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WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

IT is customary, in attempting to diagnose the ills and attitudes of the present epoch, to examine the recent past in the hope of finding the "conditioning" influences which, presumably, have made us what we are today. Crime and lawlessness among teen-age youth, for example, are sometimes explained by the fact that there is no longer a "frontier" where the young may spend their venturesome energies. A related theory has been employed by Hannah Arendt to account for the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany. The generation which grew up in Germany after World War I, she suggests, could find "no escape from the daily routine of misery, meekness, frustration, and resentment embellished by a fake culture of educated talk," and "no conformity to the customs of fairy-tale lands could possibly save them from the rising nausea that this combination continuously inspired." It was natural, Miss Arendt thinks, for the "pronounced activism of totalitarian movements" to seem to offer a romantic if violent change from the humdrum hopelessness of post-war Germany.

For Americans, the after-effects of war were somewhat different. There was the dizzying prosperity of the "jazz age," celebrated by Scott Fitzgerald, the "new freedom" of the flapper, and the Freudian revolution. Artists and intellectuals declared their alienation from American "commercialism" and many of them went abroad to become what has been called "the lost generation." Others eventually graduated into the radical movement and helped to give a "cultural" coloring to the communism of the early 1930's. The little magazines of the period between two wars record the strenuous enthusiasm of numberless coteries of rebels, all reacting, so the theory goes, against the combined effects of the war and the growing acquisitiveness of capitalist civilization.

There have been other theories. The "Godlessness" of parents and educators is a favorite theme of those who would like to explain every human difficulty and disaster in terms of the departure from orthodox religion. Psychiatrists, or a number of them, at least, present an almost opposite explanation, proposing that an excessive preoccupation with the theological version of sin and guilt has created numerous twists and strains in the human psyche, leading to the neurotic personality of our time. Social psychologists blame the maladjustments of the young on the neglect of children by self-centered parents and on the increasingly frequent environment of the "broken home," or on the wartime home where both parents have jobs, leaving the children more or less to shift for themselves.

The difficulty with these "conditioning" theories of human behavior is that they all require some sort of *deus ex machina* to accomplish a change for the better. The Better Minds among us must plan the conditions needed to make our children and young people "react" in more constructive ways. This, at any rate, is the obvious implication of all analyses which find the primary cause of behavior in conditions. But suppose there is another factor—a hidden factor of causation which every generation brings with it? Suppose there are recondite influences in *people* themselves? There are certainly such incommensurable factors in individuals. If there were not, the idea of "overcoming" the limitations of environment would be inconceivable. A lot of babies were born in log cabins in 1809, but there was only one Abraham Lincoln. The East Side of New York has environed millions of children, but the Morris Cohens and Al Smiths are very few. And Brooklyn, which produced a Robert Maynard Hutchins, also produced countless youngsters who grew up to be the timidly imitative conformists whom Dr. Hutchins finds so depressing and reproachful of the education that was supposed to help them to become free and eager human beings.

It seems fair to propose the existence of an X-factor in human behavior and attitudes—something

which combines with and modifies the conditionings of the time. The idea of an X-factor has at least the merit of working against the assumption of strict determinism—the theory that if you know enough about the environment, you can know all about the man. This is really a dangerous theory, for the determinist who is also a determined do-gooder is almost certain to want to arrange the best possible environment for the rest of us poor people who cannot help ourselves until *he,* who u*nderstands* our needs, has set in motion the proper conditionings.

Conditions, no doubt, are important. They are important just as a dry or a muddy track is important in a horse race—as a city or a country life has distinctive effects upon growing children. But the distinctive thing about human beings is that *some* great men have arisen in *all* types of environment—good, bad, or indifferent—and this is the one important and overriding fact which all theories of conditioning seem to leave out. So we propose the X-factor as the element in man which makes him, whatever else he may be, something more than a mere offprint of his environment. And it follows from this, we think, that the best possible environment for a human being is the environment which acknowledges the reality of the X-factor and provides as many openings as possible for its free expression.

It also follows that the worst type of environment is one which ignores the X-factor; and this means that the really bad environment is always a psychological environment—one which encourages people to think of themselves as "nothing but" a product of conditionings.

The idea of an X-factor for generations is more complicated, but it might be modestly helpful in understanding our own times. If Oscar Handlin's article, "Yearning for Security," in the January *Atlantic* is anything like an accurate measure of the present-day temper of American youth, we may have to conclude that the X-factor is deplorably weak in this post-war generation. As a teacher of history at Harvard University, Prof. Handlin has met in person large numbers of those who are expected to be the pick of America's future. From what he says, it seems that the psychologists of "conditioning" and the salesmen of "security" have completely sold this generation on their theories. Speaking of present-day students, Prof. Handlin says:

> The veterans who returned to college struck us as mature and earnest; they worked hard and got good grades. . . . But we quickly came to realize that all this earnestness and effort was directed toward a very meagre goal. Reluctantly but inexorably, we arrived at the conclusion that these young men and women were earnestly working toward a riskless security and, to attain it, were willing to sink into a dull conformity. . . . The college, we discovered, was muggy with modest ambitions; the little dreams were not of wealth or fame or monumental accomplishments but of bureaucrats' offices in government or the corporations.
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> . . . they settled themselves easily into ruts they dug for themselves, expecting to spend the rest of their lives undisturbed.
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> Like everyone else. Not willing consciously to take risks, the young people showed no inclination to deviate from established patterns. Their minds ran to motor cars and suburban bungalows. As students they read thoroughly what was assigned to them, but were not inclined to be adventuresome or heretic. In discussion they were eminently docile.
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> Partly, they conformed because it was dangerous not to. They knew that those who dealt out the office space in government and industry were not likely to discriminate among types of radicalism, that a red glow was reflected from every heterodox idea. Still, there seemed to be no objection, certainly no rebellion, against these pressures toward like-mindedness.

Prof. Handlin goes on like this for about two pages—it is really a good article. When he accused his students of being unimaginative acceptors of the status quo, they explained to him that their parents had read Gesell and "saved them from frustrations." What would have been genuine "issues" to the generation of Prof. Handlin's youth were met by the young men in his classroom "with a curious sense of detachment." Even the advent of war generated no large and penetrating thoughts:

> Korea came to them with the uneventfulness of a monthly bill in the mail. Those eligible for the draft or enrolled in the reserves felt more concern than the others whose obligations had already been cleared. But there was nowhere an expressed consciousness of

> the great social and intellectual issues involved, nowhere any insistence that youth had a special stake in the matter, a special claim to be heard.

How bad must it get? Will even the petty securities for which this generation seems willing to settle have to collapse before any protest is heard? And what is the matter with this generation, that it can be satisfied with so little?

If we take the "conditioning" theory first, to see what it will disclose, Prof. Handlin's explanation is probably on the right track. He thinks the fault lies with the doctrines of mid-depression and post-depression Liberalism—the Liberalism which began to die out in 1939. Those were the days, we may remember, when Security was the magic word. The fear of losing one's job hung over the heads of families as a darkly threatening obsession. An unwanted and unexpected self-denial came to visit millions of American homes, and came to stay. Money—that was the thing. How to get it, and to get enough of it, and to keep it: these were the questions the children overheard their parents discussing, day after day, year after year. And money was the thing that liberal politics aimed to get for the people—money through stronger union contracts, money through more jobs supplied by the government, and money through public welfare and social legislation. The people, the liberals argued, must have security first, and then the other good things of life can be added. But security, Prof. Handlin recalls, "was not an end but a means." The hope was, he explains,

> that a foundation of security at the base of the social structure would unloose creative individual energies through the rest of it. If we fought for unemployment insurance or farm relief or industrial unionism, it was not to plunge a large part of the population into complacency, but to ease destructive fears so that men could turn their energies toward other ends.
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> Looking back now, we acknowledge that we thought so little of those other ends—so little that this generation, which was not immediately involved in our struggle, can see as ideals only the means for which we battled.

What Prof. Handlin is really saying is that we sold out the spirit of youth for a mess of pottage; and now, apparently, all that our bright young men and women want of life is a medium-small bowl of pottage. They don't seem to realize that there is anything else to want or strive after.

Well, that is one theory of causation. The present generation is "conditioned" to a lack of imagination. The trickle at the pump is enough for them. They are all well-adjusted by Dr. Gesell to the hope of finding a secure little niche somewhere in the system.

The trouble with this theory is its complete hopelessness. Today, we lack even the liberalism of the 1930's, so what can be expected of the *next* generation, in terms of response to conditioning? There seems to be no choice except to fall back on the X-factor—to say to ourselves that we had better begin to teach the young that no security worth having can be supplied by any kind of "system," and that the good things of life are always what a man creates for himself, over and above the effects of conditioning. Our job, then, is to make sure that we throw out every sort of psychological preconception about the limits of human possibility, and to give the X-factor as much chance as we possibly can.

Quite conceivably, it is the combination of security ideals in economics and conditioning theories in psychology and sociology which has so prepared the youth of this generation for accepting without question whatever comes to them. It may be painful, perhaps, for them to have to discover that their hope of security will easily dissolve in another world war; and exceedingly difficult for them to realize that their own preoccupation with security is as much a cause of war as any of the other factors of egocentric concentration in modern life. But a man never knows what he can do for himself until he begins to rely upon himself, and a generation which has been betrayed into a passive hope of inherited security has at least the right to be disillusioned. This may be the first treatment that is necessary.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—The conversations of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers at their meetings held in London last January were unique in that they did not seek to formulate, and the conference had no authority to execute, any combined policy of action. Rather, they sought to make clear to one another their understanding of principles common to all the countries concerned. Further, as the Canadian Prime Minister pointed out in many of his public speeches, it is a special function of the British Commonwealth today to provide a bridge between the civilizations, as between the international systems, of Europe and Asia. Pandit Nehru emphasized this aspect of the work of the conference when he said in his broadcast address before leaving: "The building of a new bridge of understanding between the East and the West is of the utmost importance not only for the Commonwealth but for the whole world, and all of us in the Commonwealth, with our historic associations, can do much to remove dangerous misunderstandings which so obviously do exist between the East and the West." Mr. Senanayake, Prime Minister of Ceylon, widened the implications of this point:

> Asia, which is the land of birth of all great religions and of high idealism, wonders whether humanity is really progressing towards realisation of ultimate truth and perfection, which is its goal, and whether the Great Powers are not placing too great an emphasis on the form of the machinery of government and improvement of the social and economic organisation of a nation as a means of greater human happiness. We in the east, throughout long periods of struggle towards the light, have learnt the bitter lessons of suspicion and fear, of greed and aggrandisement, of lust for power and exploitation of the weak, and we are convinced that only through clearer knowledge of the fundamental spiritual values of existence can international understanding be reached.

In a notable Declaration issued after the conference, the Prime Ministers stated that they were both jointly and severally pledged to peace, and that, in their opinion, two courses have to be followed if real peace is to come: first, the wounds of the last war have to be healed, and second, everything must be done to understand those who differ from us. On these points, Pandit Nehru made it clear that he was not a pacifist, any more than were the other Prime Ministers: "Unhappily [he said] the world of today finds that it cannot do without force. We have to meet aggression or any other kind of evil. To surrender to evil is always bad. But in resisting evil we must not allow ourselves to be swept away by our own passions and fears and act in a manner which is itself evil." Hence the weight of influence of the Commonwealth countries is on the side of negotiation with China in the Korean business, as long as there is hope of honorable peace.

The conference had one disappointment—the failure of the Indian and Pakistan Prime Ministers, despite the efforts of their colleagues, to reach agreement in the Kashmir dispute. Obviously, the people of Kashmir must themselves decide whether or not to go in with Pakistan, but the Indian view is that Kashmir is part of the Indian Union and that Indian troops have a right to be there, while Pakistan troops are intruders. Pakistan looks first to the links, religious and economic, that bind its people to those of Kashmir, 78 per cent of whose population is Muslim. What is needed is the demilitarization of Kashmir in preparation for a plebiscite, and it is to be hoped that when the question goes back to the United Nations, both India and Pakistan will agree to the withdrawal of their forces, and to such a suggestion as that already accepted by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, namely, for a force to be provided by some of the Commonwealth countries until the plebiscite is completed. Many people in this country have a warm regard and admiration for Pandit Nehru, and for his recommendation of the "disposition to agree" as being the only key to international peace. But it is only natural that the friends of India and Pakistan should be anxious to see if this same "disposition" can be applied to the Kashmir dispute, no less than to relations with Peking.

In all these matters, it must be said that nothing is so dangerous as what has been called "the doctrine of selective application of righteousness." That doctrine really means the betrayal of principles because of "hard facts" of geography or strategy, or by the sole consideration of defensive needs. It means a reversal to jungle policy, of picking and choosing between aggressors according as to whether the governments concerned in aggression are deemed "progressive" or "reactionary."

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
BEYOND STATISTICS

HAVING a subscription to the Chicago quarterly, *Measure,* or even a thorough reading of a single issue, is likely to be an experience of fairly unique value. We have more than once spoken of the monthly *Progressive,* in appreciation of its stubborn maintenance of a liberalism broad enough to resist political or ideological cataloging, and *Measure,* in a similar sense, has during its relatively short existence stood for an intellectual liberalism which complements the type of political orientation found in the *Progressive.* This is to be expected of a paper which has Robert Hutchins for chairman of the editorial board; in this capacity he has done a great deal to revitalize interest in discussion of "abstract" ethical issues.

The claim by his detractors that Hutchins wants modern man to return to the abstruse philosophical climate of the Middle Ages—or at least to the climate of the Enlightenment—is perhaps partially true, but only to this extent: he insists that our present modes of sociological and political analysis ignore important metaphysical matters which statistics will not serve to illuminate. The earlier philosophers had few or no statistics, which was doubtless a handicap, but the men who might have been their more effective successors have been also handicapped—by blindly accepting a frame of prejudice which discounts the value of any convictions not directly correlated with factual data.

The main argument for the Hutchinites, for their Great Books Programs, and for their History of Ideas courses at Chicago, and St. Johns, is that the mind must be stretched in *all* directions in order to avoid falling into unsuspected provincialisms of opinion. Dr. Hutchins, for instance, criticizes the Age of Science, not because he lacks due respect for the advances of engineering and the laboratory, but because the custodians of these techniques too easily forget that there is more than one way to pursue "the truth." While the man who is "all intellect" may be completely uninteresting to us, however great his erudition, the man who *never* deals with abstract values and ideals denies himself a vantage-point of demonstrable merit. If he is not able to resort to any criterion save that of "facts," he is at the mercy of the fluctuating "progress" of science which means that the *values* he selects for his own life will be subject to constant revisions. It goes without saying that all human ideals are in need of refinement and improvement, but the man who has used his mind to build a conceptual and ethical world-view which is able in principle to accommodate any and all "facts" is in the enviable position of being able to adjust and improve his knowledge in the face of new evidence without deserting his basic orientation.

To illustrate *Measure's* appreciation of such matters, we refer to "Beyond the Dreams of Avarice," by Russell Kirk, in the December 1950 issue. Mr. Kirk approaches this problem from the standpoint of values—not the values of a "well-ordered society," but those which relate to that supreme intangible, human happiness. While for one or two paragraphs at the close he allows himself to sound a little bit like a statistical sociologist, he mostly wades in the sea of splendid generalities—a practice which many have come to believe is productive of nothing more than a general wetness. Yet what he tells us is true and we need to learn it—that Materialism, the goal of "things," is never good for any civilization, and particularly not good for ours. Someone may point out that at least ninety-nine per cent of our theologians seem to be telling us exactly the same thing, but they are telling us to believe rather than to reason. The importance of Mr. Kirk's article lies in the carefully chosen logic which he employs to reach his conclusion:

> A time of rising prices, booming wages, and incalculable material alteration does not guarantee prosperity for everyone. It usually has meant privation and dismay for people with fixed or tardily altering incomes—the thrifty, the old, pensioners, teachers, the clergy, endowed institutions, the

> independent shopkeeper, the small farmer, and many other persons and establishments which constitute an element of stability and tradition in our civilization. Such a time, on the other hand, is well enough for the rough customer, the smooth operator, the rolling stone, the contact man, the gentleman who puts No. I first. This world-turned-upside-down excitement, this swirling flux, may seem to some people the proof of vitality in a society; however that may be, it also is the negation of intelligence in society. In the long run, everyone comes to detest an existence so nervous and so precarious, and humanity endeavors to counteract vertigo by the application of arbitrary force. Somewhere there must exist a check upon will and appetite, Burke says, and the less check there is within, the more there must be without.
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> *What sort of people will we have become, supposing this economic expansion is accomplished?* Will we, like George Orwell's obscure protagonist, revisit the scenes of our youth only to find the country which "progress" has touched an abomination of shoddy new bungalows, juke joints, concrete, billboards, and jaded faces? Too many of us already have experienced that abysmally dreary survey. Some generations of indiscriminate getting and spending are certain to develop a remarkable type of man. The automobile will be his deity, and to it he will sacrifice sometimes nearly half his annual income, his domestic comfort, his family life, and his church. The television set will be his preacher, and inanity will compete with inanity for his attention, applying Gresham's Law to amusement. The state will direct and circumscribe his labor, and he will not object, for he will have forgotten the nature of freedom. He will live in a great ant hill of a city, and he will be precisely like his neighbors, and all of them will be decadent: for decadence, as C. E. M. Joad tells us, is to lose sight of an object in life. In the interest of efficiency, nonconformists and stragglers and dwellers in the waste will have been gathered into the city or be eliminated, preferably through natural processes. And these descendants of ours will never realize that they are in the Inferno, damned for Avarice.

What is the "object of life," which both C. E. M. Joad and Mr. Kirk inform us is lost among the men of our time? Mr. Kirk himself does not presume to say with comfortable exactitude. He simply insists, without either theological or statistical arguments for support, that virtue is better than avarice, and that hedonists play, in the long run, a losing game. Basing his conclusions on pre-selected values and ideals, Mr. Kirk does not apologetically attempt to convince us, through some turn of logic, that these "values" are superior. He has the effrontery to assume that only fairly intelligent people will be reading what he writes, and that such men will be possessed of a similar essential trust in man's innate *capacity to reveal truth to himself.* In respect of human happiness, Mr. Kirk claims that "simplicity is preferable to complexity—modest contentment to unrestrained sensation—decent frugality to torpid satiety."

Even an intellectual like Mr. Kirk, however, as we have already noted, will throw a few crumbs to the conventionally minded, who want at least a bit of objective evidence. It seems that Kirk, a short time ago, visited Eigg, a small Hebridean island, and is able to tell us how nicely and how often the dour Scots are able to smile, even though they have no "expanding production" nor any hopes for same in the future:

> A rabbit shot in the morning, bread from the mainland, a couple of eggs, watercress gathered at the brook, vegetables from the croft, porridge, tea from the shop: there is no complaint at this diet. When the young men of Eigg came home from the war, they had small desire to escape into the progressive world; on the contrary, they tried very hard to find niches for themselves in Eigg, which is a difficult thing to manage in a shrinking economy that does not fit well into the pattern social planners have drawn up for Britain. The people of Eigg have the pleasures of affectionate families and quiet life, the consolations of religion, the security of those who do not expect efficient production. They need no police; there is no drunkenness; and one sees a great many smiles. I do not suggest that we can impose the social pattern of a little Hebridean island upon America, any more than we ought to think that New Hebridean mores justify American slips from conjugal virtue; but I do suggest that the production-and-consumption view of society is neither the universal nor the traditional belief.

COMMENTARY
DELAYED REACTION

A DESERT in Nevada is the scene of the latest scientific demonstration that no man is an island, the bell having tolled (via several "false dawns") for citizens in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and even, by courtesy of "radioactive" snow, as far away as the Eastern seaboard. The snow is not really radioactive (snow is snow, after all), and who was fooled by the spurious Auroras? . . . Nobody, the second time. Trees have been toppled on hillsides, and a number of plate glass windows buckled into bits, but there are other trees and windows. All we—or the rest of the world—needs to know is that the good Americans wouldn't be playing with their atom toys if they weren't trying to bring peace. (When a better bomb—or a newer snow—or a snow of bombs—is dropped,- the U.S. will drop it.)

All who feel there is nothing seriously off-key in the new "desert song" should stop here, for we have been considering how narrow is the margin between the glamorous world of atomic physics and the workaday life of the man whose store-window happened to collapse because of something his military-scientist compatriots were doing forty miles away. We have also been stepping into the shoes of the discoverer of atomic fission (there's a Walter Mitty born every minute): Following the authentic Scientific Method, we have just solved the final riddle, and we hold in our hand the formula for unlocking the world's smallest and—so far—greatest dynamo. We look intently into the future, but not much can be seen. We wonder for just a moment what would happen if we concealed our discovery, at least until we could satisfy ourselves that it would do more good than harm. But this is an impractical attitude, seeing that soon or late somebody else is going to come upon the same, or an equally effective, solution. Dismissing the unmanly impulse, we pick up the inter-lab telephone and ask our secretary to come in for dictation immediately. . . .

The most profound thought of which we are capable, for a long while afterwards, is that although an occasional cat may die of curiosity, the human race lives curiously on. . .

We put off indefinitely the question of why we, like everyone else, cannot resist the impulse to find out a secret, to press each advantage we gain over natural forces, and to develop any power we happen to glimpse. We have no time for endless theorizing—our favorite commentator is about to broadcast the latest war news.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WE shall at least be able to claim some originality in suggesting that Charles Jackson's recently re-issued novel, *The Outer Edges,* furnishes points of departure for a discussion of parents and children. We do not, however, extoll the book as a whole. Even though *The Lost Weekend,* for which Jackson is chiefly known, was a valuable study of an alcoholic's psychology, one would not normally consider this type of writing a contribution to pedagogic progress. The most important thing about *The Outer Edges is* that the story effectively dramatizes the way in which a brutal and useless crime, capitalized on by the networks and newspapers, can spread a definite effluvium of psychic influence in ever-widening concentric circles to all levels of society. Avid readers and listeners betray their own neurotic twistings as they live over the slaying of two little girls, aged six and eight.

What does this have to do with children? We feel that recognition of the awful power which any widely publicized emotional experience can have in people's lives is essential when it comes to evaluating the effects of television, radio and movie programs upon our children. Children may not all be neurotically vulnerable, but they are all sensitively receptive. Further, before the mental capacities of a child have matured, it is open to suggestion in a way not entirely different from that of an adult under hypnotic influence. The earliest fears, hates, and dislikes of a child may be intensified by a steady emotional diet in which primitive vengeance carried out against some human personification of evil is a major theme. And if it is true that emotions actually pass like a contagion from one to another, whenever a focus is provided, we must grant that our civilization creates a world of dangerous fancies for the youngsters. One of the saddest stories of the year, it seems to us, is that of the six-year-old child who recently leapt to his death from a twenty-five-foot cliff, secure in the belief that his "Mighty-Mouse flying cloak" would enable him to fly. The pathos of such a story is not so much in the lingering death imposed by a fractured skull as in the thought that advertisers and copy-writers callously exploit children's natural capacity for fancy, hypnotizing them and leaving them without resistance to the unnatural stimuli which have been injected into their emotional veins. Macneile Dixon once repeated a similar story in regard to the trusting little girl who, peering up a chimney to see Santa Claus, caught her clothes on fire and burned to death. Often, we fear, even the Santa Claus myth can be a bad one, for it belongs so much more to adults than to children. And while the creators of Mighty Mouse are in no danger of leaping off cliffs with magic cloaks, they are apt to expose children to one sort of danger after another. The little boy who took the fatal leap had a last word for his mother before he passed into final unconsciousness—"I almost did fly," he said. There, perhaps, was a boy who possessed the fiery imagination capable of testing more substantial dreams if he had lived.

Returning to Mr. Jackson's *The Outer Edges,* we shall also find a percipient treatment of a man's too possessive love for his five-year-old daughter. The principal character in the book, a successful airlines executive, is nearly driven into a nervous breakdown by his compulsive reading of all the stories concerning the deaths of the two unknown country waifs. It is a long, hard road for him to follow before he understands the reason for this—that a parent who loves too possessively is a parent afraid. As Jackson puts it:

> He already understood all too well what he had been through. He would not change overnight because of it—one didn't change—but at least it gave him a clue to an understanding of himself that he had not had before. In vicariously experiencing murder through a newspaper story, the crime he lived in fear of had already been committed; he had even, in a sense, been punished for it, and thus his sin was expiated, the sin of loving his child too much. The danger that threatened Mary lay not in the outside world at all, but at home, in his own heart. The

horror that a man could read about in the tabloids was always just beneath the surface of his paternal love.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that parents can do away with all concerns and worries in relation to their children. All parents are emotionally affected when their children appear to be coming close to areas of danger, and this, of course, is particularly true during adolescence. The trouble is not that we have fears and worries, but rather that we don't face them as *our* fears and worries. Our incomplete communication with our youngsters usually proceeds from the false assumption that their *actions* are the real worry and, we say, no good child worries his parents. This approach has a definite result, but not the one we are after—it guarantees that the child will carefully refrain from discussing anything which might increase the worry-content of the parent's mind, to save trouble and psychological pressure. The parent who really hopes to get nothing but honesty from his child has to be courageous enough to fight down his own fears, day by day, and be honest enough, himself, never to have any doubt about whose job it is to exorcise those fears—not his child's job, but his own.

We have heard it remarked that only the unwise parent lets the child know he is worried or afraid. On this, though, we demur. Being worried or anxious to some degree is part of parenthood, for, until we human beings have reached perfection, close emotional ties will also mean a sensitivity to distraction. We may actually be unfair to our children unless we let them know when we are worried or bothered. But we can tell them this as though relating an interesting fact, without blaming them for the existence of that fact. The parent who bares his worry usually expects the child to make broad promises about refraining from this or that in order to bring "peace" to the parent's mind. But these little bargainings never bring peace, any more than does blackmail.

Tell the child about our worries and our problems, and that we would appreciate any help he can give us as we work on them. All parents who do so will come that much closer to the comradeship and emotional equality which is the best part of love.

FRONTIERS

New Ideas At Work

V

IDEAS which are seventy-five years old can hardly be regarded as "new" by any ordinary time-scale, yet the perspectives and work of the American Ethical Movement, founded in 1876, are of such far-reaching importance that they seem very new in contrast to the long history of human aspiration. The test of time also has its significance, for who would admit, without being presented with evidence, that a tenet-less and doctrineless religion could attract sufficient supporters to be called a "movement"? If we take them at their word—and there is no good reason not to do so—the members of the various Ethical Culture societies, through the years, have demonstrated this vital but difficult-to-believe truth: that human beings can unite upon a simple platform of goodwill, freedom, and ethical conduct, and can work heartily at applying these ideas without losing the fresh originality of their initial inspiration.

The January-February issue of the *Standard,* issued by the American Ethical Union (2 West 64th Street, New York 23, N.Y.), is entirely given over to general articles on the history, meaning, and fields of accomplishment of the Ethical Movement. Among the latter, the first and most important is moral education. There is discussion of ethical and moral philosophy, in contrast to dogmatic belief, and a delineation of the areas where ethical culturalists have common ground with believers in the traditional religions of the world. What is most impressive, however, about these articles, is their repeated recognition that no static formulation of the truth is ever reliable. As V. T. Thayer, long a Director of the Ethical Culture Schools, puts it:

> . . . apart from stereotyped, routine, and relatively simple occasions, the honest act requires the thoughtful application of a general principle to circumstances that are never completely repetitive.
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> As often as not, too, conventional action is blurred by the presence of conflicting suggestions for action, or principles that require individual weighing. Shall we tell a sick friend that he is hopelessly ill, in obedience to the principle of truth for truth's sake? Or shall we encourage him through expressions of confidence to draw upon his reserves of energy and to defeat the predictions of the specialists? That is, the precept of truth-telling cannot be applied mechanically. It calls for intelligence, and intelligence emerges out of repeated experience in weighing principle against principle and novel data against the facts of yesterday. To become adept in moral action requires practice, first hand experience, under guidance over periods of time to the point where an individual's decisions testify at last to an acquired art.

What, precisely, is the Ethical Movement? According to Lord Snell, who was a president of the English Ethical Union:

> The central purpose of the Ethical Culture Movement is to establish in the world a religion devoted to the right, apart from supernatural sanctions. It brings to the service of man everything that was vital in the old religions of the world—love, mercy, pity, peace—and it offers these qualities as the universal bond of religious union. With regard to the ultimate nature of things, a life after death and the final goal of the universe, the Ethical Movement affirms no creed. Its members may have divergent views on these problems but they unite in devotion to good action in the world in which they live.

The founder of the Movement was Felix Adler, and the character of the references to him in this issue of the *Standard* is an impressive tribute to his quality as an educator. He was no "personal leader," but one who released among his associates a spirit of intelligent philanthropy and human brotherhood. He refused to allow the Ethical Culture school in New York to be named after him. For the platform of the New York Ethical Society, he composed the inscription, "The place where men meet to seek the highest is holy ground." Adler was himself an exemplary sort of "leader." "I regard the leader of a Society," he said, "as its chief learner." His views on social and individual progress are contained in the

following quotation from his *Ethical Addresses* (Vol. XVII, 218):

> Every great religious movement—at least, since the days of the Hebrew prophets—had its starting point in some overwhelming realization of existing wrong—some passionate longing for moral deliverance. The Hebrew prophets themselves were chiefly appalled by the lack of collective righteousness—the kind of righteousness exemplified in the state by just rulers and judges; and they looked for collective and individual deliverance, in a glorified commonwealth. The Christian movement, when the Hebrew state was crumbling into ruins, emphasized the need of individual righteousness. Our present need, if I see it aright, is to establish social and individual righteousness, in inseparable union with each other; to make the social institutions just by the instrumentality of better men, and to make men better by the instrumentality of a more justly ordered society, and to hold the two ends jointly, never separating the one from the other.

Among the social achievements to be credited to the Ethical Societies of America are the Settlement House movement, the initiation of child labor laws, formation of the Visiting Nurses Association, the Free Kindergarten Association, and the Child Study Association. They have opposed all racist doctrines, fought "restricted covenants" in housing and "released time" for sectarian religious instruction in the public schools. Lately they have sponsored the Encampment for Citizenship, which each summer brings together 150 young Americans of the most diverse ethnic, religious, geographical, economic, and social backgrounds, for a six-week experience in community living and democratic practice.

The Movement is candid in its opposition to the personal-God idea. Its ideal is summed up in the simple expression of its founder, "Deed above Creed." The article by Henry Neumann, who is himself a distinguished educator (author of *Education for Moral Growth*—a volume no parent or teacher should be without) is particularly penetrating in its justification of the creedless faith of the Ethical Culturists:

> One good reason for making excellent practice the one central objective was stated by Dr. Adler with a prophetic insight which these times have tragically verified. He warned that if ethical living were bound up to the traditional theological beliefs, the day would come when these sanctions would be undermined (as they have been for multitudes) and that this would lead to the destruction of the morals themselves. He died in 1933, the very year when Hitler took power and the Nazi savagery became official. Germans who had been taught that the only valid reason to respect human dignity was the word of God had scrapped their belief in such a word. From believing in nothing, it was easy to move on to believing in an infallible dictator and imitating his monstrosities. In Russia too, where Stalin had once been educated for priesthood in the Orthodox Church, men and women who could not longer believe in a divine sanction for truth-telling, justice, compassion, had no ethical philosophy to oppose to the brutalities in the Soviet doctrines. When Adler uttered his plea to build respect for human worth on sure foundations, he spoke to our own day and to years to come.

Has it Occurred to Us?

IT is with one of the minor inaccuracies of our colloquial tongue that we speak of "putting things off." If ever an idiom were deceiving, this one most subtly is, for the sense in which we put things "off" is inconsequential, compared to the way they immediately become an increasingly uncomfortable load.

Has it occurred to us that procrastination, despite all evidence to the contrary, is more exhausting than any form of work? From the first moment of procrastination, when we say of a task we see, "I must do that *some day,"* instead of doing it directly we have the opportunity, we begin to amass a weariness of spirit next to which the dreariest drudgery sparkles and shines. The size of the future chore is of no importance. In time, it might require only a few minutes by the clock; the actual energy to be expended is quite often equally negligible. But the *idea* of it—how much time that takes, how much bounce and vigor evaporates from us at the very thought!

An odd phenomenon, this, and not infrequently exasperating. Who are we, and what is *it*—this burdensome thing we have "put off"—that it should dog our heels? What distressing trick of the imagination has clothed a plain, ordinary job in such an aspect that the sight of it becomes steadily more unbearable, while its morbid fasination increases?

We can easily recall the opposite circumstances: how the fact of "taking on" a job, and completing it in due season, is almost an accession of energy and time, instead of, as would be logical, a loss. Few of us can fail to be aware how often, and how literally, the things we do take "no time at all" in reality, although time has certainly been consumed. If we have been able to accomplish our work on schedule, we hardly notice the effort, and the natural contentment following satisfactory achievement more than refills our "capacity."

It is not that the ideal human life should consist of a brisk succession of tasks which we came to, saw, and conquered. In all practical affairs, interruptions are the rule, and constitute such a standard factor as to sometimes make it appear that the greatest success is simply perseverance. But to know *when* to persevere, and when to accept a modification of plan, when to bow to circumstances and when to override them—these are questions we need at least a lifetime to answer. A strong will, unflagging courage, and an irrepressible spirit are immensely to be desired, but possession of these qualities by no means guarantees their wise use.

To the uncountable generations of copybook scholars who have chanted the harmless refrain, "Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today," we can be mildly grateful. Undeniably, if the advice had been heeded consistently in all preceding generations, the world would by this time present an unanswerable argument for continuing the good work. In the absence of widespread, *practical* precedent, if we may coin a phrase, we have a slightly different prospect. Whether or not it is the influence of all our forebears who have preached the maxim without being thoroughly convinced of it, we discover the mind to have a most persistent ingenuity in avoiding the maxim's appropriate application. As many times as we may logically verify the absolute futility of procrastination, we can wake up in broad daylight to find ourselves senselessly procrastinating yet again.

We cannot erase the difficulty by talking largely of our social responsibility. Procrastination concerns the most picayune details of our personal lives—and usually involves things we are sure could make no difference to any other person in the universe. But there's the rub: the stubborn, irreducible fact is that the slightest occurrence that changes our mood or alters our temper is bound to influence others besides ourselves. If it were possible to absorb the disheartening effect of-procrastination, without transmitting some portion of it to others, the putting-off habit would be that so-far-undiscovered thing, a "private fault." Yet procrastination does bespeak an altogether too private view of human affairs, since it is often for the best that we somehow do not get around to doing everything that suggests itself to our mind.

Has it occurred to us that procrastination points to a phase of human life which requires for its understanding some more comprehensive idea of law and order? To live without regrets and backward glances, to do the needful thing in time, to turn all our energies into the most useful and therefore the most satisfying endeavors—where are the "rules" for this sort of successful living?