

THE REFORM OF INSTITUTION

THE bright young men of every generation seem to make the same discovery, and when they make it, it appears to them to be an entirely new discovery, and very important. It is that the institutions of human society are the bastions of reaction, the tools of oppression, and the perpetuators of ignorance. Bernard Shaw is supposed to have said that a man who is not a socialist at twenty has no heart, and that if he is not a conservative at forty, he has no head. Shaw broke his own rule, for he remained something of a radical long after forty, and he never became any sort of "conservative" at any time in his long life. We should like to revise his rule further, suggesting that, in the twentieth century, the bright young man who is without anarchist tendencies at twenty is not really very bright, and if he grows to forty without learning the constructive importance of social institutions, he is not bright at all.

This is not to claim that existing institutions are constructive, but that they *might* be, and that human beings at their present stage of development cannot get along without them.

One of the really impressive things about the American Revolution is the practical sociological wisdom of the Founding Fathers of the United States. They seem to have understood the power and character of institutions better than many of the inheritors of what they built. A handy volume for getting acquainted with eighteenth-century sociology is Allen O. Hansen's *Liberalism and American Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1926), a scholarly, academic tome, but with contents which are literally exciting. Here are men who lived out their lives engaged in practical politics and statecraft, yet who maintained a profound optimism regarding the possibilities of self-government and human progress. It is the fashion, nowadays, for

"experienced" men to turn Machiavellian in their private opinions, even if, in their public life, they repeat the slogans of "Democracy." The eighteenth-century liberals, however, really loved mankind and really believed in human progress. *Their* idea of institutions was indeed a new discovery, for they proposed the creation of a new kind of institutions. They were well aware of the reactionary character of most of the existing institutions, which had been established by powerful class interests as means of maintaining the *status quo*. Dr. Hansen summarizes for us the analysis of institutions by Nathaniel Chipman (New Englander of *Mayflower* stock who served Vermont as lawyer, legislator, judge, and the United States as chief justice of the Supreme Court and later in the Senate):

Vested interests were always active in preserving "the present order of things" and were responsible for hindering progress until revolution became necessary. Also, "an habitual veneration for ancient establishments, and a dread of encouraging a spirit of innovation," operated to the same end. All of these forces combined "to continue as unalterably perfect, those institutions, which were adapted only to weakness, ignorance, and barbarous manners of an infant people." Furthermore, "By the force of habit, and inveterate national prejudices, abuses are rendered sacred," and this to the extent that "those institutions which were the offspring of chance or violence," had come "to be extolled as the most perfect productions of reason, founded in the original and unalterable principles of nature."

The author [Chipman] was sure that such was the case with the British, for: "The greater part of the nation appear fully persuaded, that all further improvements are impracticable, and that because their government was once the best, perhaps, which existed in the world, it must through all progressive advances in knowledge, in morals, and in manners, continue the best, a pattern of unchanging perfection, though in its principles it is much too limited for the present state."

Chipman now comes to a definition of the problem:

If one viewed history in the large, he might "learn to account for the constant superiority in most nations, of private to political morality, as practiced by the same individuals." Hence the great problem was how to make institutions keep pace "with the general improvements of the people." As an example of survival he cited the custom of foot-binding in China. His argument was that Americans would become as blind in a smugness of their own, as were the English or the Chinese unless they deliberately set up agencies that would ensure progress through an attitude of experimentation in all things.

A kind of education was needed that would break the despotism of tradition. The task of creating institutions that would be fluid enough to keep abreast of progress and to further it, was very difficult and complex, for, "Indeed could every individual in society, have an intuitive prescience of the changes, as they were to arise, in their order, it would still, perhaps, be impossible to form any human institution, which would accommodate itself to every situation in the progress."

Chipman was far from unique among those who thought and wrote on the problems of the new American Republic. The Revolution was an achievement in self-consciousness as well as a victory in political emancipation. These men knew what they were doing—or trying to do. Hardly a man of eminence in American life failed to reflect and to write on the formation of institutions for the new society. Naturally enough, education was regarded as the primary institution for shaping the future, and most by far of their thoughts were concerned with educational programs and projects for America.

"An attitude of experimentation in all things"—how important this is, and how difficult to maintain! In the present, as we know, the schools of the United States are under fire for precisely this tendency. Open-minded consideration for all social forms and experiments is practically prohibited to the modern educator who must, lest he be charged with "radical ideas," give a second-rate imitation of an American

Legion rally in all his public appearances, and doubtless in private ones, too.

But this is not our present subject. Having looked briefly at the subject of "institutions" as they were regarded in the eighteenth century, by the best minds of the time, there should be value in turning elsewhere, in order to avoid the "smugness" warned against by Nathaniel Chipman. The United States is not the only country in "America." Other nations in the Western Hemisphere have been pursuing their own development, and there are some comparisons with them that are not in the least flattering to the United States.

Take, for instance, Brazil. It is typical of the politically-minded American to think to himself, "Oh yes, Brazil; Brazil has a dictator; Brazil is big, sprawling South American country, originally settled by the Portuguese, with many Social Problems—half jungle, too." But there is much that the people of the United States could learn from the Brazilians—not "intellectually," perhaps, but through the subtler instruction of history. Americans pride themselves that they "freed the slaves." So did the Brazilians, but without a fratricidal war. As Waldo Frank tells it in his fascinating *South American Journey* (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1942):

The history of Brazil—its colonization, its slavocracy, its independence, its bloodless gradual freeing of the Negro, its easeful shift from Empire to Republic—has been amazingly distinct from the processes of Spanish America and the United States.... There were sporadic slave rebellions and insurrections; in some cases the runaway blacks even set up temporary "republics" called *quilombos*, in the jungle. . . . They were led usually by black Moslem intellectuals, freed craftsmen of the cities. . . .

Comparative lack of strain was the coefficient of the difference from our own slave South. We too bred with the Negresses; but fought the passion and ostracized its children. Hence fear, which is the fruit of the denial of human feelings.

Fear marked the growth of our world, fear of different kinds, north and south. Want of fear marked the growth, through the first three centuries,

of Brazil's mixed population. There was food for every child; there was at least one woman for every man. Of course, there was theft, there was cruel exploitation, there was murder: these at times are natural expressions. There was no rape; almost no case of it is known in Brazil's history.

By 1822, Mr. Frank relates, three fourths of the mulattoes had been freed; six years later they numbered 400,000 and there were 160,000 free blacks. The slave trade was made illegal in 1831, although the British kept on shipping in Negroes to Brazil for twenty more years. During the middle years of the century, many wealthy slave owners took pride in freeing their Negroes. The processes of emancipation proceeded gradually. It is of interest that in 1886 "the Army in formal session of its ranking officers declared itself abolitionist and republican and instructed its officers stationed throughout the land to refuse aid to slave owners for the recapture of runaways." Meanwhile the mingling of the races had been taking place through marriage. Frank notes percipiently:

Why is the difference so great between the exploited Negro of Brazil and the exploited Negro of the United States? Because the latter have known lust and greed no less of their masters, the former, lust and greed, but tenderness also.

What may be called a "non-moral" element in this comparison lies in the fact that, as Frank points out, the North American colonists brought their own women with them, and this was seldom the case with the Portuguese. But whatever the contributing causes, the Brazilians finally acknowledged and adjusted to their responsibilities to the Negroes who had come so unwillingly to their shores—responsibilities still resisted by many people in the United States. Intermarriage, of course, is no "formula" for fulfilling responsibility, but it represents the basic acceptance that is called for whenever there is a mingling of blood lines.

In the census of 1890—the first after final emancipation—the Brazilian population was divided as follows: white, 44 per cent; Negro,

14.6 per cent; Indian, 9 per cent; mixed, 39.4 per cent. These figures need qualification by the fact, noted by Frank, that many of those listed as "whites" had small amounts of Indian or Negro blood. In any event, "color," in Brazil, has never been the problem it became in the United States:

Men of color, if they were men of value, not only occupied places of honor in all the professions; they were invited to the palace functions. At one ball, a lady refused to dance with the famous colored engineer, Andre Reboucas; the Empress Apparent, Princess Isabel, gave him her hand in the next mazurka. There were still slaves in Brazil; there were also men of color who were leading poets, musicians, engineers, doctors, statesmen and priests. In 1888, when the last slaves were freed by act of the National House, only six hundred thousand remained in the whole land. '

This was nearly a generation later than the freeing of our slaves. Brazil with its slow, organic process had been the most backward country to abolish servitude. But the process cost no blood, caused no fierce sectional conflicts or resentments. The big slave men of Bahia grumbled; and took their revenge by permitting the Empire, which had encouraged abolition, to fade into the new Republic. But the abolitionists inflicted no curse like our Reconstruction on half the country: a "reconstruction" from which our South has not yet by any means recovered.

The following year, 1889, by the same blind process, the nation awoke to find itself a Republic. When the Princess Regent, Isabel, signed the Congressional Act freeing the last slaves, she smiled into the face of the Prime Minister. "We won the fight," she said. "Yes, Your Highness," he replied. "You have won the fight and lost the throne." This Prime Minister was the Baron de Cotegipe. He was a mulatto.

There is a sense, doubtless, in which some of the notable achievements of the United States have also been "blind," driven forward by some sort of "instinct" which we are hardly able to explain ourselves. Present confusions, at any rate, indicate considerable loss of the fine self-consciousness which was exhibited by the eighteenth-century greats who "planned" America's future.

To avoid supposing that the historical lessons in how to design or wisely transform social and political institutions are all in the past, we may look at another country to the south—Mexico. Mexico, we say to ourselves, is another of those Latin-American lands where emotional instability is the chief architect of national affairs—we say this, that is, if we are ignorant of the history of Mexico since about 1930. Probably many more Americans than have a good excuse for doing so say this, suggesting that the smugness Chipman anticipated has allowed them to overlook a great national and institutional transformation that has been recently accomplished by our southern neighbor.

For centuries, the people of Mexico were tightly held in the vise of political oppression and religious dogma. Even after the Revolution, oppressions of various sorts continued. That, today, especially since the six-year regime Lázaro Cárdenas, which began in December, 1934, the institutions of Mexico have been undergoing transformation in the direction of genuine democracy—political democracy, social democracy, industrial democracy—is a fact which is all too little appreciated in the United States. As usual, we have an unusual book to recommend: *Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexican Democrat*, by William Cameron (George Wahr Publishing Co., Ann Arbor, Mich., 1952, \$4.00). For almost any reader, this book will afford genuinely thrilling discoveries. It is evident that, in Mexico, responsibility in government, as viewed by men like Cárdenas, is hardly different from responsibility in education. The obstacles faced by Cárdenas from 1934 to 1940 are equalled only by the genius he displayed in overcoming them. In these days of fears and suspicions, it is pleasant to realize that a man like Cárdenas is still among the living. As Townsend reports:

In the summer of 1937, while on his first expedition to Yucatan, word came to the president from the capital that a plot had been discovered against the regime, and that the leading conspirators, some of whom were prominent lawyers, had been put

in jail. The instructions which Cárdenas wired back were typical of the man. They read, "Suspend all action against group of accused plotters at once. Refrain from even citing them for testimony because the government feels that its institutions cannot be endangered by any acts of sedition."

Such an act was new in Latin America. .

It would be new almost anywhere, today. The story of how Cárdenas gradually changed the government of Mexico from a "Strong Man" regime to a political institution responsive to the will of the people, and at the same time worked furiously to bring the people to a level of responsibility and social intelligence where they could in fact govern themselves, forms the exciting contents of this book.

Cárdenas spent a large part of his time travelling throughout his country. Once, following the route of the proposed Pan-American Highway, he was accosted by a local mayor who asked to have the highway diverted to pass through his village. The reaction of Cárdenas was characteristic:

"What for?" asked the president. "Do you want the tourists to see how many weeds there are in your streets and how few of your houses are painted?"

Quickly the abashed mayor replied, "I'll compel the citizens to paint their homes." The president's answer voiced one of the basic principles of his life, "Persuade rather than compel."

Cárdenas was really for the people. He lived as simply as possible, cut his income in half, ignored diplomatic functions, and devoted himself to the regeneration of the Mexican people. First, he gave them land:

He threw caution to the winds, and with the Constitution in one hand and a transit in the other he went about breaking up huge estates wherever he found them. One-fourth of all the land which had been distributed to the peasants since 1915 was given them during 1935, Cárdenas' first year in office. By the time he had been president twenty months, he had distributed over half as much land as had all his predecessors.

These are only the slightest "notes" on a very great humanitarian career. How Cárdenas has worked for the freedom of Mexico from clerical oppression, for economic growth, for the restoration of the self-respect and dignity of the peasants and Indians; how he applied the principles of the Mexican Revolution—this is all given in full detail by Mr. Townsend, himself a lover of Mexico and a voluntary educator who has served there, helping the villagers, for many years.

Finally, however, the book is a profound lesson in the possibilities of reconstructing social institutions, and making them into educational instruments for the benefit of the masses. Seldom, in these days, does one find so successful a pursuit of a true social ideal. The secret of his success, perhaps, was stated by Cardenas in a speech made back in 1933:

Fundamentally, I consider that the failures of the people in their struggles toward a clearly defined goal . . . have not consisted in the lack of a more or less brilliant expression of doctrines. They have been due, rather, in great part to the folly or bad faith of the men who sought to carry them out. Therefore, the errors of an institution can be corrected by the wholesome influence of the members who are regenerated.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—Recent incidents on university campuses have pointed up the shaky grounds on which academic freedom stands, today, in Japan. These incidents involved clashes between the university students and the police, but the fundamental issue was whether or not freedom of discussion and research is to be permitted in the schools.

The major clash took place at Tokyo University—a State university, considered the highest seat of learning in Japan—when two plain-clothes men were discovered taking notes at a purely student gathering. The students forcibly ousted the policemen and took away their notebooks. The police immediately retaliated by returning in force to arrest several students who were believed to be the ringleaders in the assault against the detectives.

The students who beat up the policemen and took away their notebooks certainly deserve condemnation, for nothing is gained by violence, and violence begets violence. It is true, also, that there are communist cells in nearly all of the nation's universities and the plain-clothes men were assigned to check on the Red activities.

But the larger question is whether or not the vast majority of the students—clearly non-communist—can feel assured they are not in jeopardy of arrest every time they express an opinion on controversial subjects within the confines of the universities. To permit detectives to roam the campus could become a means of exerting pressure upon the students, as in the past when the "thought-police" were so feared that freedom of academic research was rendered impossible.

The contents of the police notebooks revealed that the detectives were assigned not only to pry into student activities, but also to shadow several professors under suspicion of being communist-inclined. The situation seems ripe in many ways for the revival of the "thought-police." The drastic action taken by the Occupation against the Communists and the anti-communist policy of the Japanese Government could lead to "weeding out"

the Reds, and for this a lot of undercover "spy" work would be necessary.

In a public hearing held in the Diet, the school authorities contended that the principle of academic freedom must remain inviolate and that they must retain responsibility for campus affairs, with the police to be called in only when matters get out of hand. The police officials, on the other hand, argued that the schools should not be permitted extra-territorial rights which would obstruct the police from carrying out their duty of maintaining law and order, and that the school authorities have failed to administer the universities properly.

The Diet debates on the subject proved far from conclusive, for the House of Representatives upheld the police, while the House of Councillors sided with the universities.

It was most alarming, however, that so many people in positions of leadership had no idea of what is meant by "academic freedom"—which, incidentally, is specifically guaranteed the people in the Constitution. The consequence of failing to clear up the question of the rights of the students to speak up and to conduct research on controversial subjects in the classrooms is appalling.

This is yet another phase of the "cold war" as it appears in Japan. The danger is that the Japanese people who have been traditionally anti-Soviet would be driven into a "witch hunt" as in the past—and at the expense of a goodly portion of their freedom.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

IMAGINATION—BLUDGEON SIZE

PHILIP WYLIE charges back and forth across the scene of popular American reading so frequently that he cannot be ignored. A reviewer can do anything he wants with Wylie, of course. His extremism makes him an easy target for devastating criticism, but it is also possible to praise his penetration. When last referring to Wylie in MANAS, we grew a little impatient with the Wylian brave, new world, described in *The Disappearance*, and we shall now endeavor to call attention to some of his virtues. (Wylie has just ridden by again, *The Disappearance* now being available in a Pocket Book edition.)

In *The Disappearance*, all the men on earth suddenly disappear from the sight of women, and all women disappear from the sight of men. Left alone, the women soon discover how leechingly dependent they have become on men, how unable to carry their own weight, let alone their psychological burdens, while the men discover how easily their barbarous instincts, unchecked by the presence of the fair sex, could reduce the world to chaos.

Mr. Wylie, the amateur philosopher's amateur philosopher, sums up many of the recent commentaries on the condition of man by psychologists and sociologists. He does this, of course, in a very personal way, and one gets the feeling that every character who says something profound is none other than Wylie himself. But in this book the incurable "primitive," the Wylie who likes his men rough and tough, virile and crude, reveals his interest in a revolt against materialism! One of his protagonists, having passed through the horror of four years in a bestial world of H-bombs and jungle struggle, announces this theory of salvation by saying, "If I could do it over I'd lead a rebellion, I guess." What sort of rebellion?

"A rebellion against materialism. Against every ism, communism or fascism or pigheaded Americanism, that pretends to be no more than a

thing-maker. Start a religion. A cult of learning and expression and enjoying and loving but not of so damned much 'progressing.' A procountry, pronature religion. A cult for reducing the human stock to a tenth of present numbers and bettering the breed a few thousand per cent. A religion that had wiser 'thousand-year' programs than old Hitler. There was nothing wrong with the period. Why *shouldn't* we plan for a mere thirty or forty generations, instead of just *one*? Rather, why *didn't* we? My cult would be anti-city, also. Did you ever think that, just as I suggested the birth rate went up in response to a threat to the species—at least in America where the threat was dimly appreciated, so, perhaps, people invented atomic bombs because *actually* they hated cities, hated modern civilization, longed of inner *necessity* to smash the whole worthless, foolish mess? Start over?"

Speaking of religion, Wylie now seems to favor a kind of guarded mysticism. He also belongs to the cult of racial fertility of which John Steinbeck is a familiar member, though he waxes angry rather than poetic when discussing the Future of the Race. For this reason, perhaps, Wylie has been bitter about the habits of child-training in most American homes, and especially bitter against the conventional "Mom" of the typical American family (see *Generation of Vipers*). It is in renewing his examination of "family" psychology that Wylie becomes most effective in *The Disappearance*, but we may note, also, that he now seems to show a good deal more compassion for "the women." Toward the end of *The Disappearance*, but before the sexes have been reunited, two men look back upon their marriages:

"What about your family?" Gaunt asked.

"Frances?" Edwin lighted another cigarette while he considered memories of his wife. "Frances had a single principle: it was to maintain the systems and methods recommended by the least unenlightened magazines for bearing and rearing children and keeping a husband what was called happy."

"And that kept her happy?"

"It kept her busy which most people identify as the same thing. That's because when they have nothing to do they're instantly wretched. In other

words, they don't like *themselves*. Frances as a matron, a wife and a mother was a social success and a family success. Emotionally, she was a well-adjusted six-year-old. As a wife to me, she was a pretty and perfumed machine. And that was just dandy so long as I didn't have time for anything else, either. Most people never grow up any more than she did. And, God, how I envied them! How convenient it is to go through life as a child!"

"And how inevitable that religion should stress just that!"

The younger man nodded. "Nobody mature *could* stay in a pattern designed for children! Well, those were the two reflections that put me nearest to a sense of some other, larger reality that existed but that I couldn't see because of the wrongness of all we believed, stood for, did every day, felt, refused to feel, didn't do and so on."

Though the essential plot device of *The Disappearance* is in some ways reminiscent of numerous "science fiction" tales, Wylie sets up an adequate framework for discussion of attitudes toward differences between the sexes. He holds that some such punishment as the "disappearance" imposes is exactly what we deserve for so long allowing men and women to live in two worlds instead of one. After all, the differences between man and woman can as easily be held to be insignificant as monumental, and it is Wylie's opinion that the first thing we should have learned from science has never penetrated our minds at all—that there is much of man in woman and much of woman in man. The differences which do exist, then, are "meant" to be merely functional. The passivity and dependence of women, encouraged by man, have kept men and women from knowing each other as beings of equal minds and of equal capacities in all important affairs. Meanwhile the customary separation becomes the more serious as the need for emotional balance grows greater in the face of war-tensions. Thus the psychological separation itself prepares the "retribution" of Wylie's "disappearance"—instead of viewing each other as human beings, men and women concentrate on the ideas of the *opposite* sex, expecting each to play a stereotyped role, until, at last, they grow apart to a breaking point,

ceasing to exist for one another. The return, of men to women and vice versa—and there is a return—comes only when enough of the inhabitants of these "two worlds" have mentally prepared themselves for living together in a single framework of reality.

While we are allowing Wylie to prove that he does have provocative insights, we might also give him credit for past achievements. *Babes and Sucklings*, which appeared in 1929, dealt with the psychology of interpersonal relationships, and helped to clarify a distinction psychologists had been working on for a number of years—the distinction between love and self-regard. Here, of course, Wylie blames "suffering" complexes on religion, but who can blame him? There is a variety of pseudo-"self-sacrifice" which certainly needs to be disentangled from love, and which orthodox religious notions have done much to confuse with it. In *Babes and Sucklings*, the hero gets the lecture he has been needing:

You've found out one thing in life and it's a great discovery. Half—three fifths of all that man believes is founded on that discovery. And it's only a silly little natural law, not important at all. You've learned that, between the pleasant emotions and the disagreeable, the ecstatic and the agnostic, there is no comparison. The lesson is written on you like stone-chiseling. You discovered that you can suffer fifty times as much as you can enjoy. Despair is an emotion that pales bliss. Grief is greater than delight. Woe is mightier than happiness. That fact makes the lives of most people nothing but avoidances. It stands in the way of progress. You know, too, that thought comes from emotion. You think. So, with pretty accurate intuition, you seek the most poignant emotions. But that has nothing to do with love. Love is a state of being. It isn't an emotion. It isn't an idea. It isn't a system of living. It's founded on certainties. You were certain of nothing.

COMMENTARY

A STRANGE PARALLEL

FROM the career of M. K. Gandhi, we know how great is the capacity for cultural and institutional reform of a single individual. Now that Gandhi is gone, and India free, the tendency is to take what he did as a matter of course. But in practical terms, Gandhi accomplished the "impossible." That is, he did what most "practical men" would have declared impossible, if their opinions had been asked before he did it.

It may seem odd to discuss the career of a General, a military man, as paralleling Gandhi's achievements, but a reading of the life-story of General Cárdenas—first General, then President, Cárdenas—makes the comparison inevitable. Gandhi worked among a naturally religious people, endeavoring to restore to them a more vital sense of the meaning of their religion, and to help them regain essential self-respect. Cárdenas worked, and works, among a people who, like the Indians of the East, also have a great past and have suffered under the heel of exploiters. Unlike Gandhi, however, Cárdenas labored, along with other Mexican leaders, to emancipate his people from the heavy weight of religious belief. But his methods, in the face of the Mexican revolutionary tradition, were as "radical" as Gandhi's.

When Plutarco Calles came to power as president of Mexico, succeeding Obregon, he pressed anew the opposition of the Mexican Government to the Catholic Church. Eventually, the priests "struck" against Calles' severe anticlerical laws. Bands of embattled *cristeros* (partisans of Christ the King) took to the hills in Michoacan, where, led by a brave priest, they withstood all attacks. Mr. Townsend relates:

Then Cárdenas was placed in command of the government troops, and he determined upon a new strategy. As soon as he had captured a few of the *cristeros* he gave them good rifles in place of the old muzzle loaders they had been using, and told them to return to their homes and use their new guns and ammunition, not for shooting people but for hunting

game. The surprised men returned to their headquarters and told their story to the priest commander. The latter, utterly confounded, said that he would like to meet the man who had followed such strange procedure. One of the proud possessors of a new rifle took this message back to Cárdenas who accompanied him *alone* to the rendezvous of the priest. Once together, the zealous priest who saw his Church endangered and the equally zealous patriot who saw his country endangered, agreed on terms of peace. The . . . campaign was thus won without casualties to either side, and without leaving coals of bitterness to smoulder in the breasts of the vanquished.

Other Mexican generals and presidents had executed thousands of their enemies. Cárdenas never executed anybody. Nor, it should be added, did he ever fall into compromises in the anticlerical policy which he shared by conviction. He simply dealt with all men in friendliness and understanding.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WE venture to say that most parents offer their children altogether too many "moral precepts." Thus the child early and inevitably acquires the impression that morality is a matter of words, and while this impression may accurately represent the generally prevailing "moral" attitudes, we may hope for something quite different and far better for our young—a grasp of the *meaning* of ethics.

Also, because there is so much talk about what we think to be "good" and what we think to be "bad," we encourage our children to talk and think too much about their likes and dislikes. This is a poor way to initiate anyone into the power of emotional adaptation to The Unfamiliar, out of which most comprehension will grow. We must, in other words, cultivate "plastic" minds in order to learn enough to have truly solid convictions.

Talking too much means, among other things, talking without thought-out constructive purpose. When we talk to a child, what we say ought to have something to do with an undertaking involving him, or at least contain an *invitation* for him to participate. We certainly talk too much whenever we lengthily recommend a different sort of behavior.

Have we ever added up the amount of our thinking devoted to recommending a changed course of conduct for other people? Most of our complaints concerning the political and economic affairs of the world belong, quite evidently, in this category. And when we speak of our business associates or our neighbors, how often is the very basis for our conversation our superior knowledge of *their* needs, what *their* mistakes have been? While children may not be much concerned or influenced by our evaluation of adult entertainment, our habits of mind will nonetheless effect them profoundly, for in numerous small ways our daily association with our children conveys the way we think about things in general. Impatience with anything against which we have conditioned ourselves will quickly communicate itself, by suggestion, to the child, for the reason that poor habits of mind are easily acquired by imitation, while the power of original thought can never be transmitted.

We have spoken of the power of words, and also of the ineffectiveness of words. The contradiction is resolved by the knowledge that words become hopelessly ineffective for the communication of ethical abstractions only when used too often. Yet words need not be empty abstractions, for even children have the capacity for seeing something real in an abstraction—if an inspired one. Moral precepts become too abstract when a saturation point of understanding is reached. We *make* them abstract, in short, simply by too frequent use. And the great danger of this is that the child, perpetually "over-saturated" by abstractions, may come to live a dual existence—the existence of his real thoughts and feelings, and another existence in the midst of words which have but a shadowy meaning to him.

A "word," after all, is not an experience, but simply a temporary focus around which we arrange ideas about experiences. The habit of taking words to be direct representations of truth is another of our theological inheritances, deriving from the same false belief which holds that there is no knowledge save second-hand knowledge, or "revelation." The logic of this was that one's own powers of comprehension were so faulty that the "word" of a superior intelligence had to be relied upon. Thus, the "word of God" was presumably the best representation of reality men could have.

This, perhaps, is a characteristic of past centuries most puzzling to us today—how could men use the tools of reason, arguments and hypotheses, without ever really reasoning for themselves, and without even seeing the desirability of reasoning for themselves? But we are still apt to use a great many words in precisely the same way, today, especially when we think ourselves to be passing on the most acceptable sort of "moral instruction."

Now, with our own children, we need to guard against the temptation to repeat empty oversimplifications of moral teaching. Moral teaching has to do with the study of cause and effect, with laws of life, and not at all with verbal versions of "good" and "evil." In other words, the "talking-too-much" method obscures the real issues for the child, encouraging him to think of his own moral case as being especially bad, since he cannot directly understand the "good" he is supposed to embody. From this, again, comes the

tendency to try to savor the only remaining forlorn hope—that of *pretending* to be "moral" in the sense apparently required by adults.

Every good teacher has had the experience of struggling for months to get children to express what they *really* feel and think. For every good teacher there are a number of others not so good, who have long been teaching children to pretend to be what they are not! These bad habits must be cut through before a real meeting between child and teacher can take place, the meeting prerequisite to any genuine *ethical* teaching.

A parent or teacher who repeats moral precepts but rarely is in different case from those who encourage pretension. The child will grow used to having anything such an adult says have a clear and real meaning. He *assumes* that the "moral precept," also, must be real, and his intuitive powers reach to *find* the meaning intended.

The best thing of all is to help the child to teach-himself. An illustration of the principle involved is conveyed, we think, by a childhood reminiscence of Louis B. Mayer:

One day when I was a small boy I got into a fight at school. I remember distinctly that I was sore in mind as well as in body.

When I got home I went about muttering threats of what I was going to do to my opponent when next we met, and it must have been that my vocabulary had been partially, at least, acquired from the older boys at school who thought profanity a sign of manhood.

My mother didn't seem to be paying any particular attention and went on about her work in her usual serene manner. I was surprised, however, the next day when we were out in the country on a family picnic and she called me aside. "Louis, come here a moment. I want to show you something," she said.

Now that part of the country near New Brunswick, Canada, was in a beautiful valley, with tall, rugged mountains towering on all sides, perfect for echoes. My mother took me over to a little clearing that faced the mountain wall.

"Now, Louis, say what I heard you say yesterday."

I began to feel embarrassed and said, "I don't remember."

My mother was never one to dodge an issue.

"I do," she replied. "You said 'Damn you'!"

I had to nod.

"Yes, I remember now."

"Say it now," she commanded.

I repeated it, as quietly as I could.

The words rolled back with startling volume in the echo.

"Louder, son. Say it louder. Whatever you say, you must be willing to say as loud as you can, to shout it for all to hear."

I didn't want to do this very much. But it did not occur to me to disobey my mother. So I faced the mountains and shouted at the top of my lungs, "Damn you!"

Right back it came, like thunder. Like a voice from heaven it denounced me.

"Now," said my mother, "that is the way life is. It always returns to us what we say to it. If you shout at it and at your fellow man, 'damn you,' life and your fellow man will shout it right back at you. If you say to life, to humanity, 'bless you,' then your life will be an echo of those words, 'bless you.'"

"Choose ye whom ye shall serve, Louis. You have that choice. As long as you live you will have your choice. Every day, almost every hour, in some way a choice will be presented to you."

At that moment, though of course I was impressed by the amazing illustration, I don't suppose I realized that my mother had given me a light, a moment of true inspiration. Like every human being, I have sneaked up on life at times and tried to see if I couldn't break the law of the echo, but I have never succeeded, not once.

Of course, everything we want to help our children to know may not seem so easily communicable. But this is perhaps because we are not yet wise enough to look for the proper setting, and because our too often empty words actually discourage us as much as they do our children—both we and they can certainly tell that they are not "working" in any creative way.

FRONTIERS "Natural Philosophers"

IT is natural—and probably justifiable—for the person with a non-specialized interest in "science" to feel that if he reads James Jeans, Arthur Eddington, and A. H. Compton, and tries to keep track of the role of modern physics as conceived by Albert Einstein, then he (the nonspecialized reader) has a fair idea of what science is about. At the risk of what we hope will be only minor inaccuracies, a summary of this view of science may be attempted. It is really a view of the universe, for what a man thinks of the universe is bound to shape the character of the science he practices.

These men have conceived the nature of the world around us in the spirit of the ancient Greeks—in the spirit, also, of the eighteenth century. They suggest that Nature exhibits a panorama of events according to a pattern, and that this pattern somehow corresponds exactly how, or why, nobody knows—to the capacity of the human mind for understanding it in terms of scientific law, or the "laws of nature." Eddington declared the basic substance of the universe to be "mind-stuff." Jeans proposed that deity expresses itself in mathematical relationships—a thorough-going Pythagorean and Platonic idea. Arthur Holly Compton goes a bit further, intimating that the cosmos unfolds some kind of divine plan. Dr. Einstein, skeptical as to God or gods, puts the matter simply:

The very fact that the totality of our sense experience is such that by means of thinking . . . it can be put in order, this fact is one which leaves us in awe, but which we shall never understand. One may say "the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility." It is one of the great realisations of Immanuel Kant that the setting up of a real external world would be senseless without this comprehensibility.

This is science as it was named in the eighteenth century—"Natural Philosophy." It proposes that by the study of the world, men may

gain reliable knowledge concerning the nature of the world.

It is also the "average man's" idea of the physical world. It belongs with the eighteenth-century conception of "moral law" as a basic, if difficult-to-understand, expression of the natural order, and with the political conception of "Right"—the rights of man—as following naturally from the idea of moral law.

Our non-specialized reader and "average man" has a tendency to reason from these assumptions about the nature of things. His thinking about "progress" certainly depends in some measure on these assumptions, and his attempts at personal philosophy usually "take off" from primary conceptions of this sort. There is cause, then, for surprise, if not bewilderment, in the fact that the majority of scientists—at any rate, physicists—no longer subscribe to these ideas about the universe and about natural law. The hope of *really finding out about things* by the method of scientific investigation has given way, Dr. L. J. Lafleur tells us, in the *Scientific Monthly* for May, to the pessimistic view that "all that is meant by any statement about the world is a set of directions leading to a set of sensations."

The practical result of this pessimism, it seems to us, is that science, in the hands of such men, has been reduced to nothing more than the "inventions department" of technology. It amounts to an absolute refusal, on the part of scientists of this persuasion, to philosophize about the nature of things. "We don't—*can't*—know," they say.

Perhaps this kind of reduction of physics to technology had to come—a development which carries skeptical materialism to its last, barren conclusion. Psychology reached this point a generation ago, in the Behaviorist denial of the reality of consciousness itself. "Scientific philosophy" probably has to run its course in the direction in which its assumptions lead, before it can even consider other assumptions. This seems to be one of the laws of institutionalized human

effort, and science, today, is certainly an institutionalized undertaking.

Meanwhile, we still have the voice of an Einstein to cheer the "average man." As he said, in 1940, after detailing some of the disappointments confronting modern physics:

Some physicists, among them, myself, can not believe that we must abandon, actually and forever, the idea of direct representation of physical reality in space and time; or that we must accept the view that events in nature are analogous to a game of chance. It is open to every man to choose the direction of his striving; and also every man may draw comfort from Lessing's fine saying, that the search for truth is more precious than its possession.

We have, then, the intuitive scientists—apparently a minority—who feel that the investigator of the laws of nature is about a philosophically serious business; and there are the technicians of research who, for what seem good reasons to them, have abandoned the goal of *knowledge*—knowledge in the old, classical sense, applying to the essential nature of things—for the goal of "results." These latter, the "Positivists," are not sure of anything—not sure, even, that scientific "laws" are really laws, or that, if they exist, they can be known.

What are we to make of all this? The important possibility, it seems to us, is that the extreme pessimism of the Positivists is no more than a passing phase, a logical and perhaps necessary outcome of the worship of physical data in science, which have now proved almost as fickle to the rational intelligence as some of the theological data of the Middle Ages. There is the further possibility that the intuitive scientists—those who still *want* to be natural philosophers—need to reconsider the nature of their quest: to consider, for example, the question of whether or not, at the level of *primary causation* in their field, there may be forces other than "physical" at work—forces which vastly increase the subtlety of the problem of "reality" and which forever resist the mathematico-mechanical approaches of modern physics. There is not, of course, in

modern physics any method for dealing with non-physical forces, so that, on the face of it, such proposals will doubtless seem like rhetorical invitations to suicide for this branch of science. The Positivists, however, have already committed this dread act, so far as any larger meaning is concerned, and some sort of "death" may be very much in order, if modern physics is to be "born again."