

# ***Tower of Babel***

***Richard W. Wetherill***

# *TOWER OF BABEL*

BY

RICHARD W. WETHERILL



AN OUTLINE OF HUMANETICS



## HUMANETICS

Today our world suffers from  
warped and twisted thinking.

That affliction is caused by  
hidden distortions of logic.

Those distortions are fixed,  
inflexible tools of thought.

\* \* \* \*

We all have distortions, and  
they cause all our mistakes.

\* \* \* \*

Humanetics exposes the exact  
nature of those distortions.

It shows their causes, their  
results, and their remedies.

It constitutes a new science of  
perfective thinking, here  
reported for the first time.

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# Chapter 1

## *The Basic Theory of Humanetics*

CLEARLY our world is in trouble. With all our graft and corruption, our selfishness and cupidity, our lusts and overindulgences, our endless killings on highways and in battle, our dissensions and conflicts, our innumerable other examples of foolishness and the difficulties which result, we can hardly call ourselves collectively stable and sane.

Despite our spectacular material and industrial progress, we are lost in confusion. Our leaders advance from crisis to crisis in a world seemingly built of crises. Over all our tribulation hangs the ominous threat of the atom bomb—and worse.

Somehow we have let ourselves get out of adjustment.

Everyone knows that our human and social sciences have lagged far behind the advances of our physical sciences. Seemingly we know more about atoms than about ourselves. Our physical sciences gave us the atom bomb, and the atom bomb is unbelievably dangerous. But the only reason we had to develop the atom bomb, and the only reason it is dangerous, is that we have not successfully applied objective intelligence to the problem of getting along with and among ourselves.

What is the result?

In our confusion and strife, living under the shadow of impending disaster, wearing the dull yoke of confiscatory taxes, laboring in exchange for a ticket to nameless future

distresses, men and women are individually and collectively frightened. They are frustrated and disturbed. They have ailments demanding a constant succession of miraculous new drugs and medical techniques, despite which we find ourselves alarmingly short of doctors, hospitals, and especially mental institutions.

How can we achieve correct adjustment?

We hear that we need a rebirth of morality and a return to simple old-fashioned honesty and virtue. It is true; we do. But that sort of talk has been going on a long time with little effect, for the simple and obvious but apparently hitherto unnoticed reason that almost every person already and quite literally considers himself both honest and virtuous.

That creates a deadlock.

We all know our world has a disease. Many of us think we know how to cure the disease. But each of us thinks only others are infected. Consequently each of us is emotionally allergic to his share of the cure.

That perpetuates the deadlock.

Each of us will discuss the faults of others, sometimes quite loudly, but seldom will anyone discuss his own. Each of us vigorously proclaims that he is perfectly willing to discuss his own, if pressed hard enough, but, even then, what he means is that he will deny them. No matter how overwhelming the evidence of his errors and mistakes, he cannot listen to it without getting irritable and resentful and excited and hot-tempered and irrational. The harder he is pressed, the more resistance he throws up, a fact any person can check for himself by applying it to the nearest human being.

That strengthens the deadlock; apparently little can be done about it.

Perhaps the quickest way to get into trouble with another

person is to suggest that there is something wrong with his logic or his morals. As an almost universal reaction, he throws up impenetrable resistance. He thus makes it impossible to correct what is erroneous in his thinking, and he does not suspect that his resistance is exactly proportional to his need for correction.

He is quite effectively insulated. He cannot successfully be approached in a conversation, because the conversation invariably goes to pieces for emotional reasons. He cannot successfully be approached in a book, because he throws the book aside the moment it becomes personal.

Thus is the deadlock protected and prolonged. Thus are we sentenced to vicious perpetuation of its deadly negative influence, evidence of which is daily paraded in our public press. Desperately we need a formula to break the deadlock and restore our sanity. Among all our millions, no person has raised a voice of significant suggestion. No person has known what to say—at least, no person who could get general attention. That is a sad state of affairs.

Something must be wrong with our intelligence—and something is.

That some strange blight afflicts our intelligence has long been evident to every discerning person. We have not known the nature of that blight. We have not known how it does its nefarious work, nor how it can be exterminated and its damage corrected.

That brings us to our topic.

Humanetics shows how we got into our predicament, and why we could not get out of it. It explains why we could not get a rebirth of morality and a return to old-fashioned honesty and virtue. It shows why each person is flatly unable to recognize his crucial errors and mistakes. It explains why he is sincerely amazed when accused of them, and why he

sincerely fails to see how he helped cause our widespread confusion and strife.

The fact is that we are all responsible for our predicament, even those of us who spend our time telling each other exactly how it is someone else's fault. We are all responsible for the deadlock that keeps us from finding correction. Humanetics shows how we are responsible, and it also shows how we can unlock the secrets that permit correction. It tells how each person can get quick dramatic improvement for himself, without waiting for others.

That is important news.

## II

We may wisely start by recognizing the platitudinous fact that virtually all our troubles are caused by people. Our troubles are caused by individual men and women, guilty of wrongs that go uncorrected. Our troubles are caused by nothing more complicated than wrong words and wrong actions based on wrong thinking.

Let us define wrong thinking.

Wrong thinking may or may not be what is usually considered wicked or immoral thinking, but it is always incorrect and inaccurate and illogical thinking. It is warped and twisted thinking. As we shall see, it gets warped and twisted by passing through counterfeit mental faculties which give it subtle and unsuspected but specific distortions of logic.

Those counterfeit faculties and the resulting distortions, hitherto undefined, explain the blight on our intelligence.

Humanetics exposes the exact nature of our counterfeit faculties and the distortions they contain and cause. It shows we are all afflicted by them. It shows how we install the

counterfeit faculties, and how they put distortions in our thinking. It shows how distortions cause all our deviations from intelligent conduct. It shows how we can recognize and avoid those deviations. It shows how we can replace our counterfeit with genuine faculties, thus automatically preventing future deviations. It constitutes a new science of perfective thinking, here presented briefly, in simple layman's language.

Even from what has already been said, it can be seen that the implications of humanetics go far beyond what any uninitiated person might reasonably expect.

Humanetics exposes and solves various basic riddles that have long perplexed mankind. It tells what causes all sorts of erratic and irrational conduct, such as we see on all sides in every level of society. It tells how anyone can avoid virtually all his fundamental mistakes, as well as the recognized and unrecognized troubles which result from them. It tells how anyone can release latent mental, emotional and physical abilities for effortless and efficient use in every situation of daily life.

Some of those abilities are so spectacular the average person never dared dream he possessed them.

By releasing them he can increase his perceptiveness, strengthen his memory, develop his imagination, speed his mental processes, and vastly improve his ability to think. He can improve his sources of energy and multiply his brainpower. He can streamline his thinking, increase its accuracy, improve his ability to cut to the heart of every business or personal problem. With all these strengthened abilities, he can quickly and successfully deal with previously unsolvable problems in every department of life. Often he can solve problems he does not now recognize and define as problems, and often he can throw aside hitherto

recurring and perplexing problems because he suddenly sees they have no importance.

These are only a few of his improvements; others he could scarcely understand until he gets them.

To his surprise, he soon discovers that his sensory impressions, as he has long known them, have offered only a pale imitation of reality. He sees through new eyes. He sees with new definition of line, new depth of perception, new recognition of colors; advantages which come as a distinct surprise. His senses of taste and smell undergo similar change; so do his senses of hearing and touch. His senses bring him new impressions, and he gets a new thrill out of each situation he faces. He extracts the best from life as he goes along; something he finds he was never able to do before; and improvement in his brainpower, in his effective intelligence, in his emotional stability, in his health, and in every other aspect of his existence, are equally evident. There are other advantages which can be described only in the light of what is to come.

Let us now look at the foundations which support all these seemingly extravagant promises.

### III

The principles of humanetics are derived from the unimpeachable authority of life itself. They are derived from thirty years of consistent effort to discover natural laws which affect human conduct. They are derived from analysis of innumerable specific problems and situations that constantly arise in family and social life, in business and industry, in management and unions, wherever people live or work as individuals or as groups.

They are geared to certain immutable but hitherto seemingly unrecognized laws of nature.

There is little similarity between laws of nature and laws of men. One basic difference is that we can violate laws of men, often with impunity, whereas we cannot violate laws of nature. Every attempt to violate them penalizes us inexorably. Another basic difference is that when we are punished by laws of men we know it, but laws of nature often punish us without telling us why; without, in fact, even telling us we are being punished. We suffer in ignorance and repeat our mistakes again and again.

Our ignorance and our suffering can now be corrected.

Correction is helped by recognition of the natural laws which we have tried to violate. Among those laws, there is one that is basic: Right action brings right results, whereas wrong action brings wrong results. That law is widely known, but it is not widely understood.

The rare person who understands it enjoys a charmed and protected life. He lives by the law implicitly. He has no incentive to disregard it, because he understands that the law is universal in its workings. It is fully as inexorable as the law of gravity, and its attempted violation brings punishment fully as drastic. It cannot be violated successfully, no matter how clever the attempt. But it is disregarded almost endlessly by persons who would not dream of disregarding the law of gravity, and the person who disregards it seldom knows he has done so. Even when he does know, he seldom recognizes his punishment. That is because he does not immediately get jolted or bumped, as he does when he disregards the law of gravity. The trouble he gets into is more subtle. He has not learned to connect the trouble with his disregard of natural law. He quite sincerely thinks the trouble is not his fault.

Humanetics can now give him information which, the moment he understands it, will quite radically alter his attitude on this and a thousand other matters, and this brings us to the theory of humanetics.

Working from the natural law that right action brings right results, humanetics flowers out into a theory that deserves wide study and intensive application all over this earth. Although various points in that theory may strain credulity at first, there is no basic point which has not been tested objectively and proved valid.

The basic points have been checked thousands of times, in hundreds of different ways. They have been applied to innumerable practical situations, and no single exception to the theory has been found. Apparently none can exist.

Techniques suggested by the theory have been developed and applied to literally thousands of specific human problems, always with positive results. The techniques solved those problems, precisely as theory indicated they should. Thus every technique has been given objective scrutiny as critical as that given the theory. Every technique has been proved valid time and again, and each can be checked for validity by any normal person.

#### IV

Let us approach the theory and its techniques by inspecting some popular misconceptions.

Everyone realizes the average person often says or does what is stupid. Because his stupidity is otherwise hard to understand, we are inclined to think he *is* stupid. But that misses the point, because intelligence is not the controlling factor. We can check that by observing that he causes

trouble mostly through mistakes any normal person could easily avoid.

Next we are inclined to think he neglects to use his intelligence. That is obviously correct, but it also misses the point. If he would use his intelligence he could avoid stupid mistakes, but we need to know why he neglects to use it.

The reason, as will become increasingly evident, is that his stupid mistakes are all caused by counterfeit faculties which tell him, under certain conditions, what to think, say and do. His counterfeit faculties are concealed, and they contain specific but unsuspected mental kinks and distortions of logic. Those kinks and distortions cause erroneous quirks in his thinking. They invalidate his intelligence without his knowledge. They alter and twist his mental impulses in the split second those impulses spend passing through his mind. They cause his deviations from logic, and destroy his ability to be intelligent in conducting certain of his affairs.

He does not know he has those kinks and distortions, and they cause mistakes he cannot detect. He cannot make a sensible decision that involves one of them, because they destroy his ability to be right. And he has very large numbers of them, on a wide variety of different subjects, covering many departments of his life.

They determine how he earns his living, how he votes, how he gets along with his wife. They determine much of what he thinks, says and does. They destroy his ability to keep out of trouble. They destroy his ability to recognize his responsibility for trouble he causes himself and others. In a dominant sense, they damage and poison his life and often the lives of people around him—always without his knowledge.

When he really understands those distortions, however,

his troubles begin to evaporate. He sees countless points on which his thinking was formerly deranged and disorganized by forces he did not understand. All sorts of former problems begin to solve themselves, and he straightens out ten thousand confusions and perplexities. Especially he sees how he misunderstood people and misinterpreted their words and actions.

After he learns what he is looking for he can easily detect distortions in anyone, and see the patterns behind them. Until he learns, he cannot clearly see either the distortions or the patterns. Therefore he usually regards illogical conduct as evidence that someone has made a temporary mental slip, causing an isolated mistake.

Most of us do that.

We consider it normal to make a constant stream of temporary mental slips. But if we watch a person's conduct long enough, we see that they are not temporary mental slips. We find that every kind of misguided conduct is repeated; some kinds endlessly and often. At first we explain the repetitions by talking about traits of character and personality, but then we start wondering what causes those traits and how they work.

Under persistent observation we see evidence that some previously unrecognized factor is at work; a mysterious  $x$  factor; some kind of counterfeit faculty operating within the individual as a substitute for his intelligence. Presently we see that the mysterious  $x$  factor operates only under certain conditions, and that when it does operate it assumes possession of its victim's volition. Under painstaking analysis we see that the mysterious  $x$  factor may take various different forms; that each form constitutes a separate and distinct counterfeit faculty, causing a specific kind of misguided conduct. Gradually we see that each counterfeit

faculty causes a long string of misguided incidents of the same general kind. Finally we see that every time the same old situation arises, the same old counterfeit faculty gets used again; each time, it causes some new version of the same old mistake.

Humanetics defines that mysterious  $x$  factor as a counterfeit faculty; humanetics defines the counterfeit faculty as a distortion of logic.

Each person has his peculiar distortions of logic. Because of his distortions, whatever they are, he displays a more or less consistent pattern of distorted thinking, irrational conversation, and illogical conduct. If we question him, we learn that each example of distorted thinking is quite inflexible. If we criticize him, we discover that he considers his misguided conduct intelligent under the circumstances that stimulate him to indulge in it. If we challenge him, we find that he defends his illogical thinking under almost any sort of condemnation or reproach. The more illogical it is, usually, the more hotly he defends it.

Obviously, therefore, a distortion has a way of getting installed so that it becomes a fixed, inflexible substitute for both volition and intelligence. Each distortion is cherished and protected by its victim, even if he is a discerning person who can see misguided conduct in others but never dreams it could afflict him.

These fixed, inflexible distortions cause erratic and irrational inclinations and predispositions, each concealed from its victim. They cause illogical and irrational conversation and conduct obvious to an undistorted person from as far as he can see or hear. They cause every kind of deviation from intelligent conduct that any of us can name.

Every irrational act can be defined as the predisposed reaction to a situation causing the victim to make a decision

which, while the decision is being formulated in his mind, feeds through one of his distortions. The distortion tells him what to do, and he does it like a monkey on a stick. In that situation he is subtly irresponsible.

Whenever that situation is repeated, his mind locks itself in a tight little circle from which it cannot escape until he has satisfied the distortion.

To the extent that his logic is distorted, he tends to live out his life like a squirrel in a revolving cage. Repeatedly he goes through the same old unrewarding motions, running himself to death because he cannot stop; indeed, often because he does not want to stop. He exhausts his energies unproductively, trying to satisfy distortions that he would instantly discard if he saw them for what they are. In repeated situations of the same general kind he makes the same old misguided decisions, and each of those decisions is exactly as wrong as the distortion that caused it. But we cannot afford to look down on him. To the extent that we have distortions, we are all in the same terrible predicament.

## Chapter 2

### *How We Install Our Distortions*

**T**HERE is a simple formula which, if we would apply it in all our daily affairs, would make us intelligent and keep us out of trouble: Always think, say and do what is right; refuse to think, say or do what is wrong. Obviously that formula is an extension of the basic law of humanetics, and the formula is fundamental to humanetics because we install our distortions when we consciously disregard its injunctions.

The formula contains so much elementary truth that the average person tends instinctively to accept it. Whether he has ever thought of it as a formula or not, he tends to base his life on it. He talks about doing the right thing, getting the right answer, living right, taking time to be right, and so on through a long string of familiar phrases.

He is gifted with an inborn persistent desire to be right in whatever he thinks, says and does, and it is a desire he cannot lightly disregard.

He tries to be right in the logical sense, because only thus can he satisfy his intelligence. He tries to be right in the expedient sense, because only thus can he satisfy his desires. He tries to be right in the moral sense, because only thus can he satisfy his conscience. He knows these three kinds of right comprise the simultaneous ingredients of absolute right, and he gets confused when there is seeming contradiction among them. He gets confused because he has

instinctive recognition that they cannot really be contradictory. Despite anything he says to the contrary in his moments of error when he hotly tries to prove a point that is not true, he has instinctive recognition that his failure to achieve absolute right offers simultaneous evidence against his intelligence, against his sense of expediency, and against his morals.

Seeming contradiction among the ingredients of absolute right is always caused by misconceptions rooted among his distortions, and those distortions do strange things to his judgment.

Because of distortions and for no other reason, the average person thinks there is an occasional distinction between logical right and expedient right, between logical right and moral right, and also between expedient right and moral right. Despite widespread misconceptions, it seems almost too prosaic to say that there is not. There is no distinction in the word itself; the distinction is only in the modifier used before the word, and the modifier designates an ingredient rather than a distinction. Right is certainly not absolute unless it has all the ingredients.

By the absolute definition, right is what is intelligent and expedient and moral, all at the same time. The right answer to a question or the right solution to a problem is the answer or solution that completely settles the question or problem. It is the answer or solution that does not need to be altered or reversed, no matter what additional facts come to light; not for reasons of logic, expediency or morality; moreover the person whose logic is undistorted never has trouble finding an absolute answer or solution; obviously the person who acts on that answer or solution is completely safe.

In the light of these facts it is clear that no person needs to be saintly or superior about his desire to be right. He just

needs to know that it is both practical and intelligent to be right, and, conversely, that it is impractical and stupid to be wrong, precisely in proportion to the degree of his wrongness. It helps if he also knows that it is moral to be right and immoral to be wrong, and that immorality is always a crime against both intelligence and expediency, but it is not really necessary at the start.

Perhaps we can reach the average person most easily through his intelligence rather than through his moral sense, not only because intelligence is generally revered while morality is often scoffed at, but also because intelligence is relatively accessible through the paths of logic. By appeal to intelligence, therefore, it is relatively easy to avoid prejudice; and that is another way of saying it is relatively easy to get the necessary information past his distortions. Moreover, if he traces out the logic of humanetics, he does not need to take anything on faith. He can continue to complain that morality and intelligence often seem contradictory, and he can remain skeptical right up to the point where his mind suddenly recognizes what for him is the essential flash of elemental truth. At that point, his thinking does a quick reversal; thereafter, nothing is ever quite the same.

Since our appeal is to intelligence, let us therefore define intelligence also.

Many of us define intelligence as the ability to recognize and resolve problems. That definition is suitable as far as it goes, but intelligence is more than that. Intelligence is the ability to think, say and do what is right, in every situation of life. Intelligence is the ability to do what is right in the right way, at the right time, in the right place, and for the right reasons. It is the ability to be right to the exclusion of being wrong, and to see that every ingredient of right is

included in full measure. It is the ability to live by the principle of absolute right, and that is a reliable definition of absolute intelligence.

Now that we have created a foundation of principle, here is a simple definition that really cuts to the heart of the matter. The definition is valid for every person not too blinded by distortions, and an undistorted person would find it not worth mentioning: Intelligence is the ability simultaneously to satisfy every demand of both expediency and conscience, however exacting, by effortless use of ordinary logic.

The average person instinctively knows he should be able thus to rely on logic, and that is what gives him his persistent sense of rightness in daily life. He *does* thus rely on logic, and he does it almost all the time, despite the fact that he hears and says so much that denies his ability to do it successfully. Sometimes the denial is bitter and loud, which only shows its irrationality, and only the irrational denial of these elemental truths makes it necessary to state them. But no denial can contradict elemental truths, and the average person instinctively recognizes an elemental truth even when he has long denied it. Despite his denial, therefore, he has a persistent urge to be as right as he can in as many ways as he can as much of the time as he can. He can deny he has that urge, and often does, to protect and conceal his distortions, but, try as he may, he cannot kill it. He cannot stop basing his life on it.

Everlastingly, and for reasons now clearly established, he wants to be right.

He wants to be right so badly he almost *has* to be right. Nothing prevents him from being right, really, except his distortions, and because of his incentives to be right he must somehow convince himself he is right whether he is right or

not. Nearly always, therefore, he thinks he *is* right.

Of course he is willing to admit in a general way that he makes mistakes. He knows he cannot successfully deny that he, like others, is prone to error; therefore, only by that admission can he protect his illusion of perpetual rightness. But he puts his admission on the basis of a lofty academic assumption. He expresses it with at least a rudimentary chip on his shoulder, and characteristically emphasizes that everyone else makes mistakes also.

We learn more about what he thinks when someone has the temerity to point out one of his deep-rooted persistent mistakes. We then find that although he ordinarily denies every pretension to infallibility, he suddenly has a sense of infallibility that is well-nigh impregnable as it relates to that particular mistake. We find him getting emotional about it, and we quickly see that his delusion of infallibility springs out of an urge so strong that it makes him deny the principle of absolute right, if he must, rather than admit he is wrong.

That is how he conducts himself in a moral crisis, when his rightness is challenged, but if we observe him in his usual mood we find that insofar as he understands the principle of absolute right, he thinks he lives by it in all his daily affairs. We find that he has an all-pervading illusion of perpetual rightness, and that is understandable, because if he did not somehow consider a thing right he would not do it.

Despite his illusion, however, he still gets into occasional or frequent trouble. Instinctively he knows that trouble is an evidence of wrong. That seems to contradict his use of the formula, but he has an explanation for it; an explanation that is equal to every emergency. His explanation is that trouble is caused by other people or by bad breaks.

The explanation, however unconvincing it looks to others, somehow satisfies him. How could trouble be his

fault when he always and interminably and instinctively considers himself right?

The fact that he is in trouble does not dissuade him from his assumption that he is right. Although the assumption is often false, he has to make it anyhow. To do otherwise, he would have to contradict every natural instinct. He would have to abandon his illusion that he lives by the principle of absolute right. He would have to doubt his faculties. He cannot do that, because he has nothing but his faculties to depend on. He cannot doubt his faculties without doubting his sanity. If he did that, he would soon become frantic.

From all these considerations it must be obvious, the average person cannot easily do what he knows is wrong.

## II

Part of the function of a distortion is to destroy ability to distinguish between right and wrong on the subject of the distortion. When a person does what is wrong, it is nearly always because he has a distortion telling him that the wrong is not really wrong but right. Unless he has the distortion ready and waiting because he installed it earlier, he installs it before he proceeds with the wrong act. When he does proceed, he is unaware of the wrongness because it is concealed by the distortion.

Here is a theoretical explanation that fits the obvious facts.

Picture the brain as an intricate electronic calculating machine, with thought impulses flowing through its circuits and connections. Visualize each distortion as a jumper that shorts out the real logic of a normal circuit, and substitutes the false logic of an improper element in the jumper, such as

a vacuum tube (or counterfeit faculty) that does not belong in the circuit. Thus the jumper constitutes a counterfeit faculty which guarantees that a wrong impulse, and the same wrong impulse, will emerge every time thinking feeds through the affected circuit.

Every time a person establishes a path of immoral and illogical thought, he makes it permanent by installing it in a jumper containing exactly the counterfeit faculty (or distortion) needed to give thought impulses the same twist in the same situation thereafter.

When the same situation arises again, thinking cannot go through the normal circuit. It goes through the jumper instead. In the jumper it is given the twist of the distortion, and the twisting is so positive that it becomes impossible to resist. The impulse comes out altered and twisted and distorted to fit the pattern of the thinking done at the time the distortion was installed. It comes out in the form of an uncensored impulse to think, say or do what the distortion was installed to justify and permit. All the victim can do is to submit.

With that piece of theoretical explanation behind us, let us now be quite specific in saying how a distortion gets installed.

Every distortion results from intentional and voluntary wrongdoing by the individual himself. It gets installed under conflict between duty and desire, when he knowingly makes an immoral and illogical choice for the sake of expediency. It gets installed when he knowingly seeks an immoral and illogical goal, or when he knowingly takes an immoral and illogical shortcut to a worthy goal. It gets installed in a moment of laxity and bad judgment, when he yields to temptation and consciously violates the principle of absolute right.

He may formulate the distortion painfully and slowly, in protracted conflict with some persistent temptation, or he may create it in a sudden flash of spontaneous emotion. But no matter what the circumstances, the distortion originates in a very simple way. It gets installed when he somehow persuades himself that wrong is right. The whole process, once understood, becomes striking and obvious and clear.

No person can do what is wrong unless he somehow satisfies his instinctive desire to be right. He must satisfy that desire despite his intention to be wrong. To do that, he must use his intelligence to contradict his conscience. More serious, he must use his intelligence to contradict his intelligence.

He does it by rationalizing.

Rationalizing is the process by which irrational conduct is made to seem rational, and it is obvious that rational conduct needs no such attention. Irrational conduct is conduct that is illogical and immoral and therefore wrong. It is conduct that a person must explain and justify to himself. It is conduct that causes him to find reasons and excuses for doing what is both immoral and illogical, and he must find reasons and excuses that are convincing enough to persuade him that what he at first knew was wrong is not really wrong but right.

Every time he accepts one of those reasons or excuses he puts a lie into his mind, and he necessarily believes the lie or it would not mislead him. The instant he accepts that lie as valid, he has installed a distortion.

In reality, the lie *is* the distortion.

Almost always he installs a distortion somehow telling him that what is wrong is really right, but occasionally there is an exception. Occasionally he would need a greater degree of self-deception than he could thus accomplish in one step.

He can always install a new distortion to help his mind jump a small gap of logic and morality, but not a big gap. He must generate a great deal of emotion to jump a big gap, and if he cannot generate that emotion he cannot get his mind to jump a big gap unless he has previously collected a chain of successive and supplementary distortions, all on the same general subject, each helping to close the same gap, and has them ready and waiting. That is easy to do, because every distortion on a new subject is likely to collect additional distortions, often hundreds and even thousands of them, as has been demonstrated by careful experiment. Unless he has exactly the right chain ready and waiting, and unless it is a sufficiently extensive chain that his logic and morals already deviate far from normal, he cannot do what is blatantly wrong.

When he is tempted to do what is too blatantly wrong, which means when he is tempted to do what his distortions will not yet permit, he cannot delude himself without resorting to indirect technique. But he has an indirect technique for meeting that precise situation.

On occasion, for example, he will lie, cheat, steal, or take unfair advantage. Each of those acts, by definition, is so clearly and unequivocally wrong that there can be no mistake. He commits the wrong act knowing it is wrong. He knows others know it is wrong. He shows he knows it by his efforts at self-protection, secrecy and concealment. But he does not proceed until his mind somehow neutralizes the wrong for his own benefit, and lets him convince himself that he is justified in doing what he quite definitely knows is wrong.

He cannot do that unless he has or installs a distortion somehow telling him that in the particular situation he faces, regardless of disapproval and possible punishment by others

if he gets caught in his wrong act, it is right and proper and logical for him to commit the wrong act. Perhaps there are a thousand ways he can install the distortion. One way might be to persuade himself that every sane and intelligent person would do the same thing when confronted by the same opportunity, and that he is therefore not sane unless he does it too.

No matter what specific form the distortion takes, it must somehow tell him that he is right to do what he knows is wrong, and that only shows how much mental derangement a distortion can cause in a seemingly normal person.

At first it is hard to see that the derangement is lasting.

Many of us, when encountering this analysis for the first time, are inclined to think a distortion would get used once for its intended purpose, and then drop out. Such is not the case. Thousands of painstaking experiments show that it is not the case. That realization contains what is perhaps the central surprise of humanetics. It makes sudden and complete sense to every person who understands it, and it gives the breath of life to every aspect of the theory of humanetics, and to every technique based on that theory.

Here is the explanation.

The purpose of a distortion is to permit the individual to commit a wrong act under the delusion that nothing is amiss. He must conceal the distortion from himself to get that freedom. He must flatly convince himself that the distortion does not exist. That is an essential part of its installation. After he has used the distortion to justify and permit the wrong act, its concealment prevents him from recognizing that it has been installed. Therefore, without knowing it, he leaves the distortion in his mind.

Once installed, a distortion stays installed.

After we know how to look for it, we can easily see

evidence of this fact on all sides. We can see it in people's irrational and illogical conduct, and especially in their conversation.

What is especially revealing about conversation is that it affords direct outward expression of the processes of thought. Through that expression any of us can soon learn to recognize that the average person does most of his thinking through the old rationalizations he once used to install distortions.

No one rationalizes unless he is thinking through old distortions or installing new ones. He is deluded by his old rationalizations because he once tried to be deluded by them. He is deluded by his new rationalizations because he is now trying to be deluded by them. He is not aware of his old rationalizations because he once convinced himself they were not rationalizations. He is not aware of his new rationalizations because he has his mind on his object of temptation.

Often the rationalizing of an intelligent person is almost unbelievably clever. It may or may not be clever enough to fool impartial observers who suffer from a normal quantity of distortions themselves, but it is always clever enough to fool the person who does the rationalizing. Otherwise it would not create and sustain his distortions. In other words, it would not work.

### III

Operation of a distortion is akin to hypnosis, and, although no one knows just what hypnosis is, there is evidence that a distortion results from voluntary hypnosis by self or others. Whether a distortion actually results from hypnosis or not is perhaps an academic matter, but we can

profitably think of it that way for study purposes, because we thus make the operation of a distortion easy to grasp and understand.

Every type of distortion can be installed under hypnosis, can be explained by hypnosis, and operates with the effect of hypnosis.

In every situation causing a distortion to assume control of its victim, the following facts can be noted: Exactly as though under a prolonged hypnotic spell, he believes what his distortion tells him to believe. Exactly as though under the power of a post-hypnotic suggestion, he thinks, says and does, uncritically and without hesitation, whatever the distortion demands. Exactly as though in an extended hypnotic trance, he loses partial control of his volition.

#### IV

A distortion may be installed at any stage of life. All that is necessary is for the individual to indulge in wrong thinking, or to justify wrong words or wrong action of some kind. At first glance, it might appear that we therefore need a detailed list of distinctions between right and wrong, so as to keep out of trouble, but that is a delusion.

No person can install a distortion except by justifying what he personally knows is wrong; and, on any subject not already confused by prior distortions, his knowledge is absolute. Even if we gave him an accurate list of distinctions, he would understand it only to the extent that he is free from distortions; precisely to that extent, moreover, he would not need the list. Every item would be unbelievable or else trite, and thus we see that he would need exactly what he cannot grasp.

The obstacle is that he has confused his ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and his confusion goes back to early childhood and infancy, a fact which calls for special attention.

Much evidence suggests that every child is born without distortions, and humanetics has no record of a distortion originating prior to birth. But much evidence also suggests that every child is born with an emotional predisposition toward certain kinds of distortions. His emotional predisposition is largely determined by the predominant emotions his mother experienced during pregnancy, and it is worth a good deal to know what the predominant emotions were. If she was predominantly angry he is born with an emotional predisposition toward anger, for example, and anger might likely invite him to install many distortions telling him in one way or another that it is intelligent to display anger in various situations of life.

Emotional predisposition may be intensified or acquired after birth, as when a child is abused so often he develops a pattern of fear, or when he is tormented so often he develops a pattern of anger. If he is born with an emotional predisposition toward anger, and then is subjected to more or less systematic torment by a distorted parent or other relative, it is easy to see that he would thus be invited to become a walking powerhouse of heavily charged emotion looking for places to blow off, and at the same time a walking bundle of multitudinous distortions based on anger, giving him an unsuspected guarantee that his emotions will always blow off in some unintelligent way. Such persons abound in our society, and the trained eye can pick them out of crowds on the street.

Negative emotion is any emotion aimed in a wrong direction or having the effect of reducing intelligence. Every

negative emotion causes its peculiar kind of predisposition, and there are many negative emotions: anger, jealousy, fear, hatred, and various others. Some of those emotions may be felt at the moment of birth, and much evidence shows that the infant starts accumulating distortions as soon as he starts feeling his negative emotions.

At first the process of installing a distortion is much more emotional than intellectual. Driven by emotion, the infant is impelled to do what goes against the grain because it is wrong. If the emotion is powerful enough, he proceeds anyhow, but he must justify himself as definitely as must an adult. By justifying wrong choices and wrong conduct, he can start installing distortions in his first day of life.

An infant can install a distortion by using an emotional outburst to dominate his mother. Unless that distortion is somehow corrected, he may dominate people as an adult by staging calculated displays of anger. An infant can install a distortion by misusing the power of a smile. Unless that distortion is corrected, he may later base his life on flattery and ulterior motives.

In these and in an infinite variety of other ways, an infant can alter his thinking processes so that he grows up with a crippled mind. By installing one distortion after another in many different chains of distortions, he can ultimately permit himself to engage in any conduct, however illogical, under a delusion that he is sane and normal and intelligent to the point of genius. By the time he is old enough to be responsible for his conduct in the conventional sense, great damage may be done.

Thus distortions installed in childhood and infancy lead to additional distortions installed in adult life, even into old age. Each new distortion gets locked into the individual's system of thinking. It gets mixed and intermingled with

other distortions already locked in. Those other distortions help conceal it, and it helps conceal them. The victim himself protects the whole sorry mess by getting touchy and excited and resentful and illogical the instant anyone suggests there is anything wrong with his logic or his morals. The seriousness of his predicament could hardly be overstated.

And every person is in it.

## V

The average person lives in a cloud of grand delusion. He thinks he is sane because he makes no monstrous and intentional deviations, at least as far as he is aware, from his recognized logic. He thinks he lives by his conscience because he makes no monstrous and intentional deviations from its recognized guidance; at least, not all in one step. He may be aware of an occasional slight deviation which he tells himself is harmless, but what he does not know is that with each new deviation he destroys his ability to recognize the same deviation or to see what is wrong about it thereafter. Nor does he know that each new deviation increases his total deviation. Nor does he know that he thus works his way down by imperceptible degrees, until he reaches unsuspected levels of depravity that would shock him if he could suddenly understand them, and the only reason he cannot understand, really, is that he hides the knowledge from himself as he goes along.

By continuing that process long enough he could ultimately justify feeding Christians to lions; he could feel quite virtuous about doing it publicly, before an assembled populace of similarly distorted spectators, as was quite effectively demonstrated by an earlier generation.

We think we are more intelligent and more civilized than preceding generations, and we persist in our delusion despite the fact that our own generation reached new low levels in the mass depravities of mass killings and mass enslavements, to mention the two leading depravities most likely to be believed because the evidence is so conclusive it must penetrate almost anyone's distortions. But each new generation has its peculiar ways of denying truth and refusing to look facts in the face.

Truth has recently been concealed by a cleverly disguised trap of conventional thinking, innocently promulgated and innocently accepted, but a trap which must be recognized and understood by every one of its victims before he can correct his distortions or stop installing new ones. The trap is that we popularly blame all our character defects on mistreatment and abuse we suffered while too young to understand or resist. The trap is based on widely circulated expert opinion, and it is attractively baited to catch the unwary person because the bait gives him soothing balm for his ego and his conscience, provided his intelligence lets him accept it.

The bait has a deceptively valid-looking attachment to truth. It is true that many of our distortions are installed under early abuse, and we get so wrought up over the abusers that we do not see where we went wrong ourselves. We go to our abusers in our minds, and there we stay.

We lock ourselves in a vicious circle of seemingly logical explanation, and thus we succumb to the popular delusion that all our troubles are other people's fault. Mentally we go from one oppressor to another, persistently excusing ourselves and heaping new blame on them, and we do nearly all our subsequent analyzing for the explicit purpose of confirming every misguided judgment originally formed.

We hammer every distortion more tightly into place. So universal is this practice that few of us have ever learned we cannot get into trouble unless we are first wrong.

Habitually blaming others while excusing ourselves represents the usual sort of thinking, as everyone who stops to consider it will suddenly realize, and it only installs more and more distortions. It invites us to go on causing all sorts of trouble. It tells us we must alter other people's conduct as a preliminary to correcting trouble for ourselves. Thus it confronts us with what is nearly always an impossible task.

All that sort of thinking feeds through our distortions, and only our distortions keep us from recognizing its incongruity. Only our distortions keep us from recognizing the true nature of abuse.

Abuse always results from distortions, although it is difficult for a distorted person to believe that. The usual routine is that his distortions cause him to invite abuse. When the abuse comes, it may be very real, and under it, he is likely to install more distortions. Thus he is caught in another vicious circle. Because he has distortions he invites and gets abuse; because he invites and gets abuse he acquires new distortions; because of the new distortions he invites and gets more abuse.

To break that up, he needs a reversal of approach to life.

He cannot wisely shrug off personal responsibility for his troubles by saying they result from lack of proper treatment in his tender years. He was given the treatment he was given, and that is that.

Shrugging off personal responsibility denies him the chance to correct what went wrong. It limits his approach to one that will not work. To avoid what will not work, he must get his thinking on a constructive basis. He can do that just by accepting two well-known facts: First, many of us who

are mistreated during infancy turn out well; and second, many of us who are wanted and loved and given every opportunity turn out badly. From those two facts it is obvious that something besides the treatment we get as children is the real controlling factor.

What it is has long remained unrecognized, but it is something in the child himself.

It is the distinctions he makes between right and wrong. Especially, it is his justifying of wrong conduct that results from wrong choices, no matter what the provocation, and no matter what excuses he may later dream up.

Other things being equal, a child often mistreated installs more distortions than a child seldom mistreated. The reason is that a child often mistreated is given more temptation to install distortions. It is not the mistreatment which installs his distortions, however, but his reactions to the mistreatment. When his reaction is wrong he installs a distortion. But the mistreatment is not directly responsible for the distortion, because he installs a distortion also when his reaction to good treatment is wrong.

Of course there is no satisfactory excuse for a person who mistreats a child and thus encourages the child to install distortions, except that mistreatment arises out of distortions in the person responsible for the mistreatment.

A person systematically trying to do it could induce almost any child to install distortions one after another in endless chains. He could do it by stimulating the child's negative emotions, thus causing the child's thinking to feed through distortions already installed. By continuing that process long enough, he could quite completely ruin the child's life, or even cause the child's death, as has many times been done inadvertently by a distorted parent or other relative who did not know what he was doing.

Little ingenuity would be needed to demonstrate that distorted parents and other relatives thus indirectly invite the average child to install a large proportion of his distortions, but that would only tempt the formerly abused child to feel sorry for himself after he becomes an adult. It is more appropriate to remember that only the child's wrong reaction permits him thus to be victimized. Each person must ultimately face that hard fact or else keep the distortions that have kept his life off balance.

## Chapter 3

### *How Our Distortions Afflict Us*

**O**FTEN we say life is controlled by habits, but that is incorrect. A person with undistorted logic manages his life to suit himself, but a person with distorted logic, to the extent that his logic is distorted, is a person who has lost his freedom of action and speech because he has lost his freedom of thought. Like a willing but irresponsible marionette, he is managed and controlled by his distortions.

Let us analyze the distinction.

A good habit is an acquired skill. It is a voluntary pattern of logical conduct, repeated so often it has become instinctive. Thus the individual gains a ready-made response to a repetitive situation. The telephone rings, and he answers. His boss sends for him, and he goes. A traffic signal turns red, and he stops his car. A friend greets him, and he responds.

A good habit is built into his muscles and his nervous system.

By his good habits he can walk, talk, shave, play the piano, and perform all sorts of intricate tasks once he has learned them. He could not get along without good habits, but they serve him and do not control him. He does not get emotional about them, nor does he need to rationalize them, and they do not lead him into trouble. He can turn them on and off as he chooses.

He cannot do that with a distortion.

In the appropriate situations a distortion possesses his conscious will without his knowledge. It gets control of his conduct by causing him unknowingly to abdicate his self-direction. It misleads and deludes him and persons who know him, causing them to think he is making his decisions consciously and intentionally.

He seldom suspects he has lost any of his volition unless and until he tries to stop making some repeated illogical decision, as, for example, when he tries to stop what we call a bad habit. He cannot stop the bad habit without correcting the distortion or distortions behind it; but rarely does he try to stop. Instead, no matter how illogical the bad habit, and no matter how illogical the decisions he must make to perpetuate it, he goes right on making the same old decisions in the same old way, each time the same general conditions arise to send his thinking through the same old distortions. Whenever necessary, he dreams up justifying explanations, however fantastic they may be.

Let us now pause to summarize the basic afflictions caused by a distortion.

It destroys his ability to be logical on any topic involving the principle or principles infringed by the lie he used to justify the original wrong conduct. Until specifically removed, it becomes a fixed piece of mental equipment and a permanent tool of thought. It constitutes an artificial channel of false logic which subtly bypasses the real logic that would be used if no distortion existed. It becomes a counterfeit faculty which thereafter gets used again and again, in all sorts of situations that seemingly have little or nothing to do with the original wrong act.

That counterfeit faculty seems so utterly valid and reliable that it is unquestioningly accepted and used in place

of the genuine faculty which the victim does not know he has lost.

It alters his decisions, and shows in his conversation and conduct. It is no more rational than a rubber stamp. It throws his thinking off the track by causing endlessly the same sort of wrong decisions it was installed to facilitate and permit. It causes all those wrong decisions without his realizing anything is amiss, whether he wants it to or not. It always misleads and endlessly deludes him into supposing he makes those wrong decisions himself, intentionally and on purpose, and it also deludes him into supposing those wrong decisions are right.

What makes this serious is that every time a distortion gets used as a tool of thought, it guarantees that the results of the thinking will somehow be illogical and irrational and wrong. And it is a sad fact that the average person does much of his ordinary thinking through his unsuspected distortions. That is why he gets into troubles he cannot explain or understand and instinctively blames on other people or on factors outside himself.

At first it is hard to see how a distortion could thus insidiously control and delude an otherwise intelligent person, so let us look further into the details.

Every act begins as an emotional impulse. Commonly the impulse is a response to a situation, to a person, to a remark, to some action in the environment, to an opportunity, to an inner need or desire, or to anything else that invites response. The impulse may be mild or strong, ranging, for example, from slight displeasure to boiling anger, and it may be any emotion, such as fear, cupidity, resentment, jealousy, ambition, and so on. When the emotion is strong enough, it drives the individual to thought, and through the channels of thought, to speech and action.

If there is a distortion on the subject causing the impulse, the emotion drives thinking through that distortion. When thinking leaves the distortion, no matter what its form when it entered, it has assumed the peculiar twist of the distortion. Thus what started as a natural response has become, in effect, an unnatural command telling the individual how to respond. It tells him in a general way what to think, say and do in the situation which set off the impulse, and it causes his brain to figure out the details. It has become an illogical command somehow giving and requiring new expression of the original wrong thinking that installed the distortion. It tells him to make the same old wrong decision and the same old mistake in some new way, as it has already done perhaps ten thousand times since the distortion was installed.

The command has the effect of compulsion.

It is obeyed for three special reasons: First, because he thinks he issues the command himself; second, because the distortion makes the command seem logical to him; and third, because the distortion so completely dominates him that he considers no other possibility. He has the delusion of self-direction, but only because he does not know what is going on. Therefore he voluntarily carries out the command, and often quite enthusiastically throws himself into the task. He supplies the physical and emotional energy, and spends himself in some unintelligent direction because the command of an unrecognized and seemingly unreal distortion has captured and imprisoned his mind.

The first evil of a distortion, then, is that it controls its victim's conduct and speech by controlling his emotions and intelligence.

When a distortion is getting used, emotion actuates the command and intelligence figures out how to satisfy it. The more unintelligent and irrational the conduct demanded by

the distortion, as when it tells him to do what is both difficult and senseless, the harder he must work to satisfy the command. Thus the distortion uses his brain and his emotions as well as his voice and his body to carry out the illogical command, always in some degree to his detriment. It also uses his brain to do any necessary rationalizing, so that he can explain and justify his illogical conduct to others and to himself. Like the slave that he is, he pours all necessary mental, physical and emotional energies into the process.

## II

Another evil is that distortions nullify his intelligence by disrupting his logic.

Results are catastrophic, because logic is the basic process of intelligent thinking. Contrary to a popular notion, logic is not an artificial process of thinking that needs to be learned out of a book. Instead, it is the process of thinking we all use naturally. Instinctively the average person understands, for example, that there can be no such thing as two contradictory facts. The proposition is an axiom so obvious and self-evident that it does not need to be stated; therefore he does not need to be told.

Every normal person uses logic whether he knows he is using it or not. He really has no other way of thinking. The more he knows about logic the better for him, because he can use logic to check and prevent deviations caused by certain of his distortions. But no matter how much he knows about logic, there is a limitation on his use of it. He can successfully use it only to the extent that his distortions let him.

To the evils of a distortion, then, we must add the fact that it destroys his ability to use his natural thinking process. When a distortion gets used in his thinking, in effect it cripples his mind. It reduces his ability to manage his affairs. It causes his thinking to be illogical and unintelligent, although his thinking invariably seems both logical and intelligent to him.

There are other negative effects on intelligence; and here is one which perhaps cannot be understood until it is learned by experience.

We have long known that the average person gets along on a small part of his natural faculties. We have not known what deprives him of the remaining faculties, but humanetics has pierced that mystery. The unused faculties are progressively turned off and blanked out by the individual himself, from the time of birth. They are blanked out by his installation of distortions.

Some of the unused faculties merely become inaccessible because they are supplanted by the counterfeit faculties containing the distortions. Others are weakened or turned off over a long period of time, because of reduced brainpower resulting from distortions, until they are forgotten. Every person who turns them on again gets a series of surprises, because he regains faculties he never knew were part of his normal human equipment.

The next evil of a distortion is that it blanks out innumerable areas of memory.

We are so accustomed to the disabilities resulting from our distortions that few of us consider it normal to remember what happened in very early life, although the person who corrects his distortions finds that his memory goes back farther and farther until finally he recaptures much more than he would expect. He does it partly by

recapturing many blanked out areas of memory, each lasting anywhere from a few seconds to perhaps weeks or months.

He lost those areas of memory for the simple reason that he was trying to lose them. They contain information which, for one reason or another, he wanted to forget.

There is only one reason why any person gets into a situation he would like to forget; that is because his distortions lead him into it. There is only one way to get out of that situation sensibly, and that is to correct the distortions. Once he has done that, he feels no further sensation of distress. He can do it at any time after he is willing to make the necessary mental adjustments, even if the adjusting is done forty years later. As a result of the adjusting, he immediately recaptures what he blanked out. He simply would not believe in advance how much of his past life has thus been lost and therefore can thus be recaptured.

Still another evil results from the fact that every distortion requires constant emotional energy to sustain it and support it and keep it intact.

No one can install a distortion the way he drives a nail into a board, and then let the distortion do its own holding. Instead, he must perpetually do the holding himself. He is not aware of the effort, because he does the holding in the subconscious levels, but as he increases the number of his distortions, he thus increases his subconscious burdens. As he increases his subconscious burdens, he correspondingly increases the proportion of his brainpower that he must use in the subconscious levels. He reduces his area of present-minded consciousness, by increasing the amount of information he must deny and hide from himself to protect his distortions, and he has less and less awareness as his distortions increase. As a result he becomes absent-minded

in a subtle manner he cannot detect or even recognize when it is called to his attention. He suffers a loss of acuity in all his senses. He loses part of his aliveness, and his condition is unnoticed because everyone he knows is in much the same predicament.

Perhaps every evil of a distortion somehow exerts a negative influence on the thinking ability of the victim.

His thinking ability suffers because his ability to use logic is impaired, because many of his native faculties are blanked out, because his intelligence is expended in wrong and detrimental directions, because he is deprived of brainpower, because his memory is weakened, because his awareness is reduced, because his emotions are laid bare when thinking feeds through one of his distortions, and also because subconscious burdens resulting from his distortions markedly reduce his supplies of emotional energy available for his daily use.

We talk of brain work as though it were a direct counterpart of physical work, but in that we err. There is no such thing as brain work, in the sense that the brain is not an organ for producing or consuming energy. The energy of brain work is emotional energy, and brain work is therefore emotional work. The brain is a warehouse of information and a complicated mass of communication lines, switchboards, calculating devices, and so on, but the drive of brainpower is emotional excitement. Moreover, when brainpower is properly harnessed, the result is additional emotional excitement. If thinking is logical and sound the resulting excitement is entirely constructive and can be put to good use. Only distorted thinking causes emotional energy to be used destructively; and the end result of distorted thinking is emotional and physical debility that gradually becomes complete.

## III

Progressive reduction of emotional energy, due to distortions, gradually deprives the individual of ability to manage his physiological processes on the subconscious levels. Negative effects on his health may range through a wide variety of both conventional and unconventional ailments. Thus his health may suffer indirectly, but it may also suffer directly.

He may have distortions telling him to do what undermines and destroys his health, for example, or telling him to refrain from what would protect it. Beyond that, he may have distortions telling him quite definitely to be sick, even specifically naming the disease. He may have distortions telling him to die, or to kill himself. If he does, all he needs is a strong enough charge of emotion that drives his thinking through one of those distortions, and he will act on its prompting. In this connection, it is perhaps important to emphasize what every thinking person already knows: that the difference between life and death is often no more than a few inches or feet in cases of accident; and often no more than a word or a phrase in any case, especially where emotions are involved.

Mention of emotions brings us to another basic evil of distortions, and it is one that destroys both happiness and peace of mind for the person who suffers from it.

Every distortion can trigger off repeated charges of the same negative emotion existing at the time the distortion was installed, and that emotion is capable of restimulation by any event reminding him of the original incident in which the distortion was installed. He does not need to be aware of the reminding, because it can occur in subconscious levels, but a result of the reminding may be

restimulation of the original emotion either mildly or to the intensity of its original strength. If he was afraid, he is afraid all over again. No matter what was the original emotion, it returns to plague him again. But there is one significant difference.

Originally he knew what caused his negative emotion, but when the same emotion is restimulated he does not. He has forgotten the event. He only knows that he is somehow indefinably disturbed, irritable, excited, upset, edgy, and so on. Perhaps he finds something in his environment to blame for his disturbance, and thus gives himself an illusion that his emotion is logical and rational. That does him little good. There is only one way for him to correct the emotional distress from which he suffers, whether the suffering is occasional or chronic. That is to correct the distortions capable of restimulating the emotional charges.

Until a distortion is specifically corrected, its emotional charge can be restimulated by a variety of different means. Especially, it can be restimulated by a person who figured in the incident during which the distortion was originally installed. That is why so many close relatives have trouble getting along with each other; they restimulate each other's negative emotions and thereby cause each other's thinking to feed through old distortions. They can stop all that by correcting their distortions. Each person who corrects his distortions, without regard to what is done by others, stops restimulation in himself.

This chapter gives only the briefest practical summary the evils caused by distortions, but the summary shows that those evils could scarcely be exaggerated.

Let us now review the evils in a basic sense.

We have seen that distortions control a person's conduct and deprive him of his intelligence and cause him to lose

certain of his faculties. Thus they cause his confusions and mistakes.

Every mistake results from using a distortion as a channel of thought. Therefore a person cannot see his mistakes before or after he makes them. He does not know when, how, or why he is wrong. He does not know he *is* wrong. He cannot avoid being wrong repeatedly, no matter how great his intelligence, until he corrects his distortions. Meanwhile he does not know his logic is distorted, but relies on it just as though he had a perfect mind gifted with perfect intelligence. Quite naturally, that gets him into a great deal of trouble.

What kinds of trouble? Every kind we could name.

Distortions cause him to have accidents; even his accidents that seemingly are unavoidable or seemingly are caused by someone else. Distortions undermine his health and may cause his death, although some conventional disease doubtless graces the death certificate. Distortions cause his failures and defeats. Distortions get him into occasional and perhaps endless controversies and conflicts, even with his relatives and friends, and usually delude him into supposing that none of those controversies and conflicts are his fault.

All those kinds of trouble, and many more, arise only because his brain is afflicted by counterfeit faculties, and he never suspects it. But trouble does not arise until he first uses a distortion as a tool of thought, and fails to use correct logic because correct logic is blanked out.

Evidence of this is found in the results of much painstaking research. Evidence is also found in the fact that every person who starts eliminating his counterfeit faculties, in addition to getting back his lost brainpower, also correspondingly corrects his logic and reduces his troubles

of all sorts. Often the change is immediate and abrupt.

As a result of all this evidence, it is easy to see that we have unsuspected tendencies to think, say and do what is illogical when our counterfeit faculties (or distortions) get used in place of our genuine faculties that have been blanked out.

Because of our distortions, people cannot understand themselves and each other. Because of our distortions, we live under conditions that suggest a modern counterpart of the confusion visited on the builders of the ancient Tower of Babel.

The resulting confusion is both subtle and enormous.

Many distortions are peculiar to the persons who possess them, and, as between individuals, have no consistent pattern. But they show up in conversation and conduct; hence they cause misunderstandings and conflict. Other distortions are widely shared, and are common to large national or racial groups. Hence they lead to widespread group irrationality and wars. Some of the shared distortions afflict all or nearly all the human race, and they have kept mankind in varying degrees of bondage throughout the ages.

That can now be stopped.

## Chapter 4

### *How We Correct Our Distortions*

THE insidious thing about our distortions is that we have lived with them so long we do not consider them in any way abnormal. Quite the contrary. We have long since started considering them entirely untouchable and sacred. We won't have them meddled with. We want to go on using them. More serious, we want to go on accumulating new ones as occasions seem to require.

That is only because we do not understand distortions.

Without knowing what we were getting into, we all started accumulating distortions in early infancy. Most of us go on accumulating them all our lives. But no person would be willing to retain a distortion that prevents him from thinking intelligently, not after he has learned its exact nature and how it afflicts him. No person would be willing to install additional distortions, not after he knows what he is doing and how he is doing it.

Instead, he would put himself on the road to complete and permanent correction of his existing distortions.

No matter how early in life a distortion was installed, there is a simple technique for removing it. See and recognize the distortion for exactly what it is. Often removal is helped if the circumstances of original installation are remembered in detail, but usually that is necessary only when the distortion cannot be attacked more directly.

Any person who can put a distortion into his mind can get it out again. He gets it out by reversing the process of putting it in. When he reverses the process, the distortion comes out as definitely as does a pulled tooth. By just that much, he changes his life for the better.

At once the counterfeit faculty is destroyed. Instantly the genuine faculty, blanked out by the distortion, is restored. Lost brainpower is regained. Subconscious emotional burdens, and occasionally conscious emotional burdens, are suddenly shed. There is a corresponding inner relaxation which may or may not be evident, and the individual is more alive. Perhaps most important, logic on the subject of the distortion instantly reverts to normal.

All this can be accomplished just by recognizing a distortion as a distortion.

The person who starts getting rid of his distortions invariably finds that he has increasing physical and emotional energy available for conscious use. As he progresses he stops doing what is illogical because he can see that it is illogical. He stops making mistakes and getting himself and other people into trouble, because he stops doing what is unintelligent and wrong. He loses his tendency to blame his troubles on factors outside himself. He gets full control of his thinking processes.

He starts to notice the difference in himself almost as soon as he starts correcting his distortions. Soon other people start to notice it too. Increasingly they become puzzled, and presently amazed, as they watch the outward transformation of his appearance, his personality, and his character.

His transformation is quite natural and to be expected, because he is in the process of becoming an undistorted person.

An undistorted person is fit to live with, fit to work with, fit to deal with in every human association. He shows that it is intelligent to be clean and decent and honest and moral, just as it is unintelligent to be immoral and illogical and dishonest and wrong. Even under adverse conditions, he can get along with anyone.

Becoming an undistorted person involves a change that is fundamental, because it involves a reversed approach to life. The change is easy, because for the first time in his life the individual becomes free to do as he pleases. The change is exhilarating because he releases abundant energies such as he could hardly imagine in advance. The change affords him more advantages than he would be willing to believe until he learns of them by experience.

Some persons at first fear that correcting their distortions will interfere with their freedom of action. They wonder whether they will be able to get themselves to do what they must do to be right, and whether they will enjoy doing it. But they soon drop all that wondering, because they learn that only the person with an undistorted mind *can* make right choices. To wonder whether he will do it when he can is to wonder whether he will be logical and intelligent and right when he has that choice as an alternative to being illogical and unintelligent and wrong.

A person devoid of distortions has full use of his faculties. He is the only person who has. Because his faculties are complete, he provides a reasoned and intelligent response in every situation. He gets along in a manner quite incomprehensible to the person whose logic is distorted. The person afflicted with distortions, however, finds life difficult in direct proportion to the extent and seriousness of his distortions.

He has great incentive toward corrective action.

Perhaps the strongest incentive is that an undistorted person is an intelligent person. He is intelligent in a sense that transcends the intelligence of ordinary standards. His intelligence directly affects all his abilities, his health, every aspect of his well-being. His intelligence shows in what he thinks, says and does. As he corrects his distortions, he gradually discovers that he is the fortunate possessor of seemingly miraculous faculties. Ultimately he finds that he has a perfect mind gifted with perfect intelligence that he can rely on instinctively and use with little effort.

Let us see how he can create for himself that happy estate.

## II

By now it is obvious that each person can protect himself against accumulating new distortions, because every distortion is installed through the conscious mind. Temptation is the danger signal, and because each person has a brain and a conscience, as well as his sense of expediency, he has the perfect chance to stand guard over each new moral choice. He has that chance in his moment of temptation, but he forfeits it unless he uses it, because the chance is swallowed up in the resulting distortion.

Whether he successfully stands guard depends on whether he successfully applies the principle of absolute right. If he does successfully apply that principle, moreover, he starts correcting his existing distortions. Almost at once, he starts getting surprises.

A person who needs money begins to receive it, often from an unexpected source. A person who suffers from conflict and abuse at the hands of others finds his human

dealings mysteriously altered for the better. A person who cannot sleep finds rest. A person whose life is tangled into complexities beyond belief, who is tired and harassed and knows no way out of his dilemmas, discovers that his problems start untangling themselves, seemingly with little or no direct attention. No person can faithfully apply the principle without getting spectacular results, and only spectacular results can attest that he is faithful in applying the principle.

Although many of the results look like miracles, they are all based on understandable sequences of cause and effect. Although a result is often difficult to explain to an uninitiated person, there is always a logical explanation for it.

The explanation is always somehow found in the fact that counterfeit faculties are destroyed, whereas blanked-out logic and lost brainpower are recaptured and used. It is easy to trace out that explanation in almost any individual case. Always the explanation leads into some consideration of the altered system of motivation that suddenly begins to dominate the life of a person who starts living by an absolute standard instead of by wavering personal standards based on changing selfish objectives.

It is easy to observe the devastation wrought by changing selfish objectives.

Everyone has a more or less conscious group of selfish objectives that tend to predetermine what he thinks, says and does. Each man who must earn his family's livelihood, for example, has objectives intended to protect and advance his career. Often those objectives crystallize into what becomes his dominating motive.

He is likely to be pious about that motive. He holds it proudly forth, assuming the world will respect it. But many sins are committed in the name of that motive, for it has a

way of getting out of hand and causing distortions. Soon his definitions of right and wrong begin to readjust and base themselves on what advances or retards his career.

Automatically his competitors become his enemies. His helpers become his friends. He starts compromising his conscience in subtle ways that seem right because they all fall in line with his distortions. He seeks unfair advantages. He indulges in a hundred sharp practices considered smart by the person whose ambitions outrun his scruples.

Always he does it with what he considers good reason. Always he gives himself a complete moral whitewash.

That is why there are so many persons who cannot accept the principle of absolute right. It steps on their subconscious moral toes. It contradicts their plan of life. They are disturbed to be told there is such a principle. They scoff at it and resist every implication of its validity. They are pious and resentful about their denial of it, without knowing exactly why. They do not believe in it, and cannot believe in it, until they get rid of various distortions telling them, in one way or another, that it is sometimes right to do what is wrong. But it is really their distortions which deny the principle for them, and they say what their distortions tell them to say.

They do not know they are desperately protecting their distortions. They do not know they are doing it to protect and defend an illusory sense of personal security that is already shattered because it is based on distortions.

Even the person who does accept the principle has trouble learning to live by it. The reason is that he has so thoroughly justified his deviations from right that most of them no longer seem like deviations. They have long since become embodied in distortions that conceal them quite completely, and until those distortions are specifically

removed they continue causing deviations he cannot detect.

He had better start working on the deviations he *can* detect, and there are many of them.

Obviously no person can successfully apply the principle of absolute right while he continues doing what he thinks is wrong. Therefore it is a rule that a thing is wrong if he thinks it is wrong. That rule covers all the blatant wrongs, such as lying, cheating, stealing, taking unfair advantage, as well as a host of other wrongs on which he has little or no doubt. When he stops doing everything he thinks is wrong, he automatically corrects enough distortions to change his life for the better. He corrects every distortion somehow telling him that in certain situations it is right to do what he thinks is wrong, for example, and he is quickly surprised to learn how extensively that alters his conduct.

As a way of bringing out the pertinent points, consider the single subject of lying.

Lying is wrong by definition, and we all know it. It is manifestly unintelligent to do what is wrong, and that should be enough to end all controversy over the wisdom of lying.

As is the case with all other matters commonly obscured by distortions, the real truth is utterly simple and unconfusing. It is nevertheless conventional to suppose that lying, in certain circumstances, is both intelligent and right. That is an obvious contradiction, but it is one that cannot be dislodged without correcting the distortions behind it.

Those distortions are all supported by rationalizations, some of them quite fantastic, and often the rationalizations are so deceptively persuasive that they capture the mind of every unwary person.

Most of us will say that telling the truth often contradicts diplomacy, for example. But intelligence dictates that we should do what is right in the right way. Telling the truth

undiplomatically is not telling the truth in the right way. Therefore it is not telling the truth intelligently. To tell the truth intelligently, both complete truth and complete diplomacy are needed.

The logical and intelligent person combines them instinctively. He always knows how to do it.

He can easily dispose of every other seemingly plausible exception to the principle of absolute right. He knows exactly how he does dispose of the seeming exceptions, but he cannot explain it to a person who does not believe in the principle. Such a person knocks down every argument that is advanced, and he does not know that his reasoning is specious at every step. He invents one hair-splitting argument after another, and he never runs out of them. No matter how much logic we use to oppose his illogical reasoning, he never accepts defeat. He does not dare. If he did, he could not go on protecting his distortions.

For these and other reasons, few of us can start living by the principle of absolute right without encountering initial confusion that almost makes us abandon our intent.

Every distortion is at heart a lie, and therefore every person with a distortion on any subject is also distorted on the subject of lying. No matter how conscientiously he determines not to lie, he presently finds himself in some situation which seemingly makes it intelligent for him to lie. That is his moment of trial.

If he cannot think of anything more intelligent to do, he has no choice but to lie. Just as he might drive a nail with an old shoe instead of a hammer, he has to solve each problem with the best tool he can find. But he would not use an old shoe if he had a hammer, and by the same reasoning, he would not use a lie if he knew truth would do a better and easier job.

That suggests a procedure for advancing toward absolute right.

Before he lies, let him take a moment to think. Perhaps he will find silence more intelligent than the lie. Perhaps he will at once see that truth is more intelligent than either. Let him use the best tool he can find; he must do that anyway. But let him keep looking for the better tool, and, surprisingly often, he will find it. When he does, he will see that it is sensible to be truthful.

Every time he thus uses truth instead of a lie, he takes one more step toward an undistorted mind. After he has taken many steps on successive occasions, at last he suddenly learns what has escaped the minds of untold millions. At last he learns that lying is always unintelligent, and that truth intelligently told is always better than a lie.

Because every distortion is at heart a lie, the subject of lying is fundamental to humanetics. All lying is done to create or protect distortions. Nevertheless, the average person thinks he has gained attractive advantages by lying. He considers it intelligent to go on gaining them; therefore when told it is wrong to lie, he only dreams up contradictory arguments.

Regardless of the contradictory arguments, and without even hearing them, it can be stated categorically that every one of them is a rationalization. Every one of them is a lie that springs out of a distortion, and unless humanity recognizes this fact at long last, humanity will go on suffering.

An undeserved advantage earned by lying is manifestly indefensible, just as would be an undeserved advantage earned by murder. When lying is needed to earn a deserved advantage, it is only because something illogical was done farther back along the line. To state a specific example, the

motorist who was not speeding does not need to lie to an offensive traffic officer who improperly accuses him of speeding. On the other hand, the motorist who denies himself lying as a way out of his predicament if he gets caught speeding soon learns to be moderate about his driving. No person can resent that line of reasoning unless he has distortions he intends to keep and protect, although he will usually lie about that also, even to himself.

What is happening is that he is making a subconscious (or perhaps even conscious) decision to disregard logic and act on an emotional impulse to continue lying because he thinks he has got so much out of it in the past. If he persists in that decision, no power on earth can save him from his folly.

What these points show is that lying is the device by which distortions are installed and protected, and conversely, that refusal to lie for any reason whatever, provided the refusal is managed intelligently, affords a certain road to correction of every existing distortion. Refusal to lie in so many words, however, does not provide a comprehensive approach. That cannot be gained without additional refusal to create a false impression by any means whatever, and by still further refusal to let a false impression stand when it is created by accident.

Important as these points are, it is obvious that they do not cover the whole subject of absolute right.

Lying is only one of the forms of dishonesty, and every form of dishonesty is equally wrong in the same sense of the word. No person can live by the principle of absolute right while he continues to persist in a wrong practice of any sort. Therefore he must be honest.

An honest person insists on paying his way. He does not accept what he has not earned, nor withhold what is earned

by another. He does not cloud or distort truth. He never violates a proper confidence. He does not bluff, pretend, or put on an act. He votes his conscience instead of his cupidity. He never advocates wrong action. He refuses to take unfair advantage. He willingly receives whatever blame he deserves; at the same time, he does not blame others. He admits it invariably when he discovers he is wrong. He rejects credit to which he is not entitled. He recognizes that he causes his own troubles. He does not permit himself to hurt another person, or the interests or welfare of another person. He always discharges his responsibilities in good conscience. He never takes irresponsible chances; he does not even make irresponsible remarks. He develops his faculties and talents, and uses them for the common good. He stays out of personal conflicts. He does not give offense, nor invite offense, nor take offense.

When a person is trying to achieve honesty, he wages relentless war on the distortions that inhibit his intelligence. By doing that, he becomes more honest. Gradually he escapes the penalties of dishonesty.

Every dishonest person gets into troubles he cannot understand. But when he finds courage to face life honestly, all his troubles start dissolving as if by magic. He starts getting rid of distortions. He corrects his moral and mental blindness, and his thinking resumes its natural focus. He gets right answers where he used to get wrong answers. His confidence rises proportionately to his success in living by the principle of absolute right. Soon a new light shines in his eyes, a new spring rises in his step, a new buoyancy results from conscious and subconscious burdens suddenly shed. His rewards are beyond belief. He discovers that self-realization is the natural result of right thinking and right action.

That is certainly no more than we should expect.

A world in which the principle of absolute right is not valid would make no more sense than a world in which the law of gravity would conveniently suspend itself before every plausible-looking human whim. It would be a world of natural lawlessness and monstrous deviation from what is normal, such as we find only where the effects of our distortions are evident in human affairs.

One technique for correcting distortions, then, is to make a sincere effort to live by the principle of absolute right. There are other techniques, but there is one ingredient common to them all.

The person who starts correcting his distortions must somehow reverse his attitude on every subject covered by his distortions. He must make a basic change in his approach to life. Instead of justifying and excusing himself for his mistakes as he has done in the past, he must start being honest with himself and others. He must stop making compromises with truth. The farther he progresses with his change, the faster he can proceed, and he soon discovers techniques that are rapid indeed.

### III

Perhaps the most natural way for a beginner to start correcting his distortions is to remember and correct the wrong thinking by which he installed them. To be methodical, he must expose every lie or denial of truth by which he rationalized his misconduct in every remembered event. He must realize that every lie or denial of truth both conceals and constitutes a separate and distinct distortion. He must also realize that there may be more than one distortion in a remembered event, and that when each lie or

denial of truth is exposed for what it is, the distortion behind it goes out like a light.

Here is a brief description of suitable technique.

Collect a few ordinary recollections of events in which you may have installed distortions. Recall several events in which you got into trouble or were abused, in which you did what you knew was wrong or what someone said was wrong, or in which you felt resentment or shame or other negative emotion. Get a few recollections that make you squirm, but not so much that your judgment is destroyed. From among them, select an event of which the details come flooding back. Let it be an event containing thoughts, words or actions you have had a tendency to repeat on and off over the years, especially words and actions you repeated with misgiving while telling yourself they were not wrong but right.

It may be the event in which you filched a piece of candy from the counter in a store, in which you lied to your teacher, in which you betrayed a confidence, in which you quit your job in a huff. It may be any event at all that you suspect contained wrong conduct, can remember easily, and can remember without unreasonable or unreasoning excitement.

Such an event is accessible to your memory, and you will find one almost at the start of an honest search. If it includes conduct you convinced yourself was right when you knew it was wrong, it contains at least one distortion you can readily correct. You should be able to correct that distortion within a few minutes after you select the event, and, to correct it, all you must accomplish is to detect and confess to yourself the lie that constitutes the distortion.

With skill and experience you can safely skip nonessential details, but you are wise to start by

remembering each event at its original speed, as much as possible like a full-color sound movie.

Do not remember the event item by item as you might remember what you had for breakfast. Go back to it in your mind. Close your eyes and call up full-color memory pictures. Hear the sounds, especially the voices. Feel yourself back there, experiencing the event as you originally did, especially feeling your pangs of conscience. If you have trouble doing it, your memory is impaired by distortions. Until you recapture complete memory, get along with what you have. You will find it sufficient to help you recapture what you have lost.

Run the event through your memory to recognize and correct each distortion. Do that by considering every step in the event under the merciless searchlight of conscience. Recognize and disintegrate every rationalization by which you justified wrong thoughts, wrong words, wrong actions. Snap out each distortion, and go on to the next. As you progress it gets easy, but it may not be easy at first.

Correcting a distortion always necessitates facing some disagreeable fact. The person who knows what he stands to gain is eager to do it, but most persons are habitually unwilling. Instead, they deny every disagreeable fact; thus they undermine and gradually destroy their memories. In addition, they remember various details in ways that favor themselves; thus they distort what memories they have left. No matter how wrong they were, they go on insisting to themselves that they were not wrong but right; thus they delude themselves.

Characteristically they put all blame where it protects their precious egos, rather than where it belongs. They do it so instinctively and automatically and habitually that they do not know they do it. They have done it all their lives.

Those are the pernicious tendencies they must discard; but those tendencies are hard to break.

Almost everyone is at first horribly depressed over the prospect of seeking details uncomplimentary to himself. It goes against the grain, but only because his distortions tell him not to do it. He is reluctant to dig into the particulars of his past misdeeds, to see what he did that was wrong, and to accept blame at last for something he has always blamed on someone else. But when a person starts doing it, he soon is surprised to find himself remembering various details his memory had previously refused to deliver.

He may have tough going in the beginning, especially if he tries to be arbitrary about deciding what he wants to tackle first. But he has easy going all the way if he is content to follow the natural procedure of taking what he can easily remember at each successive step. Some of his memories are always accessible.

The difficulty with his accessible memories is not that he cannot correct their distortions. It is that he does not try to correct them. Usually he spends enough time thinking about them, but he does it to protect and defend them. He does it to strengthen and preserve them. He does it to inspect and criticize the faults of other persons who figured in the events, all the while perpetuating every misleading illusion of his own perfection. He does it to prove to himself that he was right in the beginning and is still right.

Because it once seemed intelligent to justify and excuse wrong conduct, it now seems intelligent to keep the excuses intact. Thus he persists in the dishonesty by which he installed his distortions. Whatever else that is, it certainly cannot be intelligent.

The person who jealously preserves a distortion, as we all do until we see what we are doing to ourselves, is trying

to live under a lie. Persistent protection of that lie gives him continued excuses for repetition of misconduct. Often he likes it that way. He has the illusion of getting something for nothing. If you pulled the lie out from under him, part of his world would collapse. If the lie is big enough, his whole world would collapse. But if he goes back to remember what he thought when he was trying to justify himself, nothing collapses except the distortion. He is instantly stronger. He gets back the part of his brain that he lost.

Even when he starts trying to correct his distortions, his eagerness to protect his false illusions of perfection at first makes it difficult for him to be sure whether he is doing his remembering properly in the humanetic sense.

He cannot correct a distortion by remembering, if the remembering merely duplicates the original wrong thinking. He must remember and recognize everything he thought, said or did that was wrong. He must remember and recognize exactly how and why it was wrong, and how he excused and justified it, especially to himself. He must consciously correct his wrong thinking.

All he really needs to do is to reverse the usual process.

Occasionally he does that by accident. He does it when some enlightening incident or accusation shocks him into seeing he was wrong where he had formerly considered himself right. Each time he sees that, he gets rid of a distortion. Just by learning to see it intentionally, he could soon clear up all his distortions. He could take all accident out of the process, just by inspecting his own faults as critically as he now inspects the faults of others. Perhaps he could correct all his distortions in the time he now spends analyzing others' guilt while misproving his own innocence.

Always and interminably, he needs to see where *he* was wrong. Especially, he needs to see how he justified his

wrongness. He needs to reinstate truth in place of the lies that installed his distortions, and that is all there is to the business of getting himself straightened out.

Here are additional details of technique.

Set aside regular periods for correcting distortions, neither too seldom nor too frequent. Once or twice a week is sufficient for rapid progress, and perhaps as much as two or three hours could profitably be consumed during each effort. Often it helps if two emotionally sympathetic persons work together; they can stimulate each other's searches by asking intelligent questions. But you do not need help, for you can do the job alone.

Ask yourself questions to get yourself started.

You can almost always raise a memory of some event containing a distortion by asking yourself what you did that was wrong. Forsake the pernicious old habit of keeping your secrets comfortably buried away, and dig up all the unpleasant facts. Ask yourself about the times you got into trouble. Refuse to feel sorry for yourself, but see how you somehow caused the trouble. Ask yourself about the times you were mistreated and abused. Stop the old habit of blaming your abusers, and see how you invited the abuse.

You can easily remember most of the times you did what you knew was wrong, if you really try. Especially, you can remember the times you got into trouble or were abused. Therefore they afford excellent events with which to begin.

Run through each event in painstaking detail. Remember and recognize what you thought, said and did that was wrong. Refuse to repeat the same old mistakes. Instead, remember how you rationalized and justified your wrong conduct. That always breaks up distortions. Soon you make the interesting discovery that you no longer resent the times you got into trouble, or even the times you were

abused. Instead, you see how you brought each kind of trouble on yourself. More important, you see how you can avoid every recurrence.

That is valuable knowledge; it spurs you on.

After you have broken up a sufficient number of distortions, surprising things begin to happen. You find yourself remembering events long blanked out. You locate areas of memory long since lost, areas you didn't suspect existed. As you advance, more and more memories become accessible. After you have broken up many serious distortions, perhaps memory improves a hundredfold.

The reason a distortion blanks out and otherwise cripples memory is obvious, once it is understood.

Every distortion is installed during an experience somehow disagreeable. Often it is installed under abuse, but even when the experience is pleasurable in itself, the experience always involves infringement of both conscience and intelligence. Afterward the individual is ashamed. He wants to forget. He consciously tries to forget. That is hard to do, so he puts his mind to it. He succeeds more often than he supposes, and when he succeeds, he turns off some of his brainpower along with the memory. Then the memory is harder to turn on than it was to turn off, because he has to turn it on without the lost brainpower. Often he must do it without even being able to remember the nature of the forgotten event, or even that there is one, and, in addition, he has twisted the facts contained in the memory by installing distortions, so that when he does get it back it is at first incorrect. Thus he loses his ability to remember the event at will, or, if he retains his ability to remember it, he remembers it in some distorted form.

It is easy to see how memories thus get lost and distorted, but it is also easy to see how they can be

recaptured and straightened out.

Think of your distortions as rubbish in a barrel. The rubbish is not static, but gets churned up from day to day as the emotional charges of your various distortions are restimulated. You cannot get at the deeply buried rubbish until you remove what is on top. The top rubbish is contained in your accessible memories, and it varies from day to day, but progress is easy if you keep lifting off the top rubbish first. Gradually you can work your way to the bottom.

After you have made reasonable progress, you can often begin with a specific problem you would like to solve.

When you wonder why you feel you must exaggerate everything, for example, you may recall the time you made up a big story to impress the boy across the street. When you wonder why you stutter and stammer when talking with a person in a position of imposing authority, you may remember the time your father insisted that you talk to a visitor although you had nothing to say, and then punished you afterward for looking foolish. When you wonder why you must overeat, you may remember the time you sneaked a package of food to your bedroom and ate it all up to get it out of sight before your mother could find the evidence. When you wonder why you cannot spend ten cents without feeling guilty about it, you may remember the times you spent your collection money on the way to Sunday school, thus confronting yourself with the agony of passing the collection plate without making a contribution.

Often you find a complete memory opening up with sudden and surprising clarity, and always you find a direct connection between the problem you are trying to solve and a distortion contained in the remembered event.

Occasionally you find yourself denying the validity of a

memory, telling yourself it did not happen, or, especially, that it did not happen the way you remember it. Closely inspect such an incident, and you usually discover that by denying the validity of the memory you are only trying to protect yourself and perpetuate a distortion.

Acceptance of lies is what gets us into trouble in the first place, because that is what causes our distortions. We create lies to conceal and deflect attention from truth, and thus we drive our memories into hiding. To tell yourself that something did not happen the way it really did happen is only to perpetuate the blackout of truth. Thus you perpetuate whatever trouble the distortion causes.

All this can be corrected, and the procedure is to affirm the truth and accept the blame you have long been denying. Do that, and memory opens up.

When confronted with the hint of some unpleasant truth, even though you cannot accept it as valid, try saying to yourself, "This *must* be true, or memory would not be making such an effort to tell me it *is* true." In the next instant you may well find yourself remembering details offering so much confirmation of the real truth as to leave you in no doubt. What you thus recapture may alter the whole meaning of the remembered event.

#### IV

Correcting a distortion by remembering how you installed it offers a positive method that gets results, but it takes time. An equally positive but quicker method is to define the distortion and compare it with what would be logical in its place.

First, however, it is necessary to locate the distortion.

Usually a person is tempted to start by correcting a distortion causing him some obvious affliction, as when he cannot avoid incessant quarreling with his wife. If he can locate the offending distortion, all right; but he has to be mighty clever to do it, for the offending distortion is seldom what it seems. Besides, he likely thinks his wife is at fault in every quarrel; just as she thinks *he* is at fault. For those and other reasons, usually he is wise to keep working on the distortions he can most easily locate, and thus be systematic about correcting them all.

Probably he also suffers from another and opposite temptation.

Usually he is tempted to start by resisting the need to correct certain distortions that seemingly give him pleasure, as when he derives enjoyment by conducting an occasional clandestine extramarital love affair. Those pleasure-giving distortions are hard to detect because they do not invite critical attention, as does a distortion causing him to quarrel with his wife. But every distortion is at heart a fixed and perpetuated extension of earlier stupidity, and, once a distortion is seen for what it is, the stupidity is clearly evident. Once a distortion is got rid of, the stupidity ceases, even if it was formerly a source of illicit enjoyment. The victim has no sensation of giving up a cherished pleasure. He just loses interest in it because he sees it for what it is. When he thinks of it thereafter, he wonders how he could have let himself get so far off the track.

From the foregoing it is obvious that locating distortions can tax anyone's ingenuity, but there are ways of finding them.

Every activity which deviates from the observed normal is suspect, although reasonable deviation is certainly no

infallible criterion. To be considered normal in this abnormal world is no compliment. By the same token, every activity generally considered normal may also be suspect.

As soon as he understands distortions, the average person thinks he can easily locate them in someone else. But someone else's seemingly illogical conduct may only point to distortions in the observer. It is therefore sensible to adopt a perpetual self-critical questioning attitude. It is also sensible to examine every affliction, conflict, failure, or trouble of any other sort, seeking the possible causes, although that approach is useful only as the individual can recognize that trouble always indicates one or more distortions in himself. Few of us can become properly broad-minded on that point until we first get rid of many distortions.

Until that happy estate is achieved, a good method of directing suspicion is to look for conduct that tends to be compulsive. Especially, the individual should look for what he does so repeatedly and quickly and instinctively and automatically that he does not take time to think about it in advance. He should question its wisdom. If he cannot find altogether logical reasons to support it, and if at the same time he feels himself getting panicky at the thought of denying himself further indulgence in it, he has very likely located a distortion.

Perhaps the quickest way to correct a distortion, once it has been located, is to define its command in a carefully worded phrase or sentence, then analyze the deviation from intelligent conduct caused by the distortion, so the individual can compare his distortion with real logic and observe all discrepancies. He is helped if he understands formal logic, so he can quickly and properly check his judgment. He is also helped if he knows how his illogical

conduct has got him into trouble, if he sees how the distortion has controlled him and deprived him of volition, and especially if he realizes that on the subject of the distortion he has been acting stupidly. Once he really sees that, then presto! the distortion disintegrates whether he understands formal logic or not.

The big obstacle is that everyone almost invariably considers his conduct logical, and the big problem is to expose what has therefore been concealed. The problem is easy enough to solve; indeed, many distortions are thus corrected without specific knowledge of technique, when the individual somehow gets enough of a shock to jar his conscience and simultaneously to make him do some serious and honest thinking. The person who recognizes exactly what he is doing at such a time, and knows how he is doing it, can thereafter duplicate the performance with each of his distortions until he has corrected them all.

The essential key is always the same.

He must recognize and admit to himself his own wrongdoing. He must judge his errors and mistakes honestly, in relation to each separate detail where thinking or talking or acting has wandered even slightly from the paths of morality and logic. He must do the whole job correctly and in good conscience, without the slightest intentional or unintentional compromise.

Many things can be done dishonestly in this life, but correcting distortions is not one of them.

After a person has decided to become honest on the subject of a distortion, quick correction results from recognizing the sentence or phrase which accurately defines and constitutes the heart of the distortion. That sentence or phrase can be thought of as a command saying exactly what the distortion tells him to do, and defining the circumstance

under which he is to do it; for example, argue with every person who expresses disagreement. When the victim of that distortion captures the correct phrase in sufficiently specific words, and compares it with unfettered logic, he destroys its power over him. He suddenly sees that to continue gratifying it is stupid.

Correcting distortions by defining their command phrases offers little hope for the beginner, because the distortions so effectively conceal what must be defined. Figuring out the correct wording of a command phrase, moreover, may require close observation and much ingenuity with words. The beginner can hardly learn how to do it until he has seen, by the process of remembering, exactly how he installed a variety of his distortions. He can hardly learn to do it until he has gained much understanding of distortions by directly observing their effect on his conduct. He can hardly learn to do it until he turns on some of his unknown and unsuspected memory faculties long turned off.

As he turns those faculties on again, he can learn to combine the technique of correcting distortions by remembering how he installed them with the technique of correcting distortions by defining them and comparing them with logical reality. Then he can put that dynamic combination to good use by training his memory to deliver the command phrases of his distortions with surprising directness.

That saves him the trouble of trying to figure them out.

When he learns to use memory properly, he can locate command phrases with surprising speed. He can bring them to mind in quick succession, without even remembering the events in which they were installed. He can locate whole categories of them in quick succession, because, as we have

seen, each distortion tends to collect other distortions similar to it, which extend it and depend on it for their existence.

Because distortions form in categories, they can also be corrected in categories.

The prime objective is to correct the earliest distortion in every category. At first that is easiest if you locate and correct every distortion in the category, and thus work your way down. You learn what you are trying to do, and you rapidly decrease the amount of time needed to do it.

Suppose you try recalling every experience in which you installed a distortion by acting superior, for example, or by taking an unfair advantage? Suppose you seek categories of distortions you installed when you somehow justified petty stealing, lying, showing off, evading responsibility, overeating, claiming credit, exaggerating, or committing whatever other kind of misconduct you suspect may afflict you?

Start by trying to recall every incident in the chosen category. You may be surprised by what happens. One after another, incidents come to mind. You don't have to remember each in full detail, not after you have learned what you are doing and how to go about it. As long as you detect and correct each distortion, you have done enough. But don't go over the incidents too quickly. You may leave the distortions untouched. Usually that does harm only because you may not get back to them soon, but occasionally, where serious negative emotion is involved, you may get a disquieting restimulation of the emotion.

It is especially important to remember what was said during an event containing a distortion you are trying to correct, because many distortions are so clearly indicated by conversation that they thus become obvious. At first the average person has trouble producing memories of early conversations, but experience shows that if he starts saying

what he thinks might have been said, he comes astonishingly close to the mark, even if he was a small child at the time of the original event; usually close enough to permit correcting the distortion. Somehow his subconscious mind guides him, and it guides him a great deal better than he can guide himself.

Under prodding and effort, the memories just come up, and at first he cannot believe them because he has never done that sort of remembering before. But by taking what comes up, he soon finds that he is priming his memory for performances he never supposed he could achieve.

What comes up in the form of phrases and sentences said by him or to him, or even said by another person to someone else in his presence, can be quite important. So can what he said or thought to himself. All spoken sentences contain distortions if he used them as the basis of wrong thoughts, whether he originated the sentences or just copied them in his mind. Most persons copy many times more distortions than they originate.

When repetition of sentences and correction of the distortions they contain represents what a person must do to get rid of the distortions, he may find that the sentences are all that come up unless he strains his memory trying for more. But in that case the sentences are all he needs, and he is amazed at some of those sentences. Although many of them come out of the remote past, from long-forgotten events, every one of them sounds exactly like the person who uttered it. Every one of them is exactly in character. Often it carries the ring of the original voice, and at first it tends to renew some recognizable vestige of its original effect on him.

When he first does that sort of remembering, he may be suspicious that his imagination is playing tricks. If so, he

should dig for the rest of a memory he suspects is inaccurate. He should relive the experience behind it. He should remember enough of it to convince himself that the words are genuine and valid. After he has done that a few times, he loses his skepticism. He remembers each event and accepts what it tells him as easily as he remembers and accepts his memory's version of what he did yesterday. It is just as valid, too. Soon he is taking it all in his stride, recognizing that there is nothing remarkable about it.

Presently he gets to the point where he can correct his distortions just by remembering or detecting their command phrases. When he can do that, obviously he can clear up a great deal of trouble without spending much time.

## V

As a person gets experience correcting distortions, whether by remembering how he installed them or by defining them, he steadily increases his competence in correcting his remaining distortions. Soon he finds himself taking safe shortcuts, correcting a dozen at once. Later he can correct several hundred, and still later many thousands, all at the same time, in only a few minutes.

It is hard to describe the proper technique without an opportunity to demonstrate it, but it is easy to show how the technique works.

The technique takes advantage of knowledge that distortions form in chains. The chains develop because each distortion tends to attract and accumulate similar distortions which are made possible by it. Each new distortion attaches itself to the prior distortion in the chain. Each new distortion extends that prior distortion, and becomes a variation of it.

Any distortion in any chain may also become the start of a new chain, and thus a chain may branch out in various directions. But every chain can be traced backward from any distortion to the first (or basic) distortion in the chain, and even to the original basic distortion on which several related chains depend.

The total number of distortions thus depending on a single basic distortion may be as high as a hundred thousand, and, surprising as it seems at first, all those distortions can be corrected at the same time.

The key fact is that every distortion in every chain depends on every prior distortion in the chain. No distortion can remain intact unless every prior distortion remains intact. When a distortion is corrected, therefore, every dependent distortion begins at once to disintegrate of its own accord, without direct contact, because its support is withdrawn.

This process of correcting distortions in chains has aptly been likened to letting the water run out of a bathtub by pulling out the stopper.

The principle of chain-correction applies to every distortion on which other distortions depend, whether the distortion is first in a chain or not. If the corrected distortion is in the middle of a chain, every later dependent distortion is corrected along with it, even though the later distortions are given no direct attention. But every distortion earlier installed remains intact. Therefore it is desirable to locate and correct the earliest possible distortion in each chain contacted. If possible, it is desirable to locate and correct the original (or basic) distortion in the chain. It is most desirable to locate and correct a distortion so basic that many chains depend on it, and much experiment indicates that this can be done in routine manner by any person who knows how.

After correcting a distortion on which many others depend, usually some time must elapse before all the resulting mental adjustments are completed. Nearly all the adjusting occurs below the level of consciousness, but there is likely to be conscious evidence of it. As the distortions fall apart, the individual may or may not find himself thinking about bits of events in which he installed them. If he does, recollections from both recent and remote events keep rising into consciousness, each somehow related to the corrected distortion. There may be the flash of a person's face, snatches of remembered conversation, patches of scenery or the interior of a room, much of it long forgotten. There may be some accompanying emotional disturbance, because the emotional charges of old distortions are often given some restimulation as the distortions are subconsciously corrected.

All this occurs without effort, and the individual notices it during odd moments over several hours or days, as he goes about his affairs.

He could remember all details of these long-forgotten events by trying properly, but that is not necessary. Provided he has corrected the distortion he contacted, all the dependent distortions gain correction anyhow. He does not have to give them any special attention. But he finds it worth something to know what is going on, because that gives him confidence. If he knows that his more or less evident subconscious activity is the reintegration and reorientation of a large variety of information stored in his memory, information demanding adjustment because he has simultaneously corrected many distortions, he can gain interest and satisfaction by thus observing his progress toward an undistorted mind.

Correcting distortions by the procedure just described

saves a great deal of time. You just ask memory for the command phrase behind a distortion which started a whole chain of other distortions. You correct the original distortion, and at once all the others start correcting themselves. You go about your affairs until the process of subconscious adjustment is completed; after that, you can successfully contact another basic distortion. Then you repeat the performance by applying the technique again. It is easy for any person who knows how, but that sort of performance requires a great deal of skill. Only a rare person can start doing it before he has made considerable progress in using more elementary methods.

Let us review the procedure for correcting a distortion by defining it, and let us then relate that technique to the problem of correcting distortions in chains.

As a prelude to correcting a distortion by defining it, the first step is to detect and isolate a specific example of illogical conduct. That is hard to do, because no person is illogical on purpose, but after he has done it successfully he can more easily do it again.

The next step is to describe the illogical conduct so clearly that every essential point is included, while everything else is excluded. The exact choice of words does not matter, as long as the definition is correct. A correct definition is enough to capture the distortion in words, but it is not enough to correct the distortion. The distortion is corrected in the next step, which is to compare the distortion with conduct that would be logical in its place. The instant the discrepancies are noted, that distortion ceases to exist.

At first, it is all a matter of facing unpleasant facts with complete honesty. Therefore each correction requires initial determination and persistent effort. But when the facts come flooding into view, a remarkable thing occasionally

happens. Occasionally a whole chain of related distortions suddenly gains spontaneous and simultaneous correction.

Once a distortion is accurately defined and compared with logical reality, sometimes all the resulting mental adjustments are completed at once. Memory just opens up and delivers a long chain of recollections, perhaps all in a split second. Incidents come to mind in headlong succession, and it is seen that the same or similar distortions were used in each of them. Almost in the flash of an eye, there may be a parade of incidents extensive enough to fill many printed pages. Often the tumultuous series of rapid recollections is too much for the individual's emotional stability, and he laughs uproariously at his own past stupidity. It is laughter of relief, and the person who has not yet known such laughter has pleasant surprises in store.

What causes his laughter is that he corrects a distortion far enough down some chain that many dependent distortions are corrected along with it, and he does all his conscious and subconscious adjusting at once. If he knows what is going on, he can use that knowledge to good advantage when he tries to repeat the performance with another distortion. After two or three successes, he learns that he makes fastest progress by throwing out his old mental rubbish in big batches, and he sets the stage for more and more laughter of similar relief.

It is difficult to describe the sensations which accompany this laughter of relief, but they are basically the same as the sensations actuated by a rollicking good funny story.

When you find exact words to describe one of your repeated deviations from logical conduct, and see precisely how that deviation is illogical, you instantly correct every distortion falling completely within the limits of the definition. You also correct every distortion dependent on one of

the distortions falling within those limits. Instantly you find it both possible and necessary to make innumerable swift mental adjustments at headlong speed. Much of that activity occurs in the subconscious levels, but you are somehow aware of it all. It is both voluntary and involuntary, like a sneeze that is not resisted, and while it occurs, all the affected distortions fly out. At the same time, logic flies back into place to fill the gaps left by the vanished distortions.

Here is another way of describing it.

When you see and fully understand the sequence of misguided acts and unfortunate events caused by a large collection of similar distortions, as you always do when you completely define one or more of the distortions well down in the chain and then successfully compare that definition with reality, your sense of proportion on the subjects covered by all those distortions suddenly returns. Instantly every distortion and every chain involved is subjected to a rapid reaction of automatic correction.

You get a remarkable series of sensations, as though a complicated jigsaw puzzle which has bothered you is spontaneously putting itself together in your brain, and doing it with fantastic speed and agility. Your brain does what seems like a series of quick involuntary reversals, and you go into a spasm of rapid involuntary thinking of precisely the sort set off by riotous humor. You get your mental kinks straightened out. You find yourself enjoying the resulting sensations hugely. You may chuckle under your breath, off and on, for hours or even days. "So that was what caused all the trouble!" you tell yourself. You feel a sense of relief, and your burdens are lighter. You have got back a large chunk of your lost brainpower. When you realize this, you start looking for other distortions so you can give them similar treatment.

## VI

Another technique is so sweeping in its utility that the person who uses it starts correcting his distortions almost indiscriminately, as fast as his thinking threatens to feed into them. The technique is to detect every faint incipient sign that some old negative emotion is getting restimulated, to recognize instantly that some old distortion is about to get used, and therefore to deny the negative emotion any chance to express itself through the distortion.

By learning to do that invariably and without fail, the average person can soon correct most of his recurring troubles.

He quickly corrects every trouble resulting from a distortion that tends to dominate him in frequently recurring situations, for example, and some of those distortions have actuated him as often as fifty times a day. They are the distortions in frequent or constant use, and they may cause more trouble than many thousand minor distortions that usually lie dormant. The distortions in frequent or constant use not only cause frequent or constant trouble, but they are often hardest to dislodge because they often seem intelligent and attractive to their victim. They often create a persistent illusion that they are assets to be cherished, despite the fact that they are among the distortions most likely to keep his life upset and disturbed.

Apparently each of us has those five or six major distortions, and often a dozen or more. Just by correcting them anyone can profoundly change his life, but by persistence he can correct the others too. He can correct them fastest, perhaps, by steadfastly refusing expression to every negative emotion that threatens to send his thinking through one or more of his distortions.

The technique is easy to use but hard to learn. At first it contradicts every natural impulse, because every new emotional restimulation insidiously deprives the individual of his volition. Instead of trying to use the technique, he tries to satisfy the distortion, and that is the old trap he must break. He must learn to react by forcing his thinking back into the channels of logic. Then he must learn to recognize and define the distortion that almost got him into some new kind of trouble.

Before he can use this technique successfully, he must know how to recognize emotional restimulation when it comes.

The most important point to understand is that the emotional charge of a distortion is always restimulated when the individual encounters a stimulus which has characteristically caused his thinking to feed through that distortion. At once he is victimized by the upsurge of emotion. The emotion may be strong or weak, but at first it is all he has for a signal of danger.

He had better learn as much about that emotion as he can.

A distortion will likely have its emotional charge restimulated by any action or remark bearing close relationship to some action or remark that figured in the original event in which the distortion was installed. Certain persons are more inclined toward such action or remarks than others, as especially are those who figured in the original incident, even though restimulation occurs thirty or forty years later when they are all adults. The subconscious mind remembers everything, and the same persons are likely to be saying and doing much the same old things in the same old way, if only because of their distortions.

That is one reason why a person can often improve his

emotional tone by staying away from relatives and other persons who cause him repeated emotional trouble. That is one reason why inmates of mental institutions often have their worst spells after visits by relatives who never suspect they were themselves involved in many of the incidents leading to installation of the distortions which caused and constitute the insanity.

What happens to induce restimulation is that some aspect of the original situation is duplicated. Even though the original situation has long been lost to conscious memory, the duplication is enough to actuate memory in the subconscious levels. Thus restimulation may be induced by mere presence of a person or recurrence of a situation which originally figured in installation of the distortion, by presence of a person of similar appearance, by existence of a situation with similar aspects, or for that matter by the simple utterance by some stranger or some crucial sentence originally spoken during the original event.

Negative emotion is restimulated when subconscious memory is actuated, and unless the victim knows what is going on, there is not one chance in a million he can trace out the cause of the immediate emotional discomfort he feels. There is as little chance he can detect the fact that he is about to think, say or do something irrational. But when he learns to recognize that situation and interpret it correctly, he also learns to check his logic before he converts his impulses into words or acts.

Every distortion produces a constant burden of minor emotional disturbance, even when the distortion is not getting used, but when the emotional charge of a distortion is restimulated, the disturbance increases proportionately to the restimulation. Sometimes the disturbance may take virtual possession of all conscious thinking, forcing it to feed

through the distortion. Unless the distortion is gratified, the restimulated emotion may threaten to cause a devastating emotional blowup. The threat is empty, however. At least it is empty for the person who decides to control himself and who takes the trouble to learn how to control himself intelligently, although few of us have been lucky enough to make that discovery. The person who makes that discovery soon learns there is no sense in giving restimulated emotion its way, because that only means abdicating his volition and letting himself be actuated by forces outside his control. It lets him do whatever the distortion tells him to do, however irrational, even if it is to commit suicide or murder.

That is how restimulation works. But restimulation has its advantages. Under restimulation, a distortion can be detected quite accurately, because restimulation always actuates the distortion's command. Anyone who learns to recognize the command as having come from a distortion, and not from his channels of logic, can use restimulation as the signal to inspect and define the command, and that gives him a quick method of correcting the distortion.

The person who learns to define his distortions by noticing what he feels impelled to think, say or do when negative emotion wells up from within, it is easy to see, is a person suddenly put in control of his destiny. He can expose all his serious distortions one after another, in fairly rapid succession, as fast as they are brought to his attention by having their emotional charges restimulated.

Recurrence of emotional restimulation has other uses.

The cleverly observant person can soon discover what situations, and also which of his relatives and acquaintances, most often induce his emotional restimulation. He can define and correct distortions as he goes along, and he can also notice what memory excursions are suggested to help

him dig up additional information.

He may be tempted to stay out of situations causing restimulation, after he gets them classified, but that would deny him useful chances to correct distortions. He may be tempted to avoid the relatives and acquaintances causing restimulation, but that would be unfair to them. After all, he installed his own distortions; they didn't install them for him, no matter how heavily they may have figured in the original events.

It is true that a distorted person may improve his emotional tone by taking up residence in a strange city. Running away can remove him from sources of restimulation, and thus reduce both frequency and severity of emotional disturbance. That sometimes brings badly needed relief. But it does not correct distortions, and correcting distortions affords the only logical way to stop restimulation. Until a distortion is corrected, its emotional charge can inadvertently be restimulated by new situations, by new acquaintances, and by chance happenings of various kinds. After a distortion has been corrected, however, all risk of restimulation is gone. To hasten correction, it is intelligent to use restimulation as a detector for locating the distortion, and to use every impulse from a distortion as a detector for defining the distortion.

All this information is important, but it can be applied only by a person who learns how to recognize indications that one of his distortions is about to get used. There is a way of making recognition almost certain: become sensitive to the first faint indication of restimulated negative emotion.

Consider a person who has a distortion telling him to defend his opinions whenever he is contradicted. The emotional charge of that distortion is not restimulated until he is contradicted, but then the emotion turns on full force.

It drives his thinking through the distortion. The distortion tells him to defend his opinion, and he uses all his brainpower to figure out the defense. He pours himself into the effort under a delusion that his words and conduct are intelligent, although nine times out of ten, he is dealing with someone whose contradiction makes no serious difference one way or another. Almost always, he would be intelligent to let the contradiction stand unchallenged.

An instant before the distortion gets used, there are signs of restimulated negative emotion which he can convert into a reliable tipoff. He can do that by noticing the first detectable symptom of suddenly aroused emotional tension. It may be a twinge of involuntary tightening in the muscles of his face. It may be an upsurge of anger or resentment, a flash of unexplainable fear, or a burst of sudden excitement. When he notices that tipoff, he can be sure a distortion is about to get used. That is the time he ordinarily throws down his guard, leaving himself helpless in the grip of a preconceived decision that springs out of the distortion. Therefore that is the time he should throw up his guard instead.

If he does throw up his guard, he will see that he is about to get into a silly argument over a silly contradiction. As a result, he can withhold the retort he is preparing.

Any person can learn that little routine. Thus any person can catch his first faint glimmer of restimulated negative emotion. He can learn that no matter what he is getting ready to think, say or do at such a time, he has only one intelligent course of action: deny that impulse the chance for expression.

After a person has learned to catch the first faint indications that a distortion is about to get used, he discovers that he can detect and turn off his emotional restimulation

almost at will. He discovers that he gets a thrill out of thwarting the distortion. He discovers that he can stop what he is about to say or do, and find something else to substitute for it. He discovers that he can find something else that satisfies every intelligent requirement, and thus releases his nerves and relaxes his facial expression. At once his twinges of internal tension subside. What he says or does then comes out of an impulse that does not feed through his distortions.

Every person can wisely practice that sort of self-control, but he must take the precaution of denying himself the chance to satisfy the restimulated emotion.

No loss is involved in the denial, because expressing the impulse suggested by that emotion could not possibly be rational or intelligent. Almost anything he says or does instead would be less dangerous. If he waits a few minutes, until the restimulation dies down, he finds his logic restored. He finds he can think of an alternative to what he was getting ready to say or do. If that alternative is free of negative emotion, he can be sure he has freed his thinking from the distortion.

All this is really important knowledge, because it permits the individual to recognize the symptoms when he is about to say or do what is irrational.

Consider the person who cannot resist making an angry retort whenever he hears a remark with which he disagrees. In that case, he has a distortion likely to turn on many times a day. Each time, restimulated anger is his tipoff. Nothing he says in the grip of that anger could possibly be as intelligent as what he would say after his emotions return to normal, because after his emotions return to normal, they no longer drive his thinking through his distortion. Then he can resume his recourse to normal logic.

That is a large reward for a few seconds of forbearance, but it is not his complete reward.

Probably he has several dominant distortions that get used repeatedly every day. Each of them, before it gets used, is triggered off by some sort of negative emotion. Sometimes he likes that emotion, as when he derives pleasure from the anticipation it suggests, or from the emotion itself. Therefore he wants to preserve it and continue indulging in it, but that is only his distortion protecting itself. If he realizes that, he keeps a sharp lookout, and gradually he begins to see those various emotions for what they are. One after another he gets them classified in his mind. He learns to recognize each of them when it is restimulated. More and more often, he succeeds in thwarting the distortions behind them, denying them the chance to gain expression in words or conduct.

When he does that several times with the same distortion, invariably he weakens the distortion. He strengthens his ability to force his mind into the channels of logic regardless of the distortion. Gradually, as the result of seeing how the same distortion is restimulated on successive occasions, he learns to define it. The instant he has defined it successfully, he is in a position to compare it with reality and thus break it forever. If he is persistent, he can thus quickly destroy most of his dominant distortions. He can free himself from their blighting effect on his life. He can regain his lost brainpower and intelligence, and he can get out of trouble he would never have learned he was in without knowledge of distortions and how they work.

After a fair amount of practice, he can instantly recognize every incipient emotional tipoff. He can detect every little twinge of facial expression in himself, every tightening of the muscles anywhere in his body, every sign of inner turmoil, every little pocket of tension in his head,

face or chest. He can recognize each symptom that points to restimulated emotion and hence to trouble, and he is led to stop the trouble in its tracks. Thus he corrects one distortion after another. Each time he corrects a distortion he permanently prevents recurrence of every kind of trouble previously caused by that distortion, and he can do the same with one distortion after another until he has no troubles left.

There is another vital aspect of emotional restimulation, and, for emphasis, it has been saved until now.

What really causes a serious restimulation is the fact that some gigantic distortion (or perhaps a large group of similar distortions) is getting meddled with. The victim does not like that. Subconsciously, he is well aware of the distortion. He knows that it hides an uncomfortable guilty secret. He knows that it tells how he once adopted some illogical and dishonest expedient as a seemingly practical but irrational way out of some apparently intolerable situation. He knows that the uncomfortable guilty secret is threatened with exposure. He knows that the resulting blow will damage his pride. He also knows that if his dishonest expedient is exposed, and the distortion corrected, he must again face the same apparently intolerable situation. The only thing he does not know is that every intolerable situation can be faced with equanimity, once distortions are got out of the way.

He does all that thinking on the subconscious level, and that is why his old negative emotion is restimulated.

Instantly he suffers an upsurge of collateral excitement born of panic. Instantly he throws all his mental and emotional resources into a frantic but largely subconscious effort to protect and preserve, at whatever cost, the distortion threatened with exposure. Instantly he is filled with frightening inner turmoil, but the only serious result of

that turmoil is that hitherto it has prevented him from letting daylight into the back corners of his moral closets so that he could finally clean them out.

## VII

Defining a distortion is perhaps the quickest way to correct it by direct contact. Correcting the basic distortion in a chain automatically corrects every subsequent distortion in the same chain by indirect contact, and the total thus correctable by a single definition may run into fantastic figures. When distortions are corrected by remembering how they were installed, as is obvious, progress may be quite slow by comparison.

Nevertheless, the average person at first will likely make fastest progress if he relies on memory rather than on direct attack.

It may seem surprising to talk about the seeming miracles of memory here discussed, but really no miracles are involved. We all have perfect memories, if we could only use them. What prevents us from using them is our distortions. That is evident from the fact that correcting distortions increases memory to an extent unimagined by any person who has not started doing it.

The person with undistorted logic can call up any sort of images or other details stored in his memory just by trying. Indeed, in a moment of need, he does not have to try; the thing happens automatically. But the person with distortions has internal blinders. He cannot clearly recognize and interpret what he sees in his memory, or even what he sees in real life, as he does after he corrects his distortions.

This puts us in a dilemma. We cannot remember

because we have distortions, and we cannot easily get rid of distortions until we remember how we installed them. There is a simple way to end the dilemma.

Every person can remember some things easily. He can close his eyes and relive what happened this morning, for example. He may not get full color and sound, but he gets something. What he can get determines where he should begin. That is important, because he cannot get what his subconscious mind is not willing to deliver, and some of his memories are locked in by distortions at first hard to dislodge. Those are the memories he tried hardest to forget when they were fresh.

Usually the event hardest to remember is the one carrying the heaviest charge of disagreeable emotion. Not so much the disagreeable emotion makes the event hard to remember, as the fact that the event was once intentionally forgotten, perhaps with great determination that it would never be remembered again.

Much advantage is gained by pulling up all disagreeable old memories, because every one of them generates emotional disturbance whenever the memory is somehow restimulated on the subconscious level. The restimulation may come from a chance remark or happening, but the victim almost never connects the disturbance with its true cause. Consequently he goes on suffering in ignorance, and is hopelessly sentenced to continuing recurrence of his disturbance, unless and until he brings out the offending memory and corrects the distortions it contains.

A distortion carrying a heavy emotional charge, quite naturally, is one which was installed under highly emotional conditions. The individual was laboring under extraordinary temptation, and likely his tendency toward wrong was driven by some horrible fear, as when he was

receiving repeated shocks of terror and abuse. That distortion springs out of the sort of event he tried hardest to forget, but his subconscious memory retains it always, and its emotional charge is always subject to restimulation. Until the memory is brought up and adjusted in the light of rational and mature analysis, that distortion and its emotion are always subject to mysterious renewal, and the result is likely to be a very great amount of extended emotional trouble of unknown origin.

Events containing distortions having heavy emotional charges are not readily accessible to the memory, and that is a fortunate provision of nature. If the individual remembered one of his distressing experiences too swiftly after a long blackout, he might be engulfed in more negative emotion than he could bear. But the subconscious mind withholds its secrets intelligently, and does not divulge them until he can face them successfully. Even then, it presents them with amazing diplomacy, perhaps somehow affording a preview before delivering the event itself, and thus reducing any emotional shock.

The victim may at first remember an event as though it had happened to another person, for example, with himself as a bystander. Or he may find that he cannot remember the event at all, until he first admits to himself that it must have happened. Or at first he may consider the event a remote recollection of some improbable dream, until something pops up that makes both the reality of the event and the certainty of his involvement inescapable. Those precautions of the subconscious mind are important because they prevent any disastrous emotional flare-up, a fact appreciated by anyone accustomed to living in chronic emotional disturbance.

The person who lives in any great degree of emotional

disturbance naturally wants to know how he can stop it. But almost everyone lives under the threat of potential serious disturbance, because everyone is likely to have more than one distortion carrying a serious charge of emotion awaiting possible restimulation. Beyond that, almost any distortion has enough emotion to be perceptible under restimulation, and a lot of little emotions can add up to what constitutes a big disturbance.

Evidences of emotional disturbance have great value in helping to locate and define a distortion, and some of that value goes beyond anything yet discussed.

There is a rule that emotion becomes more turbulent as the individual gets close to the true facts behind a distortion, and that the turbulence continues as long as he persists in denying those facts. When emotion subsides, unless he has located and corrected the distortion, he is getting cold in the search. With emotion as a guide, therefore, he can hardly miss. The rest is much like playing a solitary game of twenty questions, inwardly asked and answered in silence.

When he contacts the right memory he can detect it at once, by a sudden peak in his emotional disturbance. Especially if he is remembering an event that contains more than one distortion, his disturbance continues to boil and erupt while he recalls the details. In diminishing severity, it persists until he corrects all the distortions. Then it subsides at once. After it subsides, he gets a new lease on life. He feels better mentally, emotionally and physically. He feels better, perhaps, than he can remember having felt before.

There is yet another lesson in the emotional aspects of a distortion.

Many persons are aware of various subconscious conflicts and inner disturbances they have been unable to define or understand. Usually those conflicts and distur-

bances result from restimulation of the emotional charges of distortions, especially of distortions working against exceptional resistance. Usually the resistance is provided by common sense or by disapproval from other people, or by different and unrelated distortions that set up contradictory forces because they aim in various opposing directions, but the exact nature of the resistance is always concealed from the victim.

There is nothing unusual about those conflicts and disturbances. We all have them, and certain of their characteristic symptoms are worth noting.

Perhaps everyone occasionally finds welling up in his mind some recollection of unpleasantness he quickly tries to forget because it makes him wince; at other times, perhaps everyone finds himself searching unsuccessfully for some tantalizing recollection that persistently eludes him although the recollection seems important.

When a person starts getting rid of distortions, he soon learns what all that means.

He discovers that his wince-making recollections of unpleasantness are always somehow incomplete. He learns that each missing portion contains one or more distortions. He discovers that he has so long denied some disagreeable reality in each missing portion that he cannot easily recapture and face it, and make the adjustments necessary to correct the offending distortions. Presently he sees that this is precisely what his subconscious mind has tried to tell him, by pushing the recollection into conscious memory. He therefore learns that pushing the recollection out again without correcting its distortions basically perpetuates his disturbance instead of relieving it. He starts putting that knowledge to good use, and thus he develops his ability to relieve his emotions and his mind.

Concurrently he learns that the tantalizing recollections he could almost but not quite remember are in the same general category. The main difference is that in their case he has denied each complete recollection, although his subconscious mind still tells him to recapture it and rectify his past mistakes as embodied in the distortions it contains.

Soon he sees that he is wise to stop denying the details of every uncomplimentary truth that might be related to such a recollection. He learns to admit the reality of what he has already denied, to locate the missing information, to bring it out for inspection, and thus to recognize and affirm it. He makes a habit of doing that. Presently he learns to call up details of every tantalizing or disagreeable recollection the moment it begins to disturb him, and systematically to correct whatever distortions may be involved. After correction, neither the recollection nor the disturbance bothers him again, and that is true even if the recollection and the disturbance had repeatedly interfered with sleep and digestion for thirty years.

## VIII

After learning some or all of the foregoing details regarding distortions and how they work, some persons at first fear what they might discover by probing into the secrets of their memories.

Their fear is groundless.

No matter what shocking experiences are concealed in a person's memory, he needs no special precautions against them. He needs to fear only the results of persistent refusal to remember and face them at last. He can stand reliving any event of his past. He may know little or nothing about

an event before he gets into it, but there is one certainty he can rely on. No matter what pain or distress the memory holds, he survived it. He will survive it again. But unless he faces it honestly, and corrects whatever distortions it contains, he cannot release himself from its negative effects on his life.

## Chapter 5

### *Our Unsuspected Mental Powers*

EVERY thinking person has long recognized that our world is in trouble, and there has seemed to be no escape. But there is escape. There is escape for every person who learns to control his share of the trouble. There is escape for every person who learns that correcting group trouble results, in the final analysis, from correcting individual trouble. There is escape for every person who profits by knowledge that group trouble, including national and international trouble, is caused by individual wrongs that have gone uncorrected—but from which each of us can individually protect himself.

That is a denial of conventional thinking.

It is conventional to think we are straws on a sea of chance, and helpless in the face of many conditions we cannot control. Perhaps we all think that way occasionally, and on the surface, the idea sometimes looks deceptively valid. But if we accept it, even for a moment, we submit to a delusion that has caused untold distress.

It is a delusion easy to detect in others, but hard to detect in ourselves.

When others are thinking through distortions which do not afflict us, we can easily see how they get into trouble by their failure to use ordinary logic. As though they could understand, we sometimes try to point out their mistakes, but no matter how irrefutable the evidence, we seldom get it

across. Far from accepting the evidence, they deny it. As though we never did the same thing ourselves, we are inclined to jeer at them, and we do not see our inconsistency.

We are more charitable toward ourselves.

Often we tell ourselves that *our* troubles result from causes arising entirely because of outside influences. And of course we tell ourselves that we cannot escape the danger of such hazards as unavoidable accidents, wars and taxes, occasional illnesses, and the risk of untimely death from causes beyond our control.

We can stop telling ourselves those things, and thus we can help to correct our distortions.

We get exactly the trouble our mistakes invite, no more and no less. If that were not true, our world would not make sense. If that were only partly true, by just that much, our world would still not make sense. But our world does make sense. It makes a great deal more sense than we have dared suppose.

Our world makes so much sense that the average person, by observing natural law, can become virtually invulnerable.

It is obvious that anyone can get himself into trouble by taking wrong action, and therefore invulnerability cannot lie in the direction of wrong. It is not immediately obvious that anyone can make himself invulnerable by taking right action to the exclusion of wrong action, but it is clear that such invulnerability as we can attain must lie in the direction of right. And it is clear that we cannot advance toward invulnerability unless we make voluntary choices carrying us in that direction. We can go much farther than most of us suppose; how far, we shall investigate in this concluding chapter. But first, we shall investigate the subject of right conduct of the sort that can pave our way.

## II

Since it is so important to be right, let us now arrive at a working definition of what is right; a definition suitable for use until such time as absolute definitions become available because all distortions have been corrected.

We may think that right is what everyone does, what everyone approves, what the law says, what our religion teaches, or what we desire to do. But that sort of thinking will not let us agree on a definition, because it involves all our distortions.

In defining right, we are going to get down to fundamentals.

Some will consider the following definitions naive, because in this age we like to justify our wrongs and mistakes by clouding the basic issues. We have clouded them so much that a plain statement of elementary truth looks like an oversimplification.

Right action is what leads to right results.

Obviously that definition is indicated by the basic law of humanetics. The rare person who understands that law also understands the definition without explanation. He knows that definitions of right and wrong are absolute. He knows they do not need to be explained to another person who understands the law.

That is not all he knows.

He knows the distinctions between right and wrong cannot successfully be described to a person who does not understand the law. He knows that every persistent effort to describe them to such a person leads to fruitless discussion and to an endless succession of hair-splitting arguments.

The trouble is that everyone instinctively defines right and wrong in terms of his distortions. Everyone instinctively

defends his definitions, unconsciously denying every contradictory fact and unconsciously manufacturing every needed piece of support. On the subjects of his distortions, we cannot give him enough information to change his thinking because he is convinced his thinking is flawless. Every word that contradicts his distortions falls on deaf ears, because on those subjects he is flatly dominated by his distortions.

That explains why we have so much confusion over moral questions, and each person can now prepare to end his own confusion.

In a very practical sense, right can be defined as what the individual himself thinks is right, although he cannot think successfully on any subject until his mind is undistorted on that subject. In the meantime we cannot get him to do what is right on that subject unless he thinks it is right, except by coercion. There is just no use trying to do it, as witness the continuing automobile carnage despite every corrective campaign. But we have an even more compelling reason for thus defining right in a practical sense.

Only by rationalizing what the individual himself thinks is wrong can he install a distortion. Only by correcting that particular rationalization can he correct the distortion. In the ultimate, provided he corrects all his distortions, the practical definition therefore becomes true.

Only the person with an undistorted mind can have absolute knowledge of distinctions between right and wrong. But every person can wisely use artificial definitions until that happy estate is achieved. Some artificial definitions are quite inarguable, involving what is clearly wrong by definition: lying, cheating, stealing, injuring, taking unfair advantage, and so on. Distortions enable many of us to commit those acts, seemingly with clear consciences;

therefore even those are not to be regarded as ingredients of a clear-cut definition, ready for universal acceptance.

They can, however, be used as guides by any person sincerely trying to correct his distortions. He cannot commit one of those acts without recognizing that something is wrong with his logic, and he can begin to apply the same line of reasoning to less obvious examples of wrong as fast as he recognizes them.

In a really basic sense, every ingredient of the ultimate definition is easily reached.

Right action springs out of logical interpretation of simple facts. Right action is therefore logical, and wrong action is therefore illogical. Wrong action may spring out of a distortion that is intentional, as when a storekeeper purposely misreads his scales; or it may spring out of a distortion that is unintentional, as when the storekeeper does not take the trouble to be accurate. But it always springs out of a distortion.

Every decision is dictated by facts inherent in the situation calling for the decision. Every person with undistorted logic, working from the same facts in the same situation, gets the same decision. To speak strictly, he does not make the decision. He finds it. He sifts and interprets the facts, and the decision is what he gets as a result.

The person whose logic is undistorted seldom faces a decision more difficult than weighing groceries. When we tell ourselves that our problems are confusing, in effect, we tell ourselves that our logic is distorted—or else that we handle our problems negligently, which indicates a distortion in itself.

Deciding what is right is as simple as adding a column of figures and getting the correct answer. It is as simple as looking at your best friend and remembering his name. It is

as simple as collecting and using accurate information when solving a problem. It is as simple as examining data to make sure the data are in accord with truth. It is as simple as combining data experimentally to learn what works best.

Even a complicated problem can be settled on the basis of simple distinctions between right and wrong. To the undistorted mind, those distinctions are always clear-cut. Nothing is partly right and partly wrong, although any complicated problem or body of knowledge may be composed of separate elements which, each in itself, is either right or wrong, as every bookkeeper has reason to know.

There is a way of making the distinctions clear.

The way is to simplify every complicated problem by breaking it down into its natural elements, and then to examine each separate element in good conscience. Every person dealing with a subject on which his logic is undistorted finds that easy to do. He also finds it easy to deal with the separate elements, one at a time and in relation to each other, and thus arrive at a solution for the problem as a whole.

When he does reach a solution, it is a right solution. It is a solution that leads to right action. That is important, because right action is easy to facilitate. Right action is easy to facilitate because nature gathers her resources to help what is right and to resist what is wrong.

Surely all of us have seen nature do that.

In our interpersonal relationships, what works best is what serves the best interests of every person concerned. Then everyone tends to join the forces of nature and help right succeed. But consideration of interpersonal interests necessarily brings us back to consideration of moral factors, and from this it is again obvious that we cannot consider practical right without also considering moral right.

In the moral sense, right is not only what gets best results for every person concerned. It is also what the individual knows is right, provided he has not desensitized his conscience.

Only the person with a conscience sensitive to fine distinctions between right and wrong can safely depend on his ability to use logic when dealing with his complicated decisions.

The person with a sensitive conscience, provided he uses his conscience in conjunction with his brain, has a remarkable guide to right conduct that gets right results for him and for everyone else concerned. But he cannot have a sensitive conscience unless he is free from distortions on the subject dealt with. If he is free from distortions, he can benefit from recognizing what his conscience feels like when he is tempted to distort logic to gain an advantage. Presently he learns to recognize even a slight incipient twinge of conscience telling him that he is neglecting some factor of logic in a decision he is about to make. He learns to go back and check his logic, because he knows that any action offending his conscience is somehow illogical.

If he persists in observing and checking his twinges of conscience and also his logic, presently he learns that a thing is right if he thinks it is right. He learns that a thing is wrong if he thinks it is wrong. If it is right he does it. If it is wrong he does not do it. That is how he keeps his conscience sensitive and his logic undistorted.

Some of us discard conscience as an archaic tradition. Others discard it merely because conscience gets in the way. That is how we desensitize our consciences, but the person who has desensitized his conscience does not know he has done it. Nor does he know that he has progressively undermined and destroyed his ability to think intelligently

on every subject where desensitizing has occurred.

It is sobering to realize that perhaps no person on this earth believes he has desensitized his conscience, although many of us think others have done it. That is how it is with distortions.

The person who has desensitized his conscience can read straight through these paragraphs without dreaming they apply to him. He is likely to disregard this warning also, and perhaps even get huffy because it is included. He is likely to think this warning is intended for others, perhaps even wishing he could force them to read it. He is likely to forget that the very person he thinks needs to read it is exactly as prone to react the same way.

The person hardest to reach is the one who agrees with all that, but still thinks it applies to others rather than to him. He is in the greatest danger of all.

Unless he catches himself before it is too late, and realizes that he is human also, he is in more trouble than he can get out of. Unless he somehow realizes these paragraphs apply to every human being who falls short of literal perfection, and unless he rereads these paragraphs and opens his mind, he is in danger of failing to recapture his lost intelligence.

### III

From what has gone before, it is obvious that it pays to be right. Why, then, did our creator let us be surrounded by so many temptations to be wrong?

Presumably our creator could have equipped us with a built-in device providing automatic right choices, as men have done with calculating machines. But instead, each of us is born with a brain and a conscience. The brain tells us that

right action keeps us out of trouble, because it interprets the evidence we see on all sides, and the conscience helps us to make right choices. Both are available for such use as we give them. What lets us use them, and what makes us aware of them, is the fact that we are conscious. Thus consciousness is the key to invulnerability, because it gives us our ability to choose between right and wrong. Moreover, it has no other obvious uses except to let us enjoy our successes and suffer for our failures.

Fitting these facts together, it becomes obvious that our creator intended us to be right, and gave us every incentive to be right short of an automatic device. It also becomes obvious that we are expected to be right voluntarily instead of compulsively. We cannot abdicate that responsibility without installing a distortion which thereafter denies us the opportunity to be right on the subject of the distortion, unless and until the distortion is specifically removed.

Thus a limitation is put on our use of consciousness in choosing between right and wrong.

We have the freedom to choose, except insofar as we have abdicated that freedom, but the limitation tells us unmistakably to choose right instead of wrong, to choose it consistently in all our decisions, and to preserve and protect our ability to choose it thereafter. We violate that limitation at our peril, and after we violate it, our distortions compel us to convict and punish ourselves in ways we do not suspect.

All this has a further and vastly more significant meaning than is at first apparent. We can perceive the further meaning if we look carefully beneath the surface.

Life may be viewed as a series of opportunities to make choices, and each such opportunity poses a problem. The first step in solving a problem might be defined as the act of capturing the problem in a question so skillfully worded that

the answer to the question provides complete solution for the problem. Thus the problem predetermines the question; but, in the same sense, the question also predetermines the answer.

A simple problem would involve one question and one answer, and a complicated problem would involve many questions and many answers. Therefore, in the final analysis, even the most complicated problem is solved by making a series of simple right choices, and every right choice results from logical and conscientious distinctions between right and wrong. From this it is obvious that the terms of every decision are implicit in the situation calling for the decision. Every right choice is made by interpreting that situation correctly, to get the logically and morally perfect question-and-answer sequence leading to a perfect solution, and the person who so makes his choices thus permits fulfillment of his destiny.

Here we see a grand reconciliation of the age-old philosopher's debate over predestination and free will; and it is no longer a question of which fits the facts, because both do.

Each of us has a perfect destiny fixed in advance. That destiny might be defined as the destiny which would be achieved by an unending succession of right choices, with never a wrong choice. Only right use of free will in making right choices could preserve that destiny. One wrong choice would destroy it, and things could never be the same again, although a new perfect destiny would at once replace the old one, in turn to be destroyed or fulfilled.

Thus we have both free will and a perfect destiny, at one and the same time, and free will is the agency by which perfect destiny is made valid.

Unending right choices would obviously fix a person's

path of travel. They would put him on his perfect path. They would keep him from making mistakes and getting into trouble. They would lead him always to want to do what he should do, if only because that is logical and intelligent. They would protect him from conflict between duty and desire, and between selfishness and unselfishness. They would guarantee that whatever he does would best suit both him and everyone else, with never a need for compromise.

These facts suggest how complete is the release from all kinds of internal and external friction in the person who becomes a right thinker. Many other releases he discovers for himself, and many he enjoys without becoming aware of them. One he soon starts noticing is the release of surprising mental faculties earlier discussed.

Let us summarize those faculties and the procedure by which they are regained.

By understanding a few basic principles and by learning to use a few simple techniques, the average person can get back large amounts of brainpower he does not yet know he has lost. At the same time, he can rid himself of counterfeit faculties he does not yet know afflict him. He can do it by correcting his distortions. Thus he can easily release unsuspected abilities, open doors to opportunity, overcome anxiety and personal frustration, put his life on the right track, and achieve unimagined satisfaction and peace of mind, even in a troubled world.

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of the faculties he regains by getting rid of his distortions, or the ease with which he regains them after he makes the necessary reversal in his approach to life.

Imagine what it might mean to him if he could instantly remember every fact he ever knew? Imagine what it might mean to him if he could close his eyes and relive any event

of his past life, seeing and hearing it as a full color movie with all the original sounds and other sensory impressions? Imagine what it might mean to him if he could literally recognize and interpret other people's thoughts, even to the extent of going back in his mind to some remote past event and learning what was then thought by other persons present?

These are some of the native faculties blanked out by his distortions. They are blanked out so universally, and always for the same reason, that few persons even know they exist. As the counterfeit faculties are detected and dislodged, however, these and other genuine faculties start turning on, dimly and intermittently at first, but with increasing frequency and vividness.

Apparently we all had these faculties at birth, but we lost them. Mainly, we lost them by denying and abusing them. Most of us deny and abuse them still, and thus prevent regaining them. We cannot regain them if we scoff at them, for that is a kind of denial; moreover, we cannot regain them if we intend to abuse them when we get them. Those two facts have blocked much otherwise well-intentioned investigating, but these generally unrecognized abilities stand up under any sort of investigating that does not run counter to nature.

#### IV

By turning on his lost faculties, the average person can easily double and treble his effective intelligence, and he can turn them on just by correcting distortions.

Where no distortion is involved, his brain does not make a mistake, because a distortion is the only agency by which

a mistake occurs. If no distortion is ready and waiting to permit a particular kind of mistake, a distortion must be installed before the mistake is made. During and after the mistake, the individual cannot think about the mistake without thinking through the distortion, and he adds a new distortion whenever necessary to protect or defend either the old distortion or the mistake it caused.

What this means, by implication, is that every normal person is born with a perfect brain; not surprising, because he is born with other perfect organs. His brain *is* perfect; moreover, it remains perfect even with its distortions, unless and until it suffers outright physical impairment.

The brain having no distortions performs its intricate tasks of thinking with a precision not exceeded by any mechanical or electronic calculator. It always gets right answers. It gets those right answers seemingly without effort, because every right answer causes a burst of enthusiasm that generates new emotional energy for subsequent steps of thinking.

Those remarks contradict many traditional assumptions and beliefs.

Despite the average person's delusion of perpetual infallibility, he is disinclined to accept the idea of intellectual perfection. That idea flatly contradicts evidence he sees on all sides, and only an understanding of distortions could permit him to explain the contradiction. In the light of that explanation, it is seen that the idea is correct and sound, as we discover soon after we start inspecting it carefully with an open mind.

In making nearly all our decisions, we instinctively rely on ourselves exactly as though each of us has a brain that is perfect. Only on special occasions do we become confused and mistrust ourselves; even then, we do it only because

inescapable evidence of some irrationality makes us unsure. But we most easily detect irrationality in others, and we learn to mistrust intelligence mostly by noticing other people's distorted conduct. Even the least intelligent among us gradually gets the idea that he must somehow be imperfect too, although he goes on behaving exactly as though he considers himself perfect in almost every decision he makes.

In the conclusions we thus form, we do our mental faculties grave injustice.

We are so conscious of each other's mental shortcomings that we forget what is really the routine evidence of perfection of the average normal brain. In its undistorted decisions, of which every brain makes many, it is utterly infallible. Any reasonably normal person can select an acquaintance from a crowd on the street, for example, and that makes a suitable illustration because few of us are distorted on the point involved. But that is really a complicated decision; too complicated to entrust to a machine; and it is in just that sort of ordinary routine decision that thinking goes astray.

The effortless perfection of the normal brain in dealing with so many of its routine decisions insistently suggests that it should be perfect in all its decisions. Yet many of its decisions lead to trouble. Why?

Only because our distortions deny us the benefit of our natural perfection.

What happens is that the brain makes an incessant string of correct decisions, except that every decision is modified exactly enough to allow for and accommodate the distortions used in reaching that decision. When no distortions are used in making a decision, the decision is perfect; but when a distortion is used, the decision is exactly

as imperfect as the distortion makes it. Thus a perfect brain invariably produces a wrong decision when distorted thinking leads to the decision, and then only. The brain is helpless to do otherwise, because that would require an imperfect brain. That would require a brain capable of making exactly the mistake needed to compensate for each distortion. That is expecting too much.

To put it another way, there is only one reason why our distortions display themselves in what we think, say and do. The reason is that each of us has a perfect brain which quite effectively guarantees it.

The normal brain never makes a mistake, not even when thinking through a distortion. It only gives another new expression to the original mistake made on purpose, by the individual himself, at the time he installed the distortion. From this it is obvious that the mistake, along with any trouble it causes, is strictly his mistake and not in any way the fault of his brain. That remains true throughout life, even when mistakes and trouble result from distortions installed decades earlier, during childhood or infancy, in events long since forgotten.

This concept of native infallibility does much to explain why correction of distortions moves the individual toward personal invulnerability. It moves him a great distance in that direction; exactly how far is a matter of opinion, but as a science, humanetics cannot safely argue that he goes the whole distance.

We have not yet said enough to show how he can have complete invulnerability. In the next step we must recognize that of himself, he cannot.

Nearly all the trouble he gets into is exactly his own fault, and he can stop all that. But suppose he is riding in an automobile driven by someone else, perhaps by a distorted

parent, while he is only three years old? How can he then protect himself, no matter what his morality and intelligence? Or, to select another possibility, how can any of us know he will not be struck down by a falling star?

Any normal adult can protect himself against almost every calamity that might befall him. He can protect himself against virtually all the calamities he habitually tells himself could not possibly be his fault. But complete invulnerability cannot be accepted or defended without the concept of divine guidance. A person may perhaps go 99.9 per cent of the distance by his use of conscience and intelligence in making right choices, but he cannot go all the way under his own guidance.

Would you like to have divine guidance? Can you think of a better way to invite it and earn it than to live by the principle of absolute right? Can you think of another method of seeking invulnerability so reliably that you can discard that principle and still be safe? Or do you think divine guidance most likely visits the person who has done all he can for himself?

Complete invulnerability, even with divine guidance, suggests the need for individual perfection, and that also calls for specific treatment.

Perfection is the natural goal of the person who desires an undistorted mind, and when he gets an undistorted mind perfection is his natural reward. But he does not have to wait until that fortunate day before he can start enjoying the advantages of perfection. He can start at once, and the surest way to start is to cancel out his distortions by assiduous resort to the principle of absolute right.

It has not occurred to many of us, but perfective technique does not necessarily demand perfection. Instead, any person can get the full advantage of perfection in most

of his daily affairs, despite the fact that he still has imperfections in himself.

Consider, for example, a pilot moving his ferry boat into its slip. He may approach from upstream or down. He may move fast or slow. He may rub the pilings first on one side and then on the other. But he makes corrections as he goes along. He has to do a mighty sloppy job to get into trouble. As long as he finally gets his boat exactly where it belongs, so that the fastenings and gang planks can be put in place, and does it without causing or inviting damage, he has achieved a perfect result.

In other words, it is possible for an imperfect person to get a perfect result, and it is astonishing how generally that principle applies when effort is made. All the forces of nature gather themselves to help the person who is trying to think, say and do what is right. Any person can invite that help in his efforts to correct distortions, or do anything else, and that is what is meant by perfective thinking.

This correctly suggests that a person can put himself on the right track at once, just by deciding to do it, and the significant change in his approach to life is really quite easy to make. Trying, he soon discovers, is equivalent to succeeding. But those distortions are tricky, and the unfortunate thing about trying, at least until he gets rid of his distortions, is that he must keep trying all the time.

The moment he gets his life on the right track, however, he starts finding little guideposts telling him how to keep it there. Presently he begins to see that every little error, every little stumbling in his speech, every little mistake of any sort, has a meaning. It tells him that he has somehow moved in a wrong direction. He gets the habit of going back to reconsider. Soon he learns to detect trouble at once. Presently he learns to anticipate trouble before it occurs. At last he learns to avoid it.

Clearly that is the process of achieving self-perfection. Clearly it is the way to recapture lost horizons abandoned in hopelessness when we got into troubles we did not understand. But there are many among us who will say that we must not forget the matters of prayer and religious faith, and now this has become a book of religion as well as a book of science.

There is no escaping it, for religion cannot be left out.

## V

Perhaps it is true that no person can understand and apply the knowledge of distortions and how they work without becoming a prayerful and religious person. But humanetics has purposely avoided the religious aspect. Partly the reason is that the subject matter was developed less as a religious project than as a direct scientific interpretation of life. Partly also the reason is that a religious approach, as it is generally understood, would almost necessarily involve a sectarian approach. Partly also the reason is that many persons are disinclined to recognize the validity of a religious approach. But mostly the reason is that logic permits full understanding of the science of humanetics.

Faith is not a preliminary requirement to acceptance, but an inescapable result of understanding.

Perhaps it is by divine intent that we were denied knowledge of the connections between our sins and the troubles that resulted. Thus was our morality tested, and thus were we led to punish ourselves unknowingly.

We can now see that morality practiced to avoid and evade visible and obvious penalties is not real morality, but

a barter system in which the incentive is profit and reward and evasion of punishment. That we cannot thus bargain for our souls has at last become evident. Perhaps that knowledge may advance the hitherto slow but sure and certain victory of honesty, virtue and truth over the forces of evil and wrong. Perhaps it may hasten the day when right prevails at last among men—as right ultimately will.

## HUMANETICS

Today our world suffers from  
warped and twisted thinking.

That affliction is caused by  
hidden distortions of logic.

Those distortions are fixed,  
inflexible tools of thought.

\* \* \* \*

We all have distortions, and  
they cause all our mistakes.

\* \* \* \*

Humanetics exposes the exact  
nature of those distortions.

It shows their causes, their  
results, and their remedies.

It constitutes a new science  
of perfective thinking, here  
reported for the first time.