

LEVELS OF DECISION

TIME was—say, fifty or sixty years ago—when reading the morning news from around the world was something like a journalistic travelogue. You learned what was going on in distant places as a matter of human interest, but without any need to know. Much, even, of what happened in America didn't seem to touch our lives. You read the paper the way you read the *National Geographic* or the *Literary Digest*, and except at election time you were not called upon to do anything about what went on. Of course, if a war threatened, there would be a draft and some economic privation, with a lot of money to be made by a few, but for most of us there was nothing to be done except what we had to, to get the war over with. People were mainly busy with their own affairs, accumulating security and affluence, buying better homes and bigger cars, perhaps absorbing a little culture on the side.

It's different now. Practically everything that happens has an ominous side. What the industrious Japanese are doing *so well* seems to have intimidated the automotive geniuses in Detroit; their daring is gone and there is and will be a lot of unemployment around the country from cut-backs in production. Now the ups and downs in the interest rate are beginning to get the sort of attention that mothers give to an ailing child's thermometer readings, while wars in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East are reported as if they were going on in America's backyard. Area specialists explain their idea of how we will be affected by who wins, and there are pages and pages of analysis by Washington columnists who seem to know the names of all those people and what they stand for in relation to "our interests."

Putting it briefly, you could say that today what the nations do is getting to be what *we* do—a view we're not used to at all. And it all happens over our heads or behind our backs. Years ago

we put people in charge who claimed that they understood how to run the country and went back to our important affairs. We let them alone unless they did something terrible, or could be blamed for making a disgraceful mess. On the whole, we accepted their explanations for what they did. They spoke and still speak a language we don't really understand—a "big picture" language developed by managerial types and politicians which the rest of us don't use except when pretending to know what it means—a language which makes no real connection between our own decisions and what the country is made to do.

Take the question of war—preparation for war, since questions (except for pacifists) all stop when a war begins—they stop, that is, unless the war drags on as the Vietnam War did, until enough people demand that it be ended. Last November we read in the papers that the English, the Germans, and the Italians had been aroused to gigantic public demonstrations against the plans of the American government to make Europe a nuclear battlefield. The news story (we read it in *Los Angeles Times* for Nov. 1) inevitably gets complicated. The European anti-nuclear drive, an American diplomat was quoted as saying, "has not yet peaked."

The argument turns on various nuclear weapons:

One of the leaders in the anti-nuclear weapons movement, historian Edward P. Thompson, who represents a group called European Nuclear Disarmament, said in an interview:

"The groundswell of opposition to American nuclear missiles makes it clear that we are going to be successful in stopping the deployment of 572 Pershing-2 missiles and cruise missiles here. There's no way they're going to be positioned in Britain."

The *Times* writer, wanting to clarify for readers the meaning of this claim, provided background:

At issue is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's [NATO's] 1979 decision to deploy 572 Pershing-2 missiles and cruise missiles in Britain, West Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands as a counter to 250 Soviet SS-20 missiles positioned in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe and targeted on European cities.

Under heavy pressure from European members, NATO combined its decision to deploy the new [U.S.] missiles with a call for negotiations with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing missile forces on both sides. The feeling was that if such talks succeeded there would be no need to go ahead with stationing of NATO's new missiles. . . .

In order for the United States and NATO to cancel deployment of the new missiles, a senior U.S. official said recently, the Soviet Union would have to reciprocate by "totally disbanding" its force of SS-20s as well as removing 350 older missiles targetable on Western Europe.

Many of the anti-nuclear groups want all nuclear weapons removed from the continent. E. P. Thompson said: "We've got to keep nuclear weapons out of Europe, but the question is, once we get them out of Europe, what happens next? The military will want to put the weapons out at sea or some place else. That's the big problem with these nuclear weapons."

Newspaper stories of this sort are getting longer and longer because the "facts" are so obscure. How many of us know what an SS-20 is? Or what the Pershings are supposed to be "good" for? Next year there will be different letters and numbers identifying added or more mobile fire power. A person would have to make a career out of grasping these matters, in order to enter the discussion, and then he would find other careerists voicing very different opinions. An SS-20, according to McGeorge Bundy, who ought to know (he was security advisor to two presidents, Kennedy and Johnson), is "a modern, sophisticated, mobile missile that can reach all of Western Europe and the Middle East and much of

Asia." Mr. Bundy thinks we don't need our new missiles, considering the over-kill of the nuclear arsenal already on hand. In an article in the *Manchester Guardian* for Nov. 1, he said:

With a single important exception, there is nothing the 572 new American warheads can do that cannot be done as well by other systems we already have or plan to have. Nor does the location of the weapons make any difference from the American standpoint. Whether they are based in West Germany, or at sea, or in Nebraska, there will always be the same awful magnitude in any presidential decision to use these weapons against anyone, and in particular against the Soviet Union, whose leaders know as well as we do whose command would send them, and where to direct the reply.

There is indeed one thing some of the new missiles can do that no other weapon can do, but it is something we should not want to be able to do. The Pershing-2 missiles—there are 10 in the plan—can reach the Soviet Union from West Germany in five minutes, thus producing a new possibility of a super-sudden first strike—even on Moscow itself. That is too fast. We would not like it if a Soviet forward deployment of submarines should create a similar standing threat to Washington.

Meanwhile, a *Washington Post* writer in the *Guardian* (same date) pointed out that American leaders need to recognize that the enormous demonstrations in four capitals of Europe must now be taken as seriously as if they were made in California or New York. While American diplomats claim that the new U.S. missiles are meant to counterbalance Soviet nuclear weapons already in place, the great crowds that marched in Europe at the end of October "were moving to a deeper logic." They were protesting the loss of their sovereignty to another power that controls the use of these weapons. This loss makes them "constituents" of our government, but constituents without power or vote.

It is sometimes argued that the Americans plan for a "limited nuclear war" in Europe. "Limited" may seem an encouraging word, but when you consider what a nuclear explosion of any dimension involves, it loses its reassuring appeal. A *Los Angeles Times* story, again on

Nov. 1, predicted the effect of a one-megaton bomb dropped on Los Angeles—900,000 dead, 1.3 million severely injured. The conferring experts quoted said that since medical facilities are concentrated in cities, 80 per cent of the medical personnel would be casualties, making medical care nonexistent. Drugs would be destroyed along with their manufacturers, and raging infections would spread. Concerning the possibility of a "limited" nuclear war, a former naval strategic planner said that the idea is obviously unrealistic. The leaders of one nation, he explained, would be unable to communicate with the leaders of another because of equipment failure or destruction due to electromagnetic impulses from the blast of the bombs. Judd Marmor, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, said that the most ironic thing about the arms race is that it is tied to "patriotism." More arms, the public is told, will protect our way of life, "but you can't," he said, "have a way of life if you're dead."

Broader comment on "limited nuclear war" came from Desmond Ball, identified as an expert on the interplay between weapons technology and nuclear strategy, in an article (Nov. 4) in the *Christian Science Monitor*. He calls the idea "nonsense" in an Adelphi paper for the International Institute for Strategic Studies. In no way, he says, can nuclear war be controlled. The *Monitor* printed this summary of Ball's elaborately supported contentions:

1. The US nuclear command and control system (like the Soviet system) is an uncoordinated hodgepodge that is unsuited to conduct, moderate, or end nuclear war.
2. The command and control system is inherently vulnerable to jamming, spoofing (sending spurious signals), or destruction, and no amount of hardening of facilities can alter this fact.
3. It would in any case take two to keep a nuclear war limited, and Soviet military doctrine has shown no interest in such a concept.
4. The likelihood that the US could keep a nuclear war limited is therefore remote.

This sort of thing—and the arguments on the other side—is what we read, over and over again, until we begin to feel that press reports, too, are "an uncoordinated hodgepodge," and that being an "informed citizen" has become a practical impossibility. Meantime war has been made to seem more likely than peace. A Boston columnist (Ellen Goodman) reported in the *Manchester Guardian* for last Oct. 25 that 68 per cent of Americans, according to a poll, expect war; they don't want it, but they expect it, and so, the columnist says, "a potential peace constituency is trapped by a self-fulfilling belief in its powerlessness."

Musing comment by another American writer, Stephen S. Rosenfeld, in the *Guardian* is to the effect that the anti-nuclear movement in America, while small in comparison to the aroused campaigners in Europe, is likely to grow in response to the aggressive plans of the present government. The people, Rosenfeld says, are increasingly upset, although they are also "numbed by a consciousness that the whole issue seems so hard for officials, let alone citizens, to get a handle on." Rosenfeld continues, finally making a distinction that seems crucial:

I note, for instance, that the current *Newsweek* has a poll asking people for their views on nuclear war. What the numbers mean is anybody's guess, but it is indicative that nuclear nerves are now open and raw enough to be considered worthy of callibration.

Many of us are touched more by private measurements. Last summer, for instance, there was Yale Sociologist Kai Erikson's *New York Times* review of a new Japanese study of the effects of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. After a careful recital of the findings, Erikson suddenly asked "What kind of mood does a fundamentally decent people have to be in . . . before it is willing to annihilate as many as a quarter of a million human beings for the sake of making a (political) point?"

That is a question we can all understand. You don't have to know anything about an SS-20 or a Pershing 2 in order to brood about its implications. You are able to reach a conclusion and may take a stand. Rosenfeld's comment ends:

Many citizens are concerned most with the actual human results of a nuclear bombing. But politicians, with most strategists, often end up focusing on political scenarios. The first group finds the political people lacking in the elemental respect for human life which alone qualifies them to exercise their great power. The second group finds the others perversely unwilling to cope with the political and strategic choices flowing relentlessly from mutual Soviet-American possession of the bomb.

A question that needs asking is whether the people in the first group—to which, it is fair to say, most of us belong—have the obligation to try to master the elaborate calculus of the destroying power of nuclear weapons and to go in for the problematic guessing about what the "other side" will do in response to what we decide. It may be conventional to say that of course everyone should try to understand the terms of those endless debates about "defense," but the fact is that most or many of us *can't*, and are beginning to think it's not worth a try.

One trouble is that if you enter into such arguments, you have the obligation to inform yourself, both technically and psychologically, as thoroughly as you can; but then you are bound to encounter some *real* expert who will *always* pull rank on you. When this happens all you can do is look for support from another authority. You'll never really know, and it becomes fair to ask, Does anybody? *Can* anybody?

Just having opinions on such matters comes fairly close to taking protean cards in an incomprehensible game, with rules which are privately guessed at by the players. When you take cards you are supposed to play, and this, even if only symbolic participation, becomes a fraudulent charade when you see how decisions are actually made. Yet taking cards amounts to approval of the game. You are agreeing that it has to be played.

But if, on the other hand, you see that "elemental respect for human life" is lacking in the people who are really playing that game, how can you even take cards?

Since 1945, when the first atomic bombs were exploded over Japan, this kind of questioning has been creeping up on us. Sooner or later it will have to be faced and a decision made. As phrased by Kai Erikson, it is a moral decision, which it has been, with growing intensity, since 1945. But now the decision has a practical dimension also. These two levels of decision, when they come together, lead to action. What, when first proposed, is branded as "extremism" is finally recognized as common sense. The handful of pacifists and conscientious objectors who opposed and would not take part in the first world war were certainly regarded as extremists. These naive people were unable to understand the hard-headed logic of Admiral Mahan, who had declared: "The province of force in human affairs is to give moral ideas time to take root." But now more and more people are beginning to see the point of Albert Einstein's bequest of warning: "The splitting of the atom has changed everything save man's mode of thinking . . . thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. . . ."

Change in thinking begins with a gradual withdrawal from the familiar patterns of belief or acceptance that are associated with the policy of drift—going on as we are now. Faith in the experts who lack "elemental respect for human life" diminishes from day to day until nothing is left but the shell of conformity. Meanwhile the impacts of worldwide malevolence and increased reliance on weaponry become more frequent day by day. Moral issues may remain in the background, but they do not go away, while practical considerations demand attention to the possibility of far-reaching change. Tiny increments of another outlook are slowly accumulating, making more visible the pattern of catastrophe toward which our society is moving—drifting.

But who knows what positive steps should be taken? There are lots of people who list things to do—good things, so far as we can see—but the great majority will not be prepared for their

inconvenience and cost: we see that too. Then there is also the accumulating fear, which blocks innovation. A "realist" must admit these things, yet will go on with his wondering. Perhaps the best conclusion he can come to is: there are some things we *must not do*—or stop doing immediately. We must stop no matter what other people say or do. We must stop doing the things that make other people do things equally bad or worse. That is the practical reason for stopping, but the primary reason is that they are *wrong*—lacking in elemental respect for human life.

Inch by inch, let us hope, this attitude is developing in the world. Surely it is behind the British movement for unilateral disarmament, now getting so strong. The practical-minded critics call the British unilateralists dreamers, but, dream for dream, which would you choose: the dream of a world with less fear in it, or the dream whose promise rests entirely upon the threat of annihilation, and whose continuity depends on increasing the deadliness of the threat?

Military men are sometimes the most effective critics of the arms race. In an address in the 1950s, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley said that we have been seeking to stave off the ultimate threat of total disaster and destruction "by devising arms which would be both ultimate and disastrous." He continued:

This irony can probably be compounded a few more years, or perhaps even a few decades. Missiles will bring anti-missiles, and anti-missiles will bring anti-anti-missiles. But inevitably, this whole electronic house of cards will reach a point where it can be constructed no higher.

At that point we shall have come to the peak of this whole incredible dilemma into which the world is shoving itself. And when that time comes there will be little we can do other than to settle down uneasily, smother our fears, and attempt to live in a thickening shadow of death. (*Progressive*, January, 1958.)

Well, we may be at that point now, or just around the corner from it. What, one might ask, is included in the "little we can do" besides adjusting our expectations to the "thickening

shadow of death"? One thing that is possible for us all—to make a start—is to stop taking seriously the endless debates about "the political and strategic choices flowing relentlessly from mutual Soviet-American possession of the bomb." The argument never changes. It accomplishes nothing except to make us see that it is senseless. A first step, then, would be to stop reading what these people say. It numbs our minds and dulls our feelings.

We have been studying lately a paper by Robert Engler, "The Warfare Society," first published in 1962. It shows that the underlying realities of our military thinking and policy have not changed in the least. It gets us nowhere except into trouble. Quoting a House Committee report made in 1960, Engler points out that there is "a steady flow of retired high-level military personnel into defense contractor employment." Thus has developed, he goes on, what President Eisenhower (in 1961) described as an "immense military-industrial complex" whose "total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the federal government." It is an influence that touches all our lives through the newspapers and other reading material as well as in other ways.

We can all reject that influence. We can fill our minds with other themes, and determine to find news with meaning that at least isn't anti-human, and focus on that.

REVIEW

HOW LIFE IS KNOWN

A BOOK that does much to redress the balance of our over-intellectualized thinking about health is Thomas Hanna's *The Body of Life* (Knopf, \$9.95). The author is introduced on the jacket as "a practitioner of Functional Integration" who uses the method developed by the Israeli scientist, Moshe Feldenkrais, to help those who suffer from crippling ills ordinary medicine cannot ease or cure. A reviewer with first-hand knowledge is needed to convey the scope of this work, since its value comes through only in the detail of day-by-day working with people in pain, but the mood and thinking involved in this sort of "therapy" is suggested by a quotation from Feldenkrais at the end. "In the early days," he said, "when I had the notion that I was trying to 'cure' my client, I did rather poor work. But later, when I realized the two of us were, in fact, working together to achieve an understanding of the situation, then my work changed. Only then did it become more certain." In short, people are helped by this method when they begin to understand for themselves what needs to be done, and why.

This is the sort of book one may put off reading because it sounds as though it were "all about the body." Well, it is; yet it is mostly about what *we do* with the body, and what happens to it as a result. In other words, it teaches about ill-making and health-making, with ourselves as the makers. Reading it leads to a fresh series of reflections about the old question: "What can I blame for my trouble—Nature or myself?" In the light of Hanna's book Nature comes off totally innocent. He writes about how to get well, but also gives applicable instruction on how to avoid getting sick, how to stay healthy. The author wants his readers to increase what he calls their "body awareness," which means understanding how the organism works. He writes well, as the first paragraphs of his preface show:

What is life? is one of the favorite questions of the human race. In times both of crisis and of

quietude this question arises as an ultimate attempt to make sense of things. The same question has been answered millions of times and, of course, in a million different ways. This is because there is neither a right answer nor is there a final answer; the question is so broad and so vague that almost any answer will do.

This is not to say that the question is unimportant. There is, perhaps, no question so significant. But the problem is that the question is always wrongly phrased. To ask, What is life? is to treat life as if it were an abstraction, as if this were the same as asking, What is truth? or What is goodness? The question is wrong because life is not an abstraction; it is always something very concrete, for life exists in one form and in one form only: in living bodies. Outside of individual bodies there is no life. Life does not occur except in embodied form, and when we see and experience life, it is always by seeing and experiencing a living body.

This recalls a quotation given in a book on philosophy we turn to from time to time: "If thou wouldst believe in the Power which acts within the root of a plant concealed under the soil, thou has to think of its stalk or trunk and of its leaves and flowers. Thou canst not imagine that Power independently of these objects. Life can be known only by the Tree of Life."

Continuing his statement in the preface, Hanna says:

When we cease to think about life as an abstraction and begin thinking of it in terms of the specific living bodies in which life exemplifies itself, both the question and the answer begin to take on a different meaning. If we rephrase the question correctly and ask, what is the nature of a body that has life? then we can answer the question in a way that makes specific sense.

So, this is a book "all about bodies," but as forms of living intelligence that we both use and abuse. Giving the body its due in these terms is the subject-matter of the book, and while some readers may object to language awarding complete sovereignty to the organism, they will have little difficulty with the author's intended meanings. A writer who redresses balances lays his emphasis where he thinks it is needed.

Moshe Feldenkrais, incidentally, whose name is widely known, the actuality of his work less so, was doing research in nuclear physics with Frederic Joliot-Curie in Paris when the Nazi invasion drove him to England. He was also "Europe's first black-belt judoka" and the founder of the famous Jiu-Jitsu Club of France. After the war he returned to Israel to work in electronics with the Ministry of Defense, but then surprised those who knew him by giving all his time to human neuromuscular problems. Hanna had written *Bodies in Revolt* and was studying neurophysiology when he read a book by Feldenkrais and sought him out in Berkeley when he came there on a visit. He watched the extraordinary recovery of a man from the twisting pain caused by cerebral palsy, in less than an hour. "Despite my bewilderment," he relates, "I had not seen a 'miracle,' nor had I seen a 'healing' or a 'cure.' I had seen what Feldenkrais modestly described as a 'lesson.' He had 'taught' George to breathe normally." Watching this "lesson" launched Thomas Hanna on his career. Speaking of Feldenkrais, he says:

He was quite simply a scientist who had extended his knowledge about the world of physics into the functions of the human soma. He knew about gravity, he knew about the mechanics of movement, and he knew about the cybernetics of coordination in a self-correcting, living system. At that moment I made a decision: I would learn to do Functional Integration.

The fruits of this decision are described in his book. He says toward the end:

What Functional Integration accomplishes is, from the viewpoint of traditional medicine, impossible. It is extremely difficult for physicians to accept the fact that ailments that are untreatable medically can be made to disappear by non-medical procedures. Laypersons have the same difficulty, because they, too, have been taught to think about the human body in terms of the medical model. In both cases, the disbelief is based on implicit pessimism that claims that certain functions of human beings are unchangeable. As it turns out, physicians and their patients both accept functional disorders as inevitable and as the effects of old age or unknown causes.

Medicine is certainly an area where new thinking is required. The thinking offered in *The Body of Life*—and the reports of its application—emphasize the responsibility of the human being for his own health.

From time to time we come across "popular" writing that seems to put to shame the serious authors who claim so much attention from reviewers. Such things are matters of taste, but a passage in one of P. D. James's books—*The Dark Tower*, issued by Popular Library five years ago—seems an especially good example of what we mean. (P. D. James is Phyllis Dorothy James White, a civil servant in Britain who has been a hospital administrator.) In this story, at the beginning, a Scotland Yard detective is lying in a hospital bed in London, musing on what a famous specialist has just told him—that the diagnosis of his fatal leukemia was a mistake. "It isn't acute leukemia, it isn't any type of leukemia. What you're recovering from—happily—is an atypical mononucleosis." And then the wholly secure professional man, unperturbed by his error, said to the patient:

"I congratulate you, Commander. You had us worried."

"I had you interested; you had me worried. When can I leave here?"

The great man laughed and smiled at his retinue, inviting them to share his indulgence at yet one more example of the ingratitude of convalescence. Dalglish said quickly:

"I expect you'll be wanting the bed."

"We always want more beds than we can get. But there's no great hurry. You've a long way to go yet. Still, we'll see. We'll see."

When they left him he lay flat on his back and let his eyes range round the two cubic feet of anaesthetized space as if seeing the room for the first time. The wash basin with its elbow-operated taps; the neat functional bedside table with its covered water jug, the two vinyl-covered visitors' chairs; the earphones curled above his head; the window curtains with their inoffensive flowered pattern, the lowest denominator of taste. They were the last objects he had expected to see in life. It had seemed a meagre,

impersonal place in which to die. Like a hotel room, it was designed for transients. Whether its occupants left on their own feet or sheeted on a mortuary trolley, they left nothing behind them, not even the memory of their fear, suffering and hope.

The sentence of death had been communicated, as he suspected such sentences usually were, by grave looks, a certain false heartiness, whispered consultations, a superfluity of clinical tests, and, until he had insisted, a reluctance to pronounce a diagnosis or prognosis. The sentence of life, pronounced with less sophistry when the worst days of his illness were over, had certainly produced the greater outrage. It was, he had thought, uncommonly inconsiderate if not negligent of his doctors to reconcile him so thoroughly to death and then change their minds. It was embarrassing now to recall with what little regret he had let slip his pleasures and preoccupations, the imminence of loss revealing them for what they were, at best only a solace, at worst a trivial squandering of time and energy. Now he had to lay hold of them again and believe that they were important, at least to himself. He doubted whether he would ever again believe them important to other people. No doubt, with returning strength, all that would take care of itself. He would reconcile himself to living since there was no alternative and, this perverse fit of resentment and *accidie* conveniently put down to weakness, would come to believe that he had a lucky escape.

The reader knows what sort of man Dalglish is—knows it from the inside.

COMMENTARY

THERE WILL BE MORE OF THEM

THE conclusion of this week's lead article—which may seem a bit "passive" to some readers, in view of the inhuman dangers of nuclear war—might be amplified by suggesting that Thoreau's prescription for making the government change its ways (indicated by quotation from him in *Frontiers*) is the positive side of indifference to the calculus of nuclear war-making. People who fill their minds with objectives in which they believe and *work* for will eventually find themselves *unable* to take part in either war or preparations for war. They are the ones who naturally become channels for spreading Tolstoyan and Thoreauvian themes.

America is a good place for this to be attempted. The country is wide, the population by no means excessive (in comparison to the crowding in other lands), and the opportunities for living "in the interstices" are many. Active opponents of war, of war for any reason, may have a few difficulties, but they are not starving to death. They are able to find jobs; some of them have returned to the land; and they often form small social alliances with like-minded people.

The comment that there are not enough such people to exert the pressure that is needed to stop the government from carrying out its plans has only limited pertinence: What *else* is there to do?

It is true enough that *heroes* seem required to get going a movement of this sort. The practical answer is that *we have had them*; and it is worth noting that neither Tolstoy nor Thoreau felt particularly heroic in taking their stand. They did what had become for them completely natural. That they were more or less alone might be a pity, but they were men who had to make their own decisions concerning the conduct of life. Their example has made moral independence easier for the rest of us.

They—and some others—were not merely "pacifists." Rejection of war was for them simply

a decision consistent with a fundamental attitude toward life—an attitude that needs to be more widely adopted. Practically everyone of intelligence now agrees that war-making in the twentieth century is unqualified insanity. It may be rationalized insanity, but none the less insane, whatever the twisted reasoning of its advocates. The heroes of our time are those who insist upon sane behavior. There will be more of them as time goes on.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves A HUNDRED YEARS

EVERY country has a history, every region a past. History, you could say, is identity stretched back into origins. We are no doubt more than what we have done, since we shall go on to do other things, but meanwhile the record of our past, relating to matters that are fixed because over with, supplies balance and perspective. We live, now, by our sense of direction. Knowledge—or better, a feeling—about the past may tell us that our direction needs changing. Or it may recall old landmarks, guide posts no longer in sight that need recognition.

How, then, shall we absorb history? Not only people, but professors—who sometimes rebecome people—argue about this. A distinguished American historian, Carl Becker, gave one answer—perhaps the best—in the title of his book, *Every Man his own Historian*. That, finally, is the only way history becomes useful, providing ingredients for answering the question: What shall I do next? How could anyone ignorant of history feel confident of what to do next? He doesn't know what he has already tried.

Apart from reading and schooling, then, what can we do? Well, there is drama. Drama is a form of human experience which, when well done, is likely to be remembered. Good drama places burdens on its witnesses. It insists upon thinking, even judgment. It is one of the demanding arts. You could say that all high art is demanding, which may be the reason why high art has little attention from mass audiences. Also why attention to it often becomes cultish; a cult is a small association of people who like to talk about particular things without thinking about them.

Art, however, has other uses. It gives an inviting symmetry to entertainment. It may change things worth remembering into memorials. It selects the memorable without strained didactic

intent. In this case the drama is reduced, which seems appropriate when it comes to history. Drama departs when the suspense of waiting for human decision is left out. Drama requires uncertainty. In history, however, there is no uncertainty. There may be plenty of uncertainty in writing it, but what actually happened is not a matter of present decision. All the decisions are in the past. History attempts to provide the framework of those decisions, and it may be best when set down dispassionately. There is no use getting excited about what cannot be changed. The excitement comes—or ought to come—in thinking about what to do next in the light of history.

All this is preface to considering a form of community history—the pageant. First of all, pageants are fun—fun to take part in, fun to produce, and fun to watch. Children love pageants, and so does the child in adults. The *spectacle* has attractions which delight but do not invade. It tells about human life much as the Greek chorus relates the feelings and ideas of a time past. It tells what happened without introducing the pain of decision or the remorse of mistakes.

Last summer the people of the North Fork and Lower Gunnison Valleys in Delta County, Colorado, put on a pageant—in the fairground, on a clear day, some time before dark. There would be Indians, settlers, mountain men, wagon trains, cowboys, miners, and farmers. The actors were the people of the region's towns. There was music by the local musicians—playing, singing, and some dancing. The story-telling performers speak as members of one family—grandfather, grandmother, and a visiting granddaughter—who talk about old times, the older folk remembering, the youngster questioning. But they are not exactly *in* the pageant; like all the people who come to see it, they watch what is going on in the open field before them, under the sky, and provide a counterpoint of words. (The script was done by George Sibley, who was also director.) The

pageant was a celebration of a century of life in that part of Colorado.

At the beginning, Grandfather says:

You know, this is a special year in the country. It's just a hundred years since the valley was opened for settlement.

Granddaughter: A hundred years. I guess there've been some changes in the valley since then.

GF: Oh—sure: lots of things have changed. But lots of things haven't. That picture, looking out there at this time of day—that's just about the same picture the Indians looked at for many hundreds of years before any of us were here.

GD: I wonder what *they* saw.

GF: Saw? Well—there it is.

GD: I mean—do you think it makes any difference: looking at something for five hundred years, or a thousand, instead of just one hundred?

Now the Indians are seen in the "arena" in a circle around their fire. Indian music is heard, and another voice tells the story of an Indian boy who went looking for the Singing Stone, asking the wild things—a white wolf, a white hawk, a white weasel, a white fish—for help, and how, all his life he wandered, getting help, but not finding the Singing Stone . . . until . . .

Well, the Pony Soldiers soon appear, and the ranchers and cowboys, and then some fruit-growers, farmers who talk about irrigation; and sheepmen. Coal miners come in their turn. Civil War veterans are numerous in the valley, and later other veterans come. Schools get built, and the story of this part of Colorado goes on until the present. Granddaughter says:

That was beautiful. Just lovely!

Grandmother: Oh, we have our good times.

GF: Along with the bad. But over-all—it's been a good hundred years. Not easy—but maybe life ain't supposed to be easy.

GD: I wish Daddy'd never left the valley. Maybe someday I'll move back here.

GF: Mebbe you will. You and the white buffalo.

GD: The white buffalo?

GF: Huh. First time in a long time I've thought of that. That was an old Ute story I don't even

remember where I heard it. Or how it all goes. But—someday the white buffalo will come back to free the mountains, and then we'll all be made free too, and all will be right with the world.

GD: What's that mean?

GF: Who knows? But it sounds good on the right kind of night.

GM: We're just getting started here. Just starting to know the place. The best is yet to be.

We didn't get to see the pageant, just read the script; but then, we never saw Huck Finn either, just read the book, and that was enough to make him come alive. If the story is good you can do a lot just imagining how it looked, with even those big tractors seeming natural in the setting of the story.

It would do something for the country to have pageants everywhere, in all the little towns, and the big ones, generating fields of reverie about the past. There is a little story about a Scottish grandmother that seems to fit in here. One day she said to her grandson, after he had done something scurrilous: "Ian McGregor, never forget that you are a McGregor!"

If the best of our traditions were made to live in the present, by local and more widely based pageantry, we might find it natural to say to ourselves, at some distant day, "Never forget that you are a human being." Fortunately, our literature includes great pageantry that reminds of us this. But local pageants would help to get us ready to take such reminders to heart.

FRONTIERS "The Right Thing To Do"

LAST September, a district judge in Albuquerque, New Mexico, resigned from the bench to avoid sentencing a 28-year-old first-offender to a year in prison. That penalty was mandatory under state law, preventing him from using his own judgment—which was to put the offender on probation—without himself breaking the law. So he stepped down, explaining to the amazed courtroom spectators that he refused to be a party to the "insanity and injustice" that would put a man convicted of a relatively minor crime into what has been called "one of the nation's worst prisons."

This judge, Gene Franchini, had served on the bench for six years. The New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice, Mack Easley, said that he had proved to be one of the state's best district judges, and the Governor of the state, Bruce King, said he agreed with Franchini's position on mandatory sentencing and would try to get the law requiring it amended.

The offender, Ricardo Aguilar, security guard, became involved in a traffic dispute on the highway. As reported by Bill Curry in the *Los Angeles Times* (Sept. 30), the dispute led to an exchange of insults and the other motorist "claimed Aguilar pointed the gun he used on his job at him; another witness claimed Aguilar fired it into the air." In a statement Judge Franchini read in court when it came time to impose the mandatory sentence (as ordered by the state court of appeals), he said:

"There's no question about this man's guilt. But, generally, a judge has to consider two basic things: first is punishment, second is the protection of the public. If I can accomplish these two purposes without giving a prison sentence, I will do it. I could not do what I was ordered to do (by the appeals court).

Aguilar, the judge said, "was twenty-six (at the time of the crime), employed, he bought his widowed mother a house, he lives with her. He's an honorably

discharged veteran. He has no record, not so much as a parking ticket."

Franchini said he handled two or three cases involving mandatory sentences before Aguilar's and that he imposed stiff terms "not because the Legislature made it mandatory, but because it was deserved."

Probably affecting the judge's decision was the fact that the prison Aguilar would be sent to was "the scene of a bloody riot in 1980 in which thirty-three inmates died and fourteen guards were taken hostage." He also declared "the mandatory sentencing law unconstitutional, holding that it breeches the separation-of-powers principle by taking from judges the traditional role of sentencing." His conscience and his sense of justice, he said, would not allow him to sentence to prison a man "who acted on the spur of the moment. . . . To do that is to fly in the face of every thought I have had about justice and the right thing to do."

What seems notable, here, apart from considering the gravity of the offense, is this judge's decision to be guided by conscience rather than the law. It is quite evidently a bad law, for the reason he gave, and the approved remedy for a bad law—waiting for the legislature to change it—wasn't good enough for him.

In his way, Judge Franchini was invoking the principle declared by Thoreau in 1849 in "Civil Disobedience." Thoreau was uncompromisingly opposed to slavery—and in particular to the Fugitive Slave Law of Massachusetts—and to the war with Mexico. Speaking of such intolerable measures, he said: "As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone." We could say that Judge Franchini followed the counsel of Thoreau in resigning from the bench. Thoreau at that time was considering how to make the Government change its ways, saying:

If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not

to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one had done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished.

We should be careful to say that, in drawing this comparison, we do not mean to imply that Judge Franchini is a "revolutionist." Nor is a comparison of "issues" pertinently involved. The *remedy* chosen is what deserves attention. Thoreau had asked:

Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right.

This was the principle applied by Judge Franchini, according to his conscience, and it seems to have had a much more immediate effect on his countrymen—including certain officials—than a petition to the legislature. Between a "theory" of justice and a concrete wrong, he chose to correct the latter and let the former go. If more people could get into the habit of making decisions (which go beyond "expediency") in this way, we would eventually have another kind of government. As Thoreau put it: "It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation *with* a conscience." Five years later, in "Slavery in Massachusetts," Thoreau declared again for the same remedy:

I am sorry to say, that I doubt if there is a judge in Massachusetts who is prepared to resign his office, and get his living innocently, whenever it is required of him to pass sentence under a law which is merely contrary to the law of God. I am compelled to see

that they put themselves or rather, are by character, in this respect, exactly on a level with the marine who discharges his musket in any direction he is ordered to. They are just as much tools, and as little men. Certainly, they are not the more to be respected, because their master enslaves their understandings and consciences, instead of their bodies.

Here the question is widened to include the too easy toleration of war. The remedy, however, may be exactly the same.