

BOOKS AND MEN

THE language that we use for everyday communication has terms to indicate the certainties we are confident of and also words which declare the limits of our knowledge. This is always the case, which enables us to understand the human feelings of those who may have written thousands of years ago, once translation has been performed with reasonable skill. We thus recognize the merit of ancient works, as for example that of the *Tao Te Ching*, set down, it is said, thousands of years ago by the Chinese sage, Laotse. One senses the presence of truth in the text, but can hardly explain why.

Another old book, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, has made similar claims on Westerners. August Wilhelm von Schlegel, who inaugurated Sanskrit scholarship in Germany, rendered the *Gita* into Latin in 1893, declaring:

By the Brahmins, reverence of masters is considered the most sacred of duties. Thee, therefore, first, most holy prophet, interpreter of the Deity, by whatever name thou wast called among mortals, the author of this poem, by whose oracles the mind is rapt with ineffable delight to doctrines lofty, eternal, and divine—thee first, I say, I hail, and shall always worship at thy feet.

For Schlegel the *Gita* had the rhythm of truth, as it has proved to have for thousands of others in the West in the years since. Other works have shared in this magic. There are readers who are brought close to tears by Plato's *Phaedo*, who are wonderfully moved by certain portions of Plotinus' *Enneads*, and raised to sublime heights by passages in the New Testament. How shall we understand these intense experiences save by the conviction that truth has been touched in our hearts? It follows that, however shadowed by other matters, the truth is *in* our hearts. This realization, we conclude, is more than emotional, more than intellectual, and more than the two

somehow combined—the truth as it was or is before being split into feeling and thinking.

By thinking we make discoveries and by testing our discoveries we accumulate science. With science we instruct ourselves, as we say, in what veritably is. Yet somehow, today, at the end of the twentieth century, with our elaborate definitions of what and how the world scientifically is, we do not find the sense of truth we feel in the *Gita* or the *Tao Te Ching* diminished. We may, if we are able to become scholars without losing our power of imagination, begin to understand how it could be that there was so much corruption and misinformation in the time of Laotse that he decided to go away, or why it should be that in the realm of India where Krishna taught there should be an agonizing war of succession which tried the loyalties of men and ranged friend against friend in a fierce and bloody struggle.

We are forced, then, to the conclusion that in every age there is both truth and its opposite in the world, there are partisans of half-truths and stubborn sectarian followers of paranoid leaders, both patriots and self-seeking power-mongers. Nor has our scientific progress altered these circumstances in any way. There are rare individuals whom we admire but are reluctant to empower, there are righteous egotists who are not without persuasive cleverness, and there is the great mass of unsophisticated believers whose lives are manipulated first in one direction, then in another. With all our masterful techniques, which bring comforts and conveniences, pleasures and handy contrivances for a time—the Romans had plumbing which awed the world—yet we are neither wiser nor happier than those who live much simpler lives.

What sort of enterprise then, are we engaged in? If it is the search for truth, we have not found it. Turning the world into a smorgasbord of "things" of every description has in no way improved our lives, although it has greatly worsened the condition of the world. And we now are on the verge of realizing that our knowledge has not been increased. Every fundamental discovery about the nature of the world has opened doors to further ignorance. There is no finite pile of mysteries that gives way to greater understanding, but only an ever-increasing number of dimensions to our lives that previous calculations have introduced or brought about.

Have we left the Dark Ages behind, or are we busily employed in creating new ones? The answer to this question depends largely on how we think about what is commonly spoken of as "modern progress." The question was inspired by a long article in the *Los Angeles Times* for Feb. 17, by Carol McGraw. She begins:

In what seems like a former age, Dr. Richard Alpert experimented with LSD at Harvard with fellow professor Timothy Leary. They were kicked out, but their work launched the psychedelic '60s.

In the '70s, Alpert studied with Indian guru Neem Karoli Baba, wore sandals and beads and was named Ram Dass, or Servant of God. He wrote numerous books, including "Be Here Now," which guided members of the "Me" generation in search of spiritual awakening through Indian mysticism.

Today Ram Dass's hair is silver and a neat mustache has replaced his sagely beard. He still practices Buddhist meditation and now also attends trance channeling sessions, a popular new form of parlor seance in which spirits supposedly talk through humans. But Ram Dass, who lives in Boston, is also very much in this world. . . .

Recently, while attending a channeling session, he asked the spirit Emmanuel what he should be doing. "He said 'Why don't you try being human?' I had never thought of my humanity as a practice. I was too busy trying to become divine," he said, laughing. . . .

The human potential "process" these days is nicknamed "New Age," and it is proliferating at an

astonishing rate, sociologists say, especially in trend-sensitive California. . . .

"The issue of everyone I talk to, whether it is college presidents, farm wives, congressmen, or artists, is that they are trying to cope with change," said futurist Marilyn Ferguson, a popular writer on New Age philosophy. "They aren't sure what is needed, they hope they are up to it and they are looking for inspiration in a lot of different directions."

This has spawned a dizzying variety of ways to get in touch with one's self and the world. Some seem genuinely spiritual, some solemn, others silly. . . . While many in business are getting spiritual, others are getting rich selling spirituality. Author Gita Mehta calls this New Age marketing "Karma Cola."

For the tough but fair-minded critic, reports of this sort present problems. There is a clear resemblance between the "channeling" communications of today and the Spiritualist "messages" supposedly from the "dead" in the nineteenth century, for which the Theosophical teachings of H. P. Blavatsky seem the best explanation, and there is the same narrow spread of rather intelligent communications at one end, with low-grade appeals to personal selfishness and vulgar ambition at the other. In no case, however, is there a communication which ranges above what a normal, intelligent, embodied intelligence might say. This indicates that the spooky appeal of hearing advice through a "channel" is the fundamental attraction of channeling. At present it appears that this form of "psychism" is likely to grow, perhaps for years, and that various new cults, profitable to the founders, will appear in the next decade. It should be added that Ram Dass, spoken of at some length by the *Times* writer, provides what seem sound counsels to his readers and hearers, due, perhaps, to his own innate common sense rather than to any other-worldly source.

In general, then, the popularity of channeling appears to result from a rather sudden increase in what William James called the "will to believe," to which has been added a calculated means of exploiting this human susceptibility. Yet, judging from the quality of some of the channeling books

now available, it also seems evident that many of these communications are due to the psychic propensity of those who give them rather than any overt dishonesty. What seems missing, however, in all such "messages," is an appeal such as a Buddha or a Christ might make in behalf of the suffering world. There is plenty of lip-service to altruism, but little authentic expression in behalf of the hungry, the degradingly poor, and the oppressed. Which is to say that channeling takes little account of the tragic need of the world for action in the spirit of true religion.

What we may gain from all this is instruction in the complexity of human nature. We move, it seems, from rigidities of harsh unbelief to extravagances of faith while hardly noticing the change. Fifty years ago no educated person would adopt a position about the function of the mind (or the "organism") unless he could find sanction in either Freud or John B. Watson's Behaviorism for that view, showing scorn for anyone who expressed doubt about such certainties. Today, however, his son or daughter may rely upon the words of a "channeler" with the same confidence that an ancient Athenian placed in a sibyl's oracle. Indeed, there sometimes seems as much or more reason to believe in oracles of the ancient sort than many of the present "communicators" of mystic truth. For if one should read in an ancient work such as *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians* there seems at least obscure evidence that behind this Neoplatonist's instruction on the modes of divination there lay a rigorously disciplined science as well as a metaphysics. In fact, there is as much warning against misleading practices in Iamblichus as there is advocacy of correct practice in order to receive occult guidance from higher intelligences.

Are there "higher intelligences"? We have little certainty on this, save for the quality we spoke of earlier, which makes us thrill to the appeal of ancient scriptures, feel a generous expansion of our natures upon reading a passage

in Emerson, or cause us to turn away from books of merely mechanical prose. There is indeed in us some kind of detector of higher truth which announces the presence of great ideas, even as a rare landscape may strike us with awe or a fine melody bespeak a wonder that lies beyond all sound and haunts us with its nuances. But this is a sensibility which arises from no compulsion, is not subject to command, and cannot be summoned. The skills of finite calculation imitate the completion and certainty we long for, yet in the end dissolve into paradox and contradiction.

This is the wonder of our language, which makes us comfortable in its middle ground but goes flat and meaningless when pressed beyond the limits of ordinary understanding. To help us on, our thought requires intuitive leaps, even as Einstein, a pure and good man, insisted on for the basis of his physical studies.

How, people ask, shall we tell a prophet from a schemer, a wise man or "spirit" from a fraud? The answer comes, Only by that wisdom we have generated within ourselves. But for those who ask such questions, that answer is never enough.

We are returned to the matter of progress. Are we any wiser than the Athenians? Can we find a Socrates today, and if we could, would we honor him as the Athenians did, or would we improve upon his sentence? Is there a Plato among us who is able to recognize a Socrates and to turn his life into an example to the world? Could he now find a publisher, any more than van Gogh could find a customer?

All that we can say in behalf of the Athenians is that the best among them were ashamed. Yet there is a difference between our time and that of the Athenians. Today, looking at the world, there are many more who are ashamed. Ashamed and *aroused*. Twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four hundred years ago, only a few were shocked and ashamed. Today they may run into many thousands. This may be the progress of which we are capable; what else would you feel able to count?

And what, in us, is it that makes us ashamed? Is it a strengthening of that inward monitor which responds, however faintly, to truth? One hopes it is that.

An ecologist sympathetic to this idea might ask, How long will the earth put up with our delays?

And a philosopher, if one like Plato could be found, and would submit to dialogue, might wonder if the time has come to ask us to consider how we should think about the meaning and process of human growth.

Curiously, many of the channelers have something to say about reincarnation—a somewhat romantic idea. Yet it also appeals to common sense. However, there is a question about reincarnation that is seldom asked: *What* reincarnates? If birth after birth is a process involving soul evolution, and if evolution is something that makes real sense, then a further question arises: How much is *worth* saving? Is progress something that preserves the good and sends back to the button-molder all that can't be used? If so, then reincarnation must be in some sense a filtering process which extricates the good from the bad, consolidates the good—perhaps for some almost beyond recognition—while externalizing the bad in a store of raw material to be worked on over again. There are other questions but we hardly have the vocabulary to ask them. What sense, after all, would it make to set a problem in quantum mechanics for an ancient Greek?

There is another sort of question that needs to be asked—in fact a series of questions—but we turn this task over to a modern theologian who has given it much thought. He is David Griffin, who teaches at the Center for Process Studies, Claremont, California, and is a founder of the Center for a Post-Modern World in Santa Barbara, Calif. In one of his papers he said:

Central to the rise of the modern world was a heightening of the sense of God's absolute power over the world. . . . Luther spoke of the "sole efficacy" of

God's will, Calvin of double predestination. Boyle and Newton carried out the implications of the growing sense of God as external, omnipotent controller in their view of nature, portraying it as made of particles with no power of self-movement. The "laws of nature" were understood legalistically, as externally imposed rules (not, e.g., as sociological laws descriptive of the habits of nature). Finally God was imaged not only as creating the world out of nothing and then maintaining absolute control over every detail of it, but also as ready to bring the whole show to an end with an overwhelming display of violent power.

This view, according to which God has all the power, and hence exercised absolute control over all things, has intoxicated modern humanity—especially modern *men*. The desire to imitate deity, understood as absolute controlling power, has exaggerated their own "will to power." It has promoted fantasies of absolute dominion over the world. It has encouraged the view that coercive power, the use of violence and the threat of violence, is *the* way to accomplish things. Just as God was portrayed as using violence to bring in the thousand-year reign of peace, modern men waged "wars to end all wars. Just as God keeps subordinates in line with the threat of sanctions based upon overwhelmingly superior power, we self-proclaimed "super-powers" assume that the possession of absolute superiority in military power would enable us to control the world, and so we continue an insane (from any other point of view) arms race. . . .

And we are led by our world-view to achieve our selfish purposes through the application of raw power, being convinced not only that this is the way the ultimate power in the universe works, but also that it is the only way to get things done. Just as we assume that the minds of human beings are impotent in their bodies, so that a cancerous growth cannot be treated through the persuasive power of new ideas and values but only by radiation, chemicals, and surgery, so we assume that in the body politic problems cannot be solved through the persuasive power of new ideas and values but only through bullets, bombs, and bucks. This is supported by our idea of the ultimate power of the universe, for whether conceived as the omnipotent deity who created all things by fiat, supervised mass destruction at the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, and will destroy all evil in the overwhelming display of power at Armageddon, or as the blind power of chance variation and natural selection, this power does not work by suggesting new ideas and values, but by

coercion, not by encouraging, converting, and enlarging what is now unsatisfactory, but by destroying it. Through the power of nuclear weapons, we can imitate this power more fully than has ever been done before. Even more: we can be the means by which it carries out its ultimate purpose—eliminating the unfit.

When we look at the ideas, assumptions, and values that have been encouraged by the modern world-view, we can only ask: If a set of demons had deliberately set out to inspire us with the most dangerous possible set of ideas, could they have done any better?

The question, then, is not about deity, because there can be no questions about deity, since deity, being all-pervasive, stretches beyond all the dimensions within which questions can be asked. Yet deity is within humans, as it is within all else, and in human beings it begins to enter the field of deific self-consciousness, as well as the field of evil, since if we think about it we see that there is naught in the world but good and evil. Such a suggestion may make us revolt, but that is because of our natural dislike of moralizing, which became unavoidable during the dominance of the personal-god idea.

It now appears that we are on the way to getting rid of this idea, although cleansing the mind of the conception may take centuries. But once it is gone our thoughts will gain penetration and power, and we shall understand the self-reverence which graces the best of all men and women.

REVIEW

STORIES AND SOME HISTORY

THE Western reader is likely to be first charmed then puzzled by the short stories of Shiga Naoya, a Japanese writer who was born in 1883 and died in 1971. A Japanese scholar said of his work that "he brought the short story to a level of perfection it had never known before in Japanese literature." His stories became a model for other writers and "for a time completely dominated the literary scene and exerted a powerful influence upon other writers of the period."

The first story in the collection we have at hand, *The Paper Door* (issued in hardback by North Point Press at \$14.95), reports the common adventure and conversation of a little girl and a rapeseed flower. The scene seems to take place in eternity, hardly on earth. The translator, Lane Dunlop, who seems completely at home in the Japanese language, has put the story into colloquial English, making the telling of it both comfortable and eerie. One is not inclined to question that a tiny rapeseed flower is able to speak to the human child and ask for relief from its loneliness on a somewhat barren mountainside where the girl is collecting firewood. Questioned by the child as to how the flower came to blossom in a patch of inhospitable weeds, the rapeseed plant responds: "A seed got stuck in the breast down of a skylark and fell off here. I don't know what to do," said the flower sadly. Then the flower asked to be removed and planted at the foot of the mountain where the girl lived.

So the girl freed the roots of soil and carried it. In time, however, the plant began to fade, for the day was warm and dry. They were beside a stream going down the mountain, so the girl put the roots in the water, which delighted the plant. The girl said, "From here on, you travel by water." Soon the rapeseed flower feared the separation from the girl and called out, "I'm afraid." Then a strong current picked up the flower, carrying it far forward and the girl ran to keep up.

Thus the story of the adventure proceeds and the dialogue goes on, with minor disasters and rescues, tears and laughter, until the little girl plants the flower in a field behind her house. And that is the end.

Is this really a story? It seems rather a *haiku*, a quiet motion picture portraying tender feelings and childish delights. There is no rhetoric, no extravagance of words, indeed the words that are used, while not homely, reach in no direction beyond the scene.

How much, one wonders, is this work the translator's and how much Shiga Naoya's? Then, while charming, it is all so passive. As though these small events are a kind of embroidery in motionless lives, and as if what action comes about is not willed but just happens in events so trivial that no one could have intended them.

Your reviewer, except for some familiarity with Lafcadio Hearn, knows little or nothing about Japanese culture, and less of Japanese literature. Are the Japanese people really like the characters in these stories, moving about, thinking and feeling, as in a dream? Perhaps this delicate passivity is what the people like in these stories, making Shiga a famous writer. One does not know. So one reads on, wondering what will come next.

Another story, called simply "The Razor," tells about a sickly barber. He is highly expert and well liked. One day a coarse young customer comes in, wanting a shave. The barber drags himself into the shop, leaving behind a task of sharpening a razor for another customer—something he dislikes to do and which he is not really good at. His wife tries to dissuade him from serving the young man needing a shave, but he insists. He begins, but is soon overwhelmed with disgust, regarding the customer as a vulgar youth. His nerves violently object to the work. He feels sick again, as though he had a fever. The razor was dull—the one he had been sharpening—and it nicks the flesh of the young man. The barber is named Yoshisaburo.

The exhausted Yoshisaburo could neither stand nor sit. He felt as if poison had been poured into each and every one of his joints. He wanted to throw it all away, to drop down on the ground and roll around. Enough! he thought to himself any number of times. But by force of habit, he kept at it.

. . . Just slightly, the blade caught. The young man's throat twitched jerkily. From the top of his head to the tip of his toes, something passed swiftly through Yoshisaburo. It took with it all his weariness and disgust.

The cut was quite small. He stood there, simply looking at it. At first, between the little flaps of skin, a milky white color, then a faint crimson, steadily dyeing the cut. Abruptly, blood welled up. He stared at it. The blood darkened and swelled into a globule. Reaching its maximum distention, the drop flattened and streaked down the throat. A sort of rough, raging emotion surged up in Yoshisaburo.

Yoshiaburo had never cut the face of a customer in his life. The emotion came upon him with extraordinary force. His breath grew shallow and fast. It was as if he were being pulled body and soul into the cut. There was nothing he could do, now, to resist that feeling. Shifting the blade point downward, he plunged it deep into the throat. The blade was completely hidden. The young man did not even stir.

A moment later, the blood gushed out. Quickly, the young man's face turned the color of clay.

Almost in a faint, Yoshisaburo, as if falling, sat down in a chair alongside. His tension immediately went out of him, and his extreme fatigue came back. Dead tired, closing his eyes, he looked like a corpse. The night, too, was as still as a corpse. All movement was in abeyance. Everything was sunk in a deep sleep. Only the mirror, from three sides, coldly regarded the scene.

There is a kind of power in these stories, which are both pleasant and unpleasant.

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Mark Shepard's *Gandhi Today*, self-published by Simple Productions, 12 East 15th Street, No. 3, Arcata, Calif. 95521, is probably the best book to read to bring oneself up to date on the historic change that was set in India early in this century by Mohandas K. Gandhi. In order to write this book on what followers of Gandhi have

accomplished in recent years, Shepard went to India in 1978 and stayed five months. He learned a lot about recent history in India and came to be friend of the active Gandhians of the present. The book embodies the factual record of what he learned and ample evidence of the courage and imagination of current Gandhian workers for a peaceful world. It has a quality which makes it both reliable and inspiring. He said in some introductory paragraphs:

Gandhi believed that the means of struggle a people used would shape the society that grew out of the struggle. Violent revolutions, he noted, almost always ended with the military victors setting up a repressive tyranny to uphold their gains. But a people practicing Satyagraha, he said, would gain the power, methods, and values needed to build a free, peaceful society.

As Gandhi put it, the means must be in accord with the end desired, because the means become the end. India though it had been afflicted by widespread injustice, civil violence, and authoritarian trends, yet is one of the few Third World countries where democracy has survived continuously in any form.

Gandhi wrote, "All my actions have their source in my inalienable love of mankind." Love for the victim demanded struggle, even as love for the opponent ruled out doing harm.

In fact, Gandhi believed love for the opponent likewise demanded struggle, because oppression corrupted the spirit of the oppressor. Satyagraha, then, was for the opponent's sake as well—not a way for one group to wrest what it wanted from another, but a way to remove injustice and restore social harmony, to the benefit of both sides.

When Satyagraha worked, both sides won.

This, more than any tactical innovation, was Gandhi's great and unique contribution: this spirit he infused into his campaigns, his integration of a high moral attitude with mass political struggle. It is for this that the world has declared him a pioneer of the human spirit. . . .

India could become strong and healthy, Gandhi insisted only by revitalizing its villages, where over four-fifths of its people lived—a figure that still applies today.

After Gandhi's death in 1948 leadership fell to Vinoba Bhave, who thoroughly understood the importance of the regeneration of the villages, and who worked for this end by encouraging substantial villagers to give some of their land to the landless. Millions of acres were thus transferred, at least on paper, and after that whole villages were persuaded to become administered by the elders in behalf of the good of all. But after a few years enthusiasm flagged. Vinoba, apparently, had hoped for too much, yet those villages which preserved the ideal became examples of what could be accomplished in this way. Another leader then emerged, Jayaprakash Narayan, who had been educated in the United States. J.P., as he was called, gave up his Marxism and Socialism and joined Vinoba, helping with the program of gift of land, and then, seeing the rampant corruption under the government of Indira Gandhi, opposed her rule and was successful in a campaign to displace her. But this lasted for only a comparatively short time, and JP, who was already sickly, died.

The latter part of the book is devoted to the Shanti Sainiks—peace soldiers—who helped to settle disputes, quell riots, and expose false rumors. Out of this group grew the World Peace Brigade made up of Gandhians in different countries, led by Narayan Desai, Michael Scott of Britain, and A. J. Muste of the U.S. A substantial section is devoted to the Chipko Movement, which is working to save the trees on the slopes of the Himalayas, led by Chandi Prasad Bhatt. There is also attention to the People's Court, established in villages by a Gandhian Village worker who had been trained at Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram. Finally there is a good account of the progress of Gandhian education in the villages.

There is a vast amount of work still to be done to restore to health the villages of India, but Gandhian workers have made a notable beginning at this task. Both India and the rest of the world are still learning from Gandhi. This is Mark Shepard's contribution.

COMMENTARY SOMETHING "V. GOOD"

A READER back East has sent us a typescript with the title of "The Root of Charity," by Rabbi Robert I. Kahn, of Houston, Texas. Our reader marked it, "V. Good," and we submit here a portion of the text, too long for giving the whole. He begins by quoting an authority who says "There is apparently no Hebrew word for alms or almsgiving," then goes on:

Alms is rooted in a Greek word meaning pity or compassion: you give when you feel sorry for people. Charity is rooted in the Latin *caritas*; charity is given by those who care. But there was simply no overall word to define these activities.

Gradually, however, the word *Tsedakah* became such a term. The root of this Hebrew noun, however, does not mean charity. The root *Ts - d - k* has to do with what is just and right, and so it is translated in its various forms of verb, adjective, and noun, with the one exception of *Tsedakah*. Whenever *Tsedakah* is used in the Bible in connection with charitable activity, the Septuagint translates it with the Greek word *elymosyne* (alms). And in post-Biblical Hebrew it became the almost exclusive designation for the care of the poor.

This fact has some profound implications: the use of a Hebrew word rooted in justice to describe the relief of poverty points up several fundamental principles.

In the first place, it suggests that the giving of charity was not regarded as an act occasioned by compassion or pity, but as an obligation. Whether we feel like it or not makes no difference: injustice demands our sharing. The Biblical injunctions for giving to the needy are not put in the optative mood. The Bible does not say, "You ought to leave the gleanings of your field for the poor," but "Thou shalt!" It is not a matter of your being willing. You have no choice. You must.

The Rabbi tells a story to drive his point home:

I have a vivid and anguished memory of an experience as a Boy Scout in a troop that decided to present a Thanksgiving basket to a poor family. We got the name of the needy family from an agency and a group of us, the Scoutmaster and patrol leaders,

went to the address. While our Scoutmaster was saying the appropriate things, I happened to glance across the room at a boy my age. I will never forget the look on his face: it was an expression of shame and resentment. I have never taken part in such an activity since. It was not the way to give. People have a right to be helped, but they also have a right to be treated with dignity. . . .

Tsedakah has to do with justice and with right. It demands, therefore, setting things right; it means righting the injustices of society, it means overcoming the inequities of the world.

We have been musing about this passage for some time. Is it all there, or did the Rabbi leave something out? He is certainly right about the wrong way of giving, which is not really giving but a form of self-flattery, but cannot one give rightly without a sense of theological constraint? Perhaps one has to lose completely the feeling of "owning" before this is possible, which is so delicate a matter that no "system" of ethics should ever try to refer to it. In any event, there is a profound lesson in what the Rabbi says, even if, ideally, "overcoming the inequities of the world" ought to be a natural and spontaneous human function, without the burden of moral obligation.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves TEACHING AT HOME

IF press reports can be relied upon, the home schooling movement is growing by leaps and bounds. In a report by Victor Hull in the *Los Angeles Times* for April 15, it is said that religious fundamentalists are most active among parents dissatisfied with the public schools, but there are also many parents who are disenchanted "because of drug problems, inadequate discipline or low academic standards," and have decided that "their children will get better educations at home than in school."

On the subject of numbers, Hull says:

Nobody keeps a precise count, but Pat Lines, a senior Policy analyst at the U.S. Education Department, estimates that between 120,000 and 260,000 children are being taught at home nationally, about double the total she found three years ago.

Hull begins his story:

When Bonnie Nord took her 6-year daughter Stacy out of a private school and began teaching her at home 5 years ago, she tried to keep it a secret. "I didn't want to tell anyone I was doing it," she said. "There was extreme persecution from close friends, family—everyone."

Today Stacy is still in school at her home in Edmonds Wash., learning math, reading, science, Bible history, sewing, cooking, even Greek. She recently scored at the 11th-grade level in reasoning and vocabulary skills on the California Aptitude Test.

But Stacy's home-based education is no longer a secret. "Now it's reversed," her mother said. "I'm very comfortable teaching at home now. Parents tell me they feel guilty because they *aren't* home schooling."

It seems evident that both the reporters and the newspaper publishers are sympathetic to home-schooling parents, so that good stories keep on coming out, week after week. Hull reports the now famous case of Grant Colfax, who was home-schooled in his parents' ranch near Boonville, Calif., and will graduate from Harvard

this year as a pre-medical student. Meanwhile his brother, Drew, is making A's as a Harvard freshman. David Colfax, the rancher father of the boys, had been a teacher at Washington University in St. Louis until 1973 when he moved to California to become a rancher. "Public schools," he said, "were the worst possible place to send kids. When we came here, we were turned off education in general." So he began home schooling then, when no one else was doing it.

Hull comments:

Not every family that turns its home into a school can expect to send its children to Harvard. In fact, critics of home schooling—particularly public school administrators and teacher organizations—say that most parents are not adequately trained to teach their children. But advocates say that the results tell a different story. The Home School Legal Defense Association of Washington, D.C., recently surveyed 591 children being taught at home and found that 88% scored at or above their grade level on standardized tests.

David Colfax has found no evidence that his two sons had trouble adjusting to Harvard after years of studying on their California ranch. "Other kids have said they're impressed with the way they do their studies without any external pressures," Colfax said. . . many home-school advocates, aware of the risks, say they make sure their children are involved in non-school activities with other children. Stacy Nord, for example, regularly goes ice skating and takes field trips to local museums and farms with other children from a local home-schooling group. "My daughter is more socially adjusted than a lot of adults," Bonnie Nord said.

Hull apparently talked to a lot of home-schooling parents.

Nobody—least of all the parents who have tried it—says teaching at home is easy. The biggest problem for beginners is confidence, said Susannah Sheffer, who edits a monthly home-schooling magazine in Boston. "They have to learn to trust their children and trust themselves," she said. "Many parents feel they are not trustworthy enough to teach their children. They have to let go of the pressure and worry. Good teachers learn how to teach from their children. "

Hull learned from another mother:

Wendy Baruch, who has been teaching her 12-year-old son at home in Boston for four years, says she tries to make her lessons practical. "You can teach math by baking an apple pie," she said. "Not only do the kids learn about math, they get to see the results—they eat it."

Another parent, a father in Pennsylvania, told Hull:

"My kids often ask a question I can't answer," he said. "Then we go and research it. We may end up answering just one question, or it may lead to more exploration and reading. We got interested in Colonial life and ended up joining a local program that runs a farm as it would have been run in Colonial times." . . .

Colfax, who has written a book on home schooling that will be published later this year, said his ranch, more than a mile from the nearest neighbors, offers an ideal opportunity to learn by doing. "In effect, we were homesteading, so much of it was hands-on experience," he said. "We'd read a book on how to build a septic tank, then build it. In effect, the boys were right there learning alongside us, carving out a living in the process."

The key to success in home schooling, several parents said, is flexibility. Hull relates:

Parents—in most cases mothers—find that they must juggle their teaching responsibilities with household duties. Staying flexible, they say, is crucial. "We've found the children help each other," Sheffer said. "Older children serve as a model. We find a much closer sibling bond in home schoolers. A mother might have a baby in her arms, but the other children help out." Sheffer said that many parents learn home teaching by consulting others who have gone before them. Holt Associates, an educational consulting group founded in Boston in 1970 by home school advocate John Holt, offers a list of experienced home schoolers who are willing to advise others on the methods they found successful.

California's annual home-school convention—this year's will be in Pasadena on July 18—gives parents a chance to establish contacts with other home schoolers, hear lecturers and browse through exhibits of 45 publishers offering home-school manuals, workbooks and textbooks.

The most comprehensive how-to book is "The Big Book of Home Learning" by home schooler Mary Pride, published last July by Good News Publishers of

Westchester, Ill. Sales of the 350-page paperback have topped 18,000, and it is still selling at a rate of about 1,000 copies a month, even though it is sold primarily in religious bookstores and carries a \$17.95 price tag.

Parents in California who decide to home-school have comparatively few problems.

California has no law governing home schooling, but the California Education Department requires parents who teach their children themselves to file affidavits declaring their homes to be private schools. Fred Fernandez, a consultant with the California Education Department's nonpublic schools unit, said that the number of affidavits has increased about 7% in the last year, to 1808. "Every time I go out to make a presentation to home schoolers, I expect to see about 25 people," Fernandez said. "Invariably there are over 100. There's a tendency for them to be a little more bold about it now."

And why not? What is more natural than for parents to teach their own children?

FRONTIERS Thoreau's Precedent

IN a recent issue of the *Ecologist*, Richard Falk, who teaches at the Center of International Studies, Princeton University, goes back to Thoreau for grounds of the opposition to nuclear war, in justification of American protesters who are now receiving long prison sentences for their civil disobedience and mildly destructive acts against nuclear weaponry. While Thoreau served only one night in jail for his refusal to pay a tax that would be used to support President Polk's war against Mexico, he made the occasion into a reason for declaring for conscience instead of the war of the government. He counseled his fellow Americans:

Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lead myself to the wrong which I condemn.

Falk draws the comparison:

These days, rarely noticed except when prison terms are announced, there are a growing number of Americans who are dedicating their lives to stopping the machine. Now the machine has become nuclearized, and threatens, at least in our imagination, the ultimate crime of omnicide, not an idle threat, given the validating findings of several groups of scientists about the prospects for "nuclear winter" in the aftermath of nuclear war. . . . These unsung Americans, our contemporaries, are receiving longish prison sentences, are remaining for years behind bars away from family, freedom, and work and they are returning over and over again to put their bodies in the way of the machine. Their lives have become haunted by the darkest shadows of nuclearism.

The protesters aim their efforts particularly at first-strike weapons such as Trident missiles with which nuclear submarines are armed. Mr. Falk says:

They have organized blockades of sailboats to prevent the entry into port at the Bangor base of the first Trident class submarines and they have on six or more occasions blocked "the white train" that carries the missiles and warheads for Trident subs from their place of assembly at a Pantex plant in Amarillo,

Texas. A monitoring and solidarity network has grown up along the route of the train suggesting the birthing of a movement at the grassroots. For instance, two years ago a half dozen residents of Fort Collins, Colorado, blocked the white train as it passed through their city. They were dragged by the police from the tracks and charged with criminal trespass but in the end considerable community support and policy divisions in the local DA's office led the case to be dropped. . . .

Similarly, in the Eastern portion of the United States there are comparable activities similarly motivated. These activities, because of the character of the operations located in the region, are directed at the weapons themselves rather than at their deployment. The most prominent of these protesters are the Berrigan brothers, Daniel and Philip who, with close associates, have engaged in a series of Plowshare activities, such as entering a GE plant, where the Mark 12-A missile is assembled or Griffiss Air Force Base in upstate New York where B-52s are being retrofitted for cruise missiles, done damage to some of the missiles themselves, sang religious songs at the site of their trespass and waited until the police came to arrest them. . . . Sentences of more than five years in jail are common in such cases, and there are a few recent cases where terms of more than ten years have been imposed. In other words these activists are as serious as it is possible to be in civil society.

Now Mr. Falk returns to Thoreau by way of what Emerson said about him, which was "No truer American exists than Thoreau." Here, one may think, Emerson is recalling that America "started out, above all, as the endpoint of pilgrimage, a place of sanctuary for the individual conscience." Falk goes on:

Thoreau's specific originality was to turn his grasp . . . of American character into a moral questioning of the state, and then to act accordingly. In this regard, Thoreau gives conscience priority in his arrangement of virtues: "I think we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for law, so much as for right." At the end of this seminal essay Thoreau asserts, "there never will be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived. . . ."

Thoreau in his famous essay on civil disobedience centers his concern on the militarism of

the organized state: "Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government." The minimum obligation of citizenship in a free society is to separate oneself from supporting those aspects of state power that are destructive and exploitative. Thoreau demands nothing necessarily more, but also nothing less.

Further along in his article Richard Falk gives the principles which resulted from the Nuremberg trials, principles which made individuals responsible under international law for crimes they committed, no matter if they were ordered to do what they did by their government. Then he says:

For Thoreau his stand was rooted in his conscience, and the moral responsibility of an individual to act on that basis. Thoreau accepted "law" as an expression of the state to be resisted, as necessary, by "morality." As a result, an opposition between law and morality will inevitably arise whenever a government acts unjustly.

For the Trident protesters the priority of morality is also central to their stand, and is their starting-point. At the same time, by invoking Nuremberg, the protesters are claiming that law, properly applied, is on their side. . .

Richard Falk concludes:

I honestly believe that we are reaching the stage where honoring the Nuremberg obligation becomes a spiritual weapon with which to fight against the violence-drenched orientations of the modern state, whether East or West. And I believe that these defendants who are facing trial these days are "martyrs in Tolstoy's sense; they are teaching us how to be citizens in the nuclear age.