VOLUME XXXI, NO. 38
SEPTEMBER 30, 1978

SOMETIMES WE THINK

SOME fifty years ago, in his column in the *New York World*, Harry Hansen found occasion to remark: "Many people go to China every year and notice only that the natives are dirty and eat a lot of rice." This seems an adequate answer to the question raised by a correspondent—a question he would like to see discussed: "How does thinking differ from experiencing?"

There is a growing interest in this sort of inquiry into subjective processes. Another reader writes to say:

> I have noticed a tendency for people to use the word "feeling" when what they are really talking about is thinking—or a combination of the two. . . . It is the wholeness of this process to which we must attend, since it is-the whole person who suffers when one part is pitted against another.

Analogies and examples are probably the best way to expose the facets of this question. Feeling may be compared to the flow of an electric current, while thinking corresponds to the wires which transmit and make it effective in some way. A thought without any feeling behind it is hard to imagine. Thinking, in other words, responds to conscious purpose. The simplest sort of feeling might be what we call "sensation." An illustration would be: "I feel hot," leading to an elementary thought: "If I move into the shade it will be cooler." Thought seems always to relate in some way to cause and effect. Feeling, then, presents a fact or "reality," and thought deals with it, processes it, and acts upon it. If there are no presentations of experience, there can be no thought. The ramifications of thought are illustrated by the one who, instead of thinking of a cooler place, turns on an air-conditioning unit.

Feeling, of course, arises in us in various ranges and scales. One feels heat or hunger or confinement, but one also feels affection, curiosity, and yearning. The desire to understand is another category of feeling, one that comes in at a level higher than curiosity. Some people have deep feelings about the land—as put into thought by Wendell Berry—and there are those whose longings focus on the pain of others and who study how it may be lessened. What determines the level and pervasiveness of feeling? We hardly know. As for the ranges of feeling, Arthur Young thinks that physical energy is the "feeling" of the universe. Yet he can hardly separate feeling and thought: "The universe is thinking or feeling itself into existence!"

The highest sort of feeling is doubtless love, best defined, perhaps, as the spontaneous tropism of separately embodied consciousness toward union with another embodiment. There is a sense in which we naturally place the highest value on the feeling of love. The praise of love is endless. Yet if you turn loose some thinking on the subject, puzzling qualifications ensue, as for example in the remarks of Socrates in the *Symposium.* One who loves, he says, always loves *something.* And this man who loves, he continues—

> Does he long for what he is in love with, or not?
>
> Of course he longs for it.
>
> And does he long for whatever it is he longs for, and is he in love with it, when he's got it, or when he hasn't?
>
> When he hasn't got it, probably.
>
> Then isn't it probable, said Socrates, or rather isn't it certain that everything longs for what it lacks, and that nothing longs for what it doesn't lack? I can't help thinking, Agathon, that that's about as certain as anything could be. Don't you think so?
>
> Yes, I suppose it is.
>
> Good. Now, tell me. Is it likely that a big man will want to be big, or a strong man to be strong?
>
> Not if we were right just now.
>
> Quite, for the simple reason that neither of them would be lacking in that particular respect.

Socrates concludes:

> And therefore, whoever feels a want is wanting something which is not yet to hand, and the object of his love and of his desire is whatever he isn't, or whatever he hasn't got—that is to say, whatever he is lacking in.
>
> Absolutely.
>
> And now, said Socrates, are we agreed on the following conclusions? One, that Love is always love of something, and two, that that something is what he lacks.
>
> Agreed, said Agathon.

Plato now brings Diotima, an Arcadian priestess, into the dialogue. She, Socrates explains, has been his instructor in the philosophy of love, and he repeats her argument that loving constitutes a condition halfway between longing and fulfillment. Love, he says, is the offspring of Resource and Need. The lover has a taste of what he longs for, but *only a taste:*

> He is neither mortal nor immortal. . . . Love is never altogether in or out of need, and stands, moreover, midway between ignorance and wisdom. You must understand that none of the gods are seekers after truth. They do not long for wisdom, because they are already wise—and why should the wise be seeking the wisdom that is already theirs?

Diotima provides an account of the levels of love, reaching the conclusion that the highest love is the longing for immortality, its realization becoming Beauty itself, not some particular form of beauty:

> Whoever has been initiated so far in the mysteries of Love and has viewed all aspects of the beautiful in due succession, is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshiper as it is to every other.
>
> Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh. It will be neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else, such as a living creature or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is—but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole.

Love, then, is the universal drive toward whole-making, and deliberate movement toward more inclusive and unchanging wholes grows out of *thinking:*

> But those whose procreancy is of the spirit rather than of the flesh—and they are not unknown, Socrates—conceive and bear the things of the spirit. And what are they? you ask. Wisdom and all her sister virtues; it is the office of every poet to beget them, and of every artist whom we may call creative.

What happens when feeling or loving is divorced from thinking? Diotima explains:

> Nor, for that matter, do the ignorant seek truth or crave to be made wise. And indeed, what makes their case so hopeless is that, having neither beauty nor goodness nor intelligence, they are satisfied with what they are, and do not long for the virtues they have never missed.
>
> Then tell me, Diotima, I said, who are these seekers after truth, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?
>
> Why, a schoolboy, she replied, could have told you that, after what I've just been saying. They are those that come between the two, and one of them is Love. For wisdom is concerned with the loveliest of things, and Love is the love of what is lovely, And so it follows that Love is a lover of wisdom, and, being such, he is placed between wisdom and ignorance—for which his parentage is also responsible. . . .

Thinking, it becomes evident, is the avenue to another sort of feeling—the feeling of *ought.* Love, by itself, is simply desire—longing for its object. Thinking has two roles—one, the lesser role, is to devise means for the fulfillment of desire. The other role is to determine what ought to be desired.

Why is it, then, that "thinking" is so often minimized or even condemned? There seem to be two reasons. First, thinking interrupts and discourages the fine free flow of feeling. Feeling is not reflective, but both holistic and imperial. It

is the joy of direct experience of some unity. Reason or thinking, however, raises the question: Is there a better joy, less attended by its opposite, sorrow? Feeling has no sense of the passage of time, no memory of alternating events, no objective awareness of cause and effect. It is, one could say, the cause itself, totally engrossed in its own action. So feeling may be said to be in constitutional opposition to thinking. The other reason for condemning thinking is that it often causes pain. A change in the level of one's desiring is painful. One aspect of change is deprivation of what was, and the feeling-nature resists. Feeling has trained the organic system of the embodied consciousness to act swiftly in response to its demands. Thinking, then, constitutes a direct challenge to habit.

This, it seems clear, is why Plato accords such high honor to the philosopher. He is one who finds joy in determining and then laboriously acquiring the best habits, or virtues. He is not put off by the pain of change, but learns to delight in it, because of its rewards. In relation to others, it is the business of the philosopher to declare or to invite consideration of *what ought to be*. We all have feelings. We are moved by them. Since we are complex, not simple, beings, we are animated by a variety of feelings—a competition of them, we could say. The philosopher evaluates the competitors. He is seldom liked for this activity.

Here we might make a distinction between moralists and philosophers. The moralistc describes the feelings which in his opinion we ought to respond to, and lists others he wants us to control or put aside. Accordingly, he is likely to irritate us. His apparent or actual self-righteousness annoys. Who is he to tell us what to do? How did he get so holy? The philosopher, who understands more of how human beings alter their characters—because he has been through it himself—doesn't tell people what they should do. He tells how things actually work. He practices a kind of objectivity. He draws attention to the operations of cause and effect. But he also makes a controlled use of feeling. *Come on,* says Socrates. You know what you long for in your heart! And then he says, *Think.* It is exhortation, but of a different quality from the moralist's. Socrates is a team-mate, not a preacher.

This discriminated union of thought and feeling is the foundation of civilization, in the best sense of the term. It is a union which cannot be understood objectively, nor subjectively alone, since it is the marriage of the subjective and the objective between what is and what ought to be. This union is the essence of being human—the two contradictory logics joined in inseparable embrace.

Paul Goodman wrote well on the subject:

> We are here touching on one of the most puzzling, never finally resoluble, problems of the human condition, the relation of knowledge and ethics. There is no doubt that the thinking of prophets, scientists, and artists has been powerfully normative for behavior. Nevertheless it is a fair challenge to ask how any proposition about reality can possibly be normative; how can we get from "is" to "ought"? Modern logicians tend to deny the possibility and to hold that ethical sentences are ultimately, not propositions but commands or expressions of feeling.

And feeling, as we have seen, is opposed to reason. Feeling, in other words, has no place in the chilled universe of rationality. But is this really so? Goodman suggests that their analytical separation, so necessary for thinking *about* feeling and reason, is in fact abandoned (or is never really allowed) when we think as human beings:

> Whether or not we can logically ground ethical sentences depends on how complexly and humanly we take our primitive propositions how much of the speaker and his behavior we want to include in our meaning. Further, it is certainly false that feelings and emotions have no cognitive value; they are structures of the relation of the organism and environment, and they give *motivating information* (how else would the animal survive?). And even more, by the working up of feelings and emotions into articulate literary speech—which is a storehouse of perceptions and memories, nicely discriminating and structured from beginning to end, and, not least,

> embodying the social wisdom of the vernacular—we are given ethical premises grounded in the nature of things. Indeed, if we consider the human sciences, we may say that the concrete "complex words" of stories, plays, and eloquence are more adequate observations and hypotheses of reality than any formulae and samplings of psychologists and sociologists; but besides, they are exemplary and moving. In brief, students of poetry, history, philosophy, and natural philosophy, do not in *fact* find the gap so unbridgeable between "what is the case?" and "what ought we to do?"

What is Goodman saying here? He is saying that in order to understand the human situation, the scientist must become artist, in order to contemplate the whole man. He is saying that we can grasp the link between thought and feeling only by active illustration, not by abstraction—by taking part in the drama of life and action, rejecting the static pose of "objectivity." A man is his balance between feeling and thought. Humans create their humanness.

Feeling declares a longed-for unity, now divided by multiple acts of creation. Thought comprehends the resulting increments of difference. The mind in nature—for surely underlying nature is some kind of mind—regulates the relationships of these differences, through which feeling (instinct?) must now flow, with a cunning that amazes and delights. But we, as distinguished from the entities of objective nature, are self-regulating minds, and thinking is the discipline of both action and choice.

It is time to come down to earth. In a chapter called "The Nature Consumers" in *The Long-Legged House* (Harcourt, Brace, 1969), Wendell Berry considers the behavior of holiday boatmen on the Kentucky River. Behind what they do are feelings that we all have and understand, but only a very low grade of thinking seems present. The vacationers delight in the speed of their well-made boats, and thinking might introduce them to some of Berry's musings:

> The use of these fast and powerful boats is not only destructive of the river and of the pleasure of other people; there is a sense, it seems to me, in which it is destructive of the pleasure of the boatmen themselves. . . .
>
> But then another question is suggested: If the handling and speed of the boat are the pleasures sought, then why should these people not be content to go round and round or up and down on a ten-mile course near their dock? Why should boatmen from Cincinnati and Louisville, who have the wide Ohio to maneuver on, come to a comparatively remote stream like the Kentucky that is narrower, crookeder and more difficult?
>
> The only answer I can think of involves another pathetic paradox. They come in search of peace and quiet, solitude, some restorative contact with the natural world. Which is a little like going in search of a forest with a logging crew.
>
> Once they have got it, they have lost it. They come to seek the stillness of a natural place, and their way of seeking assures the failure of their search. They seek relief from restlessness and anxiety in these expensive, fast, superhorse-powered boats, which are embodiments of restlessness and anxiety. They go toward their desire with such violence of haste that they can never arrive. They go to the country to rest, only to reproduce there the noise, haste, confusion—and surely, the frustration—of city traffic. . . .
>
> The boatman, then, has become what more and more seems the ideal man of our society: a superconsumer—which is to say, a waster, a ruiner, a benefit to "the economy," a burden to the world.
>
> The mentality that could support delusions so damaging to itself is strange to the world, alien to creation. It is like a dog that, chasing its own tail, catches it and bites it off. . . .
>
> What has troubled me most and longest is that these people, having come within reach of the decent harmless restorative pleasures that I know to be possible there, are oblivious to them, as remote from them as if they were looking at panoramic shots of the valley on a movie screen.

The engine noises, the blaring radios, the careful isolation from the gentle sound of the river and creatures of the night, become a "protection" against the awesome reality of the natural world—an insurance policy, Berry supposes, against the hazards of thinking:

> It is maybe most of all that silence that they are so intent to guard themselves against. And there is

> indeed a potential of terror in it. It raises, still, all the old answerless questions of origins and ends. It asks a man what is the use and the worth of his life. It asks him who he thinks he is, and what he thinks he's doing, and where he thinks he's going. In it the world and its places are apt to become present to him, the lives of water and trees and stars surround his life and press their obscure demands. The experience of that silence must be basic to any religious feeling. Once it is attended to, admitted into the head, one must bear a greater burden of consciousness and knowledge—one must change one's life. . . .
>
> In the face of that silence—enmeshed as he most likely is in the demands of a life in which the prevalent motive is to take all you can get, and the ultimate check is everybody else's determination to do the same—no wonder he turns on the radio. No wonder he opposes the river by strewing on it his garbage and his noise. No wonder he goes as fast as he can.

The boatman started out with the energy of feeling—some innocent longing, you could say—but he ended by creating barriers to its meaning. But by thinking it is possible to set things straight. While we are not compelled to think, we are obliged to suffer the consequences of not thinking. Then, sometimes, we think.

REVIEW
REFLECTIONS ON FORM

MANAS, which came into being a little over thirty years ago, had various parents, physical and metaphysical. It was the physical offspring of a printshop begun in 1947 with the production of the magazine as a principal objective. Its metaphysical parents, by now fairly well known to readers, were Socrates (Plato) and Thomas Paine. These two were not only hot gospelers in the service of the polis; they were also superb artists who had learned how to be persuasive without any cost to truth. One goes to school to such writers, hoping to absorb a little of their art, but always with the consciousness that they worked at the heights of human achievement.

We hardly need go on about this. Thoreau and Emerson have said practically everything that needs to be said. Theirs, too, was an art informed by the love of truth, a skill shaped and disciplined by perceptive ardor rather than attention to "technique." One reads such writers with a certain awe. The Muse is present in their work. "Fine arts" is a term that ought to be preserved for such practitioners.

A piece of printing which recently came to us in the mail helps to fill out the picture. Where the fine arts flourish, there will also be splendid examples of the yeoman arts—the supporting skills of craftsmanship. In our time a book is not a book until it is printed. For the fine printer, the muse instructs in the appropriate embodiment of a work in pursuit of truth. Printing is the craftsman's extension of the writer's power of persuasion.

The most important yeomen of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were printers. There is a sense in which printing should no more be thought of as an industry than medicine as a business. The real printer is a man who sets type, composes it into pages, and then makes impressions on paper worthy of receiving words worth saying. If he prints because of his care and respect for words that are worth saying, he is a real printer, whatever the "technology" that the inventions and economics of the time provide and require.

It is difficult to be a fine printer, these days—difficult to keep alive the great Renaissance tradition—but there are some who manage it. One of these, Jack Stauffacher, founder of the Greenwood Press (300 Broadway, San Francisco, Calif. 94133), recently issued a lovely monograph, *A Search for the Typographic Form of Plato's Phaedras,* in which the considerations involved in embodying a Platonic dialogue in a book are examined and resolved into choices. Your reviewer inspected it with feelings bordering on delight. The reader becomes witness to the birth of art out of craft, possibly its most fruitful origin. Divorced from this practical matrix, art tends to succumb to narcissistic indulgences and the barren preoccupations which result.

Seeing how work free from such tendencies is done is far better than earnest criticism. Mr. Stauffacher tells us how he works. He shows eight trial pages of Plato's *Phaedrus*—the complete evolution of a final typographic design. He shows the old manuscript versions with which he started for initial reference and guidance. With the help of designer friends whom he consults by mail, he searches for an ideal typographic form for the dialogue. He is after an exquisite balance of conventions of several sorts—printing, after all, is a serviceable convention, and so are the forms of speech. All have beauty and should be beautiful in collaborative unity, never independently vain. Of one of the later versions, a friend wrote:

> I am pleased to see the very pure and severe pages. Plato would probably have liked it. Here is the simple argument why:
>
> In your Phaedrus edition you are seeking beauty. But you have removed all ornament and arbitrary formal composition. Only the text itself remains. Therefore beauty must lie within the text, or nowhere, because there is nothing but the text.
>
> Similarly, it can be demonstrated that the beauty must be identical (without the text there would be

nothing to be beautiful), and that beauty must therefore be truth (because a true rendering of the text is the only rendering which can be beautiful).

I'm afraid the argument gets a little sophistic as it is expanded, so I'll abandon it here.

We add Jack Stauffacher's comments on the next-to-last design, in which the words of Socrates are all on the left-hand page, with those of Phaedrus on the right, appropriately spaced:

Enclosed is a rough proof of the first two pages. By making the separation I have caused myself more problems in the spatial arrangements for each speaker. But by breaking them apart, I have achieved a richer page (you can almost hear their voices). What is your first reaction, Chuck? Each page will have a different cluster of lines—some jerky and uneven, like speech, and at other moments dense and commanding. It will make the book twice the size of the original, but I'm sure it will allow the pages to have a totally fresh and classical spirit. I won't defend it at this time, but merely want to have your feelings and thoughts.

His correspondent wonders about obliging the reader to jump back and forth from one page to another:

You see, if you have to teach the reader new principles in order for this book to be understood easily, then it does itself become a dialogue, but carried on at a great remove—as if you have turned the soil, planted the seeds, watered them and gone away, and the reader must now take over managing the garden, watering and weeding, choosing the plants, waiting for them to bloom and bear fruit. . . .

Just like when meter and rhyme become so strong in a poem that the meaning is completely obscured. The day passes; I must turn to other things.

To which Stauffacher replies:

. . . I react with detachment. *Phraedrus* is no longer in my hands. The content is slowly shaping everything, and the many experiments allow us to make fewer searchings. Yet I feel the need to move ahead with the project and act out the ritual of type/printing/inks, etc. This urgency is felt now. . . .

Other friends, mainly scholars, participate at another level, and there are tidbits of various sorts on almost every page—such as, for example, a brief biography of Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), the first to put Plato into English. He was a poor bank clerk who gave up sleep to read Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, and the Neoplatonists. He had a sort of Plato club in a coffee house and a retired tradesman who heard him speak gave him a hundred pounds a year to free him for his lifework—making translations of Greek texts. Of Taylor, someone has said: "Other translators may have known more Greek; Taylor knew more Plato."

A present-day poet and essayist, Gus Blaisdell, who lives in Albuquerque, reviews the content of the book, going on to speak of the book-maker:

The general argument of the *Phaedrus* is directed against the claim that rhetoric is an art by means of which men may discover truth. Socrates argues that truth must antecedently have been attained if either sophist, rhetorician or philosopher are to have a subject. . . .

Much of the *Phaedrus* rests on the assumption that a clear, epistemological distinction can be made between an art and a craft and that crafty rhetoric, if it is anything, is a mere knack. In an art, the elements and the artist's knowledge may so combine that truth is discovered, new elements come into being, insights are achieved, and the whole activity of the art is extended to new genres or instances. When this happens the artist himself comes to some knowledge of general principles; he approaches philosophy in understanding his medium more fully. In most crafts the innovation takes the form of slightly modifying a pre-existent pattern. For Socratic purposes the analogy for philosophy would be that the pre-existent pattern is truth, the modification rhetoric. But the *Phaedrus* establishes the independence of truth and style: Socrates' strong claim is that rhetoric is mere makeup without the foundation of a face.

In the dialogue, a personified Rhetoric defends itself:

I do not compel anyone to learn to speak without knowing the truth, but if my advice is of any value, he learns that first and then acquires me. So what I claim is this, that without my help knowledge of truth does not give the art of persuasion.

Gus Blaisdell says:

> Rhetoric's answer suggests that plain truth is unconvincing, that it leaves the mind unmoved, and that if the mind is to be moved truth must often be presented in colors other than drab, propositional and plain. Socrates has shown the independence of truth and style, not that style has no place in the transmission of truth.

That seems enough of a conclusion for now.

Appropriately, Blaisdell ends with an appreciation of Stauffacher's craft:

> The real achievement of Jack's most successful pages is a beauty noticed only on reflection: as if present first to the mind, the eye is reminded to look once again, and it suddenly sees anew, or for the very first time. This would have been a beauty close to Socrates' heart and to his vision of truth's non-luminous, almost beggarly plainness. The fact that one must reflect in order to capture the beauties of pages designed to be effortlessly readable is itself a Platonic notion, since it is through memory that the philosopher is enabled to maintain himself "always perfectly initiated into perfect mysteries"; and it is through such earthly beauty that he is recalled to his initial glimpses of true being.

Jack Stauffacher has done a thousand copies of this monograph. The *Phaedrus* edition it describes is limited to 150 copies, handset, on fine paper, and bound with slip case, $170 each.

COMMENTARY
MUSINGS

THE musings of Wendell Berry about the self-defeating behavior of the vacationers who drive power boats on the Kentucky River (p. 7) have application to the question raised at the end of this week's "Children." How are the "values" Berry speaks of to be gotten across to such people? Not as condemnation, but as provocation?

In some related musings, Martin Buber (p. 8) suggests that it is no use to call out to a coarsened mankind, "Look, the eternal values!" He concludes that only the pain which leads to self-questioning has the seed of a remedy. "To keep the pain awake, to waken the desire—that is the first task of every one who regrets the obscuring of eternity."

But what sort of pain has this effect? It seems obvious that an endless repetition of "horror stories" is not the way. Both the radical press and the pacifists have been doing this for generations, with not much noticeable result. Some years ago a wise psychiatrist, in a paper on "The Unacceptability of Disquieting Facts," pointed out that terrible realities people can't handle tend to be ignored. Horror stories soon produce a protective indifference toward shocking and ugly facts that we don't feel able to do anything about.

And if Shakespeare couldn't get through to his audience of animal-baiters, what hope is there for our inexpert attempts? But perhaps Shakespeare got through more than we realize. Who can measure his civilizing influence, which still goes on?

How does moral pain come to us? In two ways, perhaps. Some circumstantial happening may press it home, or we may generate it ourselves by a use of the imagination. For example, the lynchers in the film, *The Oxbow Incident*, were driven by discovery that they had hanged three innocent men to think about how and why they had let themselves do this terrible thing. Their moral pain was caused by a particular kind of experience.

But the man who wrote the story invented that experience by a use of his imagination—perhaps touched off by some historical event. The film had enormous impact. It had a great deal to say to people who submit to the vigilante impulse, to the self-righteous—indeed, to terrorists, if they are able to hear.

In this way the artist speaks to the world. Moralists might learn from him.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
QUESTIONS, NO ANSWERS

THE people who ask questions and raise problems often do more good than the people who propose solutions. Granted that the main business of human life is to find solutions, our really oppressive difficulties, judging from what we spend most of our time arguing about, come from the determined application of solutions that work either poorly or not at all. We call these inadequate solutions "ideologies," and the most decimating wars of history were fought in our century by the partisans of conflicting ideologies.

When you fight, you stop thinking. A thinking man, on the eve of a battle, is likely to ask, "Will this do any good?" And if, to thinking, he adds some study of history he will probably become a rather unenthusiastic soldier, he might even become a pacifist. But if war is an evil, and if thinking slows war down or on occasion puts a stop to it, then the questions thinking leads to are important to ask.

For example, in the *Nation* for May 20 Frank Donner, a Civil Liberties Union researcher, thinks about terrorism and assassination in socio-political terms. His article, "The Terrorist as Scapegoat," considers how the popular fear of terroristic acts may seem to justify giving more power and authority to secret police. If the purpose of terrorism is to inspire fear, he says, the terrorists have succeeded. In evidence he quotes a December, 1977, Harris survey:

> Ninety per cent of Americans view terrorism as a serious problem; 76 per cent see the reason for the growth of terrorism as "countries of the world have been too soft in dealing with terrorists." By 55 to 29 per cent, Americans would support a "special world police force which would operate in any country to investigate, arrest and put to death terrorists"; by 55 to 31 per cent, Americans favor the death penalty for terrorists.

After several pages on the way authority is able to exploit popular fear to consolidate power and eliminate supervision or control, this writer concludes:

> Given a society programmed for fear, traumatized by three assassinations and reluctant to take the risks necessarily entailed in a commitment to constitutional democracy, and given the political stake of conservatism in the social myth of subversion, the outcome of this debate is uncertain. What alone is certain is that the institutionalization of domestic security as a police responsibility in a country faced with long-suppressed tensions and poised on the cusp of upheaval will ease the path to reaction. The history of the modern state justifies the fear that the present climate may well nurture planned provocation of violence and bombing in the United States to justify repression and to increase dependence on a secret police.

The suggestion is an ugly one, yet not without ground, as Mr. Donner's article shows. But we are obliged to note that the question of why men *become* terrorists is not examined, except for the general characterization of political terrorism as "politically motivated exemplary violence, indifference to human life, symbolic targets, the intended creation of overwhelming fear." The possibilities for manipulation of terrorism have thoughtful attention, but not the terrible reality of terrorism itself. Is this question too difficult, too obscure, too "unanswerable"?

A letter from an English schoolmaster in the *Manchester Guardian* for May 21 gives attention to an aspect of terrorism that is seldom mentioned, perhaps because thinking about it leads to no particular conclusion:

> All civilised men will rightly and naturally be appalled at the act of lawlessness which has been committed by terrorists upon Aldo Moro. Nevertheless we should reflect upon one point.
>
> The criminals who murdered Moro also murdered five men of less distinction, whose job was to protect him. The life of each one of these was not one whit less valuable than that of Moro; indeed their slaughter is the more vicious because whereas he at least was "executed" to some purpose, however repugnant, these men's lives were casually

extinguished in such a way as betrays in their killers the basest depths of inhumanity.

But it also betrays their failure to grasp that the true strength of a free democratic society lies in the fact that no political personage, however exalted his position, is indispensable. The assassination of a president, even of an entire cabinet, in a state which at regular intervals can remove its leaders by the ballot box will never bring about the political collapse of that state unless the people falsely imagine that it will, and so are panicked into the repression which the terrorist desires.

So long, therefore, as Italians and all free men remember that in a democratic society the assassination of a political leader is of no greater account than the death of a five-year-old child, the terrorist will remain a despicable but impotent outlaw.

This writer is saying that the terrorist exploits human weakness and concern for highly placed officials, when the real issue is that argued by Ivan in the chapter, "Pro and Contra," in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Ivan ends with the question that must be directed to the terrorist:

Tell me yourself, I challenge you—answer. Imagine you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last. Imagine that you are doing this but that it is essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that child beating its breast with its fist, for instance—in order to found that edifice on its unavenged tears. Would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me. Tell me the truth?

We know the terrorist's answer. What we don't know is what has persuaded him to give it. It is not pleasant to wonder about this. To attempt to "explain" the attitude of a terrorist may make it seem that you are making excuses for him, if not condoning his act. For help here we might add Camus to Dostoevsky. Camus' play, *The Just Assassins,* deals with radical terrorists and assassins—how they talk over among themselves what they plan to do, and why. It is a play written by Camus to show, as he explains, that there are some things human beings simply must not do—that there are *limits.* Could terrorists ever appear in a society where this idea has been kept alive? What is the soil in which terrorism will sprout as a resource of desperate men? Is there something more important to do than catching and punishing terrorists?

We have been drawing on literature to throw light on the issues behind terrorism, but here, again, a question must be asked. Its basis is well put by June Goodfield in a Phi Beta Kappa lecture (*Science,* Nov. 11, 1977):

Did the Shakespearean plays, with their almost God-like insight into the way that people behave, make people understand more, make people act better, make people feel more humane? It was with considerable surprise that I learned from David Daiches that the same people who went to the Globe Theatre or to any Elizabethan or Jacobean play, and saw these marvelous dramas with their rich poetry and their human understanding, would at the same place in the same afternoon watch a monkey tied to the back of a horse chased by dogs who slowly bit it to death. This was their favorite occupation between the acts. For there is a large gap between appreciating the wonders of artistic imagination and going out and doing likewise, as there is between knowing ethical norms and going out and doing likewise, which no amount of discussion of "is" and "ought" will alter. This is my main quarrel with F. R. Leavis—the myth of the redemptive power of great works of art; the belief that by teaching a small group of elite to appreciate Lawrence and George Eliot you will change civilization. You won't at all—not by this alone.

Who besides Plato (who asked: "Can virtue be taught?") has discussed this condition to any serious effect? Doubtless others, but we think of Martin Buber, who wrote in *Between Man and Man* ("The Education of Character"):

It is an idle undertaking to call out, to a mankind that has grown blind to eternity: "Look, the eternal values!" Today host upon host of men have everywhere sunk into the slavery of collectives, and each collective is the supreme authority for its own slaves; there is no longer, superior to the collectives, any universal sovereignty in idea, faith, or spirit. . . . Men who have so lost themselves to the collective Moloch cannot be rescued from it by any reference, however eloquent, to the absolute whose kingdom the Moloch has usurped. One has to begin by pointing to

> that sphere where man himself, in the hours of utter solitude, occasionally becomes aware of the disease through sudden pain: by pointing to the relation of the individual to his own self. In order to enter into a personal relation with the absolute, it is first necessary to be a person again, to rescue one's real personal self from the fiery jaws of collectivism which devours all selfhood. The desire to do this is latent in the pain the individual suffers through his distorted relation to his own self. Again and again he dulls the pain with a subtle poison and thus suppresses the desire as well. To keep the pain awake, to waken the desire—that is the first task of everyone who regrets the obscuring of eternity. It is also the first task of the genuine educator in our time.

Here are questions enough for a generation or two.

FRONTIERS

Why We Buy Armaments

AMONG the seven "searching" articles on the problems and issues of disarmament in the *Nation* for May 27, one by Sidney Lens begins:

> Since 1945, American, Soviet and other diplomats have met at least 6,000 times to discuss "disarmament" and its illegitimate offspring, "arms control," but in thirty-two years not a single weapon has been eliminated by mutual agreement. On the contrary, the arms race—conventional and nuclear, but especially nuclear—has escalated relentlessly, with the two superpowers now in possession of firepower 2 million times greater than all the bombs, grenades and bullets used in World War II. And by now we have entered what is called the "second nuclear age"—the age of plutonium and proliferation—in which forty nations will have the capability of producing nuclear bombs by 1985 and 100 by the year 2000. In the light of these developments many experts predict that nuclear war is both imminent and inevitable.

After a survey of U.S. policies and the justifications offered, Mr. Lens concludes:

> It is folly to believe that the arms race can be terminated by the efforts of "good men." . . . Lacking a strong public demand for disarmament, the area within which "good men" must work is narrow. At best, they can slow the *rate of escalation.* They can honestly argue that if they stray too far toward a consistent anti-militarist position they will either be removed from their posts or defeated in elections.

Another *Nation* contributor, Earl Ravenal, asks:

> Why have disarmament efforts failed? Why have they become objects of polite disdain in foreign policy-making circles, in the so-called "real world"? For this the peace people themselves are somewhat at fault. They persistently misconceived the problem of arms accumulation and war they have fallen into the comfortable habit of preaching to the converted. They still think that a reaffirmation of commitment, a redoubling of effort—perhaps in connection with an event such as the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD)—will unlock the problem.

Noting that the failure of disarmament has not been for lack of plans and proposals—a bibliography lists more than 9,000 of these, to date—this writer gives one explanation:

> Disarmament proposals have relied abjectly on the assumption of a universal international organization—virtually a world government—that would subordinate national governments and dispose of central military forces. Architects of disarmament proposals have spent much of their time detailing frameworks for global collective decision-making, provisions for the transfer of military power by states to international authority, and blueprints for world police forces.
>
> The fault has been to underestimate the stubborn longevity of the nation-state. True, most of them are porous as sieves, and incompetent, but they will be the source of foreign policy decision-making for the foreseeable future.

Why do people go on supporting and relying on the nation-state? Habit and lack of an imaginable alternative for keeping them out of trouble make a partial explanation, but Sidney Lens finds the key reason in a remark by Senator Arthur Vandenberg. Back in the early days of the cold war, he declared that to get people to spend more for military readiness it was necessary "to scare hell out of the country." Scaring the people, Mr. Lens thinks, is now a "science" practiced by experts:

> What we have, then, is an impersonal system in which scientists and engineers develop new horror instruments without letup, a host of constituencies, with a material or ideological stake in militarism, to promote those weapons and a vulgar type of anti-communism to seduce the public into believing it is necessary.

The articles in this issue of the *Nation* are a full-dress setting of the problem. However, instead of getting in on the futile argument about disarmament, it seems much more to the point to try to understand why the American people are so vulnerable to intimidation and seduction by experts. This calls for another level of inquiry. For example, Wendell Berry says in *The Unsettling of America:*

> People whose governing habit is the relinquishment of power, competence, and responsibility, and whose characteristic suffering is

> the anxiety of futility, make excellent spenders. They are the ideal consumers. By inducing in them little panics of boredom, powerlessness, sexual failure, mortality, paranoia, they can be made to buy (or vote for) virtually anything. . . .

These are the people who buy the "horror instruments" of the next war.

War, Randolph Bourne declared, is the health of the state. And getting ready for war—as anyone can see—requires the loss of the health of the people: "the relinquishment of power, competence, and responsibility." So, quite evidently, there will be war and preparation for war for as long as the nation-state remains in control of decisions.

By what seems more than coincidence, the *Nation* editors also published in the May 27 issue a review of Leopold Kohr's *The Overdeveloped Nations* by Robert Engler (author of *The Brotherhood of Oil*). Prof. Kohr wrote this book more than twenty years ago. It shows that no matter what anyone says or does, big nations are sure to go on trying to get bigger and more powerful. Their proclaimed theory is that the bigger you are, the easier it will be to do what needs to be done. If we have enough power, they say, we can abolish want with a flood of "prosperity."

Mr. Engler, who knows how corporate and political leaders think, summarizes Prof. Kohr's analysis, giving current illustrations of the dominance of their views:

> One executive of a late-blooming state university exulted: "We are on the way to being the General Electric of higher education." Meanwhile, cities spread their boundaries, family farms went under. Corporations became conglomerates and the welfare and warfare functions of public government multiplied. For less developed and hungry regions abroad a technological fix was prescribed as the road to well-being. A green revolution powered by petrochemicals and delivered by international business would insure magical modernization. The labels changed from "cold war" to "detente" but an arms competition between the two giants continued to envelop the world.

Prof. Kohr doesn't write much about the futility of arms conferences. Instead he exposes the morphology of self-defeat. The goals of bigness and power displace all normal human ends and deplete and waste all natural resources through the ever-increasing requirements of "growth." It becomes evident that such contemporary critics as Ivan Illich and the late E. F. Schumacher may be indebted to the reasoning and language of Leopold Kohr. His book (*The Overdeveloped Nations*, Schocken Books) now makes its appearance in the United States.