VOLUME VIII, NO. 12
MARCH 23, 1955

THE PARENT DILEMMA

A READER whose questions and comments have several times supplied matter for discussion now writes to define a problem which seems to us to represent the central moral issue of the present age. It often arises from the conflict between group action and individual action—or group morality and individual morality—but also develops in what seem entirely personal relationships. Our reader says:

> This seems to me to be one of the commonest and most important of all moral questions. I am constantly finding myself in situations in which two or more absolute values seem to conflict. For example, I recently had, or thought I had, a choice between being honest or kind in a situation which did not allow me to be both honest and kind. So far as I could see, one of these absolute values had to be sacrificed, but how can one sacrifice an absolute?

Our correspondent goes on, noting that individuals and groups, in order to support an ideal which they cherish, sometimes feel obliged to perform actions which run counter to other ideals which are equally or perhaps more important.

This is a dilemma, then, which, fundamentally, is rooted in human differences. The failure of others to share our views seems to compel us to do evil in order to do good—hence the problem of having to sacrifice one "absolute" in behalf of another.

An obvious question to be disposed of is whether or not these ideals are entitled to be called "absolutes." The definition of an absolute may be somewhat arbitrary, but we should incline to say that an absolute is an idea or a value which cannot be defined in terms of something else. It is *ultimate,* and therefore absolute. Now the ultimate, it seems to us, is bound to be supremely abstract. Abstract kindness, for example, in order to include all categories of kindly acts, would depend upon one's notion of an all-inclusive human good, in terms of which *absolute* kindness would be defined. And because absolute kindness and a given instance of kindness might seem very far apart, we would hesitate to use the word "absolute" here.

Turning, then, to the question raised, there seem to be literally thousands of great and small dilemmas growing out of the parent problem. For example, recently, in the Los Angeles area, there was a housing project which involved the condemnation of a number of small homes to make room for an extensive group of community buildings. Some of the condemned structures were no more than shacks, but others were decent homes, and one in particular, situated on a side-hill, was a masterpiece of devoted ingenuity by an old European who over fifteen years had built himself a home with surrounding gardens that bore the unique imprint of his inventive life. His home was torn down, and he was embittered. In its place the plans of skilled architects were to be realized in the attractive uniformities of low-cost housing for families of limited means—a worthy enough objective, all will agree. The fact that, by reason of the political action of private interests, the housing project was subsequently abandoned, and the hillside returned to a somewhat mournful and mutilated "state of nature" is beside the point, although it does add a further complexity to the original moral issue, which is: How shall we justify the destruction of the lifework of the old European?

Of course, someone will say, things like that "always happen." The rule we have to follow is "the greatest good for the greatest number," and all that.

Maybe so, but pressed to an extreme and armed by revolutionary utopianism, this is a rule

which led to the liquidation of a million kulaks in Russia—people who remained unsympathetic to the idea of collective farms. The problem is fundamentally the same, whether a single individual is dispossessed or the people of an entire region. And since the Russians are far too convenient as whipping boys in such illustrations, we ought to mention also the erasure from existence of a hundred thousand or so Japanese civilians by the atom bomb—again, to provide "the greatest good for the greatest number."

The point is, this is a dilemma for Good People as well as Bad People. No one can escape its conditions.

Would this sort of decision trouble a man if only himself were involved? It might trouble him, but not as a moral problem. If he must, for example, sacrifice a gangrenous limb to save his own life, he will in all likelihood choose the operation. He will suffer in various ways, but his conscience will remain calm.

The moral problem, then, exists only when we find ourselves forced to make decisions which bring sacrifices or deprivations involuntarily to other people. This is the sword of Damocles which hangs over the head of every administrator, every judge, every man charged by society with making decisions that have an effect on the lives of others. We commonly think that we honor a man when we raise him to a position of authority. Most men who seek public office have the same view of the matter. Plato, however, thought otherwise. Plato was persuaded that a man who regards the possession of authority as a goal to be sought ought not to be chosen as a governor or guardian. Only those who recoil from authority, Plato held, are worthy to exercise it.

Besides the Platonic philosophers, the anarchists are the only ones who have given close attention to the problem. They attempt to solve it by abolishing *all* authority. The anarchist ideal is at least instructive even if, the anarchists, on those few occasions when they have been in a position to exercise political authority, have gone ahead and exercised it, at the cost of their anarchist principles.

The important thing to be recognized, we think, is that the ordering of social life by rule is *bound* to produce a certain amount of evil. This comes the closest of anything we can think of to being a true Original Sin, but it is not really a "sin," since it is an organic part of human experience in organized society. It is as inevitable as "growing pains," or the ordeal of initiation into responsibility, through which every man passes.

We easily recognize this as individuals, in relation to ourselves, but resist it as social beings. If we suffer pain, we want to have *chosen* to suffer it, as the lesser of two evils, or as belonging to the means to some end we prize. The men who climbed Everest probably suffered all sorts of pains, but none of them, even the ones who lost limbs, ever claimed injustice, either from society or nature.

Since the revolutionary days of the eighteenth century, however, we have let ourselves suppose that the unseating of kings, bringing the abolition of the principle of *personal* authority, with the substitution of *legal* authority, somehow ended the dilemma. Believing this, we become puzzled when men continue to suffer from *unintended* injustice.

So we arrive at the position defined by our correspondent, who proposes that just and compassionate intent ought not to produce moral contradictions. Yet it does.

From the instance of the individual, whose acceptance of pain may be acknowledged as producing no moral complications, let us move one step toward social organization, that step being the family relation of parent and child. Here, it is often the case that a similar harmony prevails, even if pain to the child results from the parent's decision. If the parent does his best, and the child *feels* this, the hurt to the child may cause no sense of wrong or injustice. This happens, of course, only some of the time. When it does, a

kind of conjunction of natures takes place, so that the parent acts in behalf of the child, as he would for himself, and the child, accepting this superimposed identity which comes from love, experiences no moral reaction.

But in the case cited by our correspondent—in which it was impossible to be both honest and kind—disparity between outlooks, we must assume, created a gap that was unbridged by sympathy. Honesty toward a vain person who is making a fool of himself, for example, is not kind except in some "larger" sense. And when we decide to be honest and apply this somewhat surgical sort of kindness, there is always the question of how we were appointed to straighten other people out.

Perhaps we can argue that the suffering which results when people of unequal or different purposes and ideals are bound together in the same environment is a form of social "growing pain." But here we must immediately qualify or we drop back into the conventional justification of the greatest good, etc. The man who must take the major portion of responsibility for the suffering, in this case, is the man who presumes to define the goals in behalf of which the suffering will take place. *How does he know which are the best goals.?* Again, the reluctance of philosophers to become kings is justified. Again, the anarchists have their innings.

Against this background, Lao-tse becomes the greatest of political philosophers, of whose views, Thomas Jefferson's "The best government is the least government" is only a pallid echo.

In theory, at least, a wise absolute monarch could eliminate much of the margin of error that occurs in the impersonal application of law. In the case of the old European, a personal ruler could have made an exception of this man's home, and declared that the housing project must build around it, so as to preserve as a monument to human resourcefulness this pleasant structure perched on a jutting terrace hewn by hand on a steep hill. A project superintendent employed by a city housing authority could never manage such exceptions to legislative mandate. An outraged city council would remove him at once. The old man's house might be conceded to be "quaint," but hardly permitted to stand in the way of a progressive program to eliminate slums, provide clean homes for the underprivileged, beautify the city, etc.

Even if we had that unimaginable thing—a king both all-wise and all-powerful—we might find that the development of the people would be frustrated by his all-too-perfect paternalism. Other values, not capable, perhaps, of being defined in terms of "honesty" and "kindness," would be smothered by the presence of an infallible authority.

Thus, by an exhaustion of alternatives, we are brought to a musing on the nature of evil. Suppose we start out with the hypothesis that there are two sorts of evil—the avoidable and the unavoidable. Perhaps we should name the unavoidable evil simply "pain," since by definition an *unavoidable* evil cannot be blamed on anyone, and therefore is without moral quality.

In any event, to make the situation described by our correspondent intelligible, we find it necessary to posit that some pain is unavoidable in human life. That all must experience a measure of physical pain, from childbirth on, seems clear enough. That the element of moral pain cannot be altogether eliminated from organized society is also evident, if we acknowledge that in an organized society some men have to make decisions for others, and that those others will not invariably understand and approve what is decided. While the social contract is supposed to take care of this feature of human relations, through the delegation of authority, individuals and minorities are continually protesting against administrative decisions made over their heads, so that it is plain enough that the idea of the General Will is no more than a fiction necessary to political action—a fiction, moreover, which has allowed us

to dismiss the problem raised by our correspondent as of no importance.

We are now prepared to argue that the chair of the governor, the judge, or the administrator is in very truth the *Siege Perilous*—the height from which, in human society, some men distribute among their fellows the unavoidable evil which is the lot of man in his present state of inequality and imperfection.

What about the avoidable evil? We further propose that whenever the governor, judge, or administrator loses sight of the fallibility of rules, the sad expediency of constitutions, and imagines that as a representative of the "best form of government"—*his* government—he is one of those engaged in eliminating evil altogether, he becomes a dispenser of *avoidable* evil as well. For now he is a fanatical defender of the System, making for it claims no system can ever deserve; and this, in turn, is a gross betrayal of the authority entrusted to him, for he now deceives the people into believing that after one or two more changes in the system, it will at last be perfect and evil will cease.

As a result, no one thinks anything but short and shallow thoughts about the pain in human life. The main thing to do about pain is to escape from it—all of it—and only a few recalcitrant philosophers attempt to conceive a view of life in which pain or the unavoidable phase of evil has a natural place. As a consequence of all this ignorance, nearly everyone suffers more than is necessary, and suffers ignominiously, without comprehending why.

The dilemma, then, is founded upon the assumption that a painless existence is the ideal existence. We deny the assumption. It is an assumption which defines the good in terms of a state of feeling.

We prefer to define the good as a state of knowing. For then, instead of seeking an order in which evil cannot occur, our political efforts would be directed toward an order in which education is the primary value, and our feelings—of pain, or anything else—secondary.

The ideal society would then be one in which education and politics are indistinguishable from each other. Pain would still be present, but would ebb, we think, to its natural and logical minimum.

But pain, in this environment, would not be hated as the cloven hoof of the Enemy. Pain would be acknowledged as each man's due and share in the Promethean fate.

The ancients held that Evil began when the primordial One sundered into the many. With the flood of diversity there arose, in human beings, differences in understanding, perception, and desire. The return to the One, they also held, means an overcoming of the illusions of separateness and a realization of the Whole in the part, the One *in* the many. Since we live and love intensely, pain comes at the death of each illusion. So, perhaps, pressed to its limit, each "absolute value" is translated into the parent value of "knowing" or "understanding," there to rest without the conflicts and contradictions met in a world where relative knowledge makes enigmas of us all.

Letter from
VIENNA

VIENNA.—A unique publication is now being issued by an elementary school teacher who is the director of the Austrian School for Parents. He calls it *Mappe der Menschlichkeit* (Portfolio of Humanism). It collects from newspapers the little items that now and again crop up—of an airplane stewardess who saves the lives of twenty passengers by personal heroism; of a ski teacher who prevents a girl being swallowed by an avalanche; of a child saving another child from drowning; of an American city rebuilding a bombed-out German city. These things are mentioned in small print in the ordinary newspapers while murder, rape and mayhem make the big headlines; but in this portfolio they add up to a picture of humane acts that gladdens the heart of the reader. The story how Aloys Jalkotzy came to think of his portfolio is in itself a humane event. He was for several years headmaster of a reform school in Austria. There he tried an experiment: he distributed among the 300 boys between fifteen and twenty years of age newspapers of different political shades and asked them to read them carefully and collect items of such good news and report on them in their regular gatherings. They discussed the material and wrote letters to the heroes of humanism and received beautiful answers which were read to all the boys in their Sunday celebration. It seems that this wise educationist found the results encouraging enough to try the idea out on the general public, and now he has his Portfolio printed as a poster (10,000 copies each month, in one-page newspaper format) and as a brochure (4,000 copies). The posters are pasted on bulletin boards in post of dices, police stations, railway stops and other public places; the brochures are recommended by the ministry of education as reading matter in public schools and make good material for classes in reading. So the man who underpins children's education by educating fathers and mothers in the ten commandments of how to treat the human being of all ages, puts what little money he can scrape together into reporting acts of pure humanity and does what one of his readers described in an enthusiastic letter: "They read of the good in others, they hear of the good in others, they write of the good in others—they make the good wander around." Couldn't we have such a portfolio attached to several newspapers all round the world?

This interesting story of how juvenile delinquents became a laboratory for moral development in general education through newspapers might point to other ways of using little Austria as a field for world experiments. Right now the amazing success of the Young People's Book Club gives further indication of such possibilities. The Club was founded seven years ago by a secondary school teacher, Dr. Richard Bamberger. That was the time when no books, no paper, no materials of any sort were left for the schools. Without money, office or help, Dr. Bamberger started out, with just enthusiasm and faith. By 1953 he had 100,000 members; in 1955, 200,000. He now has a campaign going against the comics. Today, with the help of many teachers and of the Vienna *Kulturamt,* he is fighting *Schmutz und Schund* (Dirt and Trash) by asking the children to bring their comics to school and have them exchanged for good books. Mountains of comic magazines were burnt in a gay *autodafé* as a result; there was good publicity, and now a larger protest against comics is being launched, with a million signatures already obtained from parents against this subtle poisoning of young minds—considered more dangerous than bacteriological warfare. Government action by legal steps is expected. A million such signatures in Austria would correspond to 25 million collected in the USA! If this sort of protest occurred in America, would it result in government steps, with perhaps a pure drug law in the realm of the minds?

HELENE SCHEU-RIESZ

REVIEW
MONEY WAS NO OBJECT

A QUAKER whom we much admire—or perhaps we should speak of him as a man with Quaker views—recently delighted us with a quotation from George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, to the effect that any man who takes his religious inspiration from another—at secondhand, so to say—"is a thief."

This idea has possibilities. How far, for example, can you press its meaning? For one thing, it means that the only "sense of reality" worth having is the feeling which comes before any attempt to put it into words—the words being but lame and inadequate vehicles. It means religion without intermediaries, present or historical. It means that "spirituality" is absolute independence of creed or tradition—even though it may also mean absolute interdependence, in another sense.

The true religion, then, whatever else it may be, is a religion of self-reliance.

We do not suppose that Helen and Scott Nearing, when they set out to write their book, *Living the Good Life* (sequel to *Man's Search for the Good Life* by Scott Nearing, reviewed in MANAS for Feb. 9), had any idea of writing a "religious" book. However, it is certainly a book on self-reliance, and, oddly enough, it chronicles as background the failure of the people who live in the land of "rugged individualism" to be either "rugged" or "individual." Americans, the Nearings show, are living on the momentum of past achievement while repeating the slogans of yesterday's self-reliance. This, at any rate, is largely true of Vermont, where the Nearings undertook their twenty-year experiment in the good life, and in Vermont, let us note, life is quite a bit ruggeder than in other parts of this fair land. Vermont is the state which is said to have eleven months of winter and thirty days of mighty cold weather.

But this book is least of all a criticism of Vermonters and other Americans. It is about two people who some twenty years ago—in 1932—made up their minds to live like human beings and picked Vermont as the place to do it. They say in their Preface:

> We left the city with three objectives in mind. *The first was economic.* We sought to make a depression-free living, as independent as possible of the commodity and labor markets, which could not be interfered with by employers, whether businessmen, politicians or educational administrators. *Our second aim was hygienic.* We wanted to maintain and improve our health. We knew that the pressures of city life were exacting, and we sought a simple basis of wellbeing where contact with the earth, and home-grown organic food, would play a large part. *Our third objective was social and ethical.* We desired to liberate and dissociate ourselves, as much as possible, from the cruder forms of exploitation: the plunder of the planet; the slavery of man and beast; the slaughter of men in war, and of animals for food.
>
> We were against the accumulation of profit and unearned income by non-producers, and we wanted to make our living with our own hands, yet with time and leisure for avocational pursuits. We wanted to replace regimentation and coercion with respect for life. Instead of exploitation, we wanted a use economy. Simplicity should take the place of multiplicity, complexity and confusion. Instead of a hectic mad rush of busyness we intended a quiet pace, with time to wonder, ponder and observe. We hoped to replace worry, fear and hate with serenity, purpose and at-one-ness.

The book is a report on the twenty-year move toward those objectives. But before we tell a little about it, the matter of similar longings in many other people might be mentioned. It seems to this reviewer that for an increasing number of people, books like this one are stories of the Promised Land. They excite in those who are ready and eager for the simple life a hunger which is something like the dreams which the discovery of gold in California produced in men of another breed a century or so ago. We've had the gold, and know, now, that we need something better.

The Nearings went to Vermont pressed on by only inner compulsions. They were never

fugitives. For them, it was a deliberate choice of the good, not a desperate flight from evil. It is interesting to note that the people who make successes of what they attempt are seldom seen in flight from anything. The changes in their lives are always the result of their own decision. Anyhow, the Nearings went to Vermont and bought a broken-down farm for $1,100—$300 down. They planned to make a modest income from the lumber which grew on their sixty-five acres, but after some scouting around found that sugar maples would provide a better cash crop. (The details of the sugaring business are given in *The Maple Sugar Book,* John Day, 1950.) In the course of their stay at Forest Farm, the Nearings built eight or nine stone buildings, one a roomy home, managed to grow enough in their gardens to live the year round with very few purchases, fed countless visitors, and still had time to go on long lecturing tours of the country. On the farm, they worked a four-hour day, were seldom in a hurry, unless it be to meet a Christmas-rush flurry of orders for maple syrup and sugar, and gave the rest of their hours to personal pursuits such as reading and writing and inviting their souls in the Vermont solitudes.

Lest it be supposed that the Nearings were peculiarly fitted for this undertaking—they were, of course, but not in the conventional sense—it should be noted they began when nearing fifty (well, Scott was nearing fifty!) and that they had to learn from experience and what they could pick up from their neighbors how to cope with a climate which sometimes produced a killing frost in every month of the year!

According to their report, the solution of the economic problem was relatively easy. The attainment of health worked out, too, as they saw no doctor for twenty years. It was the social side of the venture which they count a relative failure. The attempt to win the conservative Vermonters over to economic cooperation barely exceeded the minimum "neighborliness" of New England custom. But their house was often filled with tired pilgrims from the cities, and other families have begun similar efforts as a result of the Nearings' example.

What they did do was to prove that healthful, happy lives, filled with intellectual as well as other kinds of energy, can be lived on marginal New England land, without the complete "peonage" to toil which is said to be involved in this sort of undertaking. Of course, they "pared down" their way of life to what many readers will regard as Spartan austerities:

> Our practice was almost the exact opposite of the current one. Our consumer necessities came mostly from the place, on a use basis. Comforts and conveniences came from outside the farm and had to be procured either by barter or through cash outlays. We bartered for some products,—chiefly food which we could not raise in a New England climate. Cash outlay meant earning additional income. Consequently, we endeavored to do as Robert Louis Stevenson advised in his Christmas Sermon, "earn a little and spend a little less." Food from the garden and wood from the forest were the product of our own time and labor. We paid no rent. Taxes were reasonable. We bought no candy, pastries, meats, soft drinks, alcohol, tea, coffee or tobacco. These seemingly minor items mount up and occupy a large place in the ordinary family's budget. We spent little on clothes and knick-knacks. We lighted for fifteen years with kerosene and candles. We never had a telephone or radio. Most of our furniture was built in and hand made. We did our trading in town not more than twice a month, and then our purchases were scanty.
>
> "Civilization," said Mark Twain, "is a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessaries." A market economy seeks by ballyhoo to bamboozle consumers into buying things they neither want nor need, thus compelling them to sell their labor power as a means of paying for their purchases. Since our aim was liberation from the exploitation accompanying the sale of labor power, we were as wary of market lures as a wise mouse is unwary of other traps.
>
> Readers may label such a policy as painfully austere, renunciatory or bordering on deliberate self-punishment. We had no such feeling. Coming from New York City, with its extravagant displays of non-essentials and its extensive wastes of everything from food and capital goods to time and energy, we were surprised and delighted to find how much of the city

> clutter and waste we could toss overboard. We felt as free, in this respect, as a caged wild bird who finds himself once more on the wing. The demands and requirements which weigh upon city consumers no longer restricted us. To the extent that we were able to meet our consumer needs in our own way and in our own good time, we had freed ourselves from dependence upon the market economy.

There is a sense in which this book is misleading. The real success of the Nearings' venture did not result simply from the careful planning and energetic labors expended over twenty years on a Vermont hillside. It grew, fundamentally, from an attitude toward life which obtained its chief sustenance from the inner resources of the mind. The freedom experienced by the Nearings would have meant imprisonment for far too many of their countrymen. The great question, then, is one of the values which people cherish: what makes people like the Nearings able to feel "free" in circumstances which many others would regard as an intolerable ordeal?

What we are trying to suggest is that the solution for a cluttered, frustrated existence is not merely in moving to the country and attempting to practice "the simple life." The solution is in an attitude toward human experience which makes simple physical and economic arrangements almost a moral and esthetic necessity. It is the larger purpose in life which gives to its lesser enterprises—the obtaining of food, shelter, and clothing—their essential harmony and balance. So often people dream of an ideal life "in community," forgetting that a "community" is not an end in itself, but a frame for higher human qualities—the qualities of the mind and the heart. Making a community is not a magic formula for happiness and good; making a community is the result of the happiness and the good which people already possess in principle, and the community, whether of one family or several, is the infinitely variable expression of the excellences of human beings, and not their cause. The Nearings, in short, were people rich in human values before they went to Forest Farm.

Man's Search for the Good Life, reviewed Feb. 9, sells for $2.50; *Living the Good Life* (with a number of photographs) is priced at $3.50; both volumes may be bought together in an attractive slip cover for $5.00. Orders should be sent to the Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine, where the Nearings have started another combination farming and educational project. We shall have to wait a while before hearing from them whether the first twenty years is the hardest, or the most encouraging!

COMMENTARY
THE BEST LAID PLANS. . .

OUR lead article concerns what might be called the "hazards" of moral decision—decision directly effecting others. Our correspondent writes of decisions in which the dilemma is more or less obvious, but other choices involve dilemmas which are hidden by ignorance, so that the course of righteousness seems unmistakably plain.

Prof. Frederick J. Teggart of the University of California has supplied graphic illustration of such situations in his study of ancient wars, *Rome and China* (University Press, 1941). Reviewing the period from 58 B.C. to 107 A.D., he shows that barbarian invasions of the Roman empire were often caused by wars waged by the Chinese emperors, the impulse of disturbance being transmitted along trade routes in the Tarim basin. During this period, Teggart says, twenty-seven of the total of forty uprisings which harassed Roman administrators "are to be attributed to the influence of events in the 'Western Regions' (of China)," while the rest resulted from Roman aggressions in the East. Teggart comments:

> It is of some importance to note that the statesmen who were responsible for or advocated the resort to war, on each of forty occasions, were entirely unaware of the consequences which this policy entailed. The wars of the Chinese, indeed, were initiated only after lengthy discussions at the imperial court by ministers who were well versed in Chinese history and who reasoned from historical experience no less than from moral principles and from expediency. But the Chinese emperors and their advisors were unconscious of the fact that their decisions were the prelude to conflicts and devastations in regions of which they had never heard. The Romans were equally in the dark with respect to the consequences of their wars in Bosporus, Armenia, and Syria, . . .

The Romans concluded that their immediate neighbors were "actuated by an unalterable disposition to maraud and war," when, as Teggart observes, "the immediate factor in the border wars was not the martial spirit of any particular tribe or tribes, but the mutually unintelligible conduct of men responsive to different modes of existence."

Present-day wars, despite the righteous fervor with which they are prosecuted, doubtless have a similar origin. And if we consider the deeper import of Joseph Wood Krutch's remarks about the "elaborate scheming" we call "conservation" (see Children...and Ourselves), even our best advised relations with the natural world may be suspect, as pursued in a mood which, for all its "prudence," does not even dream of a Nature which may in herself "produce beauty and joy."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

LAST week's discussion of *Animal Inn,* story of an unusual zoological garden—affording genuine "nature study" near the confines of a large city—fits very nicely with Joseph Wood Krutch's "Conservation Is Not Enough," first printed as an article in the *American Scholar* (Summer, 1954), and reprinted in pamphlet form by the University of Utah Press.

We have read a number of volumes dealing with wanton destruction of natural resources, both plant and animal, and it is hard to know whether to be glad or sad about the fact that such books as Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet* and Vogt's *Road to Survival* are apt to be added to with each passing year. While the Forest Service departments of every large government are finally aroused to the pressing need for education in conservation, Krutch's point is that "Conservation is not enough." Man needs a kind of reborn pantheism, a sense of intimacy with all the things that live and grow under the sun, in order to realize that his goal must not only be to strive for "one world," but for the realization of "one earth"—the destinies of all its inhabitants interpenetrating one another. Krutch writes:

> What is commonly called "conservation" will not work in the long run, because it is not really conservation at all but rather, disguised by its elaborate scheming, a more knowledgeable variation of the old idea of a world for man's use only. That idea is unrealizable. But how can man be persuaded to cherish any other ideal unless he can learn to take some interest and some delight in the beauty and variety of the world for its own sake, unless he can see a "value" in a flower blooming or an animal at play, unless he can see some "use" in things not useful?
>
> In our society we pride ourselves upon having reached a point where we condemn an individual whose whole aim in life is to acquire material wealth for himself. But his vulgarity is only one step removed from that of a society which takes no thought for anything except increasing the material wealth of the community. In his usual extravagant way, Thoreau once said: "This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired than it is to be used." Perhaps that "more" is beyond what most people could or perhaps ought to be convinced of. But without some realization that "this curious world" is at least beautiful as well as useful, conservation is doomed. We must live for something besides making a living. If we do not permit the earth to produce beauty and joy, it will in the end not produce food either.
>
> Here practical considerations and those which are commonly called "moral," "aesthetic" and even "sentimental" join hands.

A few years ago we took note of Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac,* a rare conservationist's testament, and it is apparent that Mr. Krutch is similarly impressed by the depth of philosophy in that book, integrated with scientific discussions of ecology. What Mr. Leopold found to be missing in conservation programs was "some feeling for, as well as some understanding of, the inclusive community of rocks and soils, plants and animals, of which we are a part." Whether we turn to the old philosophers of India or to a sensitive, philosophical religionist much revered in our time—the message remains the same. Krutch continues:

> Albert Schweitzer remarks somewhere that we owe kindness even to an insect, when we can afford to show it, just because we ought to do something to make up for all the cruelties, necessary as well as unnecessary, which we have inflicted upon almost the whole of animate creation.
>
> Probably not one man in ten is capable of understanding such moral and æsthetic considerations, much less of permitting his conduct to be guided by them. But perhaps twice as many, though still far from a majority, are beginning to realize that the reckless devastation of the earth has practical consequences. They are beginning to hear at least about "conservation," even though they are not even dimly aware of any connection between it and a large morality and are very unlikely to suppose that it does or could mean anything more than looking after their own welfare.

Another way of summing up this thesis would be to say that, just as soon as we take the poetry

and art out of our relationship to nature—or, more clearly, when we push "Nature" so far away from us that we are only dimly aware of her presence we are bound to suffer deleterious psychological effects. Callousness towards animals, plants and trees is only one step removed from callousness in regard to one's fellow humans, and it may turn out to be something more than a historical fact that an epoch threatened with mass atomic bombings was the one in which the misuse of nature reached its nadir.

The concluding portion of "Conservation Is Not Enough" deserves considerable reflection:

> There is a criterion which it seems to me not wholly fanciful to apply. Might it not have something to do with nature's own great principle of "live and let live"? Might it not be that man's success as an organism is genuinely a success so long, but only so long, as it does not threaten the extinction of everything not useful to and absolutely controlled by him, so long as that success is not incompatible with the success of nature as the varied and free thing which she is, so long as, to some extent, man is prepared to share the earth with others?
>
> And if by any chance that criterion is valid, then either one of two things is likely to happen. Either outraged nature will violently reassert herself and some catastrophe, perhaps the catastrophe brought about when more men are trying to live in our limited space than even their most advanced technology can make possible, will demonstrate the hollowness of man's supposed success; or man himself will learn in time to set a reasonable limit to his ambitions and accept the necessity of recognizing his position as that of the most highly evolved of living creatures, but not one which entitles him to assume that no others have a right to live unless they contribute directly to his material welfare.
>
> But how can he learn to accept such a situation, to believe that it is right and proper, when the whole tendency of his thought and his interest carries him in a contrary direction? How can he learn to value and delight in a natural order larger than his own order? How can he come to accept, not sullenly but gladly, the necessity of sharing the earth?

So nature appreciation is a much vaster subject than one may realize. Parents stimulated to thought by "Conservation Is Not Enough," and children intrigued by *Animal Inn,* are apt to provide better homes for one another, homes pervaded by an underlying thoughtfulness which, in other terms, is simply an everyday manifestation of Schweitzer's "reverence for life."

We recall from Krutch's *Desert Year*—still our favorite among his books—the suggestion that the "austerity" of the desert has a great deal to teach modern man. It does indeed seem true that we seldom learn much of anything when our lives are surfeited with conveniences—when we have so much of what is commonly considered desirable that pause is never taken to fully know and appreciate anything in particular. Most of the "goods" of the world arrive in such plenitude that we scarcely have time, let alone inclination, to ponder just how "good" they really are, for us. From the standpoint of the philosopher, nothing is actually much "good" to man unless it makes him think, enlarges the horizons of his sympathy and understanding. So animals in zoos are not necessarily "educational" for children, for the simple reason that an exhibit calls for no thought or sympathy from its viewer. The children who *care* for animals at Trailside Museum—first literally and then, in a more important sense, by way of feeling and attitude—may learn a great deal. Similarly, conservation, if regarded as a matter of statistics alone, can do no more for human beings than fill their stomachs regularly. The food for lack of which people perish, at least in Occidental lands, is a different kind of sustenance. There is a death of the soul—a withering away of the capacity for sympathy and pantheistic reverence—and this sort of death justifies the ultimate in mourning.

FRONTIERS

Some Perspectives on War

A SUBSCRIBER, recalling two "Review" articles appearing under the title, "The New Pacifism" (Oct. 6 & 13, 1954), offers comment which may prove interesting to readers. As these reviews endeavored to show, negations of the logic of warfare are now appearing in some strange quarters. For instance, one would hardly expect to find in a book by last year's Chief of Air Staff in Great Britain, Sir John Slessor, such uncompromising sentences as: "No war can avoid creating conditions more unfavorable than those to be corrected." Sir John's title is *Strategy for the West,* and he apparently found it just as necessary to voice the above opinion as to recommend the strengthening of atomic armament, the latter being an unfortunate expedient demanded by the peculiar conditions of our times.

Our correspondent calls attention to the extent of "war rejection" among a growing number of men who know nothing of classical pacifism or conscientious objection. The November *Newsletter* of the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, for example, contains a communication in which the following appears:

> The task of the SSRS is to encourage scientists and engineers to go on strike against the American drive toward world destruction.
>
> As a pacifist I believe that open, vocal noncooperation with war work is the most effective form of a strike against a war program. Nevertheless, I am inclined to agree with SSRS member Alex Comfort, who said in the June *Resistance* that more important than the conscientious objector "is the unconscientious objector, the man who deserts, or goes slow, or even becomes ill with perfectly genuine gastric ulcers. . . . In America, and possibly also in England, we are on the verge of a widespread withdrawal by scientists and technologists from the support of the kind of psychopathic policy which the atom bomb exemplifies. Some will withdraw militantly, as Dr. Norbert Wiener has done. Others with less insight or courage will suddenly discover pressing commitments outside military research. Others will quite genuinely fall ill . . ."
>
> The people with whom I come into contact in my business are proprietors of small manufacturing establishments. They are not the sort of people one would expect to question the status quo or the prosperity of war sub-contracts. Yet even there I see signs of unconscientious objection. In three instances I have refused to help small manufacturers with sub-contracts directly related to the killing business. Two of the three immediately went on the defensive when I gave a short one-sentence explanation of why I wouldn't do it, and said they had to provide work for their men . . . A manufacturer who knew how I felt about war told me with undisguised pride in his voice that the work in his shop was all civilian work.
>
> These and other experiences lead me to believe there is considerable quiet objection to war work . . . The words "aware" and "unaware" will come closer to what I mean. SSRS members are "aware" objectors. They are aware that they object to doing destructive work. More numerous. . . are the unaware objectors, the semi-aware . . . etc. Individually these objectors are less effective than the aware objectors, but it is conceivable that by their numbers they can overshadow in influence the aware objectors . . . Their objection comes out, to some extent, when they come in contact with a known, noisy war objector like myself. I have seen enough of it to believe there is more objection to war work than most people think. I would like to see the SSRS try to further this objection. This could be done by increasing the awareness of these objectors to war work. Their influence would be greater if some of the semi-aware became objectors, if some unaware became semi-aware, etc. If that happened, we might well also see an increase in the unaware objectors.
>
> The army discovered during World War II that 85% of the combat soldiers had such strong inhibitions against killing that they would not fire their guns even when it was a case of kill or be killed. It may be that the 85%, or some percentage of them, have the capabilities of being some sort of objectors to destructive work, but their feelings are easier to over-ride in such a case than when they are called on to kill someone. Their inner feelings may need only to be brought out.

There is no doubt, as our correspondent contends, that "the lack of enthusiasm in Korea was a form of war objection." Many will remember that amazing story in *Collier's,* "Why

Don't They Shoot?" by Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall. General Marshall was given the task of discovering why "half of the combat soldiers in Korea can't seem to force themselves to fire at the enemy." He describes the situation dramatically:

> Imagine you're a combat infantryman in Korea, well trained and well dug in on a ridge line, awaiting an enemy attack. The artillery and mortar barrage begins. You see a number of the enemy making their way up the steep hill toward your unit. They mean to kill you. Ducking from rock to rock, moving steadily forward, they finally run across an open area and come into view. They're perfect targets. You sight down your barrel. Your finger tightens. But then—as the perspiration pours from you—nothing happens! *You just can't squeeze the trigger!*
>
> Impossible, Unusual—Once the Army thought so, too. But now, after a long, hard look at itself, the Army is facing up to these sobering facts:
>
> In any given action of World War II, only 12 to 25 percent of all the combat soldiers who were armed and in a position to fire their weapons at the enemy were able to pull the trigger!
>
> In Korea, the average has been raised by dint of intensive effort, but only to maximum of about 50 percent!
>
> In other words, today, one out of every two American soldiers who come face to face with the enemy cannot be counted on to fight.

General Marshall is careful to point out that this reaction had absolutely nothing to do with the men's courage, recounting the astonishing case of a "much decorated World War I company Commander who always advanced under fire well ahead of his men yet who lately confessed to a fellow officer that he was never able to pull the trigger of his own weapon." Marshall then makes particular point of the fact that the same company Commander later became a General in the Marine Corps, testifying to the high regard with which he was held by superior officers. Another interesting side-light is furnished by General Marshall's observation that the Russians must be having exactly the same sort of trouble in their own armed forces, although probably in less degree. There seem to be elements in human nature which protest the finality of killing even when one believes that there is no alternative. In any case, the "unconscientious objectors" of the 1950's may some day turn out to be a positive force. Perhaps something occasionally called the "human soul" is showing its capacity to transcend political conditioning.

All this, of course, is a far cry from articles like "No Need to Bomb Cities to Win War," appearing in *U.S. News & World Report* for Jan. 28. However, even though Colonel Richard Leghorn, Air Force Reserve officer, there recommends a plan "to destroy instantly and utterly the nuclear stockpiles of the aggressor and the nuclear capability of the enemy," he also features a companion proviso—that the U.S. renounce all A- and H-bomb attacks on hostile cities. Perhaps the fact that this militant proposal carefully includes the latter provision is further indication that a good deal more rationalization is necessary today to make even defensive war palatable. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor naval installations in December of 1941, popular feelings would easily have supported wholesale atomic bombing. Today this is doubtful, and if we seem to be straining a point in dredging up evidence that a new tradition of conscience is apparent, we take refuge in the contention that here one's optimism is excusable—because necessary.