

RENDERED UNTO CAESAR

[This article by Milton Mayer first appeared in *Fellowship* for September, 1962, and was reprinted in condensed form in *MANAS* for October 31 of that year. The present reprinting needs no explanation. Milton Mayer, it may be recalled, back in the days when he was assistant to President Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago, wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post* (Oct. 7, 1939) a similar article titled "I Think I'll Sit This One Out," telling why he would be a conscientious objector if the U.S. became involved in the European war and the draft claimed his services. Hardly anyone has put so clearly the reasons for refusing to be a soldier. Both of Milton Mayer's articles are classics of war resistance literature.]

I WAS a spavined old man of forty-three (this was ten years ago) when I realized that my Government was unlikely ever again to order me to pick up a gun and kill a man who has never offended me and who had been ordered by *his* Government to pick up a gun and kill me; each of us subject, if he disobeyed the order, to being set upon by his own Government. The last time my Government ordered me to perpetrate this abomination—for such it may be seen to be, on its very face—was in 1949.

On that occasion I had said No (as who wouldn't, to such a preposterous demand?) and the Government retired in instant confusion. I had not expected that it would stand up to me like a man; rather, I had expected it to use its brute force on me. But I appeared to have taken it by surprise. Governments taken by surprise hasten to reclassify, supposing by this device they may escape their predicament. Mine reclassified me.

It reclassified me as "indispensable war worker" because I was beating my gums in the lower depths of the one remaining peaceable division of a university engaged in a great secret war project. (The university's motto was, Let Knowledge Grow from More to More, that Human Life May Be Enriched; and by August 6,

1945, its knowledge had grown to the point where it was able to enrich human life in Hiroshima.)

When I saw that all a man had to do was say No to send the Government headlong, I lost my fear of it. I had long since lost my respect for it, as any man necessarily must for any such organization, be it Murder Inc. or Murder United. But the Government found other men to do its sorry work, and enough of them, I suppose, because it did not come near me again; not even in 1948, when it enacted universal peacetime conscription (which Woodrow Wilson had called "the root evil of Prussianism"). It sent me a classification card again, and I sent it back with a letter of regret and heard nothing more.

Others may have had another sort of experience with Government, or with Governments more purposeful than mine, but mine convinces me that Government, whatever it means to be, good government or bad, is something of a humbug. The good things it pretends to do are done by men—by free men, and even by slaves—and the one thing it is specifically designed to do, and always promises to do, it never does, namely, keep the peace.

A humbug and, like all humbugs, a fourflusher. A few years ago I was invited to Hungary on a religious mission. My American passport forbade me—quite tyrannically—to go to Hungary. But my American Constitution forbade the Government to interfere with my religion. As between the passport and the Constitution, I held with the Constitution and so informed the Government before I went. The Government waited until I got back and then threatened to take my passport away from me, and thus make me a prisoner of my own country, unless I immediately swore that I would never again disobey its regulations present and future. Again, all I had to

do was say No. My religion forbade me to swear at all and my Americanism forbade me to agree to obey anybody's *future* regulations, and I said so. The Government ran away at once.

There remained one matter in respect of which I felt that the Government needed a really good licking and would not behave itself until it had one. That was money. If men for its abominations were, as it seemed, a dime a dozen, it wanted only to get the dime to get the men. I might be palsied and arthritic, but I could still hand over the dime and the Government would let me go my windbroken way. As long as I went on giving it its annual allowance, I could no more expect it to mend its ways than I could a reprobate son. I had to say No to the dime and see what happened.

The Government was even then—this was 1952—on a shooting spree and I was financing the spree. It was ordering men to kill other innocent men and burn down their shanties, and I was buying it the men. I was paying others to do what I would never do myself or, indeed, countenance in others in any other circumstances. This couldn't go on.

Such were my reflections when, that same season, in a German town, I saw the ruins of a hospital in which eighty-five people, their eyes bound after surgery, were burned up blind when a bomber missed the railroad station. I realized that my notion of war as two innocent men ordered to kill one another was a little refined. War meant killing people in hospitals, including whatever Jews in Germany Hitler had overlooked.

This really couldn't go on. I notified the Government that I was cutting it off without a nickel of my dime until it straightened up. It was spending at least half of its allowance on criminal debauchery and I did not see how I could be a God-fearing American and go on paying its upkeep.

Taxes are inevitable. So is death. But suicide isn't inevitable. I intend to die unwillingly and

without giving death any help. The inevitability of any evil is not the point; the point is my subornation of it. Why should I, on receipt of the Government's demand for money to kill the innocent, hurry as fast as I can to comply?

My neighbor says that the Government will take the money anyway, by force and violence and other lawful means. He is right, but what's that to me? If a robber ties me up and robs me, I have not become a robber. If the wicked Russians kill me and my little ones in my (or at least in my little ones') innocence, I have not become a killer. I have become a killer only if I kill wicked Russians (or, more likely, their wicked little ones).

My neighbor says that my refusal to pay half the tax begs the question, since the Government will use half of what I do pay to kill the innocent and, in the end, with interest and penalties, get more from me than if I had paid the whole tax with a smile. Agreed. But the point is unaffected; the point is the smile.

I am told that the Government doesn't need my piddling nickel to get on with its abominations. Agreed again. But I need it. The year I first refused to pay it, the tax came to \$33.94. I could buy myself a champagne supper with \$33.94. Or I could send it to the American Friends Service Committee, which could buy 1,697 dinners with it for hungry children in Orissa Province in India. One way or another, the Government doesn't need the \$33.94, and I do; and its characterization of the amount, when I went to court for it, as "this small tax" was contemptuous.

Of course the Government can get along without my money. If it gets less from me, or none, it will get more from my neighbor. Or more from me, then less from him. It will get the money and buy the guns and give them to the Portuguese to defend democracy against the Russians by killing the innocent in Angola. Good enough. I am not the government; I haven't the power to put a stop to the abomination, but only to put a stop to my being willing to perpetrate it myself. . . .

If I need not pay my taxes because I am squeamish about the killing of men, then, says my neighbor, the vegetarian need not pay his for inspection of the killing of animals, etc., and, in the end, no one need pay his taxes for anything he doesn't much fancy, and this is Anarchy. My neighbor is not alone in saying it. When the Circuit Court of Appeals was hearing my complaint against the Government, one of the Judges said to my learned counsel, "Is the plaintiff aware that this Court, if it held for him, would itself be laying the axe to the root of all established Government?" And learned counsel said, "I think he is, Your Honor."

Is a man who is worth anything at all to be diverted from positive horrors by putative horrors? I have no primary obligation to save established Government from the axe, but to save myself from the fire. I will pay for the conveniences of Government, including those conveniences I don't use. I will pay for its inconveniences, because prudence dictates that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes. But why should I pay for its madness—or my neighbor's, if you will—because the madness is established? All the more reason for cutting it off at once; all the more. The Government is anarchical, not I. It, not I, denies the kingdom of God and throws its anarchical bombs into the midst of the family of man.

I am not first of all a doctor of political philosophy, with no better business than to set terms like Anarchy in order (though I may say that if there were only one other term, and that Slavery, I, like Locke's judicious Hooker, would know how to order the two). I am first of all a man; not much of a man, and getting no better; but still a man, born with a set of terms to live by and an instinctive apprehension of their validity. My neighbor says "Anarchy" as if he were affirming the Eleventh Commandment instead of denying the Second and the Sixth. He wags his head and says that there is no other way than

established Government—or even than *this* established Government—to manage human affairs.

Who said that human affairs are manageable?—Not I. Perhaps they aren't. They do not seem to be just now, nor for a long time since. If they aren't, then a man who may not live until they are must manage his affairs as best he can. The burden of proving manageability is on the managers or, as they are known in election year, the rascals. Neither my neighbor nor *the rascals* can relieve me of my responsibility by thumbing through their index of terms and threatening me with Anarchy.

But all this is by the bye. I do not mean to argue Pacifism here (another of my neighbor's terms). I mean to abide by the Aesculapian oath to do good if possible, but in no case to do harm, whether or not the doctors of medicine (or of political philosophy) abide by it. And if I can not once in a while try to be righteous without succeeding in being self-righteous, I am sorry that I am offensive and that my neighbor is diverted by the offense.

My neighbor is forever saying that the situation is pretty bad (or at least hopeless) and asking, "But what can one man do?" He means to answer his own question with, "Nothing." I tell him what one man can do, almost nothing, perhaps, but not quite nothing, and do at no more effort than it takes to keep his golf clubs polished. But when I tell him, he says, "But one man is ineffective."

I know that one man is ineffective. I know that Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower were ineffective. They all hated war—so they said, and I believed and believed them—and they all made war. I hear that John F. Kennedy, as President, is the prisoner of his position. And these men are managers, and my neighbor and I are not even managers. How, then, should one of us be effective? But one of us can try to do the right thing, all by himself, and, maybe, even be effective. The United Nations has not been able

to disarm the world by one man; I, all by myself, can be more effective than it has been.

"But someone must take the responsibility for Society." Is there no other way than public preferment to take responsibility for Society? If there is none, a man may have to be irresponsible. Too bad; but not as bad as being responsible for the offenses the men-turned-Government are obliged to commit in Society's name. Society, grumbling at the offenses, but assenting to them, has compelled me to choose between a bad course and a worse.

Thoreau imagined a State which would recognize the individual as a higher and independent power. He may have been whimsical then. He would be much more whimsical now. Two victorious world wars for democracy have not extended democracy even among the citizens of the victorious nations. Two victorious world wars for democracy have extended, not the black man's, but all men's enslavement to war and its preparation.

The State that Thoreau, so whimsically in his time, so much more so in ours, imagined "would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men." Some of us who once pitied the Forgotten Man would like ourselves to be forgotten now, but the State insists upon remembering us each and several; not, to be sure, as men, but as cards to be slipped soundlessly into a computer. But when one of the cards does not slip soundlessly out the other end, the computer may not know, for a moment, what to do, and so, for a moment, do nothing. The only thing a man—a man, not a card—can do now is obstruct and pray for obstruction.

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." When Mr. Kennedy spoke these words at his inaugural, I knew that I was at odds with a Society which did not immediately rebel against them. They are the words of totalitarianism pure; no Jefferson could

have spoken them, and no Khrushchev could have spoken them better. Could a man say what Mr. Kennedy said and also say that the difference between *us* and *them* is that *they* believe that man exists for the State and *we* believe that the State exists for man? He couldn't, but he did. And in doing so, he read me out of society.

This good man, and the good men around him, can neither do good themselves nor allow me to do good if I would. They are all of them prisoners of their position—prisoners already of the Government which tries to imprison me. I offered to give the Government all the money it wanted, no matter how much it wanted, if it would use it to help my countrymen. My country's children needed schools. Its old people needed medical care for want of which I (with my own eyes, as my mother would say) had seen them die.

But the Government wouldn't hear of these needs. They were all beyond its capacity—the capacity of the Government of the richest nation in history. So straitened, indeed, is the Government's capacity to help men, at home or abroad, that it is constrained to notify the children of Orissa Province in India that they either have to make war on "our" side or starve.* *

Shall we say "Yes" to a Government, no matter what it asks of us? If so, men are freer in Prague than they are at home; and this would seem strange unless you hold that ours is a Government that, unlike any Government that ever was before, never asks anything of us. Our government is certainly better than many in many respects, but in the one respect of mortal wrong, the killing of the innocent, it is identical with all the rest.

There is something to practice's making perfect. I may say, "I would say *No* to Communism," or, "I would have said *No* to Nazism." But if I cannot say "No" to a

* "It is my belief that in the administration of these (foreign aid) funds we should give great attention and consideration to those nations which have our view of the word crisis."—President Kennedy (*Newsweek*, Sept. 18, 1961).

Government whose pains are light, what makes me think I would say "No" to a Government whose pains are heavier?

It is excruciatingly easy for me to say "No" to Communism, and I say it. I would not rather be red than dead; I would rather be neither. But I would rather be either than have the blood of the innocent on my hands. Wouldn't you? The Russians will have to answer to their Government's abominations, you and I only to ours. What our Government requires of you and me, in our dotage, is only that we give it the money to buy the gun and hire the man to carry it. What say you?

The world may end next week, or next year, and the last flash will light up the darkness in which we stumble now. We shall be able to see then, in an instant, that the Government, like us, wasn't itself very good or very bad but only, like us, enchanted, and, in its enchantment, like us in ours, turned everything it touched to iron. Between now and then we shall none of us change our wonted ways very much or very fast, and we should not expect to. But then, in the last flash, instead of saying, "What little can I do?" we shall say, "What little could I have done?"

MILTON MAYER

REVIEW

BETTER THAN TEN THOUSAND EYES

AS readers of his *Hiroshima* will remember, John Hersey makes a powerful use of words. There are no rhetorical devices in his stark account of a Japanese city of a hundred thousand reduced to rubble by the atom bomb. He tells what he saw, and it is enough, more than enough. His "objectivity" has immeasurable subjective effect. The reader is numbed by what he says, yet the sentences, each one with its separate horror to relate, go on and on. A monstrous awe is the result.

Hersey, a literary man, showed that the arts of the humanist have a part to play in relation to scientific and technological achievement. In effect, he asks: What is this "achievement" which people say ended the second world war in the East? *Look* at it, he said. We have looked, and then, to find relief, have looked away.

In an essay, "The Triumph of Numbers," in the October *Atlantic*, Mr. Hersey invites his readers to look further. For focus he recalls the essential point of C. P. Snow's Rede Lecture of 1959—that the "two cultures" of science and the humanities lack any common ground. He says that Snow, five years after his famous lecture, felt encouraged by the attempts made at Yale, Princeton, Michigan, and California to bridge the gap between scientific and humanist perception. Wondering about this, Hersey recently visited some of the universities and looked at the records, discovering that the simplified science courses are largely ignored by literature majors. Why? One reason is that they fear they might flunk, and this would be bad for their fiercely competitive academic careers. Besides, the science courses—even stepped-down science for non-science majors—are both boring and *hard*. "The ambitious humanists flock to the safe courses." The alienation goes on.

At the end of his melancholy recital Mr. Hersey says:

Our technologists have become so sophisticated and ambitious, our humanists so ignorant and blithe where science is concerned, that we seem to be on the point of losing sight of the difference between living beings and inanimate things. This dimming of our vision does not make objects more vital, but makes us more morbid. Patents have always in our history been reserved for objects, but the Supreme Court recently enabled the patenting of new forms of life. Congress has before it a bill that will enable the copyrighting of computer programs—the first time in our history copyright will have been afforded to something which communicates not with human eyes or ears but with machines. Smart robots are pushing workers aside at General Electric, GM, Du Pont Ford, Boeing. We now have atomic warheads that can think. We can begin to wonder whether the human mind or "artificial intelligence" will write the philosophy—or the funeral orations—of coming years.

This is the "triumph of numbers"—numbers you can do things with. Or that technologists can do things with, to the wonder and embarrassment and apprehension of the rest of us.

Mr. Hersey has some lyrical passages on scientific writers who bring the meaning of their work within the reach of ordinary readers—Victor Weisskopf is one, Lewis Thomas another—and he recalls that two hundred years ago, during the high noon of the Enlightenment, scientists and literateurs were often the same persons. But not now. Today humanist attitudes toward science are hardening into routine distrust:

In a long period of inflation, a great deal of suspicion of technology derives from the fact that in our economy applied science is largely the servant of corporations, whose guiding principle, to be blunt about it, is greed. No amount of argumentation about exploring for new resources will explain away, for most hard-up citizens paying three to four times as much at the pumps as they used to, the obscene proportion of the obscene profits of the oil companies in the last couple of years that has not been plowed back into exploration.

And finally, as if we didn't have enough else to be mad at, there's the computer. Of course in nine cases out of ten we blame the machine for the inattentiveness of the operator who punched the wrong numbers into it, though an argument could be made that that same operator, if he or she were

dealing directly with another human being rather than with a machine, might not suffer so many lapses of attention. But that is really a side issue. A great part of what frightens the literary culture about technology is epitomized by the computer itself, the dazzling versatility and usefulness of which has brought in the last two decades a great shift in the weights of the signals of communication. Numbers have become more powerful; words have grown weaker.

Well, some words are still strong. Or the writers of the past who used them were strong—stronger than our modern literary humanists. We have in mind a passage in Plato's *Republic* on this matter of numbers, their importance and what to do with them. Plato, it turns out, was fully aware of the dilemma Mr. Hersey describes, and warned against it, predicting exactly what has happened to us. In Book VII, the dialogue is about the curriculum for the young in Plato's ideal community, and Glaucon is arguing for inclusion of astronomy, which, he says, "compels the soul to look upward" to higher things. Socrates does not agree, saying of astronomy,

As it is now handled by those who are trying to lead us up to philosophy, I think it turns the soul's gaze very much downward.

What do you mean? he said.

You seem to me in your thought to put a most liberal interpretation on the "study of higher things," I said, for apparently if anyone with a back-thrown head should learn something by staring at decorations on a ceiling, you would regard him as contemplating them with the higher reason and not with the eyes. Perhaps you are right and I am a simpleton. For I, for my part, am unable to suppose that any other study turns the soul's gaze upward than that which deals with being and the invisible. But if anyone tries to learn about the things of sense, whether gaping up or blinking down, I would never say that he really learns—for nothing of the kind admits of true knowledge—nor would I say that his soul looks up, but down, even though he study floating on his back on sea or land.

A fair retort, he said. Your rebuke is deserved. But how, then, did you mean that astronomy ought to be taught contrary to the present fashion if it is to be learned in a way to conduce to our purpose?

Socrates explains that astronomy can be taught so that its content is understood as made of analogues of more profound meaning concerning the processes of all life and being.

Geometry is also to be studied. We must, said Socrates, "never neglect geometry, for even the by-products of such study are not slight."

What are they? said he.

What you mentioned, said I, its uses in war, and also we are aware that for the better reception of all studies there will be an immeasurable difference between the student who has been imbued with geometry and the one who has not.

Immense indeed, by Zeus, he said.

Then comes the recommendation of astronomy.

I certainly agree, he said, for quickness of perception about the seasons and the courses of the months and the years is serviceable, not only to agriculture and navigation, but still more to the military art.

I am amused, said I, at your apparent fear lest the multitude may suppose you to be recommending useless studies. It is indeed no trifling task, but very difficult to realize that there is in every soul an organ or instrument of knowledge that is purified and kindled afresh by such studies when it has been destroyed by our ordinary pursuits, a faculty whose preservation outweighs ten thousand eyes, for by it only is reality beheld. Those who share this faith will think your words superlatively true. But those who have and have had no inkling of it will naturally think them all moonshine. For they can see no other benefit from such pursuits worth mentioning.

With but little effort we are able to recognize in Plato's discourse the parallels to our present problems. There is, he says, a kind of sight that is "destroyed by our ordinary pursuits." That much we understand, but the rekindling of its activity remains a mystery. It may require of us that we change our ordinary pursuits. It would be fine if Mr. Hersey and other perceptive writers of like inclination would address themselves to this possibility, and to what PLato might have had in mind as "useless studies."

COMMENTARY

A DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR

THIS issue bears the date of Christmas Eve, making an editorial obligation to say something about the spirit of the season. One finds it difficult to do so. Such feelings need to burst into words because of their insistent meaning. The feelings should declare the time of year, not the time demand the feelings. It is not that the hidden renewal of life by the sun's turning northward is without significance. There may indeed come to us a natural quickening of heart, however symbolized in tradition. The Mass of Christ or the Feast of the Nativity is but one of a number of recognitions of the annual planetary rebirth. They all, as John Ciardi notes in the December *Atlantic*, "have a common ancestor in a sun-worshipper's ritual."

But speaking of these things at Christmas time ought not to be a mandated affair, made in response to the calendar. Integrity of feeling might rather bring home our kinship with Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, whose attempt at reverence brought only a "wicked whisper," making him sick at heart. He needed to feel sick. The albatross hung heavy about his neck, and as long as it was there, he needed to feel what it meant.

As the preparations for nuclear war grow ever more lethally dangerous, this might be a time to remind ourselves of the opinion of a soldier of World War II, Edmond Taylor, who found himself agreeing with Eastern people regarding the infamous Bikini nuclear "experiment" as "a black mass of physics as the German experiments [on humans, in the concentration camps] were a black mass of medicine." What right have we even to speak of Christmas—to say nothing of "celebrating" it!

Hence the contents of this issue. To them might be added a reading of Peter Marin's article, "Coming to Terms with Vietnam," in the December *Harper's*.

None of us [this writer says] has faced the specter of his own culpability—not Nixon's, not Kissinger's—but the way in which each one of us, actively or passively, contributed to the killing, the taxes we paid, officials we elected, lessons we taught in the classroom, obedience we taught, the endless round of incipient and explicit influences that made countless young men willing to kill for the worst of causes in the worst of ways.

It is heartening that such articles now appear. The words cannot cleanse us of the past, but they may help to bring us to the point where some cleansing will be possible. Christmas is an appropriate time to think of such things.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

SOME USEFUL RECOLLECTIONS

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD was born in 1861 into a family line of Anglican clergymen and schoolmasters of southern England. In "Some Autobiographical Notes" at the beginning of *Science and Philosophy* (Philosophical Library, 1948), he tells about his education, saying that it "conformed to the normal standard of the time."

Latin began at the age of ten years, and Greek at twelve. Holidays excepted, my recollection is that daily, up to the age of nineteen and a half years, some pages of Latin and Greek authors were construed, and their grammar examined. Before going to school pages of rules of Latin grammar could be repeated, all in Latin, and exemplified with quotations. The classical studies were interspersed with mathematics. Of course, such studies included history—namely, Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus. I can still feel the dullness of Xenophon, Sallust, and Livy. Of course we all know that they are great authors; but this is a candid autobiography.

The others were enjoyable. Indeed my recollection is that the classics were well taught, with an unconscious comparison of the older civilization with modern life. I was excused in the composition of Latin Verse and the reading of some Latin poetry, in order to give more time for mathematics. We read the Bible in Greek; namely, with the Septuagint for the Old Testament. Such Scripture lessons, on each Sunday afternoon and Monday morning, were popular, because the authors did not seem to know more Greek than we did and so kept their grammar simple.

We were not overworked; and in my final year my time was mostly occupied with duties as Head of the School with its responsibility for discipline outside the class-rooms, on the Rugby model derived from Thomas Arnold, and as Captain of the Games, chiefly cricket and football, very enjoyable but taking time. There was however spare time for private reading. Poetry, more especially Wordsworth and Shelley, became a major interest, and also history.

Whitehead entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1880. Before describing his

experience there, he says (during his ripened eighties):

The education of a human being is a most complex topic, which we have hardly begun to understand. The only point on which I feel certain is that there is no widespread, simple solution.

At the University he apparently had ample freedom:

The formal teaching at Cambridge was competently done, by interesting men of first-rate ability. But courses assigned to each undergraduate might cover a narrow range. For example, during my whole undergraduate period at Trinity, all my lectures were on mathematics, pure and applied. I never went inside another lecture room. But the lectures were only one side of the education. The missing portions were supplied by incessant conversation, with our friends, undergraduates, or members of the staff. This started with dinner at about six or seven, and went on till about ten o'clock in the evening, stopping sometimes earlier and sometimes later. In my own case, there would then follow two or three hours' work at mathematics.

Possibly, here and there, experiences of this sort might have been duplicated in the universities of the United States, but one doubts it. Here, perhaps, there were other intensities, suited to our needs, yet the value of what Whitehead enjoyed as his education seems worth considering carefully. He continues:

Groups of friends were not created by identity of subjects for study. We all came from the same sort of school, with the same sort of previous training. We discussed everything—politics, religion, philosophy, literature—with a bias toward literature. This experience led to a large amount of miscellaneous reading. For example, by the time I gained my fellowship in 1885 I nearly knew by heart parts of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

For those of us who have tried to read Kant, this is a bit embarrassing. However—

Now I have forgotten it, because I was early disenchanting. I have never been able to read Hegel: I initiated my attempt by studying some remarks of his on mathematics which struck me as complete nonsense. It was foolish of me, but I am not writing to explain my good sense.

The general retrospect:

Looking backwards across more than half a century, the conversations have the appearance of a daily Platonic dialogue. Henry Head, D'Arcy Thompson, Jim Stephen, the Llewellen Davies brothers, Lowes Dickinson, Nat Wedd, Sorley, and many others—some of them subsequently famous, and others, equally able, attracting no subsequent public attention. That was the way by which Cambridge educated her sons. It was a replica of the Platonic method. The "Apostles" who met on Saturdays in each other's rooms, from 10 P.M. to any time next morning, were the concentration of this experience. The active members were eight or ten undergraduates or young B.A.'s, but older members who had "taken wings" often attended. There we discussed with Maitland, the historian, Verrall, Henry Jackson, Sidgwick, and casual judges or scientists, or members of Parliament who had come up to Cambridge for the weekend. It was a wonderful influence. The club was started in the late 1820's by Tennyson and his friends. It is still flourishing.

My Cambridge education with its emphasis on mathematics and on free discussion among friends would have gained Plato's approval. As times changed, Cambridge University has reformed its methods. Its success in the nineteenth century was a happy accident dependent on social circumstances which have passed away—fortunately. The Platonic education was very limited in its application to life.

That is doubtless true, although the fault may not have been Plato's. It was certainly not true of its application to Whitehead, who seems to have remained essentially Platonic to the end of his days. Among his recollections and observations of the time before Cambridge:

The Greek insistence on the golden mean and on the virtue of moderation entered into our philosophy of statesmanship, sometimes reinforcing our natural stupidity, sometimes moderating our national arrogance. . . . Our school course was a curious mixture of imaginative appeal and precise, detailed knowledge. . . .

Altogether we were a happy set of boys, receiving a deplorably narrow education to fit us for the modern world. But I will disclose one private conviction, based upon no confusing research, that, as a training in political imagination, the Harvard School of Politics and of Government cannot hold a

candle to the old-fashioned English classical education of half a century ago.

Later in this book Whitehead discusses the dying out of classical education by reason of the changes in our lives brought by science and technology. As a result, the body of classical literature, providing direct experience of great ideas, was diminished and eventually withdrawn (especially in the United States). At first a lot of "modern subjects" were added, but this proved an impossible program for the students. So there were less and less classical studies.

What, then, should be done?

If, for the mass of boys and young men, we are to concentrate our education upon modern subjects, we must first transform them into a real vehicle for the inculcation of ideas. We have, in fact, to civilize them.

Now nothing is more difficult than to transmit to our pupils real general ideas, as distinct from pretentious phrases. . . . In view of this difficulty, let us examine briefly how the classical languages achieved their undoubted success as vehicles of a liberal education. The advantage of education based upon them is that at every step definite aims are placed before the learner. He has to construe the author, to know the meaning and grammatical status of each word, and to render the sense in the precise equivalent English. It has also the useful property, which every teacher will appreciate that it is easy to test whether the pupil has in reality tried to accomplish his task. He may not make sense of his translation, but he can at least know the meaning of the various words and their cases or their tenses, and, in addition to all this, the classical languages possess the supreme merit that great ideas are simultaneously presented to the mind. The noblest authors of Greece and Rome can be read. Some of us may still remember construing in our school-days Lucretius' reflections on the nature of the universe, and the account of the battle of the harbour of Syracuse, its triumph and its despair.

What is Whitehead calling for? Does he want to restore Greek and Latin to the curriculum? Or is he arguing for translations of the classics? Perhaps. But mainly he is pointing out that what we need and have not got is a value-charged curriculum—something that went out with the

classics. So long as the classics were taught, it seemed unnecessary to have "values" anywhere else:

The boys might learn both German and Greek; but it was from Sophocles and not from Goethe that they drew their ideas. Mathematics, for example, was divested of all discussion of ideas, and reduced to the aimless acquirement of formal methods of procedure. In other words, modern thought was not introduced into the educational curriculum, but merely modern technique.

This may be something we have not thought about—that the very materials of modern education are almost deliberately "value-free." But adding a course or two on "values" is surely the last thing we should do. Getting them back into the curriculum, by weaving them into the subjects studied, might be just right, but do we know how to do this? Meanwhile, we owe a lot to Alfred North Whitehead.

FRONTIERS

Sons and Fathers

ONE young man of twenty, a reporter on an upstate New York alternative newspaper, tells in the *Progressive* for October why he registered with the Selective Service System last July. He conformed, he says, in order to strengthen his position for opposing the draft for military service:

When the U.S. Government decides to draft me to fight for the oil fields in Saudi Arabia, I'll draw up my battle plan.

But with my commitment to social change, I must consider how best the struggle can be carried forward. My abhorrence of violence, the military, and authority notwithstanding, I may be most useful inside the armed forces. Or I may decide to fight the draft every inch of the way.

When I walked into the post office and felt that helplessness, and saw again the naked power of the Government, I was strengthened in my conviction that I must work as hard as possible to fight the misuses of that power. I know that many young men stayed away from the post offices during those last two weeks of July. I know that they, too—perhaps for the first time—felt that same sense of helplessness, and maybe that helped them to begin the long fight for themselves against the abuse of power.

Another young man, this one nineteen, a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explains in the *Progressive* why he did not register. He begins by recounting the changes of mind on the part of the government—at first registration was held to be "redundant and unnecessary," but a little later it would expedite "mobilization" and the duty of young men is to "submit." He says:

In the midst of this confusion, I was forced to examine my beliefs and values more thoroughly than I ever had before. At nineteen, no one is really prepared to make a moral/ political decision that will affect the whole course of his life; no amount of education can help you to see your soul. Suddenly, questions of peace and freedom became more urgent than Maxwell's equations, T. S. Eliot, or even the movie at Central Square Cinema.

The first question (and the most easily answered) involved the meaning of registration. If registration were no more than a name on a card, the command wouldn't be backed with threats of prison. Registration is part and parcel of warfare; it serves no other useful purpose. To kill another human being, or to force another to do so, is wrong by any civilized moral code. Is it less wrong by the tens of thousands with the approval of Congress? To participate is to accept; by signing the card, I would have given my support to a foreign policy which accepts mass murder as a useful tool.

"Submit" is probably the most honest word in the entire Selective Service Act; registration is a *submission*, of both your body and your conscience, for use at any moment by the military machine. It is a blank check to the old; when their own failures necessitate it, they will cash it in the terrible coinage of the lives of the young.

What is this young man's duty? A senator claims that those who refuse to register are "unpatriotic." The MIT student replies:

On the other hand, Thoreau said the greatest patriots "serve the state with their consciences . . . and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated by it as enemies." I realized that if I really opposed the draft, it was my duty to disobey. No system was ever toppled by cooperation. Even a conscientious objector has accepted the system's right to decide who can and who cannot be forced to kill. This is more than I feel willing to accept, as Gandhi said, "He who is a passive spectator of crime is really, and in law, an active participator in it."

Many readers may feel this is merely the impetuosity of a hot-headed child—and it may be. But idealism is a strength of youth, not a weakness, and it is a natural obstacle the draft must overcome.

The last and most difficult question has yet to be answered: Do I have the courage to carry this duty through? In February, I took the first step, announcing at a rally that I would refuse to register. The crowd roared, but I felt strangely queasy. I don't know whether I have what it takes to endure a prison term; the only answer is waiting for me in a cell.

During World War II several thousand young men served time in federal prisons for the same reasons that this student gives. It was not pleasant in prison, but we know of no one among

them who preferred joining the army, although there were probably a few who did. As for the conscientious objector's decision to dissent from the "majority," there was one Texas youth who, after a hearing which meant that he would be sent to prison, was asked by the Hearing Agent (a judge): "Ernie, do you think that all those people out on the street are wrong, and you are right?" The young man replied, "Well, judge, there was a time when all those people out there thought the world was flat." Later this Texan youth was paroled to a conscientious objector camp, not particularly scarred by the prison experience.

This time, however, if war comes, there may be no camps. Toughness is planned by the Selective Service System, according to report. This probably means that today conscientious objection is increasingly feared by government officials—suggesting that now it may count for more.

That it *does* count for more seems plain from the portions of a letter from a father to a son, printed in the *Los Angeles Times* for July 23. It began:

Dear Mike: When you told me yesterday that your conscience will not let you serve in the military if you are drafted, my thoughts flew up like birds. I felt a start of fear for you. I know that there are those who will believe that your stand is selfish and cowardly.

I thought of our family's tradition of military service. Impatient with America's neutrality, your grandfather enlisted in the British army in 1914. He believed that fighting against German intervention meant fighting a "war to end war."

The letter proceeds, telling how, in the generations of their family, faith in the righteousness and efficacy of war was worn down. Vivid recollections of hopes, of ugly realities, and of personal experience fill the letter. In one place the father says that in his division there were no My Lais:

When you spoke to me, these thoughts crowded in, but they paled beside an image that I have carried in my mind for almost 40 years now. It is of a young

woman in the Philippines, quite handsome, lying across the doorstep of a burning thatch hut, her expression one of surprise and sadness. She had been severed in half at the waist by a naval shell fired in preparation for our landing on that beach. The lower part of her body was missing. My tears would not stop. As I ran for cover, bullets snapping and buzzing like bees, a promise formed in my mind that I would do everything in my power to make her death worthwhile.

I no longer believe that I can do that. To believe it implies that a death has some concrete value as a kind of bargaining chip, and that certain social aims are worth dying for. . . .

Times have changed so radically that the same values that led your grandfather and me to rush to enlist lead me now to counsel you to stay out. If World War II seems to have been only a narrow winner, there is no question about a nuclear war, which would leave only losers, if there were to be any survivors at all.

As for other, non-nuclear, wars there may be to fight, in today's climate there is no clear moral ground. Fighting "limited wars" leaves populations devastated, demoralized and embittered—fertile earth for more war, blood revenge, never-ending savagery. We must find ways to fulfill our goals short of bankrupting ourselves for weapons while people starve.

I would kill to defend myself, to defend you. I am not a pacifist; there are battles I would fight. But in good conscience I agree with you that we cannot support the wars and military philosophy that is currently offered us. . . .

I feel proud of you, your courage, your independence, your thoughtful, caring way of living. I'm proud of myself for having fathered you. One more bird—I am reminded of Herodotus, reflecting on how war reverses the laws of nature, because "in peace sons bury their fathers; in war the fathers bury their sons."

Your loving father,