

THE MEANING OF PERSONAL FREEDOM

[This article by Victor Gollancz, the British publisher, first appeared in more extended form in a pamphlet, *The Meaning of Freedom*, published in England (1956) by Pall Mall Features Ltd., 103, Pall Mall, London, S.W.I, at 75 cents.]

WHAT is personal freedom? The really important thing to start with is this: personal freedom is essentially an inner thing; something inside a man; the presence of something in a man's personality, not the absence of constraint from without. This inwardness is the essence of personal freedom, and we get nowhere until we recognise the fact. Consider, for instance, the question of imprisonment. It is, of course, exceedingly difficult for a prisoner to be free, but it is possible. Rare people are to be found, in many civilisations and at many periods of history, who have had perfect freedom in prison. The supreme example is Socrates, who was utterly free up to the very moment of drinking the hemlock, and doubtless beyond. His freedom was never for a second in doubt. Contrast him with another sort of prisoner, a murderer who struggles on his way to execution. You have two kinds of prisoner there, both about to be killed: the one possessed of utter freedom, the other utterly lacking it.

I do not imply that it is other than extremely difficult for a prisoner to be free. When the poet put it to his lady that stone walls do not a prison make he was speaking only a fragment of the truth, because it is precisely a prison that stone walls do make; but this fragment was the essential one. It is even possible for a man of exceedingly rare type to be free in conditions far worse than imprisonment: to be free under torture. I have had one or two very remarkable testimonies from people who have been tortured in concentration camps, and who—I am convinced of it from the way they have told their stories—have nevertheless, even in circumstances like that, remained perfectly free. The thing is possible only

with a degree of spiritual development excessively rare, but it is possible. To mention not things rare, but a thing unique, Christ, except perhaps for one moment of dereliction, was perfectly free on the Cross. On the other hand: while it is possible, though very rare, for a man to be free when constrained or tortured from without, it is wholly impossible for a man to be free when constrained or tortured, by fear or guilt for example, from within. We see, from the comparison, that freedom is essentially an inner thing, a thing of the spirit.

I intend to deal presently with the question of constraints from without and with their effect on the inner: but first we must consider, in slightly greater detail, inner freedom itself. The real meaning of personal freedom can best be understood by examining its opposite: personal slavery, inner slavery. I understand by inner slavery preoccupation with the self in all its forms. The man who is totally preoccupied with his self is in a perpetual prison, and wholly without personal freedom. We all know this from our own experience: we are all, to a certain extent, enslaved, because no one of us is completely free from those selfish motives, from that selfish preoccupation which imprisons us in ourselves. But there are very different degrees of enslavement, not only among our fellows around us, but also in ourselves at different times of our lives. And there are different kinds, as well as degrees, of preoccupation with self. There are two main kinds, though they fade into one another. Preoccupation with self may take what one might call the ordinary, normal form, or it may take the morbid, the neurotic, the psychotic form. By the ordinary, normal form I mean common-or-garden selfishness and greed, absence of public spirit, the habit of thinking in terms of one's own comfort and one's own future security.

That is something to which everyone is prone, in however varying degrees.

What I think is important to observe at this point is the enormous growth of that kind of selfishness during the last few decades. Despite many advances in social organisation, despite the removal of many plague-spots from our national life, people, on the average, are nowadays far more selfish, far more preoccupied with their own interests, far less interested in other people's concerns, than they ever were when I was a boy. When one pauses to look back for a moment over the history of the last thirty years, and when one observes what a widespread callousness, in face of everything that has been happening to our fellow human beings, has characterised it, one is appalled by the contrast. I think it was Leonard Woolf who wrote a brilliant article the other day, comparing the horrified protests that arose all over the world when, round about 1870, some unknown individual was kicked by a Prussian officer, or when a single Jew, Dreyfus, was the victim of injustice—comparing this with our relative indifference at a time when millions of human beings have been dying of starvation. I have such a comparison much in mind at the moment, because it happens that I am working on the question of Arab refugees. There are nearly three-quarters of a million of them as a result of the war in the Middle East. They are in appalling shape, without drugs or doctors; the death-roll of little children between the ages of two and five is pitiful; and yet every effort that has so far been made to arouse public attention and to collect money for the relief of their distress has disastrously failed. One of the biggest of the organisations appealing has collected no more than two or three thousand pounds from the British public. The contrast between then and now could not be more startling. That does seem to me to show that there has been a tremendous growth of selfishness and greed and callousness.

So much for the ordinary selfishness, the common-or-garden greed, that enslaves us all. By

the other form of enslavement, morbid enslavement, I mean, of course, a neurotic or psychotic condition; the state of being hag-ridden: of being, in particular, the prey to guilt and fear in their various forms. This form of enslavement too has immensely increased—as the result, to a high degree, of insecurity, of developments in the international field, and so on—during the last two or three decades; and that is a serious augury for the future sanity of our race. It is doubtless unnecessary for me to emphasise the point that guilt and fear are forms, essentially, of preoccupation with the self, and therefore of enslavement. A man feels guilty not so much because something has been done, as because *he* has done it; a man feels fear, diffused, undifferentiated fear (and this is the neurotic type of fear), not because something may happen, but because something may happen to *him*. The reference is always personal. His spirit is like an ingrowing nail: it turns back on itself: and that is personal enslavement.

If that is personal enslavement, the opposite is personal freedom. In inner freedom the spirit, instead of turning inwards, turns outwards. When a man is free, his spirit gives itself spontaneously to its allotted place in the whole; and he who loses his life will find it, just as he who seeks to save his life will lose it. Christ summed up in that aphorism the whole of human and divine wisdom about personal freedom and personal enslavement. Personal enslavement, preoccupation with self, reaches its climax in hatred, which is spiritual aggression in its extreme form, a sort of murder in the soul; and the supreme expression of inner freedom is as obviously love—the natural and spontaneous embodying of one's self in the totality.

It might perhaps be deduced from what I have just been saying that I think it proper and desirable to destroy or mutilate one's selfhood; for to speak of saving one's life to lose it and of losing one's life to save it is often taken as somehow implying a sort of contempt for one's selfhood and

a desire to see it curbed. The opposite is the case. In endeavoring to define personal freedom and personal enslavement I have been saying, not that a man must destroy or mutilate his selfhood, but that, on the contrary, he must preserve and perfect it. This cannot be emphasised too strongly, for here is the heart of the matter. The self is that part or rather aspect of total reality with which we do our work in that reality: we have nothing else to do it with: or, more accurately, it is only through the selves of each one of us that Reality can unfold and express Its Self. Our duty, therefore, is to let "our" self grow, to preserve it from constraint or outrage, and to submit it only to the purposes of the greater, Total Self—which is not indeed submission at all, but perfect inner freedom.

Or, to put it in the mystical language of the Cabbala: God, when he created the universe, split himself up into innumerable fragments and placed one of these fragments in every living thing (and, for that matter, in every stick and stone). So every human being is the guardian of that fragment within him, and to preserve it inviolate, or rather to redeem it from our own corruption to its original integrity, is the essence of our duty to God. A man who submits to outrage against his spirit—a man who allows others, for instance, to dictate what he is to think or feel—is not only a slave, he murders life. And a man who loves the enemy who attempts to outrage him is not only free, he increases life.

If freedom is essentially something inner, something spiritual, and moreover something infinitely precious, then the terrible responsibility is put upon us of doing away with whatever may corrupt it. As we know very well from looking outwards at the world around us, and, what is far more important, from looking inwards at our own hearts, inner freedom is habitually corrupted, to a horrifying and increasing degree. It starts in the cradle, this corruption of freedom (possibly earlier than the cradle: we do not know) and continues throughout life. The earliest years are the most

important in this respect, because they dictate the direction in which a life will grow. I often think that people concerned, professionally, or otherwise, with education do not give sufficient weight to the essential continuity of the life-process. Looking back over one's own life, one observes the tragic inevitability with which, quite imperceptibly, one second has led to the next second, and how when, at some particular moment, this or that disastrous impulse has been occasioned, the most drastic remedies have been required, if indeed any remedy has been possible, for the reversal or even modification of that impulse.

Corruption of inner freedom derives from two main sources. (I am taking the individual as he is, with all his potentialities, and am not stopping to consider—for that would take us too far afield, though of course it is highly relevant—whether men are born sinful or virtuous.) The two sources are individual contacts on the one hand and general environment on the other. Consider, first, individual contacts. It seems to me, it has always seemed to me, a quite indisputable law that like elicits like. I have seen it at work, time and again, in my family life, both as a husband and as a father; and I have seen it at work in the reactions of friends, and of people I have not even known, but have come into contact with in one way or another. Like elicits like, and if you assault a person with hatred, or jealousy, or envy, or dislike, or contempt, that assault is not only itself an expression of inner slavery, but invariably *pro tanto* enslaves the person so assaulted. There is no exception whatever to this law: it is the basic spiritual law of the universe: and its importance for parents and educators, and for all who have anything to do with young people, should require no emphasis. We dare not, in the smallest degree or on a single occasion, elicit hatred, or contempt, or envy, or whatever cognate evil it may be, from the young people who, in very truth, are in our charge.

The reverse is as indisputable. Just as, if you assault a man with hatred, you elicit hatred and so enslave him, no less, if you meet a man with love, you elicit love and so free him. These weapons, of hatred on the one hand and love on the other, are terribly potent. Assault by hatred can enslave a man who has been the most free, and loving can free a man who has been most enslaved.

I have had a great deal of experience of all this in my relations with Germans since the end of the war. What I am going to say contains no iota of exaggeration, and is wholly devoid of, in the pejorative sense, "idealism" or "sentimentality." I have had to deal, occasionally by personal contact, but more frequently by correspondence, with people who were, you would have thought, completely inured to Nazism in its most virulent form; and, time after time, I have observed them—I can only say—freed. Because they have met gentleness, gentleness has gone out from them. There has been no doubt about it. I do not mean, of course, that there never can be doubt in such cases—that deception is always impossible: what I mean is that there is a tone, a ring of sincerity, in certain reactions which, for anyone of spiritual perception, admits of no scepticism. The hardness, the hatred, the violence to which these people had been inured has been broken up. Will it last?, you may enquire. That depends entirely on our present and future attitude, individually and nationally, spiritually and politically, to the German people.

So much for the first main source from which freedom or enslavement derives—that of individual contacts. I come now to the second main source—that of the general environment. Everyone realises the immense importance of environment for determining the inner life of all who live in that environment. I do not know how many of you may have read Margaret Mead or Ruth Benedict or our old friend Professor Boas, and so may be familiar with those extraordinary civilisations in which a brute, the most ferocious of brutes, is what we call a gentleman: in which,

that is to say, people consider it gentlemanly to be a brute and caddish to be gentlemanly. But even if we are ignorant of anthropology we all do know, from our personal experience, how crucial is the power of environment for determining our spiritual lives. Therefore it does seem to be of fundamental importance, as touching inner freedom, that the social order should be characterised, as far as possible, by the going out of individuals to others rather than by their concentration on themselves. Other things being equal, a co-operative society is far more likely to produce inner freedom than a competitive one, or, to use other terms, a society characterised by public service is far more likely to produce inner freedom than one characterised by the profit motive. This has always seemed to me so obvious as hardly to be worth arguing about. (Note carefully, however, "other things being equal".) What else does the profit motive mean—I am in business, after all, and I know—than that the desire to get the most for themselves is the ruling motive of people's lives? And how can such a daily environment produce the maximum of inner freedom, which depends, by definition, on a merging of one's self in the whole?

II

I have been dealing, so far, with inner freedom, and not at all with what is commonly meant by freedom, for what is commonly meant by freedom is simply the absence of constraint from without. I want to deal with that now. I said, you may remember, that a man in prison, or even under torture, could be absolutely free—but only a man of rare spiritual development. And I would put this to you: that the real charge against any outward constraint on freedom is precisely that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it enslaves inwardly (and enslaves, incidentally, the constrictor as well as the constrained). Any assault on a man's liberty which the man really feels as an assault on his liberty—the "which" is important, because in political propaganda we sometimes talk about people feeling outraged by

assaults on their liberty when they don't in fact feel outraged at all—produces (again, in the vast majority of cases) resentment or hatred, which is to say inner enslavement; and, over and above this, it focuses his whole being on the struggle to free himself, and that too is enslavement. This is the supreme charge against the Hitlerite concentration camps, the Stalinist concentration camps, and similar iniquities. The real charge against them is not that they enslave men's bodies (though God knows that is evil enough), but that they enslave men's souls by corrupting their inner freedom.

I have unfortunately had to read an enormous amount of literature about the Hitlerite concentration camps, and have published many books on the subject—the first, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror*, came out as early as 1933. The most dreadful thing in that literature is not the physical torture, shudderingly awful though that is, nor even the fact that human beings, could commit such unspeakable abominations: the most dreadful thing in that literature is the way in which—with the aforesaid rare, with Socratic, exceptions—the victims have been inwardly corrupted. Many of the inmates of Sachsenhausen and the other Hells became more like wild beasts than the human beings we know. That is the supreme charge against the tormentors.

Let us return to more pleasant generalities about restraints from without. I would say that, other things being equal (again I emphasise this), that society is best in which there is the minimum of outward restraints—the minimum of restraints on a man's freedom to do what he likes. (An odd statement, you will think, from a socialist: but that is because you fail to understand what socialism essentially means—and so do the majority of socialists.) I said previously that the best society is a co-operative rather than a competitive one: I say now that the best society is the one with the minimum of restraints from without: and both statements are true. The ideal society is the society in which everybody freely co-operates; the

ideal society, in other words, is the one ruled, or rather unruled, by a kind of Christian anarchy—the handful at Christ's Supper become the whole nation. Yes, that is the ideal: but the history of the world has been such, and men have so developed, that for millennia, and perhaps, on the temporal plane, for ever, Christian anarchy is impracticable. We have to consider, therefore, what is practicable in the world as we know it, but never forgetting the ideal. Moreover, there are certain developments that the sheer force of history, a movement of events that is almost non-human, appears to make inevitable. I by no means imply that people who abominate these developments should give up the struggle against them; they certainly should not. Others, however, may consider it wiser to accept them, and to make them as useful for goodness as possible.

I have said all this because I am convinced that, as things have developed, a large measure of centralised planning in our economic life is quite unavoidable; and that, whether one likes it or not, simply to oppose it head-on is to invite disaster. If you agree, then, first, that the ideal society—Christian anarchy—is at present out of the question, and, second, that the tendency to centralised planning is irreversible; then certain restraints, from without, on a man's freedom there clearly must be. But I rush on to add that we must confine ourselves, we must be passionate about confining ourselves, to two kinds of restraint: to those restraints that interfere not at all, or as little as possible, with inner freedom, and to those restraints, if any (and I think there are some), which actually increase inner freedom. It follows immediately that we can have nothing whatever to do with constraints on freedom of expression in any shape or form. Here is the inner citadel, the holy of holies; and, whatever the cost, we must keep it inviolate.

Only a little less objectionable than restraint on freedom of expression is restraint on freedom of movement. *Coleum non mentem mutant qui bans mare currunt*—that is true: if a man is

mentally enslaved in London he will not remedy his condition by running to Paris, or even to Assisi. Nevertheless many, though not all, can be spiritually maimed by being shut off from the world. This is why the present restrictions on foreign travel are so outrageous. The economic arguments cut no ice with me at all: it is a question of priorities, and if we can consider priorities in times of war then we can consider them in times of peace. To prevent people from getting about in this heavenly world, from enjoying its sights and sounds and smells, and from mixing with Parisians and Venetians and South Africans (I mean Negro South Africans) and Chinese, is to put a padlock on God's open door.

As to industrial conscription or direction of labour—the transition is obvious—we must reject them, of course, out of hand. A Socrates or a St. Francis would be as free under industrial conscription as in prison: but the average man, as yet without this inner peace, would feel himself another man's instrument—would feel outraged, would feel enslaved, and so, in his reaction to that feeling, would *be* enslaved: for it is what a man feels that is crucial. If he were complacent about it—out of indifference and not out of saintliness—then indeed would our glory have departed. And if I am told that, without industrial conscription, any considerable measure of centralised planning is exceedingly difficult, then I answer, first, that this is nonsense, and secondly and alternatively, that the difficulty, however great, must be solved—the world, which is still an infant, has solved far greater difficulties in its time.

I want now to deal very briefly with restraints which, in the present state of average human nature, may actually enhance inner freedom. We have seen that a man who loves and co-operates is free, and that a man who does the opposite is enslaved. It follows, surely, that any restraint which increases love and the sense of co-operation must also increase inner freedom. That doubtless sounds paradoxical because, to be perfect, love

and co-operation must be spontaneous. But in an imperfect sort of way, and given, to repeat the phrase, the present state of average human nature, a sense of co-operation can be induced, if the will is there to do it, by suitable means. What is vital is this: that every restraint should be genuinely felt and gladly accepted as for the public good.

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REVIEW

A STATE TO BE PROUD OF

WHILE Dorothy Canfield Fisher has made no mouse traps, she has brought the world to her door. This, curiously enough, is the impression we get from reading her *Vermont Tradition* (Little, Brown, 1953), a book supposed to be about her native state, and of course is, but which is more truly about the world we all live in.

We acquired the book (a library copy) from a friend, on the ground that it had something in it about students working while at school. We never found that passage, but soon forgot the quest in turning the pages of a volume which is profoundly instinct with the spirit of all that is good about American life. *Vermont Tradition* should be studied by the staff of The Voice of America, and then carefully set aside as material which ought to be known all over the world, but which no one—not even The Voice of America—should try to *sell* to the world. There is something deeply embarrassing about an effort to tell the world how good or how "democratic" you are. Goodness loses its savor when advertised, and this is as true for foreign relations as it is for human relations.

Mrs. Fisher has a fine text to illustrate this point. In her account of the life of Justin Morill (1810-99), a Vermont shop-keeper who, upon retiring at thirty-eight, found that his neighbors wanted to send him to the United States Senate—where, after years of campaigning, he became responsible for the bill that made land-grant colleges possible—she says:

Religious institutions have not markedly shaped the Vermont way of life. One of the stories often told by the Senator was a variation on the theme familiar, in one form or another, all over our State—the disconcerting response to emotional revivalists who in the early nineteenth century swept over our nation during the evangelical movement. The story ran this way: a local "character," curious about what a revival meeting might be, attended one held in Strafford. Towards the end, the brass-lunged, hell-fire-predicting revivalist shouted hoarsely to him,

"Brother, have you got religion?" To which the Strafford man called back with brisk pride, "Not any to boast of, I can tell ye."

Puzzling a little over why we liked this book so much, we decided that it is because there is in it no effort to persuade anyone of anything. Mrs. Fisher seems mainly engaged in delighting herself with the sturdy qualities of Vermonters, and this pleasure may be shared by her readers by the invitation of a mature, cosmopolitan mind. The book is filled with anecdotes, and one about John Dewey (a Vermonter) is too good not to repeat:

His hands in his pockets, he stood, apparently deep in thought, before the large audience. Then he said, "This intelligence-testing business reminds me of the way they used to weigh hogs in Texas. They would get a long plank, put it over a crossbar, and somehow tie the hog on one end of the plank. They'd search all around until they found a stone that would balance the weight of the hog and they'd put that on the other end of the plank. Then they'd guess the weight of the stone."

It is the Vermonters' understanding of what it means to be American that pervades this book. They are not "proving" anything; that is the way they are. Mrs. Fisher tells about the influx of Irish immigrants who began arriving in Vermont about 1850, in flight from famine and starvation at home. It took some time for the Irish to become Americans. But they did. There was Patrick Thompson, one generation removed from the immigrants, who spoke up in a town meeting. Thompson was a partner in a grocery store. The meeting was about the need for public funds to establish a school. Thompson said:

"We are being told that our town cannot afford to keep its bridges safe and also to provide for its children a preparation for life that will give them a fair chance alongside other American children.

"That's what we are being *told*. Not one of us here really believes it. We just can't think what to say back. But suppose it were true—Then I say, if we have to choose, 'Let the bridges fall down!' What kind of a town would we rather have, fifty years from now—a place where nitwit folks go back and forth over good bridges? Or a town with brainy well-educated people capable of holding their own in the

modern way of life? You know which of those two is really wanted by every one of us here. I say, '*Let the bridges fall down!*'"

He took his seat in silence, the American citizen, the Celt, whose grandparents had lived in enforced ignorance.

It was a turning point in the life of our town. We knew it was. So we spoke not a word. We sat silent, thinking. And feeling. What we felt, with awe, as though we saw it with our physical eyes, was in all our human hearts, the brave burning up to new brightness of the ideal. . . . The school was built.

But what about Vermont in *contemporary* public life? The record of what Vermont has done about the "Communist menace" gives a good answer to this question. In 1951 the Attorney General of the United States directed each Federal District to draw up a Grand Jury to investigate the activities of the Communist Party, violators of the Federal Security Act, and other matters. After the Grand Jury was formed, Presiding Judge Ernest Gibson, former Governor of Vermont, made the official Charge to the Jury. Judge Gibson described the provisions of the McCarran Act, in which Communists are identified as persons who seek denial of fundamental rights and liberties, "such as freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of religious worship," and who "repudiate their allegiance to this country." He then said:

None of us here want any real Communists *as thus defined*, in our midst, and any Communist who *violates our law* should be proceeded against.

However, I want to bring to your attention a second and more elementary function of a Grand Jury, even more fundamental than that of being an informing body. You may have wondered how the term "Grand Jury" came about. History indicates that originally a body known as a Grand Jury was established *to protect individuals* from oppression by a ruler. It was established thus as a protective body as well as an informing body.

This country can only be kept free and strong if freedom of speech is protected to the hilt. People in this country *must not be afraid to express minority views* because somebody in a position of eminence may holler "you are a Communist." Thus if we have

those in this state who brand areas or individuals as being Communists, you, as both an informing body and *as a protective body*, should summons those people in and solicit from them whatever knowledge they may have as to Communist infiltration into this State. If you find some are branded as Communists but that such brand is unjustified by the facts, you should not hesitate in making your report to announce that such has been investigated and proved to be completely erroneous. Maybe some in your localities have told you that different people are Communists. Summons them in and let's arrive at the truth. (Italics Mrs. Fisher's.)

A couple of months later, after the Grand Jury had completed its work, the official report appeared. Three sentences were devoted to the subject of Communism: "Special consideration was given to the consideration of Communism and Communist activity in Vermont. No evidence was presented which seemed to require further investigation by us. It was felt that the situation in Vermont is well understood by the F.B.I. and is properly handled by that Bureau." Then, at the close of the report, were these words:

It is felt that not only is the Grand Jury a body charged with such investigative procedure to protect the public from criminal activities, but that it has the further power and duty to protect individuals who may be unjustly accused.

The sub-title of Mrs. Fisher's book is "The Biography of an Outlook on Life." This is exactly right. Mrs. Fisher is proud of her Vermont heritage and of being a Vermonter. She makes us proud of being in the same Union with the State of Vermont.

COMMENTARY TOWARD FREEDOM

So few of us—so *very* few of us—have the extraordinary patience and—we might as well say it—actual *love* of their fellow human beings that are shown by G. A. Lyward (see "Children . . . and Ourselves") that reading about this man should for most of us excite both admiration and embarrassment—admiration of what he is doing and embarrassment over what the rest of us are *not* doing. Most parents fail in serious attention to their duties to quite normal children. We might say to ourselves that we hardly deserve normal children, since we do so little to help them grow to a brave and wise maturity.

What does it take to be a Lyward? The thing that even our brief notice of Finchden Manor School makes obvious is Mr. Lyward's unqualified faith in human beings—in the potential good in unhappy, misguided and thwarted youngsters. Perhaps he has had failures. Perhaps with some children his methods did not work. With some children, perhaps, no methods will work. One cannot be sure about such things. But Mr. Lyward is not the bargaining sort. He does not ask that the percentages be on his side. A man who needs assurance of reward could never do what Mr. Lyward has done. A child in trouble is more important than anything in the universe. It isn't that the child must be "saved," but that a child is a human being against whom the cards may be stacked by cruel, selfish, or careless adults. Lyward tries to unstack the cards so that the child will have an even break. No one can be helped by more than an even break, because this is stacking the cards the *other* way, which is just as bad, in the long run. Respect for the self-reliance and integrity of human beings dictates the necessity for an even break, no more, no less.

There is this, however, on Mr. Lyward's side: he has "bad" boys to work with. There is color and rebellious strength. There may be frustration, but a positive energy is present, to begin with.

For a man who endeavors to work *with* and for people, instead of against them, some kind of strength is better raw material than flabby weakness which gives no "trouble." It is easy to shape people in weakness, but impossible to shape them in strength. The strong must shape themselves, while the weak must learn to be strong before they can hope to have much shape of their own.

The mysteries pervading this subject—the formation of human character—are the most interesting and profoundly important of our time. They underlie Victor Gollancz' discussion of personal freedom and play a part, also in the "Vermont Tradition" of which Mrs. Fisher writes (see Review). Again, they are precisely the mysteries which are ignored by modern scientific explanations of human behavior.

Books like *Mr. Lyward's Answer* perform an extraordinary service for this generation: They give unmistakable outline to an area of independent investigation and research. For Lyward does not proceed according to any familiar educational theory. Instead of trying to "condition," he tries to remove the prejudicial effects of past "conditionings." The great question is this: Who or what is he endeavoring to set free?

CHILDREN and Ourselves

MORE ON "FINCHDEN MANOR"

G. A. LYWARD, of Finchden Manor School, near Tenterden, England, like A. S. Neal and Homer Lane before him, is one of those near-miracle-producing educators whose work in rehabilitating youth has proceeded outside of any clearly defined system—illustrating that the greatest educators are always *sui generis*. They read, they study and absorb, perhaps, but come forth with some inspiration of their own—all of which indicates that education is far less of a "scientific" matter than certain diligently trained experts would like us to believe. There is, of course, one common denominator for all those companions of the young who have reached deep into the lives of children: respect for the individuality of each child is one way of describing the secret of success. But there is more than that. The true educator's respect for individuality is seldom talked about—rather illustrated in terms of that sort of intimate psychological understanding which results from the capacity to identify with the child's own feelings and thoughts.

For twenty-five years G. A. Lyward has been demonstrating what this sort of understanding can offer to confused and unhappy youths. Some of the residents at Finchden Manor have extensive police records and are boarded at Finchden at the expense of local authorities; some are paid for by wealthy families, and some have been kept by Mr. Lyward for nothing just because he happened to see a pressing need. Finchden has never had an endowment or state grant, nor did Lyward have any money of his own when he began the school, but his reputation is such that there are always people working to keep Finchden's head above financial waters. The most complete account of Finchden is supplied by Michael Burn, a writer who came to spend six months on the Finchden staff in order to write his story. So impressive was the result, *Mr. Lyward's Answer*, published in

1956 in America by Beacon Press, that even *Time* was flattering.

According to Mr. Burn, the first key to Lyward's approach is the word "respite." Lyward concluded a long time ago that emotionally disturbed children needed a complete rest from lessons as such, and from schools as such. Somehow they have gotten out of step with their contemporaries, and unless allowed the time to catch up with themselves, all attempts at "schooling" do little to help them find roots. So at Finchden there are no set times for classes—no classes in the usual sense—nor any of the ordinary forms of discipline. What Lyward and his staff are most interested in is getting the children to ask questions about what they really want to know, and after establishing the trust which makes these questions possible, a process of education can begin. Burn writes:

Grave questions, funny questions, questions that disguised an anxiety or came straight out with it, all were met; often not with a straight answer, but always in such a way that the boy's first trust was left intact, he did not feel inferior or snubbed, and his exploring continued. Some questions seemed to have a kind of heart-ache, which no crudeness or casualness or jauntiness could hide. Sensing this, you could not go away. Even in the older boys, you would have a glimpse, if you were brusque at the wrong moment, of something that had once been deeply harmed and was still not healed; and the boy would become temporarily hostile—as his whole life might have become, through a continued brusqueness.

The staff went along with the boys, now leading, now leaving them to spurt on their own, picking them up, but most of all just waiting, and able to explain (to visitors or each other, not to the boys) why they were waiting. They had themselves run their own course at Finchden years before. Mr. Lyward had stood and moved beside them, as they now moved by the side of the boys who had succeeded them. In their own day they had learnt the unwisdom of taking too much thought for the morrow, and the morrow had taken care of itself. "A quickening of interest and an increased power of relaxed and effective concentration . . . never fail to bring about an advance in educational standards"; and later, if those, who had hurried the boys before, did not start to hurry them again, examinations would be passed, jobs and

openings would be found. The predecessors of boys now at Finchden, heading once for dead ends to be reached by the meanest means, had turned away to become doctors, architects, workmen, farmers, heads of businesses, probation officers, lawyers, artists, teachers; so would they. Meanwhile Finchden "helped them at the stage each boy had reached and said in various ways: 'Do not be endlessly preoccupied with what he will be later on. Give him his *now*.'"

The methods of Lyward parallel those adopted by Bruno Bettelheim in his reorganization of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School in Chicago. No one can work effectively in either school if he is given to pre-judgments about the pupils in his care—even optimistic pre-judgments. No one knows how long it will take an emotionally disturbed child to come out of his shell, and when he does, erratic back-slidings are likely to follow. The staff cannot follow any ordinary concept of the progress of a pupil. Lyward sets the example with a personality which Burn describes as "Protean"; he is ready to adapt himself to the needs of any situation as he spontaneously feels at the time.

Burn's description of "intuition" in this regard should be of general interest:

I have avoided making too much of the word "intuition" in describing either Mr. Lyward or his work. Yet the question must arise in many minds as to what extent his success derived from some "gift" personal to himself and impossible to pass on, and to what extent from a method which could be continued by others willing to dedicate their lives to such a work.

The immediate and continuous disarming of the boys seemed indeed to be due to a gift he possessed of bridging the gulf between himself and the boy, so that youth and maturity met, not on the level of the boy's mask and Mr. Lyward's logic, but heart to heart. He himself said of this gift that "I rule myself out as having any experience at all and become as one of them," and that, when sitting back in a chair and looking up at a boy, "I might be the same age. I feel as if, consciously and by virtue of experience, I do know what he is like, and yet am seeking." He spoke of a certain kind of man as unable to become "enquiring" in that as it were innocent fashion, which had nothing to do with intellectual probing and

invited the boy to respond "as if we were both on the same side of the fence." He approached the boys himself with so little weight of preconception. He did not await confirmation of some pattern formed about them in his mind, although his long training had made him familiar with many patterns; nor did there intervene between him and them any picture of what he wanted them to be, or thought they ought to be, or might be. He remained entirely open to receive the impressions of them as they were, entire.

He felt that many people were hindered from receiving this whole and direct communication by being too conscious of age, on finding themselves with children. They could not themselves become as children. He himself felt that this did happen to him, and yet he never completely lost awareness of his own maturity. Somehow the majority of the boys sensed both qualities. They felt him to be wise and at the same time one of them.

To read the record of Finchden Manor as reported by Mr. Burn is a really amazing and unsettling experience. Here the headmaster never worries about anything; even on those rare occasions when a boy runs away, he is apt to "forget" to notify the proper authorities. He "feels" that that boy will come back of his own volition—and nearly always the boy does.

Burn finally sums it all up by saying that the things he learned about children at Finchden were always things that he also came to know about himself. As a writer he concludes that every human living, young or adult, must find his "place" and understand each event as if it were an incident in a story. That incident—or an attitude or complex then present—has meaning only as it is related to the central plot; for none of us is life an unbroken process. Always there are "chapters," and before one can begin a new chapter, he must be allowed to write a close to the previous one in his own way—hence the universal need for "respite." This is especially true in regard to those who do not run successfully with the herd, and because it is true, the counsellors who work with above-average or below-average children have the opportunity of learning much more about human nature—and about philosophy, too—than the ordinary instructor.

FRONTIERS

Censorship—A Dilemma

EVER since Dr. Frederick Wertham's campaign against "Crime Comics," proposals for censoring obscene literature have gained new supporters. Examination of the lurid contents of sexual psychopath type of "funnies," statistics on teenage sadism, plus the analyses supplied by Wertham's effective pen, have made it clear that unscrupulous publishers are fattening on childish susceptibility. Most informed parents or teachers come at least close to hating the "writers" and publishers who make such fare available, and will support any agency of prosecution.

Several recent court decisions have upheld the censorship principle during the campaign to eradicate this particular menace, and a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals confirmed the conviction of one Samuel Roth, "for mailing obscene matter in violation of the federal obscenity statute." However, a concurring opinion by Circuit Judge Jerome N. Frank was accompanied by an appendix in which he questioned the constitutionality of any such statute. *Open Forum*, Civil Liberties Union organ, published the following excerpts from Judge Frank's study:

Most federal courts now hold that the test of obscenity is the effect on the "mind" of the average normal adult. However, there is much pressure for legislation, designed to prevent juvenile delinquency, which will single out children, *i.e.*, will prohibit the sale to young persons of "obscenity" or other designated matter.

If the obscenity statute is valid, then it would seem that its validity must rest on this ground: Congress, by statute, may constitutionally provide punishment for the mailing of books evoking mere thoughts or feelings about sex, if Congress considers them socially dangerous, even in the absence of any satisfactory evidence that those thoughts or feelings will tend to bring about socially harmful deeds. If that be correct, it is hard to understand why, similarly, Congress may not constitutionally provide punishment for such distribution of books evoking mere thoughts or feelings about religion or politics, which Congress considers socially dangerous.

There is another horn to this particular dilemma. Any attempt to establish a clear-cut judicial definition of "obscenity" falls short of striking a neat balance between freedom in the arts and protection of youth from commercial conspiracy. The Courts have usually exempted such books as Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* from the "obscenity" classification on the ground that they are "classics," but who is to say just when or how a work of art or literature becomes "classical"?

Attempts have been made to interpret the federal statute as applying only to books which, in addition to being "obscene," are also "dull and without merit," but, in Judge Frank's opinion,—and however worthy the intent—a precedent is thereby established for giving vast powers of literary or artistic censorship "to a few fallible men—prosecutors, judges, jurors." The result, says Judge Frank, may be "to convert them into what J. S. Mill called a 'moral police,' . . . to make them despotic arbiters of literary products. If one day they ban mediocre books, as obscene, another day they may do likewise to a work of genius. Originality, not too plentiful, should be cherished, not stifled." Judge Frank concludes:

Governmental control of ideas or personal preferences is alien in a democracy. And the yearning to use governmental censorship of any kind is infectious. It may spread insidiously. Commencing with suppression of books as obscene, it is not unlikely to develop into official lust for the power of thought-control in the areas of religion, politics and elsewhere.

In our industrial era when, perforce, economic pursuits must be, increasingly, governmentally regulated, it is especially important that the realm of art—the non-economic realm—should remain free, unregimented, the domain of free enterprise, of unhampered competition at its maximum. An individual's taste is his own, private, concern.

On the other hand, no one can read Dr. Wertham without feeling that youth needs some sort of protection against literature deliberately contrived to stimulate and feed unhealthy precociousness. Judge Frank's comments

establish the position that it should not be supplied by legislative measure. But what kind of protection is then possible?

Well, it seems to us that nothing short of the attempts of parent, teacher, civic—and perhaps church—groups to interview the youthful consumers of dangerous trash can satisfy all of the requirements of a delicate situation. Since the same youths who buy and read obscene crime comics are already fascinated by "conspiracy," a strong talking-point for personal boycott is the evident conspiracy of shady publishers. It might be possible for young people themselves to work against fattening such publishers' wallets.

A good psychiatrist—or any intelligent individual who studies the matter from a psychiatric viewpoint—might make out a powerful case against the reading of this sort of swindle-trash, a case good enough to be heard by youth. This could not, of course, be accomplished by general moralizing by teachers or magistrates, nor by home punishment. The appeal to youth has to be that of "being in on the know," and this entails a frank examination of the nature of crime-comic and obscene literature. If the comic copywriters can organize "crime busters" and "Dick Tracy Clubs," a somewhat more dignified effort to stop the worst publishers could be undertaken—but not, we should hope, on any sort of "national scale." Individual time and attention to the problem are required. The need is to undertake psychological analysis of children's reading, from comics to the inane "good" books which are often sponsored by well-meaning library associations on the ground that they "do no harm." Anything worth reading is supposed to do more than "no harm," and if readers among youth who seek the stimulus of something exciting can be shown that good writing and "adventure" are not-incompatible, much will be gained.