

## HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

A FEW years ago, a contemporary essayist—one of the most distinguished—speaking to a group of graduate students, including practicing biologists, asked a question to which he could get no intelligible answer. Why, he wanted to know, is there so much resistance to the idea that the struggle toward *meaning* is a part of or behind the driving force of nature? Why do scientifically educated minds reject almost automatically the possibility that this "cosmic" tendency flowers in human beings, whose best and ideal expressions are heroic efforts to make sense out of the puzzles, contradictions, and apparently inexplicable mysteries of life?

There are answers to these questions, but making them involves us in the history of the Western mind and its uneven quest for certainty. One way to characterize the scientific mind is to say that it strives above all to eliminate ambiguity from what is thought and said about the natural world. "Maybe this, maybe that," is not a stipulation that can be used in the construction of a machine. You have to make a decision: "It is *this*, not *that*," before there is any hope that the machine will work. If you allow unpredictable free will to come into the picture, science becomes impossible.

Galileo began the archetypal struggle of the scientists to rule out "wild" factors in the natural system of cause and effect. The theologians of his time, the early seventeenth century, were quite aware that their power—the power of the Church—over human thought and behavior rested on the claim that God can do *anything*. This is the practical, everyday meaning of omnipotence, and the interpreters of "God's will" were in a position to decree as divine intention whatever they thought would serve their institutional interests. To set limits to God's will would be to

disarm the clergy and eventually dissolve the power of the Church.

In a recent essay Giorgio de Santillana describes what happened in the case of Galileo's great book in defense of the Copernican theory, which he hoped would persuade the Church to "quietly drop its veto and move over to new positions." The Pope at that time, Urban VIII, had been friendly to Galileo and approved the writing of the book, even suggesting certain conclusions to be reached. De Santillana relates:

The manuscript was submitted to the Church censors, examined word for word, and came out with official approval. The censors found it good and full of laudable reverence. *The Dialogue of the Great World Systems* came out in 1632; it was an instant enthusiastic success—and then all at once the authorities realized that they had made a frightful mistake. The usual advisors rushed to tell the Pope that, under presence of following his instructions, the work was really a demolition charge planted by an expert, that it made a shambles of official teaching, and that it was apt to prove more dangerous to Catholic prestige than Luther and Calvin put together. (*Reflections on Men and Ideas*, 1968.)

The Inquisition figured out a way to catch Galileo as a law-breaker, and he was put on trial. When a diplomatic friend appealed to the Pope in behalf of the scientific thinker, the Pope, enraged, shouted: "We must not necessitate God Almighty, do you understand?"

The charge was accurate enough. Galileo had suggested that God must obey the laws of nature as his telescope had revealed them. And as de Santillana says:

Necessitating is indeed the fatal word that marks our science. Where there is mathematical deduction of reality there is necessity itself, that which could not be otherwise. This is what Galileo asserts, powerfully and dangerously in his *Dialogue*, where he says that when the mind deduced a necessary proposition, it

perceives it as God perceives it. There is an identity at that point between man's mind and God's.

Galileo was put under house arrest and ordered to write no more, but the fundamental momentum of scientific rationalism had been released and at the end of the century Newton would present the world with the conception of a cosmic machine that demonstrably worked. By study of matter and its motions, it came to be believed, we can know all that we need to know. The metaphysics of mathematically conceived forces became the faith of science, the forces being simply "givers" in the physical universe, all that we have to work with, and all, scientifically speaking, that we need. This was the system that modern thinking put in the place of the elaborate theology expounding God's will, and nothing was more welcome to the social thinkers of the eighteenth-century time of revolution. Science not only stood for attainable knowledge; it was also the gladiator fighting for freedom of mind. The broad consequences, early in our own century, could be described in a few lines by Carl Becker (in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*, 1932):

What is man that the electron should be mindful of him! Man is but a foundling in the cosmos, abandoned by the forces that created him. Unparented, unassisted and undirected by omniscient or benevolent authority, he must fend for himself, and with the aid of his own limited intelligence find his way about in an indifferent universe.

Such is the world pattern that determines the character and direction of modern thinking. The pattern has been a long time in the weaving. It has taken eight centuries to replace the conception of existence as divinely composed and purposeful drama by the conception of existence as a blindly running flux of disintegrating energy. But there are signs that the substitution is now fully accomplished; and if we wished to reduce eight centuries of intellectual history to an epigram, we could not do better than to borrow the words of Aristophanes, "Whirl is king, having deposed Zeus." . . .

Since Whirl is king, we must start with the whirl, the mess of things as presented in experience. We start with the irreducible brute fact, and we must

take it as we find it, since it is no longer permitted to coax or cajole it, hoping to fit it into some or other category of thought on the assumption that the pattern of the world is a logical one. Accepting the fact as given, we observe it, experiment with it, verify it, classify it, measure it if possible, and reason about it as little as may be. The questions we ask are "What?" and "How?" What are the facts and how are they related? If sometimes, in a moment of absent-mindedness or idle diversion, we ask the question "Why?" the answer escapes us. Our supreme object is to measure and master the world rather than to understand it.

What was the practical support of this outlook—so accurately described by Becker in 1932? Its strongest support was surely the immunity it provided to theological mind-control and the careless speculations of religion. Running a close second was the outstanding fact that science *works*—it enables us to do things we couldn't do before, and various utopian writers have painted glowing pictures of the material paradise that would one day be ours, with scientific discovery as the instrument of creation. The outlook had behind it the vast enthusiasm of the Enlightenment, gaining maturity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mankind, it was felt, had finally found *the* way to make real progress, and that we, especially we Americans, were really on the march.

The mood of the scientists was well expressed by an eminent biologist, August Pauly, at the turn of the century:

The prospect that our attempts at explanation in biology may lead us in the end into psychology is distasteful to the natural science of our time. Psychology with its phenomena grasped by the understanding rather than the senses and with its suspicious affinities with philosophy, appears as a sort of mysticism; and natural science, which trusts only to the senses and mistrusts reason and philosophy, must not come to that. That would be to end in darkness.

This was the mainstream scientific opinion when Becker wrote his book, and only within the past twenty years or so has it begun to be seriously questioned. But any well-seated opinion

such as the rules of the scientific method is not easily shaken, nor can it be replaced save by a way of inquiry which has a corresponding discipline, and where can this be found? The difficulty in finding an answer to this question is now the chief explanation of the "resistance" to the philosophical quest for meaning.

The depth of the resistance is illustrated by the fact that individuals who have had thorough training (and indoctrination) in the scientific method, if they become interested in the area of psychic research, develop ways of converting their findings into data that can be "objectively" examined and evaluated, as in the case of the "guessing" scores obtained from the subjects of ESP experiments conducted by J.B. and Louisa Rhine at Duke University. Demonstration that telepathic communication is possible and takes place was regarded as having greater importance than the content of the communications. One could say that for psychic researchers endeavoring to be scientists in their approach to trans-physical phenomena, the medium was indeed the message. This is in striking contrast with ancient thinkers, for whom the quality of the meaning conveyed, by whatever means, was what they valued.

It was Plato's view that the truths that could be objectively proved, leaving no room for doubt or questioning, were of only secondary value. The truths in which individual decision by the learner determined their discovery are the important ones for human growth. These are not consensus or apodictic truths, having objective certainty—the criterion of scientific validity—but truths which are independently reached and adopted, and these are the truths that science rules out as by definition unscientific and not worth pursuing. Thus the conversion of philosophic ideas into scientifically acceptable ideas became the approved method of researchers who wanted to go beyond the boundaries of conventional scientific inquiry. Ideas which could not be put through the mangle of objectification were outlawed by the Method as merely

"metaphysical," and often referred to with disdain and even contempt by scientific thinkers. This rejection was equally applied to moral conceptions, which have no ground of reality in sense experience.

Justification of this materialist purism is offered in terms of religious history in the West—the burning of Giordano Bruno at the stake in 1600, the persecution of Galileo, and numerous other crimes of intolerance and bigotry throughout the Middle Ages and in the early days of the Reformation—Calvin's punishment of Servetus by fire for daring to dissent from the claims of Protestant religious orthodoxy. Thus there were powerful social and humanitarian arguments behind the scientific theory of knowledge. Materialism would disarm the power of authoritarian institutions by declaring the sources of that power to be unreal. If there is no such thing as a moral law, then the abuses growing out of claims to know what it is—by having special access to the "will of God"—could no longer exist. Bertrand Russell put the matter briefly in his Introduction to Frederick Lange's *History of Materialism* (1925):

Historically, we may regard materialism as a system of dogma set up to combat orthodox dogma. As a rule, the materialistic dogma has not been set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked. They were in the position of men who raise armies to enforce peace. Accordingly we find that, as ancient orthodoxies disintegrate, materialism more and more gives way to scepticism.

But what the distinguished founders of modern materialistic doctrine did not realize—so involved were they in the struggle with arrogant and ignorant religious authority—was that their own "first principles" would be turned into another kind of dogma with equally subversive consequences. As their credo was more widely adopted, the world around us was gradually drained of all meaning, and eventually our own lives suffered the same deprivation. For at least a generation we have had fancy sociological and

psychological terms to describe the feelings which accompany a senseless, purposeless existence, with no goals beyond the transient satisfaction of material acquisition or the momentary pleasure of sensuous enjoyment.

Fortunately, in time the skepticism Russell speaks of was turned against the limited credo of conventional science, and pioneers of a return to philosophy began to be heard. There had always been a handful of scientific thinkers who refused to adopt the materialistic assumptions—men like the psychologist, William James, and a little later William McDougall, who saw in psychic research a practical weapon for scientists to be used against materialism, and then, a few years after, came humanist thinkers such as Joseph Wood Krutch, who wore away at the assumptions of materialism in cogent essays.

In the 1956 edition of his book, *The Modern Temper* (1929), Krutch, in a new preface, described the view that he was contesting with the full vigor of his mature mind. He said:

The universe revealed by science, especially the sciences of biology and psychology, is one in which the human spirit cannot find a comfortable home. That spirit breathes freely only in a universe where what philosophers call Value Judgments are of supreme importance. It needs to believe, for instance, that right and wrong are real, that Love is more than a biological function, that the human mind is capable of reason rather than rationalization, and that it has the power to will and to choose instead of being compelled merely to react in the fashion predetermined by its conditionings. Since science has proved that none of these beliefs is more than a delusion, mankind will be compelled either to surrender what we call its humanity by adjusting to the real world or to live some sort of tragic existence in a universe alien to the deepest needs of its nature.

With stubbornly good manners, Krutch devoted his long and fruitful life to raising questions about the scientific assumptions. He made a strength out of the weakness of philosophy. What is that weakness?

The "weakness" is this: That real philosophy cannot be made into an orthodoxy, which means

that it will never become a consensus system of thought guaranteed by an elite body of researchers—the experimental scientists—who provide the system's authority. In philosophy, an independent thinker is always more valuable than a system, largely because any system has limits and even flaws, as was mathematically demonstrated by Godel earlier in this century. A second-hand philosophy—borrowed without being entirely understood and demonstrated for oneself—is no philosophy but a kind of metaphysical faith. People who have a managerial temperament—and that includes most of us who are still afflicted by the delusion that modern man is progressive, wiser than ancient philosophers, and skilled in the arts of getting ahead—don't think much of real philosophy. It can't be turned into a vehicle for mass influence. It doesn't lend itself to the writing of constitutions for states. Any body of man-made law continually offends against real philosophy. That is the difference between philosophy and ideology, the latter being a selective adaptation of originally philosophic ideas to make a system that is converted into an orthodoxy. In short, philosophy has no manipulative leverage in human relations.

In philosophy, you are not to act upon an idea until you have made it entirely your own, and when you *have* made it your own, you *must* act upon it. Actually, making a list of the individuals who were or are capable of philosophy in these terms is a difficult task. First, no doubt, you would put down Socrates, probably Tolstoy, certainly Thoreau, and then a handful of others according to your reading and experience. A contemporary essayist, John Schaar, has put this idea in other words in a recent article (*American Review*, No. 19):

One of the most important differences between great actors—think, say, of Gandhi or Lenin, or Lincoln, or Malcolm X—and most of the rest of us is that they hold their views and ideas in a way we do not. They *are* their views. We *have* views. And most of us, when we think clearly, can acknowledge that we took, or received, most of what we call "our" views from others. We did not create them. . . . To an

unusual degree great actors are their ideas. More of their lives are contained in, or centered on, their views. In that fascinating way, great actors have a mode or experience of selfhood and identity that is different from ours. That difference makes us uneasy, for we know that at bottom the great actor is demanding of us that we change our lives. We need defenses against that, and the condescension implied in such words as "fanatic," "simplistic," "single-minded" helps to provide those defenses. To us, the actor seems too simple, and that simplicity is threatening.

Throughout this discussion we have been trying to get at the reasons for resistance to the goal of the quest for meaning, and for the deep objection to dependence on individual human inquiry and decision. There are many who seem to think that we can't know what the meaning of life is, that our attention should be given to the practical problems, for which, quite possibly, the *right* ideology will bring a solution.

Then there is the question: Even supposing you happened to find out the truth of human meaning, how will you be sure of it, and how will you prove it to others? The people who ask this question become impatient when you say, "Well, the others would have to kind it for themselves, as I did. Giving them *my* truth would be a kind of betrayal, because it wouldn't be their own, although they might not for a long time realize this; but when they do, they will become my enemies." The hearer becomes impatient because he thinks, we don't have time for this slow process of self-instruction. Just look at the world, he says. Pressing problems call for *action*, and that means telling people what they must do. Philosophy will have to come later, after the world gets straightened out.

In a way, this argument is the same as the reproach made by the Grand Inquisitor to Jesus, in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. "You," he said accusingly, "want all these people to become heroes. They are weak, sinful, self-indulgent, and easily influenced. They are not capable of heroic behavior. We know this, and we have learned how to manage them for their own

good. Just look at all the good we have done, and then go back where you came from. And keep silent. You are only a useless disturbance to our projects."

Well, today, we do look around at what the managers of societies have accomplished, and it very nearly frightens us to death. Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* is a treatise on what they have accomplished. So is Eric Seidenberg's *Post-Historic Man*. So is the study, *Limits to Growth*. And so are dozens more of the accurately critical books of our time.

Meanwhile, a few Socrateses keep on getting born and asking their provocative and embarrassing questions. And now there are people around the world working toward a largely unorganized communitarian society. The time has come, they say, to abolish the nation state. It may take generations, but it must be done. We need to learn how to learn from ourselves. That's the kind of evolution that must come next. From the evidence of history as well as our internal feelings and growing convictions, *there is nothing else to do*.

As this idea slowly spreads, the resistance to the search for meaning will finally go away.

## *REVIEW*

### COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

THE MANAS library, after nearly thirty-seven years of publishing a weekly review, has accumulated a lot of books—books we have reviewed, mostly good ones. There are, we suspect, thousands of them. An exercise we have adopted recently is to walk by the shelves looking for books that, if opened, insist upon being read more closely. What causes this?

With this question in mind, the exercise becomes an experiment, a subjective testing of what may be regarded as a good book. The reasons, we found, can be quite different. For example, one book we picked up was the Day Lewis translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*. We read enough to understand why Vergil is so much admired by scholars, to be impressed by the depth of his thought, and to appreciate the truth of what a writer said recently in the *New York Review* (Oct. 27, 1983) in relation to a more recent translation of Vergil: "A work of the past can possess the quality of 'nowness' . . . . It may treat so directly of what is permanent in the human condition that time can get no hold on it." The writer said further that the *Aeneid* is a controversial poem whose "greatness consists, not in its 'success' but in the profound perhaps insoluble problems it raises and explores with such passion and truth." He concludes by saying that "the poem is still as good as anyone ever said it was."

Another book we picked up, *Words and Faces*, by Hiram Haydn, from 1944 until his death in 1973, editor of the *American Scholar*, has a passage which helps to explain and justify the exercise we have adopted. Besides being the *Scholar* editor—in our view the best general magazine published in the United States—Haydn worked as an editor for several leading publishing houses. His book, being about his life and work, is filled with stories about writers and accounts of their problems. In his last chapter, there is this:

I have often been asked, as I suppose all editors have been, "How do you select a book?" It has been this frequent curiosity that has led me from time to time to study the process. But I have come up only with two rather simple guidelines.

I have taught myself to ask the question, "How much do I want to turn the next page?" Sometimes the answer is easy, sometimes not. When it isn't, I decide some worry, ailment, distraction or preoccupation may be blocking my receptiveness. Then I do something else for a half hour. On my return to the manuscript, I usually need to read no more than a page or two before I feel sure.

Well, Haydn goes on about how he strives for impartiality, trying to get rid of unconscious prejudices, to reach a fair verdict, but again, some current comment we found in the *May Harper's* (by the editor, Lewis Lapham) seems more pertinent to repeat:

On first opening a book I listen for the sound of the human voice. By this device I am absolved from reading much of what is published in a given year. Most writers make use of institutional codes (academic, literary, political, bureaucratic, technical) in which they send messages already deteriorating into the half-life of yesterday's news. Their transmissions remain largely unintelligible, and unless I must decipher them for professional reasons, I am content to let them pass by. I listen instead for a voice in which I can hear the music of the human improvisations as performed through 5,000 years on the stage of recorded time. . . . If within the first few pages I cannot hear the author's voice—no matter if he promises to introduce me to the court of Cyrus or the inner councils of the Democratic Party—I abandon him at the first convenient opportunity.

Lapham seems to prefer writers of the past. "In much of what falls under the rubric of modern literature I hear little more than the quarreling of the faculty in a university English department." He adds:

The ancient authors, at least those among them who remain in print, seem less frightened of the world. They approached the study of man as if he were a universe unto himself, so vast and so mysterious as to defy the promulgation of doctrine and the making of smaller mystifications to conceal the fear of an empty stage. Having learned to admire the spaciousness of Montaigne, I have come to think that the most astonishing books are those that I can open at random.

Writers whose books we often open at random, in full confidence of never being let down, include Macneile Dixon, Ortega, Thoreau, Simone Weil, Albert Camus, Northrop Frye, and Wendell Berry—who are all unable to speak except with a human voice. We go to them for renewal and refreshment and for lines of investigation. One other book among

those picked up at random recently is a forgotten volume which came out in 1962—*The Hidden Remnant* by Gerald Sykes. We began by glancing at it and then read it from beginning to end. The title goes back to the Book of Isaiah in the Bible. The Prophet speaks of "a very small remnant" without whom Israel would have been destroyed. Sykes develops the idea that there is no society worth talking about that is without such a remnant, sometimes called the "saving remnant," to keep it going. His book is about the kind of people who make the remnant, how they think, and the basis of their decisions. He goes all over the place and the reader may feel lost now and then, but he pulls his subject together in the closing chapters. How are the members of the Remnant best described? A closing passage in Gaetano Mosca's *The Ruling Class* seems the best answer to this question:

Every generation produces a certain number of generous spirits who are capable of loving all that is, or seems to be noble and beautiful, and of devoting large parts of their activity to improving the society in which they live, or at least saving it from getting worse. Such individuals make up a small moral and intellectual aristocracy, which keeps humanity from rotting in the slough of selfishness and material appetites. To such aristocracies the world primarily owes the fact that many nations have been able to rise from barbarism and have never relapsed into it. Rarely do members of such aristocracies attain the outstanding positions in political life, but they render a perhaps more effective service to the world by molding the minds and guiding the sentiments of their contemporaries, so that in the end they succeed in forcing their programs on those who rule the state.

These, essentially, are the people Sykes seeks to identify and to tell something of their spirit and attitude. In one of his last chapters, "The Politics of Shipwreck," he says:

The present is the time when a Remnant, in an intelligent use of its anxiety, will be drawing the right conclusions from political events. It is possible of course that survival will not be won by courage or clarity, but on the other hand it will certainly not be lost by them.

The position of the Remnant has been described by Ortega y Gasset: "The man with the clear head is the man who . . . looks life in the face, realizes that everything is problematic, and feels himself lost. . . . Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will

cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas, the ideas of the shipwrecked."

Sykes believes that we are already in the midst of the shipwreck, but only a very few are able to recognize our plight. He puts it this way:

We Americans, who seem almost the most conservative people in the world—or at least are so described, rather vehemently, by a steadily increasing array of enemies who now number more than half the population of the earth—we Americans are actually in the midst of the most advanced revolution our century has seen. But it is also the least publicizable of revolutions, precisely because it is so advanced. It makes no impression on other peoples because they have not yet gone through it. Only Americans, only a few Americans can put it into words and thus enable their country once more to communicate with others. And thus also prevent their country from marring further progress toward disaster. We have introduced a literal *deus ex machina* into the plot, in the hope that the very newest machine will snatch us from a tragic end. . . .

*America is the land of the refused revolution.* The leisure offered by mechanical mastery is here. At the same time, surely not through chance, leisure becomes economically ever harder to sustain—and psychologically more terrifying. So we see without seeing, read without reading, and fall back on mythologies in which we no longer believe. . . . The technical revolution demands in time that man be equal to his own creations. He cannot merely run his airplane well. His consciousness must go as high as his body does. He must be not merely a flyer but a Saint-Exupéry. Otherwise he becomes a mere chauffeur. This may have been a reason why, as Lombroso suggests, the great innovators of the Renaissance called a halt to their inventions they sensed that men would not be worthy of them. But we have gone ahead with ours, and now we must equal them or perish. A first step would be to realize how dangerous they are to mental health. One can so easily misuse them as ways of short-circuiting personal experience.

We need more books like this one—books which raise questions instead of books with logical, righteous answers. There are indeed two kinds of books, the ones which catalog what we know, which are confidently expressed, which repeat that the truths that will make us free; and then there are the books which insist that the truth is far subtler than we suspect and that we may have been blinded by our confidence in what we think we know. This second sort of book is the kind we like to review. We get too few of them.

## *COMMENTARY*

### VARIOUS PEACEMAKERS

THE peace movement is usually described as made up of all those people who, in various ways, are campaigning against the threat of war, mainly nuclear war, by means of conference, publications, demonstrations, lobbies, and organizational techniques. They seem to raise quite a lot of money which they use to pay for the printing, mass mailings, and educational materials involved, all of which can be quite expensive. The gist of many of the present efforts is that nuclear war can no longer be justified on *any* rational ground, and the arguments presented in behalf of this claim seem altogether sound.

Then, in addition, there is the core of morally and intellectually convinced pacifists—those with a religious basis of a peace church or Tolstoyan origin, plus philosophical objectors of whom Dr. Evan Thomas was a good illustration—who are wholly convinced of the folly, wrong, and uselessness of any sort of war. Their influence forms the seed-bed of anti-war activism, although their audience is likely to be personal and much smaller than the number of those reached by the "nuclear" pacifists.

There is, however, still another group made up of individuals not directly associated with peace-making, yet perhaps more important than any of the others, from a long-term point of view. In this group are writers and thinkers like Henry Beston, quoted in this week's *Frontiers*, who deal with the characterological roots of human history. Beston's work is a reflection of the life of a man well-practiced in the art of being human—very nearly a lost art in our time.

Our true security lies here, in ways that are not adopted out of a desire for "security," but for the reasons given in his books, not as "arguments," but as insights which have become his way of seeing both the world and himself. He speaks mildly of our "incomplete urban perspective," a perspective which is blind to the

qualities that make war an impossibility. This is where our attempts at "education" should begin. We need to develop the kind of society that has peace as its natural consequence. Beston understood this. He refers to the "proper perspective on the whole mystery of living," which he gives in works like *The Outermost House* and *Northern Farm*—and which has emerged more recently in the books and essays of Wendell Berry. The real peacemakers, in short, are not the "organization men," however devoted, but these advocates of learning to be fully human in all our undertakings, and to select the latter with appropriate care.

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### WHAT IS PEACE EDUCATION?

WHAT should young people be told about war and the growing threat of the outbreak of nuclear war? The question is probably not a good one, getting us off to a false start. It implies that we know enough about wars and their causes to give instruction, when obviously we don't. A little reading in history makes that plain. The people who plan and instigate wars are ignorant men, although they have a certain cleverness and the skills required to arouse a population to the emotional pitch of readiness to fight. After a war is over, the thoughtful among those who took part, aided by the revisionist historians, realize that the first thing that war-makers do is lie to the people. The most effective kind of lying is by making use of only isolated truths. During the period of moral sensitivity which followed World War I, at least a dozen books on propaganda for war came out, exposing the techniques of manipulation used by very nearly all the participants. Then there was the "never again" reaction which generates false optimism and almost never lasts.

One who studies these things soon realizes the vital truth in the War Resisters League slogan, "Wars will cease when men refuse to fight them." Nothing else will ever stop war. But this is anti-state, objectively anarchist. It is, indeed, just that. So, if you want to say something that is really true about putting an end to war, you have to say that wars will go on until there are enough people who cannot be made to become combatants; who simply will not do what they believe to be wrong, no matter what anyone else says.

How do you develop that kind of determined minority? No one really knows. One young fellow, Lowell Naeve, who survived a couple of prison terms as a war resister, wrote a book, *A Field of Broken Stones* (Libertarian Press, 1950), about his experiences. He says: "When and how anti-war ideas first entered my mind is rather difficult to explain. It was seemingly hundreds of minute things

seen and heard, one bolstering the other." He grew up on a farm, and one day he killed a large rabbit by throwing a beer bottle at it. Afterward he wondered if he could ever kill anything again.

At seventeen I began to see that I didn't look at things the way most kids did. The difference was first noticeable in school. The teacher, along with the history book, regarded war as a somewhat glorious thing. The killing of the rabbit, going hunting several times with my four-ten shotgun, had definitely convinced me I could never kill a human being. On top of this I'd come to regard as partially true, war was to enrich munitions millionaires, to protect Standard Oil properties abroad, etc. Most of the kids, as they studied history, imagined themselves in the wars as heroes. I began to think to myself: "I would never have taken part."

What planted this idea in Lowell Naeve's head? There is no answer to this question. He didn't get it from books, although books were useful to him later. About reading in prison during 1942, he says:

Books were the only thing I was allowed to have. I began to do a lot of reading. This reading was almost the first I had done. On the outside I had gone to libraries many times, thinking I ought to read a little, but the particular books I found were extremely dull.

Gene Garst [another c.o. prisoner] brought me *Walden* by Thoreau, *Leaves of Grass* by Whitman, *Essays* by Emerson, *Toward Freedom* by Nehru, and others. Through these authors I found my first real interest in books.

Naeve was held at the West Street jail in New York while awaiting his first trial. Of what happened there he relates:

Back at West Street, while waiting for the regular incoming checkover: Lepke, the short stolid-faced boss of Murder, Inc., motioned me over to his adjoining cell. In a curious, soft-spoken, considerate manner he asked: "You're one of those fellows who's going to object to the war when it comes?"

Somewhere in the conversation we got around to the fact that I was in jail because I refused to kill people. The Murder, Inc., boss, who was headed for the electric chair, said: "It don't seem to me to make much sense that they put a man in jail for that."

We just looked at each other. There we were, both sitting in the same prison. The law covered both ends—one in for killing, the other for refusing to kill.

Naeve's book, if a copy could be found, might be of interest to a young person as an introduction to what it takes to work seriously against war, and what it may cost—in conventional terms. The idea to get across is that the people who will stop war are people who count integrity higher than cost. They are the people we need. No other lesson is as important as this one. What makes people into Thoreaus, Gandhis, Tolstoys—or, more recently, a Martin Luther King or a Danilo Dolci? How can we get more like that?

What *are* such people like? How, for example, would Thoreau have reacted to the prospect of an all-out nuclear war? We can only guess, but what he did say was this:

We should wash ourselves clean of such news. Of what consequence, though our planet explode, if there is no character involved in the explosion? In health we have not the least curiosity about such events. We do not live for idle amusement. I would not run round a corner to see the world blow up.

Thoreau wrote this in "Life without Principle," still an ideal introduction to the delusions of modern conventional life. A youth who begins to take Thoreau seriously will not grow up into a man who will ever be dragged off to war. Thoreau walked up into Canada and while there saw some soldiers marching around, remarking that on the whole they made a sad impression, "for it was obvious that all true manhood was in the process of being drilled out of them." He went on:

I have no doubt that soldiers well drilled are, as a class, peculiarly destitute of originality and independence. The officers appeared like men dressed above their condition. It is impossible to give the soldier a good education, without making him a deserter. His natural foe is the government that drills him.

The foregoing reflections were precipitated by a book that came to this department for review—*Our Future at Stake* (New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, \$6.95), put together by the Citizens Policy Center in Oakland, Calif., based on statements

by nine young people from twelve to seventeen who are active in opposition to nuclear war. These teenage writers are intelligent, articulate, and deeply concerned. The book repeats the major facts of what a nuclear war will do to the world and to people. Each of the nine youngsters is quoted at length. One of them said:

Learning about the bomb and its effects was very scary. I don't believe I could survive a nuclear war, but if I could, I surely wouldn't want to.

I first got really involved when I started working on this Nuclear Action project. I feel that trying to do something about the issue has made me feel much better about things—less depressed. I'm glad I'm one more person trying to do something to stop nuclear weapons. It seems to me like this age, 15, is when you really start thinking about things, thinking about life, and it's better to feel you can do something about the things you don't agree with.

Other kids should know that if we don't do something soon, terrible things will happen. They should know about the dangers of nuclear weapons and that there are things we can do to prevent a nuclear war. I wish I could tell the politicians that I want to grow up, not blow up. I just don't understand how they think they can survive.

In *Weapons and Hope* Freeman Dyson looks at the literature of war and peace, pointing out that there are essentially two points of view, represented by the thinking of the warriors, on the one hand, and of the victims, on the other. The victims have nearly all the moral logic on their side, but the warriors have the power to make decisions. This is the main thing that young people will have to learn to understand. What sort of society will produce people able to take away the power of the warriors? This is what Gandhi wrote about, what Thoreau wrote about, and Tolstoy wrote about. One wishes that there were a little background of this sort in *Our Future at Stake*, but this isn't fair, since only older people are capable of this kind of awareness. But an interchange of ideas, however good, among victims is not enough.

## *FRONTIERS* A Lost Art?

LEAFING through our exchanges we found in the Summer 1984 *Land Report* (Route 3, Salina, Kans. 67401) a reconsideration of the meaning of Security by Martin Gursky, who says:

In a contest with the Soviet Union over ideology and access to the world's remaining resources, we in the western world have armed ourselves to the eyeballs in destructive power. I think it is fair to say that all nations and all people are less secure today than they were ten years ago, last year, or even yesterday. We have been accelerating our destruction and now have included many more active participants.

What we need is a new definition of security. So far the United States has spent almost \$3 trillion on national security since 1945, and we are less secure today than we were then. We have more destructive power than any nation on earth has ever had. But we seem unable to translate this awesome force into political power. According to Heffernan and the Lovins, our new concept of national security, as well as global security, must be enlarged beyond military and energy concerns. It must mean food security, grounded in an agricultural system that replenishes soil and water and protects the ecosystem that supports it; health security embedded in an environment free of toxins and carcinogens; economic security, and the social security of a population with the hope and desire to work for a continually improving world, not one fraught with a "psychological climate" of suspicion and mistrust that makes international cooperation impossible.

We have to develop the strength to act in the world so that our children and grandchildren may live. We will have to rebuild our faith in the possibilities of a decent society—not just for ourselves but for our four billion neighbors.

There is a class of humans which understands this without being told. Its members already know how to "develop the strength" needed to make a naturally warless world. But when they speak, not many listen. We think they are changing the subject because they don't talk much about the things most people fear. They talk about a way of life that does not generate fear.

One such man, Henry Beston, writes about life on his farm in Maine. His book, *Northern Farm*, came out in 1948. His excitements are not ours. His reflections do not—not often, that is—occur to us. But at the end of nearly every chapter he says things that go to the heart of a good human life. This is the thought and the spirit that needs to be spread around. In one place he says:

There is only one test of any political scheme or adventure in government. It is the quality of the human being produced by the political order and by the way of life occasioned by that order. Such materialistic arithmetic as the amount of electric power sold, the number of motor cars produced, and the immense potential of this and that means nothing whatever. A truce to these materialistic puffings of a materialistic heaven as vulgar, tedious, and empty in its conception as anything ever held up to the inquiring spirit of man.

But the human being? There you are. Is that human being a conscious member of a community and willing to do his best by it, has he honesty and courage, the reasonable public good manners which keep the experiment on the way it should go, has he a proper sense of the human decencies and is he seized upon now and then by his birthright of natural gaiety; has the man his quality of manhood and decision and the woman her immense and mystical power?

Another paragraph:

Has it occurred to anyone that as civilization has become more urbanized and city populations greater than those who live by agriculture, there has been a parallel increase in war and violence? Apparently some relation exists which is not entirely economic. The farmer would reply that agriculture is an art of peace which requires a peaceful time, and that agricultural populations, as seen in history, are not by nature aggressively military. A population of planters and farmers, moreover, can not leave its crops to shift for themselves and gather themselves into barns. The machine, on the contrary, can be left to shift for itself. It does not improve it, but it can be deserted on its concrete floor. Above all, the machine world is barren of that sense of responsibility which is the distinguishing spiritual mark and heritage of the long ownership of land. I think history would agree that though spears may be beaten into pruning hooks, pruning hooks are less frequently beaten into spears.

A balancing comment:

One of the complications of the problem of the machine is the fact that just as certain people are born hunters and farmers, others are born machinists. The mechanical strain is in humanity, and if it has given us a machine civilization increasingly difficult to manage, it has also given us the wheel and the knife. I do not forget that memorable saying of my old friend Edward Gilchrist that "the secret of the artificer is the secret of civilization." Yet what we must ask today is whether or not the mechanist strain has increased out of all bounds, and taken over an undue proportion of the way of life. It is well to use the wheel but it is fatal to be bound by it.

Why don't more people naturally think this way? Beston has an answer:

It often strikes me that in our modern Babylons you never see anything begin. Everything comes to you, even thought, at a certain stage of its development, like an iceberg lettuce. Now life is more a matter of beginnings than of endings, and without some sense of the beginning of things, there is no proper perspective on the whole mystery of living. This is only one detail, but it will serve as one of the marks of the whole incomplete urban perspective in which we live. For the city governs us now as never before; it tells us what to love and what to hate, what to believe and what not to believe, and even what to make of human nature.

I begin to suspect that we should be more on our guard against Babylon when its urbanism has gone bloodless and sterile, and it insists on our taking its false map of the human adventure. We must regain the truer and fuller perspective, one leading back to origins and to beginnings human, earthy, concealed, and slow. No map is worth a penny which does not include both the city and the fields.