

## THE REVIVAL OF SLAVERY

UNTIL quite recently, the subject of human slavery was thought to represent a long but finished chapter of history in which the enlightened present may read about the barbarous past. A scholarly article in the *Scientific American* for June reports that the Siamese slave system was abolished in 1905 and that China prohibited the practice in 1909. It seems that slavery still existed in Abyssinia in 1923 and that certain tribes in Liberia, the African ward of the United States, have maintained the institution of slavery to this day. However, the general impression to be gained from the article is that slavery exists only in scattered "remnants" of ancient custom, and that it forms a subject of little more than academic concern.

Perhaps international "delicacy" caused the author of the *Scientific American* article to ignore the contemporary form of slavery usually called "forced labor," for both he and the editors of that journal must have known of the rising world interest in the problem. It has been up for discussion in the United Nations since November, 1947, and was examined in some detail during the sessions of the Economic and Social Council in February and March of this year. Discussion was concluded on March 7 with passage of a resolution calling upon the International Labour Office to conduct research on the problem of forced labor all over the world and to report to the next meeting of the Council.

The nature and extent of forced labor in the modern world are important to investigate for the reason that it will certainly be practiced, with or without democratic disguises, by any nations which become involved in another great war, and possibly before. Forced labor is clearly implied by all "preparedness" programs for the coordination of industry and the military—for if a man can be

made to stay on a certain job, whether he wants to or not, his labor is forced, whatever the reasons of State for keeping him there. Forced labor does not become something else because those who arrange it regard it as a "good thing." It is forced whenever it is not voluntary.

But is forced labor "slavery"? According to Edward Westermarck:

Slavery is essentially an industrial institution, which implies compulsory labor beyond the limits of family relations. The master has a right to avail himself of the working power of his slave, without previous agreement on the part of the latter. This I take to be the essence of slavery; but connected with such a right there are others which hardly admit of a strict definition, or which belong to the master in some cases though not in all. He is entitled to claim obedience and enforce this claim with more or less severity, but his authority is not necessarily absolute, and the restrictions imposed on it are not everywhere the same.

If this definition be accepted then there is little or no difference between slavery and forced labor. David J. Dallin, who has studied the modern institution of forced labor as much or more than anyone else, can find no difference. His recent pamphlet, *The Economics of Slave Labor* (Human Affairs series, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago), is a concise summary of what facts are available concerning the forced labor camps in Soviet Russia, based upon his wide background of knowledge of the USSR and upon interviews with numerous refugees who were released from Soviet labor camps as recently as 1948. The responsibility for employing slave labor is not, however, uniquely Soviet. Although after the fall of the Nazis, Russia was by far foremost in this practice, other nations, including the United States and Britain must share in the blame. Mr. Dallin writes:

In the last stage of the war and immediately after the German surrender, the two Western powers "lent" to France hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war as manpower; the over-all number of men thus "borrowed" by France was 800,000. This was a slave labor force, pure and simple. Sanitary and dietary conditions in which these men were held were abominable; there was no protection of human rights for the laborers; the death rate among them was high. The United States was fully aware of this state of affairs and, so far as is publicly known, did nothing about it.

As for Russia, the intentions of the Soviet government to use millions of Germans—civilians, and ex-soldiers alike—as slave labor in the Russian economy, was fully known to the governments of Washington and London. In inter-Allied commissions doing preparatory work in 1944, the Soviet delegates had asked for Allied consent to these projects. Not without hesitation was Western approval given to the Soviet demand at the Yalta Conference, with the United States playing the decisive role. In a resolution (not immediately made public), the heads of the Big Three governments stipulated various forms of reparations payments; the resolution enumerated the transfer of capital goods, current production, and also "the use of German labor."

This phrase constituted Messrs. Roosevelt's and Churchill's consent to a supply of new forced labor to Russia. There could be no mistake about its actual meaning, as it climaxed several months of detailed discussions. There were no obvious political reasons why the heads of democratic governments should have consented to what was bound to be slave labor—except that in the fog of war they themselves, just as a part of the peoples they represented, had lost the solid moral ground under their feet.

While there can be no doubt of the vast extent of slave labor in Soviet Russia, nor of the general hideousness of the lives—and deaths—of the men and women who form this labor force, it is not the intent of this discussion to exploit these horrors. We are interested, instead, in the basic conceptions which are used to justify human slavery and in the habits of mind which make it acceptable as a matter of course. If human slavery is a horrible thing, then it is these conceptions and habits of mind which need investigation, as the *causes* which lie behind this dread development of

the twentieth century, and not the particulars of the institution itself. These latter have already been sufficiently explored in books on the Nazi and Soviet concentration camps—books which should be read only to establish the facts, and then set aside in order to discover the psychological roots of modern, legalized slavery. (Books that have the ring of authentic reporting include Chernavin's *I Speak for the Silent*, the compilation of Polish testimony called *The Dark Side of the Moon*, and David Rousset's *The Green Kingdom*. Mr. Dallin's *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* is also doubtless reliable, and George Orwell's recent novel, *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, affords a study of some of the "social" considerations which are involved.)

To search the history of morals for arguments on behalf of slavery reveals some curious things. Aristotle, whom Lecky calls "the greatest of all advocates of slavery," had no doubt that some people are destined by nature to be slaves, and others masters. In the *Politics*, he asserts "that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right." For the most part, however, slavery was simply taken for granted in the ancient world, philosophers limiting themselves to the idea that slaves should be kindly treated. Slavery among the ancients was usually far more humane and often less absolute than the forms of slavery familiar to the modern West. The ancient method of acquiring slaves was by taking them captive in war, and to be enslaved commonly meant that one's life was spared. Greek slaves could buy themselves out of slavery; they were allowed to participate in the Orphic mysteries and were admitted to social clubs which also included free members.

It is generally conceded that the dying out of slavery in Europe was not due to any great moralizing influence, but to its transformation into serfdom. The early Christians who discussed the subject accepted it along with other customs of the ancient world. While Aristotle claimed the

inferiority of the slave to be an endowment of nature, Augustine explained enslavement as a punishment sent by God. Westermarck notes that not one of the Fathers of the Church hints that slavery is unlawful or improper. During the early centuries of Christianity, dignitaries of the church, and even the martyrs, owned slaves. A Church Council at Orléans, in the sixth century, decreed the everlasting servitude of the descendants of slaves, and as late as the nineteenth century, a French Bishop defended the right of enslaving captives taken in war. Christian moralists, like their pagan predecessors, counselled kindness to slaves, but no great moral reforms were proposed. It was Seneca, the Pagan Stoic, and not a Christian reformer, who said: "What you avoid suffering, seek not to impose on others. You avoid slavery, for instance; take care not to enslave. For if you can bear to exact slavery from others, you appear to have been yourself a slave."

The Christian attitude toward slavery was rather in furtherance of submissiveness of mind. To be a slave is no barrier to salvation—it is a merely external thing. As Lecky remarks, "Christianity for the first time gave the servile virtues the foremost place in the moral type. Humility, obedience, gentleness, patience, resignation, are all cardinal or rudimentary virtues in the Christian character; they were all neglected or underrated by the Pagans; they can all expand or flourish in a servile position."

In the nineteenth century, when the issue of African slavery was brought to a crisis in the United States, the slave-owning classes of the South sought classical as well as Scriptural authority for the practice. To justify owning human beings by "right of conquest" was both too naive and too remote from reality for the cultured Southern planters. They wanted slavery to be "civilized" and "moral." So, as Aristotle had held that some people were made by nature to be slaves, the planters contended that the Negroes had been created by God for this purpose. In 1861, shortly after he was elected to be Vice

President of the Confederacy, Alexander H. Stephens declared in a speech: "Our new government is founded upon . . . the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition . . . in conformity with the ordinance of the Creator." Elsewhere he attempted to document this claim with numerous Biblical texts, reaching this climax of righteous enthusiasm:

To maintain that slavery is in itself sinful, in the face of all that is said and written in the Bible on the subject, with so many sanctions of the relation by the Deity himself, does seem to me to be little short of blasphemous! It is a direct imputation upon the wisdom and justice, as well as the declared ordinances of God, as they are written in the inspired oracles, to say nothing of their manifestation in the universe around us.

Thus the gallant South, schooled in learning and religion, discovered for slavery a metaphysical foundation. Its defenders invoked the hierarchical principle, the gradations of being as created by God, and argued that the lesser creatures should serve the greater. A subordinate "humanitarian" contention was that through contact with the "superior race" and its true religion, the heathens of Africa gained opportunity to save their immortal souls from damnation, so that for a black man to be owned by a white man was an ineffable privilege allowed to the black man by the generosity of the superior race.

There is little to connect these justifications of slavery with its twentieth-century form. In the first place, instead of greater and lesser races or individuals, a uniform equality is postulated by totalitarian theory. All men are to be served equally, and as welfare is essentially a material thing, power is needed to control and distribute material welfare equally. In the drive for power, which is to be used for the good of all, individuals who interfere, whether deliberately or accidentally, must be brushed aside—"liquidated" is the common term. The individual is so infinitesimal a "quantity" when compared to the

whole that his interest and welfare may be disregarded entirely.

This may be called the "quantitative" theory of mankind, as opposed to the hierarchical idea. To work effectively, the quantitative theory soon requires that some abstract symbol be substituted for the idea of the entire community, in order that the complaints of any minority within the whole may be logically suppressed. In modern times, that abstraction is the State. As the State represents the whole, and as what serves the whole is the highest good, it follows that to serve the State is the highest good, to oppose it, the greatest crime.

What is more logical, therefore, than to commit those who oppose the State, or anyone who happens to get in the way of the State, to "Corrective Labor Camps" where they may be compelled to contribute to the good of all? They are valueless as free individuals, even dangerous, but as slaves their lives may be made to count for something. According to the compiler of *The Dark Side of the Moon*, this general view of human beings is the common outlook in the Soviet Union. After describing the conduct of the Soviet Military guards who managed the "export" of Polish civilians to work camps in Russia during the war, the following explanation was given of their behavior: "the citizens of the Union, soldier or civilian, have come through long-enforced habit to think of human beings mainly as material to be taken up, set down, used or set to work, or kept in prison, for the benefit of an impersonal body known as the state."

Slavery, then, rests upon the concept of *Man as means*—as something other than an end in himself. Theoretical distinctions are unimportant, so long as his ends are not within himself. If a man is made to serve the ends of other men, another class or race, he is a slave. If the State's purposes claim his labors and his life, he is a slave. In either case, he is *material*—a quantity, a thing without essence or purpose of its own. With other men of like classification, he may be

shipped, deployed, or even "poured" into some breach where a "labor-force" is required by some sudden emergency.

This psychology of man-as-means is found in its most developed form in the military mind, and as military thinking comes to dominate popular attitudes, the acceptance of slavery, first as an unpleasant "necessity," then as a natural institution—as it is already regarded in some parts of the world—follows as effect from cause. What seems to be the prevalence of the slave-psychology in Russia is far less a horrible example than it is a warning to the West, for the West has only a weakening tradition of the idea of man-as-an-end-in-himself to protect it from the insidious persuasions of man-as-means. Actually, the only real protection any man has against the threat of enslavement is the temper of his spirit. Culture and its more concrete embodiments in institutions can do no more than reflect the temper of human beings. A man without high ends is already a potential slave, and with each submission to the trivial, with each indulgence of the irrational in him, he comes a step nearer to his future master.

All this is a round-about way of saying that slavery is a metaphysical problem before it becomes a political one. Slavery happens to people who fail to think of themselves as free, who lack a sufficiently important reason for determining to *be* free. Such people are docile pupils for instruction in the theory that their place and part in society ought to be determined by "better" and "wiser" men than themselves. They willingly adopt the "servile virtues" because they know of nothing better to do. Slavery comes naturally to those who learn to worship an outside power and expect from it either salvation or security.

Parts of the arguments of the believers in slavery are true enough. Nature does display difference, degree, and hierarchy. She has infinite division of labor, numerous schemes of organization—or organism—with complex responsibility at the top and simple labor at the

bottom. And there is "equality" in Nature, too, for all her children are constructed of a common stuff, obey the same laws, are born by similar processes and suffer a similar death. But what do these things mean for man?

Not, we think, what it seems to mean for the creatures of the physical world. For man is the *comprehending* unit of Nature, and no material thing at all, in his truest essence. For physical nature, the world is a great construction project, but for man it is a *school*. Nothing that a man can build is worth anything to him, as man, unless he knows more, is more, as a man, for having built it. This is the quality of being human, possessed by every man—it makes him a potential god. And in this potentiality lies the equality of all human beings. The knowing more or knowing less of some men is only a technical distinction—the dignity of man is in knowing at all. From the feeling of our common capacity to know arises the trust we place in our fellows, the love we bear for the great among them and the sympathy we give to the weak. We are united in our learning minds, our knowing spirit, and these ties we are entitled to call the bond of soul. What breaks this bond enslaves the human spirit, and what denies the potentiality of soul creates doctrines of servitude which lead to man-hating social systems and the politics of despair. Neither god nor State has authority to tell a man what he is or what he is good for. It is the peculiar capacity and necessity of man to tell these things to himself.

## *Letter from* FRANCE

A COLLEGE TOWN.—Education is one of the best mirrors of civilization, in addition to being one of its main dynamos. The Gallic love of the arts and appreciation of cultural heritage is reflected in the educational system of France, the emphasis on intellectual values being stronger in France than in most (if not all) other countries, today. There are so many things to be learned, in the relatively brief span of elementary and secondary schooling, that the best way of assimilating them has long been felt to be through lecture, memorization and recitation. French schools are in session until four-thirty or five in the afternoon, and most of the evening must be spent in preparing the next day's work. The baccalaureate examination, geared so that the majority of students do not pass it at the first trial, is at once the climax and center of attention in the secondary schools. The importance of the program is constantly evident: one does not "take" a course, one "follows" it. Many do not easily mold themselves to the curriculum, which too often is formed of a dry presentation of facts. Pupils seek to relieve boredom in extraneous amusement; discipline must be enforced from without. A game ensues in which pupils see how much they can get away with. Thus it is difficult (if not impossible) to establish between teacher and students the relationship of "working together" in the classroom. Four years ago, some French educators who were aware, like many others, of the psychological shortcomings of this program, started an experiment in which the work would become less program-centered and more student-centered. The "*classes nouvelles*" which have resulted seek to relate the subject matter to the children's own experiences, and give them as much opportunity as possible for self-examination. The classes are co-educational—another novelty in French schools. Discipline is encouraged to come from within the class. Manual arts receive a larger share of the program, so that those who are slower intellectually can derive some profit and satisfaction from school. This new program has been confined to relatively few schools, and is still critically eyed as an experiment. Its success, of course, is to be estimated by the extent to which the "new classes" measure up to the standard

of the *baccalauréat*. On the whole, progress so far has been encouraging, though it will be another three years before the first "products" take the exam. The *classes nouvelles* have not met with enthusiasm everywhere. For one thing, they show signs of being more costly—classes have to be smaller than the usual forty-odd pupils. There is also considerable doubt on the part of universities, educational inspectors and parents that enough can be learned under the newfangled system. Lack of formal discipline is often looked on as a lack of any discipline. But there are also educators, parents, and (of course) children who appreciate the greater interest stimulated in the subject matter; this alone does a great deal to lighten the heavy program. The French have become, in general, much more aware of the nature and possibilities of education; due to governmental regulations, however, private schools have had much more latitude to innovate than state-controlled schools.

At the forefront of the movement to modernize education is the Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques, at Sévres (the porcelain-famous Paris suburb). In addition to seeking better pedagogical formulae, it is a center for international exchange of educational ideas. It has been the scene of several seminars, such as the one held by the UNESCO in the summer of 1947, attended by representatives from over thirty countries. It is hoped that the spirit of international cooperation will not be confined to the study of theories, but will also pervade the classroom itself so that "our children, whatever their nationality, [can attain] a better mutual comprehension." The "universal anxiety of educators," continues M. Gustave Monod, one of the founders of the Sévres center, in a recent issue of *Les Amis de Sévres*, is "the certainty that only a revised and renewed education can save man from the horrors of war and barbarity, and that if the efforts for renewal are not carried on everywhere with the same good will and the same lofty goals, all our little local reforms are destined to fail."

FRENCH CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### FREEDOM AND POWER

LAST fall, MANAS (Sept. 22) described the struggle between the editors of the *Nation* and the New York City School Board which had resulted from the banning by the Board of the *Nation* from all public school libraries in the city. The *Nation* had printed a series of articles on the Catholic Church. These articles, by Paul Blanshard, were portions of his book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, which has since been issued in Boston by the Beacon Press.

In his introduction to this volume, Mr. Blanshard refers to the *Nation* controversy as "a test case of considerable importance" in which the *Nation* asserted its right to discuss "a fundamental social issue." He notes with appreciation the vigor with which persons in "liberal and academic circles" opposed the School Board's claim of the right to remove from school library circulation any periodical which is "offensive" to any group, and observes, with respect to the stand taken by the *Nation*: "Such fortitude is all too rare in American life today, and the fact that it exists is a hopeful augury for the Catholic people and their American freedom."

Mr. Blanshard's justification of his book is that of a sociologist who believes that any social institution as powerful and—influential as the Catholic Church has come to be, needs objective study.

In two hundred years [he writes the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has increased from the smallest to the largest church in the nation, claiming in 1948 the allegiance of some twenty-six million Americans. The branch of the Roman faith is now almost three times as large as the largest single Protestant denomination in the United States, the Methodist Church, and it claims about eighteen per cent of the total population.

Nothing in his volume suggests that he harbors a prejudice against Catholics as "people," or a desire to stir up religious strife. *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, he says,

is a book not about the Catholic faith but about the cultural, political and economic policies of the rulers of the Catholic Church. Wherever possible I have let the Catholic hierarchy speak for itself. There is a Catholic source for almost every major fact in this book, and the documents, dates, publishers and official Imprimaturs are all listed, with due acknowledgments, in the Notes at the end of the book.

This author believes, however, that the majority of Catholics are being used as the tools of socially reactionary leadership, and that his book may contribute to the enlightenment of socially liberal Catholics who have never investigated the social and cultural attitudes of the clerical hierarchy. As proof that some Catholics are willing to view the social consequences of clericalism dispassionately, Mr. Blanshard quotes the following from Prof. J. A. Reyniers of Notre Dame:

On the basis of productive scholarship we have no prominent universities. Among the schools which have reached the university status, we are at the bottom of the list of published research, just as our medical schools are at the bottom of medical ratings lists. The over-all picture is still blacker. . . . There is only one-fourth as much productive scholarship coming from Catholics as our numbers warrant. . . . Neither in its quantity nor its quality is there the slightest room for complacency about Catholic scholarship.

Mr. Blanshard's summation of clerical policy amounts to a serious indictment of the Church from the point of view of traditional American liberalism, but it becomes clear, after reading several chapters, that the indictment is not by Mr. Blanshard himself, but by the blatant contradictions, or "cultural schizophrenia," as he calls it, inherent in all attempts to make Catholic ideals and Jeffersonian ideals compatible. Mr. Blanshard is very understanding of his non-Catholic critics who feel that his approach indicates a strong negative bias, but he attributes this—correctly, we think—to a rather fuzzy idea about religious "tolerance": the idea that anything which might sound derogatory to any religious group, from any perspective whatever, should never be publicly discussed.

A less forthright discussion of the Catholic challenge to free thought is afforded in Cecil Northcott's *Religious Liberty* (New York, Macmillan). As Home Secretary of the London Missionary Society, Mr. Northcott has studied Catholic activities in a number of countries. Despite his reluctance to criticize Catholic "beliefs," as such, Mr. Northcott also reveals the impasse between the desire for liberty of conscience and Catholic authority. Colombia, in Latin America, for instance, is but one country where persecution of Protestants is the typical pattern. Catholic priests are the teachers in the Colombian public schools, and their inflammatory remarks against Protestants are unceasing. As Dr. W. S. Rycroft, an authority on religious liberty in Latin America, puts it: "The Roman Catholic Church does not lose any opportunity to oppose or persecute Protestants and to hinder their work."

Mr. Northcott has singled out the only defense which a Catholic can make to such charges by a quotation from a Catholic source: "When we are in power we behave on our principles; when you are in power we expect you to behave on yours." This remarkable point of view is more than a witty jibe, for no less an authority than St. Augustine has put the same formula in soberer terms: "When error prevails it is right to invoke liberty of conscience, but when, on the contrary, truth predominates, it is proper to use coercion." Through the centuries, Catholics have applied Augustine's rule whenever possible, on the theory that "toleration," if accorded to false doctrines, is nothing less than a manner of supporting them. Thus there are numerous facts of history which give Mr. Northcott occasion to observe:

It is one of the paradoxes of Christianity that it holds within itself revolutionary teaching about liberty for the individual and what often seems to be a reactionary intolerance in dealing with the results of liberty.

As long as certain segments of the population support dogmas which are seeds of intolerance,

and as long as others strive to *be* tolerant of social practices based on these ideas, the peculiar dilemma caused by an attempt to be "tolerant of intolerance" will continue to puzzle us. Clarity of understanding among the Catholic laity can never come about, it is sure, unless all controversial issues are raised for public discussion. Defenders of the Catholic right to "believe in intolerance" will have to recognize that *open debate* upon the social effects of Catholic *doctrines* as well as policies must be allowed. So far, Catholic apologists have rather successfully veiled the official position of the Church in all instances where it might possibly unsettle the faith of "good Catholics" who are also trying to be "good Americans." Little or no attention, for instance, has been paid to the Church's identification with General Franco, nor its complete approval of his policies. Many Catholics simply have had no occasion to consider the implications of this support of Franco and his policies. Nor do they know that Catholic dominance in Quebec has produced the most reactionary political record north of the Rio Grande. The Quebec hierarchy, for instance, fought against woman suffrage so persistently and effectively that no woman could vote in Quebec until 1944. Such facts should be known and discussed. They are not "anti" anything; they are simply necessary to our understanding of the effect that ideas may have upon forms of social behavior. "Ideas," as Richard Weaver pointed out, do have "consequences."

Actually, Mr. Blanshard, instead of being accused of attacking "religion," ought to be asked to undertake a sociological analysis of Catholic *doctrines*. After all, the leadership of no other religious group is so persistently committed to totalitarian policies, and the ideas of medieval theology must have something to do with this.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **WORTH-WHILE ROAD**

THE San Francisco Bay area recently became the scene of an important experiment in popular education. Whatever one may think of radio, it is difficult not to be favorably impressed by the programs announced by the new FM station, KPFA-Interim, which began to broadcast on April 15 of this year.

KPFA has four points of emphasis: (1) excellent music, and lots of it, often performed by local musicians; (2) a carefully planned series of children's programs, with folk music, games, stories and drama; (3) several lively approaches to public affairs, including interviews, round-table and panel discussions, and talks bearing on local and national issues; (4) treatment of news which faces honestly the limitations of news sources available to radio, yet assumes editorial responsibility for what is presented, and how it is presented.

This venture should have the good wishes of everyone and the support of those within listening distance—which, incidentally, includes all those living in the East Bay section of Richmond, in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. While it was not expected that KPFA programs would be audible in San Francisco, tests have shown that clear reception occurs in all these cities and adjacent communities.

So far, according to the managers of the station, public support has been unusually encouraging. Audience interest developed with almost the first broadcast, and the local newspapers were generous in reporting what KPFA had set out to do. Ordinarily, a new station must wait for months to determine audience reaction, but KPFA received enthusiastic approval within the first few days.

Three sources of revenue are open to KPFA for practical support—capital contributions, the sale of time to commercial accounts, and subscriptions by listeners. As KPFA seems to be developing a

large following of grateful listeners, the station hopes to be able to rely entirely upon the subscription plan, which will involve for each subscriber a payment of \$10.00 per year to the station, for which the listener will receive regular listings and descriptions of the programs offered, and a guarantee of non-commercial broadcasts in direct proportion to the number of subscriptions received.

KPFA is sponsored by the Pacifica Foundation, a non-profit California corporation. It broadcasts at 100.1 Megacycles over FM Channel 261. The offices of KPFA-Interim are at 2054 University Ave., Berkeley 4.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A PASSAGE in Feodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* recommends itself as one of the finest counsels ever offered to parent-educators. Perhaps the reader will be reminded by it of something we are all often tempted to forget—that no amount of specific suggestions as to what to do with children at certain ages and stages can take the place of a philosophical attitude of mind on the part of the parent or teachers. Our child psychologists may tell us how to behave, in certain situations, to bring out the best in our children, but unless we see some vision which makes the recommended procedure natural and inspiring, we will probably be unable to communicate much of value to them. There never has been a true educator who was not also a transcendentalist—someone, that is, who feels strongly, throughout his entire being, the presence of a connecting link among men, aside from the obvious brotherhood of economic and biological necessity. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, for instance, Dostoevsky speaks from the vantage point of metaphysical conviction:

"Every day and every hour, every minute, walk around yourself and watch yourself, and see that your image is a seemly one. You pass by a little child, you pass by, spiteful, with ugly words, with wrathful heart: you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you, and your image, unseemly and ignoble, may remain in his defenceless heart. You don't know it, but you may have sown an evil seed in him and it may grow, and all because you were not careful before the child, and because you did not foster in yourself a careful, actively benevolent love. Brothers, love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, for it is hard to acquire, and it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labour. For we must love not only occasionally for a moment, but forever. Everyone can love occasionally, even the wicked can.

"My brother asked the birds to forgive him; that sounds senseless, but it is right; for all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth. It may be senseless to beg forgiveness of the birds, but

birds would be happier at your side—a little happier anyway—and children and all animals, if you yourself were nobler than you are now. It's like an ocean, I tell you. Then you would pray to the birds, too, consumed by an all-embracing love, in a sort of transport, and pray that they too will forgive you your sin. Treasure this ecstasy, however senseless it may seem to men."

It is worth while to ponder the difference between sentimental maundering about the terms "love" and "kindness" and writing such as this passage of Dostoevsky's. The deep meaning he gives these words and the inspiration they bear seem to grow from the philosophical fundamentals implicit in the two paragraphs. (Incidentally, we know of no better way to read "great books" than to seek in them the author's first principles. It is an exercise for the imagination and a quest which seldom palls.)

Dostoevsky's first fundamental proposition is that each man is a God—even his thoughts and moods are endless in their effects upon others, for either good or evil. The Man-God is not perfect, but rather developing. He "sins," and while his sins cannot be forgiven by anyone, they can be considered as a result of temporary ignorance. Transgressions against the "laws of life," affecting all, need the forgiveness of *everything* that lives, and intelligent improvement of oneself is thus the only way to produce the conditions of forgiveness, for it is only when we have become "nobler" that we have actually secured a better relationship with all around us. Because man is a God, he can do this, but in order to do it more effectively he needs to utilize that portion of his consciousness which is more God-like than animal. Dostoevsky says, "walk around yourself and watch yourself"—implying the capacity for viewing our purely personal emotions impersonally.

Dostoevsky's second fundamental proposition is implicit in his first. The "laws of life" are just the psychological reflections of our own and others' natures; that is, *we make* the essential conditions which affect us for good or for ill, and therefore equally, though perhaps unconsciously,

we work for the fruition of our own rewards or punishments.

Third, "all is like an ocean, all flowing and blending." Every living thing of every degree is passing through its own phase of evolutionary development—or retrogression. We, in this sense, are a portion of Emerson's "Over-Soul," and until we recognize our responsibility to all that lives—until we recognize our link with even the birds and the animals—we have not acquired a sufficiently universal viewpoint to qualify us for the education of young humans.

Recently, here, Gandhi's and Thoreau's "natural religion" has been spoken of, and the spirit of Bronson Alcott's teaching. In all such cases, we have tried to call attention to what seems so indefinable a virtue of great educators that it seldom receives the notice it deserves. It may be called a sense of the Oneness of all life. When one *has* such a sense, it appears, everything which one does is educational, the only limitations being those temporarily imposed by incomplete development of the rational faculty.

Since this discussion began with a passage from a novel, we are reminded that all great literature is philosophical, and that the freedom of expression allowed by informal conversation in dialogue sometimes drives home a point—though "drives" is hardly the word—much better than exhaustive logical development. Perhaps this is because the natural function of philosophy is to permeate everything we do, and perhaps philosophy is never seen to best advantage when disported from the rest of human affairs and considered as a formal study. The man who argues philosophy or religion in doctrinal manner has a terribly hard time being convincing; our resistance is up against this manner of approaching the ultimate questions. But when a man gives something of himself while stating his convictions, our sympathy is invariably on his side—and we improve our chance to gain whatever may be gained from what he has to say. Children need this sort of "religious instruction,"

and, probably, this is the only variety they will accept.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Education Versus Disaster**

ONE of the consequences of building a technological civilization is that all its major problems eventually become moral problems. This is probably true of every civilization, as it moves toward maturity, but the idea should have special value for people living in a technological age, for the reason that technology, on the surface, seems to have nothing to do with morality.

Technology has certain obvious effects upon society. It brings people closer together in their material lives. It takes up the slack of distance between communities and individuals and makes them feel the impact of the actions of one another. But this impact is impersonal rather than individual, for a second effect of technology is that men no longer do little things by themselves, but each man does a small part of very big things. The impact is impersonal for the further reason that fewer and fewer people "do" anything at all, in the sense of origination or independent accomplishment. Technology makes them part of a process which goes on and on, getting more complicated year by year, until, in some cases at least, the process itself rules over human choice.

Take the case of modern agriculture. In the *Scientific Monthly* for last May, Stanley A. Cain, a botanist of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, discusses the accelerated rate of food production which technology has made possible. He has no quarrel with technology itself, but examines some of the results of "the development of farming as plant industry with specialization in cash-crop surpluses." The need, he writes, "is for a redirection of effort and a control of the new energy sources, for these technological improvements have brought with them undreamed-of complexities."

One such "complexity" following upon the industrialization of agriculture Mr. Cain sees in the extraordinary spurt in population growth.

While countries which have been industrialized for many years are no longer in a cycle of extreme fertility, the Asiatic lands now experiencing the sudden tide of industrialization are also entering a period of geometric growth in population. The Russian birth rate is greatly in excess of that of Western Europe, while the population of China "is said to be growing so fast that all the passenger boats in the world could not transport the increment away if immigration were a possible solution." A million and a half babies were born in Japan last year, making its population denser than ever before.

This development, Mr. Cain believes, has been "due in large part to 'mining agriculture' rather than to sustaining agriculture," with this "ironic" result:

The very land-use patterns that have helped increase our population and have raised momentarily the level of living of many of us carry with them the seeds of immediate destruction, for there is a growing pressure of our increased population and a growing pressure of our industrialized Philosophy for more and more production, irrespective of loss of balance between productive resources and demand.

Our crimes against the land include types of agriculture that result in a steady deterioration and loss of topsoil, such as the growing of one cash crop, like cotton, to the very doorsteps. They include range practices that are inimical to a maintenance of cover, especially in semi-arid regions, and forest practices that not only harvest the crop, but often, through failure of forest reproduction and subsequent fires, destroy the forest completely and its soils and its wildlife. *Even when one knows of methods for the restoration of useful vegetative cover and the repair of the soil, the necessary treatment may be uneconomical and impossible under present sociopolitical ideologies.*

We have added special emphasis to this last sentence, for in it Mr. Cain is referring to that aspect of our technological society which suppresses intelligent human choice. Or, to describe the situation in other words, bad technology has entrenched itself against good technology, and men seem impotent to make the necessary reforms.

Having seen this impotence clearly, the botanist turns sociologist and devotes the rest of his article to the necessity for general education. For the modern world has no real technological problems: it has only moral and educational problems—the necessity of transforming what Mr. Cain calls "present sociopolitical ideologies" into something very different from what they are is certainly an educational and moral problem.

His closing remarks offer little encouragement:

General education is a concomitant of a high level of living. How can general education come to pass where an abuse of the natural resources is keeping men from reaching a level of living where education about that abuse can be effective? This is the most vicious of chain reactions. We are living at a moment of great and what seems justifiable pessimism, and perhaps man is his own worst enemy. But the dual problems of population control, into the abysses of which we have not looked in this essay, and that of our dwindling resources seem to me ones that have even less likelihood of a solution to man than the control of the atomic bomb.

Obviously, those who believe that deep thinking is the concomitant of good eating have no choice except to share this writer's pessimism. There is probably statistical evidence to support the claim that children from prosperous homes go further than others in the direction of a general education, so that conventional theories of how to persuade people to be more intelligent are no help at all. Conceivably, however, our idea of a general education is as much at fault as our "present sociopolitical ideologies," and escape from the dilemma will have to involve a rejection of educational statistics as well as of the destructive practices of modern agriculture. If there is anything at all to be learned from the Gandhian method of education—as described in "Children . . . and Ourselves" in recent weeks—it is that another kind of "high level of living" is entirely possible to young people who are brought up in conscious relationships of responsibility to both nature and the human community. This form of education shouts its solution to worried

scientists like Mr. Cain—men who see the consequences of the ravaging of nature, and who, as specialists, suppose that only the same sort of specialized knowledge which opened their eyes to impending economic disaster can open the eyes of other men. Eventually, the conservationists will have to abandon this fallacy of technical education and recognize that problems which appear to them in terms of the statistics of world nutrition have a much more primary reality in simple human attitudes, and that when destructive and exploitative attitudes finally reflect themselves in ominous statistics, it is too late to do anything about them—too late for anything, that is, except to start at the beginning with the next generation, by teaching the young to *live* a new philosophy of nature and of man.