our own times, but it already serves as a clue to all the complex labor of humanity, consisting as this labor does, on the one hand, in the destruction of physical and moral obstacles to the union of men, and, on the other hand, in establishing the principles common to all men which can and should unite them into one universal brotherhood. And it is on the basis of this perception that we should appraise all the phenomena of our life, and, among the rest, our art also; choosing from all realms whatever transmits feelings flowing from this religious perception, highly prizing and encouraging such art, rejecting whatever is contrary to this perception and not attributing to the rest of art an importance not properly pertaining to it.

. . .

The essence of the Christian perception consists in the recognition by every man of his sonship to God, and of the consequent union of men with God and with one another, as is said in the gospel (John 17:21). Therefore the subject-matter of Christian art is such feeling as can unite men with God and with one another.

The expression *unite men with God and with one another* may seem obscure to people accustomed to the misuse of these words which is so customary, but the words have a perfectly clear meaning nevertheless. They indicate that the Christian union of man (in contradiction to the partial, exclusive union of only some men) is that which unites all without exception.

Art, all art, has this characteristic, that it unites people. Every art causes those to whom the artist's feeling is transmitted to unite in soul with the artist, and also with all who receive the same impression. But non-Christian art, while uniting some people together, makes that very union a cause of separation between these united people and others; so that union of this kind is often a source, not only of division, but even of enmity toward others. Such is all patriotic art, with its anthems, poems, and monuments; such is all Church art, *i.e.,* the art of certain cults, with their images, statues, processions, and other local ceremonies. Such art is belated and non-Christian art, uniting the people of one cult only to separate them yet more sharply from the members of other cults, and even to place them in relations of hostility to each other. Christian art is only such as tends to unite all without exception, either by evoking in them the perception that each man and all

men stand in like relation toward God and toward their neighbor, or by evoking in them identical feelings, which may even be the very simplest, provided only that they are not repugnant to Christianity and are natural to everyone without exception.

Good Christian art of our time may be unintelligible to people because of imperfections in its form, or because men are inattentive to it, but it must be such that all men can experience the feelings it transmits. It must be the art, not of some one group of people, nor of one class, nor of one nationality, nor of one religious cult; that is, it must not transmit feelings which are accessible only to a man educated in a certain way, or only to an aristocrat, or a merchant, or only to a Russian, or a native of Japan, or a Roman Catholic, or a Buddhist, etc., but it must transmit feelings accessible to everyone. Only art of this kind can be acknowledged in our time to be good art, worthy of being chosen out from all the rest of art and encouraged.

Christian art, *i.e.*, the art of our time should be catholic in the original meaning of the word, *i.e.*, universal, and therefore it should unite all men. And only two kinds of feeling do unite all men: first, feelings flowing from the perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man; and next, the simple feelings of common life, accessible to everyone without exception—such as the feeling of merriment, of pity, of cheerfulness, of tranquillity, etc. Only these two kinds of feelings can now supply material for art good in its subject-matter.

And the action of these two kinds of art, apparently so dissimilar, is one and the same. The feelings flowing from perception of our sonship to God and of the brotherhood of man—such as a feeling of sureness in truth, devotion to the will of God, self-sacrifice, respect for and love of man—evoked by Christian religious perception; and the simplest feelings—such as a softened or a merry mood caused by a song or an amusing jest intelligible to everyone, or by a touching story, or a drawing, or a little doll: both alike produce one and the same effect,—the loving union of man with man. Sometimes people who are together are, if not hostile to one another, at least estranged in mood and feeling, till perchance a story, a performance, a picture, or even a building, but oftenest of all, music, unites them all as by an electric flash, and, in place of their former isolation or even enmity, they are all conscious of union and mutual love. Each is glad that another feels what he feels; glad of the communion established, not only between him and all present, but also with all now living who will yet share the same impression; and more than that, he feels the mysterious gladness of a communion which, reaching beyond the grave, unites us with all men of the past who have been moved by the same feelings, and with all men of the future who will yet be touched by them. And this effect is produced both by the religious art which transmits feelings of love to God and one's neighbor, and by universal art, transmitting the very simplest feelings common to all men.

From *What Is Art.;* by
LEO TOLSTOY

REVIEW
"THE SEEKER"

ALLEN WHEELIS' novel of this title (Random House and Signet) is, to our way of thinking, an extraordinary book. A practicing psychoanalyst and a Fellow of the Menninger Foundation School of Psychiatry, Dr. Wheelis brings to this study of the human situation a penetrating ability to examine the first premises of the psychological sciences. While *The Seeker*, as one reviewer says, is "a novel of ideas" rather than of events, most readers will find their attention held throughout long passages of introspection. "Oliver," the psychoanalyst protagonist, runs the gamut of human successes and failures in his profession, while being increasingly driven to a search for meaning.

Successful in his professional research and in his practice with patients, he notes in himself a nagging sense of emptiness, a dissatisfaction with formulas. In the third chapter this mood is briefly expressed:

> I have not found in psychoanalysis the meaning I sought. I function as guide to the lost, but do not myself know the way. I would escape this responsibility if I could, but have come a long way down this path to turn back now. And even if there were time, I wouldn't know what other path to take.

Oliver engages himself in what may be called a paring-down process, in the course of which he troubles his old friend and mentor—the head of a psychiatric research foundation—with heretical opinions. A conversation between the older man, "Stanley," and the restless Oliver leads in the direction of a kind of nihilism. Stanley's belief that "science" and psychoanalysis provide all the "meanings" he needs is contradicted by his inner experience. Oliver explains: "Science has little bearing on what troubles me most. It gives information about particulars, not about wholes. I want to know what is worth struggling for, but science is embarrassed by such a question, ignores it, or so dismantles it into sub-questions that the answers become meaningless. What I know certainly is unimportant to me; and what is important to me I cannot know certainly." The dialogue continues:

> "This is eloquent," Stanley said, "but it's a lament, not an inquiry."
>
> "Life," I said, "is foolish and painful and short. Particularly it's painful. It could be endured if it meant something, but it doesn't, and on its own terms it's intolerable. So we endow it with meaning. The meaning is an illusion, and this is what we live by. We in psychoanalysis serve up an illusion in the guise of science. That's all right. Since illusions are necessary we might as well provide them. The absurdity lies in thefact that we fall for our own gambit. We accept as reality the illusion we have created."
>
> "There are plenty of charlatans in psychoanalysis," Stanley said, "magicians and manipulators who achieve transference cures and make exaggerated claims. About such persons I could agree with you. But you seem to be talking about psychoanalysis proper and making a wild accusation."
>
> "It would always sound wild," I said. "Necessarily so. For whatever embodies the illusion people live by is held in highest esteem. Whoever tries to expose it is obviously crazy.
>
> "Illusions pretend the human condition isn't so, or else promise to rectify it—either in this world, like the Marxists, or in the next, like the Christians. To serve its purpose the illusion has to be recognized as truth—self-evident truth or a law of nature or a discovery of science. So soon as it is perceived as illusion it ceases to protect against the absurdity of life and is discarded. The great illusory systems of the past have collapsed; the wreckage is all around us. But the illusion they carried lives on. For a small group—the well-to-do and the intellectual—psychoanalysis is its current bearer. It is the heir of religion, the heir of the Enlightenment, the heir of Marxism, and of all the other wrecks that surround us."
>
> "I understand the charge," Stanley said drily, "and am awaiting the evidence."
>
> "It fosters the belief that unhappiness is an illness, a product of local and temporary conflicts, and that it can be cured."
>
> "At times unhappiness *is* a symptom," Stanley said. "And at times it can be cured. Psychoanalysis does not claim that this is always the case."

"Not explicitly," I said, "but it connives with that assumption. The profession is supported by illusion-seekers, by those who have found a sophisticated way of crying out, 'Say it isn't so!' The case against psychoanalysis is that it accepts their support. Doing so, it cannot remain innocent."

Oliver does not pass from nihilism to some kind of mature fulfillment all at once. While "trying himself out" mentally in various roles, his painful honesty perseveres. He considers the idea of dedicating himself to "principle," of fighting injustice, poverty and disease:

Everyone can perceive himself in the one who cries for help, and can respond. Quantity is not important here. If a single man languishes unjustly in a remote, vermin-infested prison, you must find him. Find him and you will find yourself. Take up his cause. Resolve that you will not rest till he rests, nor eat till he eats, or that your food and rest, if you must take them, will garner strength committed to his cause.

I tried to imagine myself carrying a rifle in a foreign land, in a war at present unknown to me. Or, more usefully, I might serve as a doctor. I pictured a primitive mental hospital in Burma or perhaps Madagascar—a colony of the demented, a scattering of grass huts in the jungle, foul with refuse, housing indiscriminately the old and the unwanted, the sick and the insane, administered in superstition and brutality, a few indifferent attendants prowling about and accepting bribes. Such places exist. If not in Burma or Madagascar, then somewhere else. It has been but a few decades since they existed in the United States, and for all I knew might still exist. At any rate somewhere in the world there is such a place, and probably there are hundreds. Any of them would derive enormous benefit from the service of but one competent and dedicated psychiatrist. So—the opportunity is there. Why do I wait?

So thinking, I could feel myself begin to frown. There was something about the idea I didn't like. To become a psychiatric missionary, to do good in a jungle—how could I keep a straight face? I would be an impostor. Who the hell did I think I was? Jesus Christ? And, moreover, would not this stagey mission still be egoism? I would be trekking across the world to save the demented—but come off it. Whose soul, in fact, would I be trying to save?

Finally Oliver graduates from his dilettante experimentalism and approaches a true identity. But now, as a man of fifty, he discovers that his body is host to an incurable cancer. So, as a dying man, he plunges into another dimension of the search for meaning, returning to the areas of philosophy and religion from a different point of view. He cannot accept belief in immortality simply because of its appeal to a man whose days are numbered; on the other hand, he senses something of a truth which might be put in the words of Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation.* "Once the world has reached the reflective stage of full self-consciousness," wrote Dixon, "if then it holds that this earthly life is all, there can be no exit, however long it lasts, from its disquiet, no comfort anywhere." Waiting for death, Oliver sums up:

I had been deluding myself. I was not identified with a social process. When I said "I" it referred to something unique and perishable. My work on perception will be retained; it has existence and meaning for others as well as for me. This house, in the restoration of which I have taken such interest, will survive me and have value. But it was not such things I meant by "I." I took no pride in them now, but rather resented their durability. What right had tangible accomplishments and material things to outlive me, their more subtle creator? . . .

Intellectually I affirmed a social theory of value; emotionally I clung to individual uniqueness. This was why I could not feel as I believed. That which is shared has a life of its own, will exist in others after my death, and hence does not need me for survival. But what is singular in me is about to die and I would save it. The only thing that could make death acceptable to me is a passion of purpose or meaning, or some kind of comprehensive clarity or unity. Lacking such certitude I must live in the consciousness of a unique and incommunicable self, valued by me alone, and soon to die. Unable to forsake this uniqueness, I cannot identify myself fully with a social entity which is indifferent to this unique self.

Where does all this take—or leave the reader? In a sense, Dr. Wheelis takes the mind nearly everywhere that the mind can go—the mind as "seeker" or "searcher." But ultimate meanings must be wrought each for himself.

COMMENTARY
GANDHIAN ECONOMICS

THE contribution of Noshir Bilpodiwala to this week's Frontiers is a refreshing discussion of the ethical issues in property relations, carried on without any sense of ideological pressure. The author explains that his article is a translation of a talk he gave in Hindi, and what he says might be regarded as an effort at basic education for people who have as yet to determine the direction in the development of their economic system.

Westerners who, especially in recent years, have been subjected to high winds of controversy about "socialization" and exposed to heavy-handed indoctrination asserting the practically religious merit of private wealth and acquisition, may at first think the proposals of this Indian writer somewhat ingenuous—lacking in the background of experience common to all the industrialized Western countries. But he might reply that most Westerners are ignorant of the fact that there have been several cultures in the past which managed to attain to a high level of human relationships without any attention to the doctrine of private acquisition. We do not speak of the systematically socialist societies, such as Peru under the Incas, but of less pretentious groups, the members of which saw no point in striving for large accumulations of private property. Burma in the nineteenth century, for example, had such a culture. As Fielding Hall points out in *The Soul of a People*, the Burmese in the way of becoming wealthy was made uncomfortable by the threat of a surfeit of goods. He found ways of reducing his economic status, such as building rest houses for travelers along the country roads. For the Burmese, there was no *point* in having wealth above one's fellows.

Actually, the human longing for wealth is much exaggerated, even among Westerners. Most people turn their economic life into a *struggle*, not from any basic acquisitive drive, but from fear—fear of want, fear of lowered status, fear of being a "poor provider." With a change in ideals, and with the spread of feelings of fellowship and cooperation, we might find that many people—the large majority, perhaps—would turn away from the anxious pursuit of "security" with considerable relief. There is an unnatural vulgarity in the continual worry about *money* which the acquisitive society seems to require of all its members.

No one, of course, wants to be compeled by law to give up his possessions but it is just possible that, deep down, people have equal distaste for being compelled by a nervously insistent economic ideology to *pursue more and more "things"* all their lives. If we can forget the angry claims of partisans of economic theories for a moment or two, we may be able to recognize some sound common sense in Gandhian economics.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE ISSUE ABOUT ISSUES

TO say that effective learning occurs only when old viewpoints are reconstructed is simply to recognize that the essence of life is constant growth. At the university level this idea was put in the form of a challenge by Robert M. Hutchins when he was president of the University of Chicago. "I am in favor of teaching communism in our universities," wrote Dr. Hutchins. What he meant was that unless each individual makes his own evaluation and criticism of communism, he will not learn to recognize political dogmatism and authoritarian control, especially when it is presented under a different label. At the level of elementary school discussion it is certainly possible for the teacher to demonstrate the importance of listening attentively to different points of view. This is, in fact, the process of education itself, as opposed to the conditioning techniques of indoctrination, however well-meaning or "moral" the indoctrinators.

The feature article in the July issue of *ETC.*, "The Teaching of Controversial Issues," is a contribution by Earl C. Kelley, professor of education, Wayne State University, and author of *Education for What Is Real.* Dr. Kelley favors all programs devoted to discussion of controversial issues, but he is convinced that the methods used are often inadequately based. For instance, it is sometimes argued that "hot" issues can be discussed beneficially if the teacher "knows all the facts" and is able to present them "without bias or prejudice." But Dr. Kelley contests the assumption that the teacher should decide precisely what is to be taught because "he knows all the facts." Dr. Kelley writes:

> Learners do not learn exactly what is taught, but they adapt teachings to their own unique backgrounds, and make "facts" uniquely their own. Teachers cannot control what is to be learned, except in the degrees to which they can deprive their learners of freedom. So-called "facts" are not reliable, but change with the changing scene, especially when they are "facts" about current matters which have not been validated or settled. If teachers could be completely "fair" and neutral they would cancel themselves out and deny the existence of their own personalities, for which, in part, they have been selected.

The academic habit is to regard the content to be taught as largely a matter of history. For example, a junior high school instructor may invite debate on the issues of the Civil War, and while youngsters may learn something from a conscientious effort to be "objective" toward a position which they do not share, the value of such experiments is limited. There is nothing daring about this kind of contrived "controversy." The useful discussions, in Dr. Kelley's opinion, have to do with the often bitter political' social or religious arguments of our own time. He says:

> There are really two kinds of issues, those that have been settled and those that have not. Unsettled issues have to do with current matters. There is much difference of opinion about them because they *are* current, and this fact is what makes them true issues. So the question becomes, "Shall young people learn about what is now going on, or confine their study only to matters which are far enough in the past so that they are no longer issues?" All current issues are controversial in some degree. . . .
>
> The fallacy of not permitting study of controversial issues is nowhere better illustrated than in examination of the social scene. Issues constantly come into our awareness; we become excited about them, take sides with bitterness, occasionally; and then we see them fade into insignificance or disappear altogether. Here we can see before our eyes the emerging, becoming nature of life, and can see that there is nothing static about it; that there is no firm foundation, that we must learn to live in a world of movement, rather than a stationary one. The concept of knowledge as something "set out to be learned" becomes obsolete when we see that life on the earth we live on is in process, not established. Knowledge comes *after* learning and does not exist before learning begins. It is a part of a living organism.
>
> The question, then, as to whether or not we shall allow learners to study controversial (current) issues is to ask whether the learner shall be concerned with

that which is coming up, or with that which has gone by.

It is far from easy to set a course for truly free intellectual inquiry. Public pressure is brought to bear upon both attitudes and course content in the classroom, by parents who are self-protective, status quo thinkers. John Dewey faced this problem squarely when he stated the conservative's case for "stability": "If we once start thinking, no one can guarantee where we shall come out, except that many objects, ends, and institutions are doomed. Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place." We conclude with Dr. Kelley's analysis of the pressure of conformity as it is currently felt by teachers in our schools:

> In times of public fear and its attendant hysteria, such as we are now going through, it is not reasonable to expect teachers, particularly in the social studies, not to be deeply concerned for their own safety. They need employment and most of them, both married and unmarried, have family responsibilities. The temptation to "play it safe" is almost overwhelming.
>
> It is perhaps true that limited personal safety may be achieved in this manner. If the teachers of our country, however, rear a generation unaccustomed to consideration of current issues, and deprived of the development of their power to think about them, this may result in the loss of our democratic form of government and our democratic institutions.
>
> Pressure from the community to avoid current issues naturally has a bad effect on teachers. It most often causes fear, and fear always has a bad effect on people, one way or another. Some teachers become belligerent, make loud demands, but fail to keep their powder dry. Their response to fear is to attack. The vast majority of teachers, however, do not take the aggressive attitude, but withdraw, dealing with threat by an effort to escape. They retreat into the past, taking the learner away from his environs, which contain the things the learner really cares about, and impose upon him the matters which are so far gone by that nobody in the community, and especially no learner, cares about them. A national leader in the social studies once told the writer in a meeting, with flushed face and clenched fist, that he would have me understand that social studies consists of history and geography. But history and geography, to the learner, too often do not contain people. At any rate they do not contain real flesh-and-blood people, but names, places, dates, battles, causes, and so on. It would seem that a social study would have to have people in it, real people, and preferably current people. And so I have long contended that history and geography are not necessarily social studies.

FRONTIERS

The Foundations of Trusteeship

TRUSTEESHIP, if expressed in a single sentence, means the holding of the property of others in trust, and giving it to the rightful owner the moment the situation wants. The act of giving in trusteeship is not an original gift, but a return gift at best. Property held in trust is never for personal enjoyment; it is to be returned at the first available opportunity—this is the central idea behind trusteeship.

Actually, the bedrock of almost all the theories of social change is in property relationships of one kind or another. The crux of the problem has always been the attitude to be adopted towards liquidation of ownership. From the Marxist program of "expropriating the expropriators" to the Socialist dictum, "Property is theft," humanity has had a long march to find the solution of this knotty problem. In India for ages we have identified *Parigraha,* or the accumulation of property, as *steya,* meaning theft.

Greed and insecurity are the twin causes that prompt man to accumulate property. Surfeit and scarcity exert a reciprocal influence upon each other and that is why we observe the paradox of these two extremes thriving side by side. The motive of accumulation is immaterial here. The painful experience of the people of the Dark Continent might be cited as an example. They say that "when the white men came, they had the Bible and we had the land, and now the whites have the land and we have the Bible." Holy scripture could not protect the Africans.

On the other hand, a man who accumulates is not necessarily bad. This should be understood by the votaries of non-violence. There is no inherent wickedness in him, nothing beyond cure. Therefore, the problem of the ills arising from the age-old institution of private ownership requires objective thinking.

If we are to consider the Gandhian technique of tackling this socio-economic malady, we must keep both faces of the coin in our mind's eye. Trusteeship is but one aspect of the solution, the other being *Aparigraha* or non-possession. Not only the personal life, but the entire social structure of the Gandhian order as well should rest upon the twin pillars of *Asteya* and *Aparigraha.* If trusteeship does not pass these two acid tests, then there is no difference between it and individual proprietorship.

Is individual determination strong enough as an incentive to cause people to take to trusteeship? No, pressure of environment is also necessary. Moral and material incentives might well complement each other. In fact, the physical condition of India has created a situation which is congenial to this move. The contradictions inherent in Capitalism have diffused political power, which is now held by the people in general. Diffusion of economic power, however, is yet to be achieved.

What is the essence of trusteeship? Can a person go on increasing his wealth, yet call himself a trustee? Certainly not. If one is worthy of the name, he cannot long for increasing wealth, whether by inheritance or from some other source. His wealth is to be surrendered to society at some time or other, and if the society is one that strives for Socialism, it cannot expect its constituent members to resort to profit rent, interest and commission, etc.—the traditional methods of multiplying accumulation. The trustee, be he an individual or a public institution, should declare his property and surrender to the society such increases as might occur. This would cut at the root of the profit motive.

Trusteeship should be an instrument for social change. It must alter the attitude of man toward property and its possession, and above all it must help to change the existing property relations. Otherwise it becomes the paradise of the propertied class. The theory of trusteeship is not

for opportunists who would treat it as orthodox ownership minus the associated dishonor.

The Gandhian theory of trusteeship has not been a static idea; its has gradually evolved. In the initial stage even stalwarts like K. G. Mashruwalla supported a limited amount of individual ownership. Here we must note that the institution of private ownership is not an unmixed evil. Ours is an age which is experiencing a hitherto unforeseen problem—conflict between individual and the group. What safeguard has the individual against the bullying tactics of the group or those who control the group? Individual ownership of property might offer a solution to the problem, since in this system the individual is not a cog in the wheel of collectivism. He retains at least some economic freedom. Moreover, individual ownership gives a strong incentive for work, which may be needed until the utopian standard of incentives grows influential. Not only have the protagonists of the Swatantra Party made a creed of individual ownership; this problem of incentives has forced a substantial section of the twentieth-century Socialists to think in these terms. The idea of trusteeship, as propounded by Vinobaji through his various Dan movements, was hailed by Gandhians and others as a practical program of *Asteya* and *Aparigraha* which may serve our present needs well.

The theory of trusteeship is quite applicable to small owners. The small owner, irrespective of his holdings, is a Capitalist nonetheless. He is a miniature bourgeois. Similarly, the laboring capacity of a worker should be treated as property held in trust for society and the laborer should be ready to surrender it to the community whenever the need arises. There can be no exclusive right over any kind of property—be it physical or mental. Trusteeship does not even allow one to do as he likes with his body. It requires an equal reverence for the entire creation. No trustee should make indiscriminate use of any of the things of nature. Raw materials, finished products, labor, and administrative efficiency are all equal in this respect. This is the path to the cherished goal of having each according to our need after working each according to our capacity. By this means the individual would work under the guidance of free initiative, doing work that is artistic and appropriate to his increased efficiency. The material return one obtains in this ideal social order should be strictly according to need and in case of scarcity it might be less. In other words, it is the process of giving more to the society while accepting less in return. As the neighbor is the concrete image of society that can be understood by all, Gandhiji insisted that all the art and craft, the genius and talent, the labor and intellect of man are meant first for the levelling up of the man next door. This was the spirit behind his program of Swadeshi.

The most difficult task of giving up personal ownership arises in the field of land. The intimate relation between the man behind the plough and his field has not a merely material character; the attachment is virtually romantic. In "The Deserted Village," Goldsmith has described the nature of this relationship, and Pearl Buck has drawn a true picture of a peasant family in *The Good Earth.* To the members of this family, land is not only associated with the sense of property, it is something more—it is full of passion, passion of flesh and blood. This deep bond between man and the land has two aspects. On the one hand the peasant is not ready to part with the land which is his life-blood; on the other, he considers the land to be sacred, worshipping it as a universal mother. Practical revolutionaries like Gandhi and Vinoba banked upon this latter sentiment of the peasants and held that the land, which is mother to all, should be equally available to all his children. The seed of voluntary liquidation of property was thus discovered by Vinoba in an age-old conviction of the peasants.

In a land constantly beset by hunger, food grains should be the cheapest commodity. For this purpose the traditional economic system needs to be revised, so that finished goods are

much dearer than raw materials. The producer of food should need no compelling material incentive to carry on his vocation. That is, the agriculturist should consider himself as the trustee of the land, feeling that labor devoted to land is not to be measured in terms of money. It is a social service in itself. The incentive of human welfare should be paramount under trusteeship. This idea, while it may sound novel, is no innovation by Gandhi or Vinoba. The institutions of control, rationing, levy and food procurement, etc., are the socially accepted forms of trusteeship at the time of food scarcity. When the welfare of the community at large is at stake, no cultivator is allowed to treat the fruit of his labor as an inalienable right.

Excessive accumulation of consumer goods is a superstition. It can never be a natural characteristic of man, since the capacity for consumption is limited. The limitations of the body with regard to nutrition and even enjoyment curtail and restrict the utility of acquisition. More material goods might enhance enjoyment, but the capacity for enjoyment does not increase on a pro rata basis. Even if an entire railroad car is made available to-somebody, he cannot use more than one seat at a time. Moreover, at present possession is associated with prestige. When this sense of prestige is removed as Socialism intends, man will not like to possess more than is necessary. Therefore, while Socialism is agreeable to the individual ownership of consumer goods, the theory of trusteeship suggests that we be trustees in this sphere, also. That is, nobody should consume more than what is essential. This is why an extremely busy man like Gandhi would search for one small lost coin. He would not use another, as that would be one more unnecessarily consumed.

Thus we find that trusteeship is not a narrow or sectarian ideal. It covers the entire creation. From the great natural resources such as land and minerals, etc., to the instruments of production and finished goods, a trustee is to consider himself as the custodian of all things and to see that there is no waste or misuse of any property.

NOSHIR BILPODIWALA

Poona, India