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GREAT REFORMERS: LEO TOLSTOY

WHILE other nineteenth-century figures fade into pale images of history, Leo Tolstoy seems to become more contemporary with each passing year. It is not simply his hatred of war which makes him so much alive today, nor his distrust of the motives of State. Numerous other pacifists and anarchists of the nineteenth century are now forgotten. Nor is it his endeavor to live a Christlike life. Other men of his time attempted this, and according to their own estimates, succeeded much better than Tolstoy. Tolstoy could hardly be described as an assiduous practitioner of "the virtues," although a life of virtue, as he understood it, was certainly one of his ideals. That he was a literary genius, there can be no doubt, but here, again, an exception must be taken. As a critic recently remarked, "literary contrivance" was unknown to Tolstoy. He hardly thought of himself as a "writer" at all. "He is the enemy of rhetoric and every kind of artifice and virtuosity. . . . one might say that in a sense there are no plots in Tolstoy but simply the unquestioned and unalterable process of life itself."

Here, indeed, seems to be Tolstoy's essence. The quest for the meaning of life was the conscious theme of his career. He would accept no interpreted version and no polite or pious substitute for private conviction. He was one of the few men who have dared to ask, publicly and without embarrassment, What is the meaning of existence? What is it all for? By devoting his great powers of imagination to the answers to these questions, Tolstoy noticeably changed the world.

There is hardly space to consider Tolstoy as a writer—a subject which should involve extensive technical knowledge of his works. But Tolstoy as a man who lived a great life—this needs no works of reference or encyclopedic reading, but only the observations that anyone can make about him. The story of his life is not a hidden one.

He was born in 1828, on the family estate which he later inherited, Yasnaya Polyana, some three hundred and thirty miles south of Moscow. Except for his education abroad, occasional trips, his service in the army, and stays in Moscow, he was to spend his life at Yasnaya Polyana. It was here, at thirty-four, already famous, that he brought his young girl-wife of eighteen, Sophia, who was to bear him eleven children.

Early in youth, Tolstoy began living the "normal" life of the landed gentry. That is, he tasted or rather reveled in all the indulgences of the senses which were expected of a propertied young aristocrat, but with this difference—he did these things with a kind of tortured enthusiasm, wildly, and with spells of remorse afterward. The young Tolstoy pursued pleasure, as though it were, for the time, the most important thing in the world. The interesting thing is not in any of the attitudes he assumed or the follies in which he engaged, but the intensity with which he swept into and drove through them all. His early manhood seems like a prolonged although Olympian adolescence.

In 1855, as a young army officer of twenty-seven, Tolstoy was well known as a brilliant contributor to Russia's most popular magazine. Already he had fixed upon a career of dissent and rebellion. In literary and social gatherings, he was always in "opposition to everything conventional in the realm of reasoning." But when a Petersburg writer upbraided him for political backwardness and reactionary opinions, Tolstoy challenged him to a duel—a reversion to a convention of medieval barbarism which was hardly the response of a "liberated" spirit. His critic avoided the duel by

the simple—and intelligent—expedient of ignoring the challenge.

Tolstoy passed from enthusiasm to enthusiasm. At home on the family estate in 1858, he installed parallel bars in his bedroom and undertook a furious course in gymnastics. Puzzled and perturbed, his overseer remarked: "I come to the master to get his orders, and I find him in a red jacket, swinging upside down from a bar by one leg, his moist hair dangling, his face a dark purple. I don't know what to do: to ask for orders; or to stand and watch the show."

At ten Tolstoy heard his older brothers report their discovery that "God" does not exist, and at sixteen, he discarded religion entirely, wearing a medal of Jean Jacques Rousseau to represent his rationalist faith. From boyhood, he seemed animated by an intense, if unbalanced, desire for self-improvement. This desire, together with his animal instincts, he said, guided his whole life. Years later, he wrote:

> . . . my only faith was faith in self-improvement. But what this self-improvement was, or what was its purpose, I could not explain. I tried to improve myself mentally: I learned everything I could, everything that I saw in the course of my daily life; I tried to improve my will; I made rules that I forced myself to follow; I tried to improve my body through various physical exercises that required strength and speed, and through various privations taught my body to be patient and enduring. All this I considered self -improvement.

Now comes the voice of the older Tolstoy—a Tolstoy who understood himself:

> Naturally, at the bottom of this, was . . . a desire to appear better not before myself, or before God, but a desire to appear better before other people. Very soon this desire to appear better before other people changed to a desire to be stronger than other people, to be better known, to be more important, and more wealthy.

There were other phases. . . He took up billiards, wagered almost his entire fortune on a thousand matches with a local expert in Tiflis—and lost. He became interested in farming. He idolized a capable peasant on his estate and hoped to become an expert ploughman by sticking out his elbows as the peasant did while ploughing. Then, suddenly disgusted with agriculture, he escaped to Moscow. Next he studied forestry. Asked by his friend, the author, Turgenev, what he thought was his real calling in life, Tolstoy answered with full conviction, "I am a forester."

His first really constructive enterprise was his schools for peasant children. He began to make discoveries about education, and with his usual enthusiasm, published an article, "Should We Teach the Peasant Children, or Should the Peasant Children Teach Us?" Another task he undertook was the official post of arbitrator in the division of the holdings of the great landowners of the region, following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. At this time he formulated his philosophy of life in a letter which, upon reading it over a year or two before his death, he said he would not change. Harassed by the problems of his rural career, in 1862 he wrote to a friend:

> It seems strange that I thought, and you still, I believe, think, that one can create a happy and honest world in which one can live quietly, without making mistakes, without regrets, complications, and in which one can serenely, neatly, deliberately do only good things. It's funny! It's impossible! It's just as impossible as remaining healthy without moving, without exercising. . . .
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> To live honestly it is necessary to yearn, to get entangled, to fight, to make mistakes, to begin things and drop them, then begin and drop them again, and constantly to struggle and deprive oneself. Serenity is nothing more than cowardice of the soul. That is why the bad side of our soul seeks peace, without realizing that its achievement means the loss of everything beautiful within us—-loss of that which is not of human creation and comes from above.

Tolstoy's marriage slowed him down considerably. That is, he lived a "happy" and literarily productive family life for about fifteen years. Then, as he approached fifty, the old gnawing dissatisfactions returned. For judgments of Tolstoy's relationship with his wife—if it needs judgment—the reader should turn to Ernest J.

Simmons' full-length biography (Little, Brown, 1946), or to Polner's excellent *Tolstoy and his Wife* (Norton, 31945). To us, it seems that Tolstoy wanted all the world, or at least his immediate family, to grow up with him, and at the same rate, while his wife, who did her best, did not happen to be a Leo Tolstoy. Her almost incessant pregnancies are enough to win the sympathies of most readers, but both she and Tolstoy marred their married life by apparently incurable and childish jealousies of one another, and both had a full complement of Russian "emotion."

Tolstoy's difficulties with his wife and with most of his friends seem to be characteristic of all great men who are not sages. They do not understand the differing paces of human development and the varying response of individuals to moral inspiration.

But both Tolstoy and his wife lived vastly productive lives. While in later years, both were miserable a lot of the time, the misery seems insignificant beside the achievement which accompanied it. Both were prodigious workers. Besides bringing up her children, Sophia managed the estate and ran the farm. In her spare time, she copied out in longhand the manuscript of *War and Peace* seven times—each time Tolstoy was given a fresh draft he covered it with extensive alterations. She did this work without a murmur of complaint, and was eager for more. Tolstoy's devotion to his children is indicated by his learning to read Xenophon in Greek in six weeks in order to teach it to his eldest son. When he started, he did not know even the Greek alphabet. Such was the household life at Yasnaya Polyana.

At forty-seven, Tolstoy "had everything"—a large and happy family, a prosperous farm, and the reputation of being Russia's greatest novelist. But for him, the conventional theory of "success" worked in reverse. About 1875, he began to be oppressed by a sense of the worthlessness of his existence. The things other men might have envied in his life he valued not at all, and soon the thought of suicide became almost overpowering. This period is commonly referred to as his "conversion," but it would be more property described as a natural result of his uncompromising honesty. He saw that he had not got to the bottom of things. His carefully developed skill in psychological self-analysis—on which his art was based—now served him as a man who needed to be reborn. He could not believe in life, and this drove him to seek men who could. He found belief in life among the peasants, and so he imitated them. He went faithfully to church and tried to believe in the Greek orthodox doctrines, but his intellectual integrity was his undoing as a convert to Orthodoxy. Further, he discovered that the peasants were indifferent to the most important rites of the church. Yet they gained from their religion what Tolstoy could not find. He tried to become a peasant. He dressed like one, worked like one, and tried to think like one. But before he succeeded in achieving the deep faith he sought, Tolstoy had to work his way through the intricacies of orthodox theology and compile a new version of the Gospels, leaving out all that he did not understand.

The secret of Tolstoy's new-found religion was that life cannot be judged as an abstraction, with "objectivity" or scientific detachment. Life must be judged as it is lived by the individual who is doing the judging. To find a new life, Tolstoy had to make a new life, and this is what he set out to do. The famous man of property and title, Count Tolstoy, adopted the faith of a possessionless seeker after truth.

Now, Tolstoy's literary genius, his intense emotional nature, his self-scorching conscience and his yearning for self-improvement gave a luminous perfection to his work. Now the restless energies of his youth found focus in his regenerating sense of destiny. At last, Tolstoy had discovered a work which could engage the whole of his nature. In 1882, seven years after his painful awakening, he wrote *My Confession,* the faithful record of the inner experience of the

twice-born human being. Tolstoy's confession unties the knots of vanity and moral reservation in the heart of the reader. He spreads upon the canvas of the mind the image of the greatness which all men may feel within themselves.

In essence, *My Confession* and the writings which came after, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You,* and *Christianity and Patriotism,* and others, articulated the sense of divinity which Tolstoy now felt was potential in the human breast. He asserted the power of almighty conscience:

> That the order of life opposed to the conscience of man should change and be replaced by one that is in accord with it, it is necessary that the public opinion of the past should be replaced by new and living opinion.
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> For the old outlived public opinion to make way for that which is new and living, it is necessary that men who recognize the new requirements of life should speak of them openly. Yet the men who recognize these new requirements of life—one for the sake of one thing, another for the sake of something else—not merely refrain from speaking openly of them, but in word and deed maintain what is in direct opposition to these requirements. Only the truth and the free expression of it can establish that new public opinion which will change the out-of-date and pernicious order of life; and yet, far from freely speaking the truth, we know we often even directly state what we regard as false.
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> If only free men would not rely on that which has not strength and is never free—on external power, but would believe in what is always powerful and free—in the truth and the expression of it. If only men would boldly and clearly out the truth that has already been revealed to them the brotherhood of all nations and the criminality of devotion to one's own nation, the dead false public opinion produced by them upon which all the power of Governments and all the evil produced by them rests would drop off like dried skin, and make way for the new living opinion which only waits that dropping off of the old husk that has confined it in order to assert its claims openly and with authority, and to establish new forms of life that are in harmony with the consciences of men.

There are gaps in Tolstoy's philosophy. It leaves unsolved problems. But the primary truth of what he declares should be manifest to all. He was, therefore, a creator of the moral philosophy of the future. Who could know, in the nineteenth century, when Tolstoy wrote the above, that an Indian brother would within fifty years prove its truth to all who could see? Tolstoy and Gandhi are apostles of the triumphant human spirit. There can be no other triumph for human beings.

Letter from
ENGLAND

LONDON. —Carlyle is reported to have said that for Herbert Spencer the supreme tragedy of human life was a beautiful theory slain by a refractory fact. Certainly, such a calamity was seen to overtake the complacent nineteenth-century view of the unbroken continuity of progress. The world has had to face the fact of two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century, and these left our terrestrial structure very weak and shaky, and untold dangers still lurk around every corner. Even within each country the same disturbing phenomena are experienced. One form of apprehension centres around the increase of crime.

In this country, official figures leave no ambiguity. In 1938, the number of convictions for theft was 56,000. In 1947, it was 76,000. Violence against the person rose from over 1,500 in 1938 to 2,500 in 1947. The number of young people who commit crime is appalling: 41 per cent of the cases of theft are committed by those under 21; so are 68 per cent of the cases of breaking into homes, shops, warehouses, etc.

The facts are widely known, and apply with equal force to all countries. Dispute ranges amongst social workers and legislators as to the causes of the increase. In a Parliamentary debate here at the end of last year, many reasons were offered: returned members of the armed forces who found civilian life dull and took to crime for adventure; shortage of food and goods leading to black market transactions, sometimes violent; excessive laws and regulations tempting people to regard offences against them as of little importance. Other factors are the influence of the crime theme in film and radio; the number of deserters from the armed forces who are still liable to court-martial; and the shortage of men in the police (the London force is 4,500 below strength).

The main trouble, however, is held to be "the breakdown in home life." The Lord Chancellor has said: "For my part, I blame not the schools, and not the churches. I put the responsibility primarily on the parents." This admission in no way lessens the tendency of magistrates to invoke the help of psychiatrists in deciding on what to do, especially with first offenders—which seems to show that the conventional reasons usually given for the increase in crime are over-simplifications of an intractable problem of "civilized" life.

What do schoolmasters say about all this? One of them at a recent conference remarked: "So much is done for children that they are rapidly becoming incapable of realizing their obligations to others. . . . Selfishness has developed to an intolerable degree. Former virtues are almost vices. Civility is now considered servility." The president of the Catholic Teachers Guild places the prime responsibility on the psychological ideas that have permeated official and public opinion.

We are here in the realm of age-old controversies as to the place of authority in human relations, and the real nature of man and society. Crime and its incidence are only phases of that loss of unity which is characteristic of modem life (including the perversions of solidarity common to totalitarian régimes), and which has resulted in physical, social, intellectual, and moral disease of both individual and community.

The fact is, it seems, that humanity is in a transition stage, sloughing off old ideas and ancient claims of authority (even that of "property," so sacrosanct in its commercial sense), without regard to the finely-wrought heritage from the past, and, in the process, we are losing all sense of real values. Partisan codes of morality must eventually give way to universal principles which will demonstrate that man, by recognizing and opening his spiritual intuitions, may learn to act from within, instead of ever obeying impulses from without, however derived. A sense of unity in thought and action, and "philosophical research into the mysteries of being," are not patent nostrums for personal ills. They are essential elements in any planning of the World of Tomorrow.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
LUCID PROSE

THE number of books which are both important in content and a source of pleasure to the mind are so few in number that it seems worth-while to speak of contemporary writers who combine these qualities in their work. Without straining, we can think of three: Robert M. Hutchins of the United States; the Spanish Ortega y Gasset; and Harold Laski of Great Britain.

These men have each produced at least one book which is for the reader an exhilarating and unforgettable experience. Our case for this statement rests upon *The Revolt of the Masses,* by Ortega, *The Higher Learning in America,* by Dr. Hutchins, and Mr. Laski's *The Dangers of Obedience.* Only to list the titles of these volumes invokes the rich savor of their contents, for one who has read them. The first two, certainly, and possibly the third, represent, to our way of thinking, a new elevation in understanding our own time—a perspective which, once gained, can never be wholly lost.

Of Ortega and Hutchins, it may be said that both have the capacity to give the substance of immediate reality to broad generalizations about human beings and states of mind. Mr. Laski's special talent is not so much in the novelty of what he makes seem clear, but in the simplicity of his discourse.

Ortega sums up the temper of an age. This involves not only a wide experience of human affairs, but the comprehensive and disciplined use of the imagination—the capacity to see a common principle behind externally different actions and attitudes. Ortega, perhaps, is not "great," for the reason that his genius is at its best in analyzing the intellectual and moral disintegration of this period of history, yet it must be conceded that he is by no means a "negative" writer. His *Mission of the University* has the quality of sustained inspiration in its appeal to educators. It is peculiarly an intellectual inspiration, reflecting the author's own nobility of mind. One need never exactly "agree" with Ortega. Reading him helps to make clear the folly of reading a good book in order either to "agree" or "disagree" with what the author says. A good book functions instead as a catalyst which contributes to the clarity of the reader's mental processes.

Two passages from *Mission of the University,* one on "culture," the other on the individual man, will illustrate the intensity of Ortega's thought:

> Life is a chaos, a tangled and confused jungle in which man is lost. But his mind reacts against the sensation of bewilderment: he labors to find "roads," "ways" through the woods, in the form of dear, firm ideas concerning the universe, positive convictions about the nature of things. The ensemble, or system, of these ideas, is culture in the true sense of the term; it is precisely the opposite of external ornament. Culture is what saves human life from being a mere disaster; it is what enables man to live a life which is something above meaningless tragedy or inward disgrace. . . .
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> It is the virtue of the child to think in terms of wishes, it is the child's role to make believe. But the virtue of the grown man is to will, and his role is to do and achieve. Now we can achieve things only by concentrating our energy: by limiting ourselves. And in this limiting of ourselves lies the truth and the authenticity of our life. Indeed, all life is destiny: if our existence were unlimited in duration and in the forms it could assume, there would be no "destiny." The authentic life, young people (whom Ortega is addressing], consists in cheerfully accepting an inexorable destiny—a limitation we cannot alter. It is this state of mind which the mystics, following a profound intuition, used to call "the state of grace." He who has honestly accepted his destiny, his own limitations, is imperturbable. *"Impavidum ferient ruinae."*

Ortega's prose is like a last piercing beam of the light of the Renaissance, penetrating through the fog of the present into the future. As man, as an individual, he is able to withstand the decay that is overtaking the Old World and infecting the New.

Dr. Hutchins has given the idea of learning and wisdom a somewhat athletic meaning for the

supporters of his educational reform. The Great Books campaign for basic education has little of the reposeful gentility which used to be identified with "cultivation," and nothing of the "ivory tower" atmosphere of traditional scholarship. But what has been lost for tradition has been gained in intellectual vigor and currency in philosophical thinking. Dr. Hutchins writes with the same sort of simplicity as one finds in Plato's dialogues, and he talks about much the same things. His prose crackles with meaning. Like Ortega, he addresses his readers with exceptional intensity of conviction on the educational needs of the modern world:

> If we omit from theology faith and revelation, we are substantially in the position of the Greeks, who are thus, oddly enough, closer to us than are the Middle Ages. Now Greek thought was unified. It was unified by the study of first principles. Plato had a dialectic which was a method of exploring first principles. Aristotle made the knowledge *of* them into the science of metaphysics. Among the Greeks, then, metaphysics, rather than theology, is the ordering and proportioning discipline. It is in the light of metaphysics that the social sciences, dealing with man and man, take shape and illuminate one another. In metaphysics we are seeking the causes of things that are. It is the highest science, the first science, and as first, universal. . . . The aim of higher education is wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of principles and causes. Therefore metaphysics is the highest wisdom.

A frequent criticism of Dr. Hutchins is that very few men are as sure of their opinions as he seems to be. This criticism might have point, except for the fact that it usually ignores what Dr. Hutchins' most positive opinions are about. They are about method in thinking, about the importance of clarity, about the supremacy of moral values. This is the one field of thought where everyone *should* have strong opinions—if he regards himself as having any maturity at all. No one can live an intelligent life without clarity concerning the foundations of moral choice. Most of Dr. Hutchins' critics merely express annoyance with another man's determination to organize his mental life efficiently and in terms of human responsibility.

Unlike the proficient writers of previous generations, Dr. Hutchins makes his sentences short and terse. Yet his ideas flow easily through this form, impressing and delighting the reader by turns. His humor is a natural part of what he writes. In *Education for Freedom,* he describes his years in the Army during the first World War:

Here I developed some knowledge of French and Italian. I learned to roll cigarettes, to blow rings, and to swear. . . . Since my education had given me nothing to think about, I devoted myself, as the alternative to suicide, to the mastery of all the arts implied in the verb "to soldier." I learned to protract the performance of any task so that I would not be asked to do another. By the end of the war I could give the impression that I was busy digging a ditch without putting my pick into the ground all day. I have found this training very useful in my present capacity [of college president]. But on the whole, aside from the physiological benefits conferred upon me by a regular, outdoor life, I write off my years in the Army as a complete blank. The arts of soldiering, at least at the buck-private level, are not liberal arts. The manual of arms is not a great book.

Harold Laski, undoubtedly the leading intellectual associated with Britain's experiment in socialism, is a writer for whom we have almost unqualified admiration. *His Dangers of Obedience* brings John Stuart Mill's essay on Liberty up to date. The excellence of this book lies in its apt illustrations of contemporary problems of political philosophy, rather than in any great originality. In these days of loyalty tests, purges and witch hunts, the principled dissenter from popular opinion, or from "official" attitudes, becomes the conservator of moral values. Mr. Laski's readers will find it difficult to forget this social law. The following is taken from the title essay.

> Men who insist that some particular injustice is not their responsibility sooner or later become unable to resent any injustice. Tyranny depends on nothing so much as the lethargy of a people. Autocracy is born above all of the experience that it need not expect active resentment of injustice. This is the

> inner truth of Thoreau's famous sentence that "under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison:" For unless he is insistently Protestant, his acquiescence in the injustice is assumed. His silence makes him in fact the jailer; and the powers that be rely on him because they know that the inert acceptance he has displayed in the past is a proof that his conscience is dead. The bad employer, the savage justice, the corrupt statesman, these exercise their authority only because they have not been challenged in the past. Let that challenge once be made forthrightly and, where one man has been bold, a thousand are prepared to follow him. . . .

Not all of Mr. Laski's prose has this distinction. We have seen articles of his which must have been written or dictated on the run, for the reader must plod to understand them. In this book, however, lucid ideas have that precise embodiment which effaces itself as a form and admits the reader directly to the mind of a clear and forceful thinker. Any writing which has this quality approaches greatness.

COMMENTARY
THE FINGER OF SHAME

IT is not too much to say that the Tolstoyan philosophy of private moral responsibility is far more needed now than when Tolstoy set it down. In his time, masses of men were not being compelled by circumstances to choose between the inner security of a morally self-directed life, and the external security of the garrison State—the choice which lies before the populations of the "progressive" nations of the world, today.

True, in the autocratic Russia of the Czars, young men influenced by the novelist's doctrine of non-violence were given long prison terms for refusing to be conscripted into the Russian army. But today, a college professor who holds to the Tolstoyan position may be imprisoned for discussing his views. A Federal Court recently convicted Larry Gara, teacher at Bluffton College, Ohio, of violation of the Selective Service Act, because, months after a Bluffton student had decided not to register, Gara met and talked over with him the meaning of the nonregistrant position. While Gara had openly declared his intention of counselling men not to register, no proof of his having done so was produced in court. The Toledo *Blade,* commenting on the trial, made this editorial observation:

> . . . so Mr. Gara's "crime," for all practical purposes, seems to have consisted almost entirely of giving comfort to a young man for doing the same thing as a matter of moral principle as he had done.

Explaining his conversation with Charles Rickert, the non-registrant, Gara told the court that he had advised Rickert to follow his own conscience and to be sure to change his position if his conscience so dictated. Whereupon the prosecuting attorney observed:

> I make a lot of this statement. How could the boy waver when day after day, instead of getting a little fatherly advice, he was exposed to an influence like that? If the finger of shame had been pointed at Rickert, who can say if he couldn't have seen the error of his ways.

Apparently, in order to avoid criminal prosecution, Gara should have counselled Rickert to go *against* his conscience.

To date, 40 young Americans have been sent to prison for refusing to register under the new draft law, for reasons much the same as Tolstoy held; and two older men have been convicted of counselling non-registration, which Tolstoy did. Will we, in fifty years, be as intolerant of moral freedom as Tolstoy's Russia is today?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE familiar desire of parents to see their children develop an adequate sense of responsibility in the home is usually unrequited, and, unfortunately, parents have in general accepted this family fate. Occasionally we blame some mysterious element of cantankerousness in children, or indict the public schools for their carelessness. But most parents are half-hearted in probing the causes of irresponsibility—which, incidentally, illustrates the maxim, "like parent, like son," since this parental acceptance of inadequacy in solving the problem of irresponsibility is itself irresponsible.

Our social scientists have compiled valuable statistics on the inevitable "social disorganization" incident to the increasing urbanization of modern life. Our children, we are told, are no longer functional in the home, the reason being that the home is no longer functional in our society. The young ones cannot play a productive part in the family life; also, they move from home to home frequently; the American home is much more like a hotel room than the farms and ranches of a bygone era.

We would like to suggest, however, that the root cause of "irresponsibility" does not lie in the changing patterns of our economic life, but rather in our uncritical acceptance of those changes. If "we" are becoming more and more centralized and urbanized, it is *our* responsibility to know that this is what is happening to us, and to recognize the gaps which are created in a child's life by such changes in the home. Reflection on our own experience should convince us that parents have blown along with the prevailing winds of social change and accepted uncritically all of the conditions which result. Perhaps the first failure of responsibility is here.

Somewhere there must exist helpful suggestions for parents on the use of toys. Some experimental schools have shown a concern in the proper selection of these "tools" given into the hands of children. The function of a toy, as an element in education, is beyond question that of a tool; it is a mechanism used to facilitate a functional relationship between the child and his environment. Most toys, however, seem to be bought either to gratify parents in the giving, or to keep the children "quiet." And of course the mass production of toys has also added infinite variety; they are easily accessible and comparatively inexpensive. With these conditions prevailing, the average child is able to establish only one psychological relationship with his playthings—they are merely *possessions* with no use save that of pleasing, rewarding or cajoling him. Neither parents nor children expect toys to have any other significance in the home.

Let us contrast this situation with that existing before the era of mass production. While there were always "the spoiled rich boys," the dominant tone of the children's world was then set by activity which had some productive relationship to the home economy. There were no electrical contrivances to lighten the work of the kitchen; and because there was more work to do, there was more in the way of small chores and odd jobs, all of them *necessary.* Even the youngest members of the family could perform some significant tasks. When he lived on a ranch, a boy's first axe was a respected article because it contained utility value. The same with a pony or a saddle, and for a girl with the first kitchen utensils entrusted to her care.

It is entirely possible that the children of the past were happier *because their life was more real,* because their "play" was interwoven with work, and because their playthings were usually suggested by the peculiar needs of the regions in which they were born. Snowshoes in the northern states, small boats or canoes in the South—these were introductions to a man's world. Girls, too, learned to do something about the creation of their own garments. The household activities may have had some sort of unrecognized, deep, philosophical meaning—for they linked the child

with actual physical existence and informed him of the relationship between himself and the bounty of nature upon which the continuance of life depended.

But to commiserate with one another about the disadvantages of urbanization is foolish. We must, as with all disadvantages, endeavor to transcend them. Every toy may still be selected only after deliberate reflection upon its functional or educational value to the child's growing maturity. Actually, children are most contented with implements used by father or mother around the home. If parents can find available even the tiniest plot of land, they can undertake to raise a few easy growing vegetables and entrust part of the care of the miniature garden to the children, providing them with tools not too awkward for their use. Even in city apartments the gift of something which grows, if only in a flower pot, is worth a score of more expensive presents. The greater the number of toys a child possesses, the greater the chance of his psychic confusion, whereas the growing plant or small garden initiates the imagination of the child into basic *processes of growth* which are as much *his* story as the story of the farmers in country areas.

Apartments and city dwellings need work, even if it is only cleaning and scrubbing. Yet if we were today to present a broom to our ten-year-old child as a substitute for a toy, we should probably be suspected by the recipient of harboring a morbid sense of humor. However, if that same child had been encouraged, let us say, at three years of age, to make his or her activity in some measure useful, this would not need to be the case. In relation to the kitchen, cooking equipment has a vital relationship to the child's life. Actual use of such equipment can encourage stability and self-reliance. A human being without the faintest knowledge of how either to grow food or to prepare it is without roots of self-reliance. It is only when we do help children create "root-relationships" with the basic environment all men share that we provide the conditions under which a natural sense of responsibility may grow.

So, if we were writing in Sunday supplement style, we should title this piece, "Give your child a Garden, a Plant, or a Broom—not a Toy."

FRONTIERS
A Question of Orthodoxy

THIS department is candidly unorthodox in its view of the problems of human evolution. Too much, we think, is taken for granted about evolution on the grounds, not so much of overwhelming evidence concerning the origin of man, but of the general assumptions of evolutionary theory during the past eighty years.

Lately, in the press, the discoveries of the aged Scottish anthropologist, Robert Broom, have received much attention. Dr. Broom has dug up from the rocks of South Africa a series of human remains which he believes are at least one million and possibly two million years old. The actual beginning of the human species, however, he places in the Oligocene period, about 25,000,000 years ago. He believes that the fossil skulls he discovered in the Karoo Valley in northern Transvaal represent a stage of development "near the ancestors of man."

So, another group of half-human, half-animal creatures is established as once having lived upon the earth. A few years ago, the Peking man excited the attention of anthropologists, and before that, the Java ape man, or *Pithecanthropus erectus,* was the focus of interest in the quest for "missing links." These strange tribes of prehistoric monsters are evidence, surely, of something—but of what? It would be easy to invent several plausible hypotheses for their origin, other than that they are directly or even indirectly related to the line of ascending human evolution. In any event, the evidence is too sparse and incomplete for any firm conclusions to be drawn concerning the general outline or "plan" of human evolution. We know so little about man, really, as he is, it seems foolhardy to assume that there can be any certainty about his past.

Suppose, for example, that the essential course of human development is moral or spiritual in nature—as distinguished from the biological evolution of the animal kingdom. Should this be the case, the development of man's body, as a problem for research, would be virtually a side issue in comparison to the mysteries of his moral and social evolution. The fact that the study of man is divided up into a dozen or more fields of scientific research, each with its complement of Ph. D. specialists, while impressive, gives us no reason to think that these labors are making any material addition to our *working* knowledge of man. Indeed, the most experienced scholars are among the most humble.

Philip Ainsworth Means, a leading authority on pre-Columbian America, writing on the fortunes and vicissitudes of lost Andean civilizations, acknowledges an indefinable factor in human culture—a factor which, he says, "may be designated frankly as *x*, the unknown quantity, apparently psychological in kind." He adds:

> If *x* be not the most conspicuous factor in the matter, it is certainly the most important, the most fate-laden. When, through a tardily completed understanding of the significance of life, we achieve mastery over *x*, then, and not until then, shall we cease to be a race of biped ants and, consummating our age-old desire, join the immortal gods. *(Ancient Civilizations of the Andes.)*

It seems likely that this *x*-factor may also be the real "missing link" in human evolution. Writing of the infancy of the human race, J. Arthur Thompson speaks of a time when there must have been, as he puts it, "a re-definition and re-thrilling of the moral fibres under the influence of the new synthesis or mutation—Man." Dr. Thompson locates the essential "humanness" of the species in the power of moral perception, for he continues: "With reason and language and consciousness of history both past and possible, there must have been a re-tuning of the moral nature." Whether digging up the skeletons of ancient satyr-men can ever illuminate the nature of this "new synthesis or mutation" remains to be seen.

Of course, someone may reasonably ask, What's wrong with being descended from the animals—from the anthropoid apes? Wouldn't

that show how far we've come on the evolutionary road? These questions need a forthright answer. It seems to us that the assumption that man is only an exceptional member of the animal kingdom has had a peculiarly pernicious effect on human thought and behavior. First of all, it has led to the conclusion, sometimes tacit, sometimes outspoken, that man's so-called "animal" needs are of first importance to him. Not only the schools of psychotherapy, but nearly every branch of the healing art founds its theory and its practice on the assumption that man is an animal.

And yet, in every division of science having to do with man, there is evidence to contradict the animal theory. Writing on "Biology and Human Trends" some years ago, Raymond Pearl took particular note of the differences between men and animals, so far as the laws of heredity are concerned. He called the analogy between human breeding and livestock breeding "specious and misleading."

> In animal breeding [he continued] it has been learned that the only reliable measure of genetic superiority is the progeny test—the test of quality of the offspring actually produced. Breeding in the light of this test may, and often does, lead to the rapid, sure, and permanent improvement of a strain of livestock. But when the results of human breeding are interpreted in the light of the deaf principles of the progeny test the eugenic case does not fare so well. In absolute numbers the vast majority of the most superior people in the world's history have in fact been produced by mediocre or inferior forebears; and furthermore the admittedly most superior folk have in the main been singularly unfortunate in their progeny, again in absolute numbers. *(Smithsonian Institution Report,* 1935.)

The same sort of failure to explain the qualities of human beings has been experienced by psychologists. Lewis M. Terman's *Genetic Studies of Genius* is principally a chronicle of the uncertainties of psychological research. He speaks of the absence of data "revealing laws by which superior mental ability is transmitted," yet finds evidence suggesting that the causal factor for differences among individuals "lies in original endowment rather than environmental influences." This conclusion is expressed in another way:

> Recent developments of measuring intelligence have furnished conclusive proof that native differences in endowment are a universal phenomenon, and that it is impossible to evaluate them. (I, vii.)

"Endowment," here, must be taken as meaning simply that, and not as suggestive of the power of heredity. The origin of the "endowment" remains obscure. In the case of youthful writers, for example, Terman speaks of the failure of *both* heredity and environment to explain their talents.

While on the subject of the puzzles of heredity and of evolution generally, there should be value in calling attention to a curious passage in Charles Darwin's *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication.* In considering the inheritance of acquired characteristics, Darwin was much impressed by the observations of the French investigator, Brown-Sequard, on the inherited effects of physiological mutilations. Brown-Sequard's conclusion was that "the morbid state of the nervous system" was transmitted to the offspring of animals on which operations were performed. This he illustrated by the cases of guinea pigs born without toes, which occurred, as Darwin says, only with "the offspring of parents which had gnawed off their own toes owing to the sciatic nerve being divided."

Apparently, the inheritance of "acquired characteristics," when it occurs, is facilitated by certain psychic conditions on the part of the parents. A purely physical change is not transmitted, but a psychophysical alteration may certainly affect the offspring, if the evidence assembled by Brown-Sequard can be relied upon. Should this be the case, the whole question of psychic influences upon parents is reopened for discussion, after being laughed at as "superstition" for generations. And how much more, in the case of human beings, may the imagination of the parents play a part in shaping at least the external

attributes of the young. One is reminded of the Filipino woman who, during the last months of her pregnancy, lay on a sick-bed staring at a portrait of Jesus, who was depicted with the pious monstrosity of an exposed heart. When the women's baby was born, its heart was fixed on the outside of its body.

Our theories of evolution and of human nature have too long been preoccupied with merely physical transitions and transformations. This view of evolution and of human nature forms the scientific orthodoxy of the day, and like other orthodoxies in which we unthinkingly believe, it is probably full of unwarranted assumptions from which erroneous conclusions have been drawn.