

THE FORUM

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A NON-PARTISAN MAGAZINE OF FREE DISCUSSION.
IT AIMS TO INTERPRET THE NEW AMERICA THAT
IS ATTAINING CONSCIOUSNESS IN THIS DECADE.
THE FORUM GIVES BOTH SIDES. WHATEVER IS
ATTACKED BY CONTRIBUTORS THIS MONTH MAY
BE PRAISED IN LATER ISSUES

MY PHILOSOPHY OF INDUSTRY

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THERE is no denying the fact that life seems to be becoming more complicated. But is it, really? Isn't it rather that we are asked to make decisions more rapidly than before? With our new forms of transportation and communication the whole outlook of man is changed. It is greatly enlarged. He travels more, sees more, comes in contact with more people, does more things. But there is a question in my mind whether, with all this speeding up of our everyday activities, there is any more real thinking. Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it. If it were possible first to teach people how to go to work to think and then to think, there would be hope for all sorts of things.

It is easy to have ideas. But whose are they and what are they worth? Merely having something on your mind is not thinking. Merely wondering is not thinking. Merely worrying is not thinking. Merely listening with all intentness to catch and remember something that someone is offering out of the essence of wisdom is not thinking. We all have intelligence, for intelligence is the ability to receive; but we have little thinking.

Thinking is creative or it is analytical. Intelligence comprehends the outlines of a thing. Thinking breaks it into its elements, analyzes it, and puts it together again. One feels, however, that —

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regardless of the fact that up to the present time everything has been about all that it could be under the circumstances — there is a sense in which from this moment forward a new era may emerge, if the necessary human components of the new era decide so. Perhaps the most one can hope for now is to drive home a conviction that as a people we have not done much thinking. If we think we have been thinking and then find out that we have not, the jolt of discovery may be of service to us.

The secrets of life are open to the thinker. Thinking is the work of digging to the foundation and has the aid of higher lights. Thinking calls for facts, and facts are found by digging. He who has gathered of this wealth is well equipped for life.

Of course, in the long run we never really create anything new. We merely discover something which has already existed. We know when we have reached Truth. We are on the right road toward Truth when the things that we are doing make men a little freer than they were. We may also know when we are on the right road by examining what our motives are. Of course, mistakes may be committed with right motives, but the general direction is right when the motive is right. These are the things of which we may be perfectly sure. These principles surround the very base of Life.

RIGHT THINGS IN THE WRONG WAY

In some instances we are doing right things in the wrong way. Because the method is wrong and the trouble begins presently to show the wrong results, people are quick to draw the conclusion that the whole thing is wrong. They want to wipe it all out. They want to overturn all the machinery of social and of political life. If that were the right thing to do, then it would be the right thing to do. We should never be fearful of the cost of the right thing.

Our discovery of Truth will be one of the great surprises of human experience. When the truth comes everywhere, it will be a great surprise to see how near we have been to it all the time without recognizing it, and to see how little are the changes to be made in our exterior mode of doing things. Our experience is a great preparation. It is a preparation to know the Truth when we meet it. Of course, there are many ways of arriving at this goal. Men have been striving for it ever since civilization began. All right activity has been contributing to the ultimate result.

Books, mechanics, commerce and science, the motor car, the radio, the airplane — all these have helped us on the way.

Our experiences are coming faster than ever before, both in our industrial world and in our domestic life. Many people see in these changes a world constantly growing worse. I do not believe this; I think we are headed in the right direction and that we should learn to interpret our new life rather than protest against it. We are entering a new era. Old landmarks have disappeared. Our new thinking and new doing are bringing us a new world, a new heaven, and a new earth, for which prophets have been looking from time immemorial. Much of it is here already. But I wonder if we see it.

I have no sympathy with those people who believe the world is growing worse. Of course, we all are making mistakes, but we learn by them. It is only when we correct these mistakes, reverse our tracks, and get back on the main road that we make progress. Automobiles that were made fifteen years ago no longer satisfy. We have all progressed, our needs have changed. We demand more, we see a wider horizon, a better type of civilization; and whether you believe that we are the originators of it or whether a wiser destiny has forced us to accept that which best promotes our welfare matters not. That fact is here and we must recognize it and conform our manner of living to it.

The basic things are of course very old. Nothing useful ever passes away. If a light-headed group comes along and imagines they have found a new morality and if they draw to their books and plays and strange philosophies a following of other light-headed groups, some serious people are inclined to believe that the old morality has passed away. The good old type of goodness they say is gone. It is a rather foolish position to take and causes needless worry.

There is nothing new except a new appreciation, a new understanding, and this is the result of experience, and the result of experience can only be character. I believe that all we are here for is to get experience and form our character. Although our beginnings may be small, yet daily we are adding to our sum total of knowledge of reality — those eternalities of which real life is composed. I believe that our conscious individuality will never be lost. No matter what plane of thought we may inhabit we shall be in full consciousness of our birthright of thinking, and by each experience we shall improve our character.

Unfortunately, there exists in our day the pretense of a curious prejudice against any view of life that presupposes moral laws or values. The word "moral," like many other terms, has been narrowed in its meaning so that it has been made to serve in the very opposite sense. But when one regards the moral law as merely the law of right action or of truth it becomes quite different from "trying to be good." The universe is set in a certain direction, and when you go along with it, that is "goodness." If you don't, you are getting an admonitory kind of experience.

There is a vast difference between a man's being merely *statically* "good" and being *dynamically* good. In one state he is merely good negatively, and in the other he is good for something and puts that goodness into effect. He accomplishes something for mankind. We make no progress so long as we deny this. Our motive cannot be the attainment of some kind of goodness which is apart from life itself, but the attainment of inherent rightness, physically, mentally, spiritually, so that this complex instrument which we call society may efficiently function. The *right* way is the only *way*. The rightness of an attitude or method goes down through all its relations. Rightness in mechanics, rightness in morals are basically the same thing and cannot rest apart.

MATTER AND SPIRIT

I make no difference between matter and spirit. They are different degrees of fineness of the same thing. The one is becoming the other, through ascent and descent, and both benefit by the process.

Will the poverty and the injustice and the need of the world force us to adopt this law of higher relations? If so, fortunate are we. When we speak of "morality in progress," we mean the maintenance by man of his control of the situation, instead of his being overwhelmed by the situation. We mean that he should mold progress to our highest concept of what is right between man and man and of what will work for the service of all, and not merely consent to be molded out of moral shape by the pressure of progress upon him.

Morality is merely doing the sound thing in the best way. It is a larger view and a longer view applied to life. The world is on the whole quite receptive to this implication of progress and we are all waiting for more manifestations of its workings, which are

incidentally more numerous now than they have ever been in all the ages of mankind. Regardless of what we name it, this view is surely moving to practical recognition. There is one thing that we know about universal law: it operates for us if we will, against us if it must — but it operates.

Furthermore, I believe that the application of this law is necessary for business success. Just as a clean factory, clean tools, accurate gauges, and precise methods of manufacture produce a smooth-working, efficient machine, so clear thinking, clean living, square dealing make of an industrial or domestic life a successful one, smooth-running and helpful to everyone concerned. It has always been surprising to me that so few people realize this great fact. Many people are led astray by gaudily painted substitutes, imitations, when they could have the genuine for the same equivalent of time or money spent — in fact many times for much less.

The whole industrial world is suffering from many bad practices which we must refuse to use or tolerate. There must be a substitution of right methods, of right motives, the real ideals of service. I am no sentimentalist in this regard, it is just good business. There was a word once spoken which throws light on this: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." This is from the Sermon on the Mount. It sounds religious but it is just a plain statement of facts. It means just what it says — the reign, the rule, the law of the highest relations. Get that right way, work by that, and you have the world — a world without poverty, without injustice, without need.

As people wake up in their thinking — and we are even now arriving at this point in some respects — the benefits will be universally ours. Such facts are spreading throughout the whole civilized world. Even foreign lands are feeling the benefit of American progress, our American right thinking. Both Russia's and China's problems are fundamentally industrial and will be solved by the application of these right methods of thinking, practically applied.

NO MACHINE AGE

Another thing, it is a mistake to think that we are living in a *machine age*. That's one of those bugaboos which people who do not understand the changing fundamentals of our civilization have set up. They prophesy all sorts of things because we have

been freeing men for centuries and making it possible for them to widen their lives. We are *not* living in a machine age, *we are living in the power age*. This power age of ours has great possibilities, depending upon how we use it. Of course it can be abused. But it can also be used greatly to benefit mankind.

Here is where what we call the moral law comes in. Power must be properly used or it will destroy us. But I, for one, do not believe that we are headed in this direction. I believe that, fundamentally, every man has sensed his freedom and is eagerly making way for the new era, which is fast appearing. I think we are due for a big change in educational methods. That is one of the reasons why we are, at present, trying out our trade school form of teaching.

Give men or women the ability to think for themselves and they will soon acquire the facts necessary for the solution of their problems. The ability to recognize truth when you see it and the ability to think a thing through to its logical conclusion — these are important. These will help a man or woman contribute his or her share to the social welfare and progress of the world.

Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin both thought in fundamentals. They would be just as much at home in our civilization of to-day — just as valuable contributing members of our society — as they were in the age in which they lived. The Truth they knew still persists. The Truth we discover, know, and use, sets our value in the world.

In the deep, unwritten wisdom of life, there are many things to be learned that cannot be taught. We never know them by hearing them spoken, but we grow into them by experience and recognize them through understanding. Understanding is a great experience in itself, but it does not come through instruction. Nothing ripens that is not first planted, and the very desire, the dream, the ambitions of youth are by way of a planting which will come to fruition some time after these desires are abandoned and forgotten. For the sown seed goes on growing whether we remember it or not. The wisdom of life is to keep on planting.

It seems to be the tendency of our coming generation to want things in tabloid form. Our youth want to get their education quickly. They want to find short cuts to knowledge. In some ways this is a desirable tendency. We are making use of it in our trade schools by teaching our boys many things by motion pictures. For example, we teach them how to use a micrometer, how

to use gauges. Many of the processes which are hard to describe in words can be made plain in a few moments by good pictures. Pictures speak the universal language. But on the other hand, observation means little without reflection. In the old methods we observed many things pretty much as they really were. In the present day radio and movie we observe them as some one desires them to appear.

Such a process is likely to stunt our reflective power. On the other hand, the new methods are stimulants. However, these new mediums of education will gradually find their place and the outworn methods will slip out. This will, of course, happen in individual cases much faster than it will in society generally. As is always the case, individuals can make more rapid progress than society can. One portion of the country or the world may see a thing and use it for months or even years before the rest of the world is willing to adopt it.

To my mind there is little difference between an international problem and a local one. The only difference is that people generally think in local terms instead of thinking in universal conceptions. As I have told many young men who have come to me for advice on how to succeed, it is just as easy to think big as it is to think in small and limited ways. It is just as easy to plow a thousand acres with a tractor as it used to be to plow a ten-acre lot with a horse. And it takes no more time.

POLITICS DON'T MATTER

Political boundaries and political opinions don't really make much difference. It is the economic condition which really forces change and compels progress.

I have been asked several times whether I believe that the large cities will continue to grow and drain the country of its small town population, or whether the reverse will be true. Well, I think we shall continue to have large cities and small towns. Each has its advantage, each has its reason for being. There are disadvantages in both, but the good in each will survive. The father and mother of to-day, who are not content with the conditions under which they are living, will not be willing to have their children grow up in the same environment. They will try to change it and thus will come about many movements which will be good for both the city and the country.

Our new forms of transportation are making it easy for people

to get out to see other localities, to become familiar with the kind of country in which they wish to settle. Such an interchange of social contacts, such a broadening of all peoples' geographical horizons will ultimately bring about a redistribution in which each person will naturally gravitate to that part of the country in which he is best satisfied to live. The automobile has done for this country what the airplane and radio may do for the world. A wider circulation of right ideas always breaks down prejudices and helps secure universal understanding.

This, then, suggests a solution of the problem of world peace. A peaceful nation is one that has the means to make war and refrains. Until the means are present, disposition toward their misuse cannot be fully known. In the present world the believers in peace confront the advocates of war and, fortunately, the former are better armed. Their power for peace seems to be in proportion to their power to enforce it.

It sometimes seems that the course of history has been an effort to produce the invincible warrior and through him to dominate the world for peace. The nation must be capable of making war and refrain before its natural peaceableness can be known. Some nations, very great ones, are to-day physically unable to make war. Maybe they will continue peaceable even when they become capable of this dread ability, but we also know that there are nations able to make war who believe in peace. What the peace-loving forces of the world are facing is the war-loving forces. If that fact could be realized much waste motion would be saved.

It is interesting to study international methods of education. The educational processes differ according to the goal in view. Many of the old civilizations educate their upper classes for a condition of economic freedom and vegetative leisure, while their lower classes are held in industrial slavery. In fact, it is by the use of leisure that we may judge the characteristics of a people. There was a time when leisure was regarded as lost time. Particularly in industry, the creation of leisure time was supposed to be impractical and wasteful. It was said that working men had not been trained how to make the most of it and that a reduction of daily working hours would result in greater poverty and dissipation.

We, in America, have changed our thoughts in this regard very much during the last few years. We have come to see that leisure is not waste time, that even from a cold business point of view it

pays dividends in greater profits, better health, and a better product. Furthermore, it has been discovered that the working-man very soon finds a desirable and healthy way to use his leisure time to his own personal advancement and for the greater happiness of his family. The second generation is never at a mental loss to improve their time. It has been our experience that even those who come from countries where long, hard-working hours were the rule are soon found using their leisure hours in a useful manner.

Man needs leisure to think, and the world needs thinkers. One of the hardest things in the industrial world to-day is to find enough men who are capable of thinking a problem through, executives who can do the whole job without further supervision or additional prompting. Americans of every class have more spare time than the people of any other nation in the world. But leisure is by no means secure so long as it is regarded as a privilege forced by the demands of the class. It is not secure so long as industry regards it as lost time. There is a law which definitely relates leisure to economic well-being. We are learning to use that law to the betterment of our business, the improvement of our people, and the increased welfare of our country.

Mr. Ford began his series of FORUM interviews in practical philosophy in the March number. They will be continued in subsequent issues.

WHEN THE CITY SLEEPS

HOW quietly they lie — the lights blurred out,
The city's pompous brilliance dimmed before
Day's lustre as she climbs her gray redoubt —
These sleepers, greedy for one hour more
Of dreams, or, better still, oblivion
Ere they must join again the sweating crowd,
Coördinate and firm, the bastion
Against the canker of time disallowed.

Musing, detached, I watch the sleeping town,
A monster gorged yet subtly beautiful,
Its crenelated skyline like a crown
Vesting authority for gay misrule.
So still, the unchallenged torpor might be death
But for the hum of traffic's bateless breath.

— Virginia McCormick