

THE DRAMA OF RESTORATION

IT hardly needs pointing out that when human affairs—the pursuit of desirable ends—are going well, philosophy, or inquiry into the meaning of things, gets little attention. Philosophy, in other words, is usually afterthought. For most of us, it seeks an answer to the question: Why have things gone wrong? Fulfillment, satisfaction, pleasure, then, are likely to be distractions from the pursuit of truth. Is this an implied criticism of the ordinary life-processes of the human species? We can hardly say. We don't know enough about human nature to make such judgments. It would be a very rare species of the human genus that began any sort of enterprise with philosophical inquiry. There would of course be planning of a practical character, but who would feel the need to establish in advance the meaning of the project—we already know that! There's gold in the hills. And so forth.

If one tried to justify—rationalize—this situation, he might argue that it makes considerable sense. If philosophy is a worthy—perhaps the highest—human goal, then ordinary ambition and striving might be its prerequisites, since without these qualities we would probably not get into much trouble, and so never be driven to think "seriously." That, at any rate, seems a useful, non-moralistic way of thinking about our behavior. There are times when it may be especially helpful to think about ourselves without self-condemnation, since there are so many other times when it seems unavoidable.

In the present, then, for obvious reasons (various troubles), a great deal of philosophizing is going on. How does philosophizing begin? It begins with the asking of neglected questions. We thought we knew what we were doing, and had the best of reasons for doing it, but did we? We began with certain basic assumptions about the world—mostly on how it works rather than what

it is—and with related assumptions about ourselves. But now we are in so much difficulty that we are driven to question those assumptions. It seems fair to say that if you have knowledge, things come out well for you. When things no longer come out well, shouldn't we question what we supposed was "reliable knowledge"?

A good example of what we have regarded as knowledge is the science of physics. It is well known that physics has been the model followed by the rest of the sciences.

If you do it the way the physicists do, you'll be safe from criticism and you may find something out. This has been the rule for a hundred years or so; but today, often with apprehension, although also now and then with eagerness, thoughtful individuals, including physicists, are wondering about changing the rules. Both daring and imagination are involved.

Two recent books by physicists will illustrate the strength and promise of the present philosophizing tendency. One author is David Bohm, professor of theoretical physics at Birkbeck College, in London. His book, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, \$8.50), is at once difficult and easy to understand. The philosophical generalizations are simple, clear, and fundamental, while the support of them in scientific terms (relating to recent developments in physics, such as quantum theory) is likely to be difficult, although often *engaging*. In his first chapter, "Fragmentation and Wholeness," Prof. Bohm attaches major importance to this comparison, since, as he says, "fragmentation is now very widespread, not only throughout society, but also in each individual; and this is leading to a kind of general confusion of the mind, which creates an endless series of problems and interferes with our

clarity of perception so seriously as to prevent us from being able to solve most of them." He continues:

Thus art, science, technology, and human work in general are divided up into specialties, each considered to be separate in essence from the others. Becoming dissatisfied with this state of affairs, men have set up further interdisciplinary subjects, which were intended to unite these specialties, but these new subjects have ultimately served mainly to add further separate fragments. Then, society as a whole has developed in such a way that it is broken up into separate nations and different religious, political, economic, racial groups, etc. Man's natural environment has correspondingly been seen as an aggregate of separately existent parts, to be exploited by different groups of people. Similarly, each individual human being has been fragmented into a large number of separate and conflicting compartments, according to his different desires, aims, ambitions, loyalties, psychological characteristics, etc., to such an extent that it is generally accepted that some degree of neurosis is inevitable, while many individuals going beyond the "normal" limits of fragmentation are classified as paranoid, schizoid, psychotic, etc. The notion that all these fragments are separately existent is evidently an illusion, and this illusion cannot do other than lead to endless conflict and confusion. Indeed, the attempt to live according to the notion that the fragments are really separate is, in essence, what has led to the growing series of extremely urgent crises that is confronting us today. Thus, as is now well known, this way of life has brought about pollution, destruction of the balance of nature, over-population, worldwide economic and political disorder, and the creation of an over-all environment that is neither physically nor mentally healthy for most of the people who have to live in it. Individually there has developed a widespread feeling of helplessness and despair, in the face of what seems to be an overwhelming mass of disparate social forces, going beyond the control and even the comprehension of the human beings who are caught up in it.

It is necessary, of course, to divide things up in order to use them for particular purposes, but that is only one way of thinking about them. It is, David Bohm suggests, the habit of thinking about things *only* in this way that has been our great mistake. When, as he says, this convenient and necessary "mode of thought is applied more

broadly to man's notion of himself and the whole world in which he lives (i.e. to his self-world view), then man ceases to regard the resulting divisions as merely useful or convenient and begins to see and experience himself and his world as actually constituted of separately existent fragments."

Being guided by a fragmentary self-world view, man then acts in such a way as to try to break himself and the world up, so that all seems to correspond to his way of thinking. Man thus obtains an apparent proof of the correctness of his fragmentary self-world view though, of course, he overlooks the fact that it is he himself, acting according to his mode of thought, who has brought about the fragmentation that now seems to have an autonomous existence, independent of his will and of his desire.

This book is an essay on the implications of modern physics, the understanding of which, the author believes, will help us to overcome both the belief in and the fact of fragmentation. This is the twentieth-century version of an ancient quest:

Men have been aware from time immemorial of this state of apparently autonomously existent fragmentation and have often projected myths of a yet earlier "golden age," before the split between man and nature and between man and man had yet taken place. Indeed, man has always been seeking wholeness—mental, physical, social, individual.

Prof. Bohm finds in the content of modern physics sound reason for feeling that if we pay attention to its version of the structure and nature of things, grasping why they appear as they do, then the "split between man and nature" will be healed. He has a fascinating section on holograms which adds strength to his persuasion. Reading his book may prove an essential step in participating in the science and philosophy of the future—an outlook which closes the gap between matter and mind.

We turn now to the other book we spoke of—*Physics as Metaphor* (University of Minnesota Press, 1982, \$15.95), by Roger S. Jones. Having, in addition to teaching physics, the assignment of designing a math-science curriculum for the elementary grades, the author

was driven to think about how to interest children in science, and this led to recurring philosophical questions.

As a practicing physicist, I had always been vaguely embarrassed by a kind of illusory quality in science and had often felt somehow a part of a swindle on the human race. It was not a conspiracy but something like the hoax in *The Emperor's New Clothes*. I had come to suspect, and now felt compelled to acknowledge, that science and the physical world were products of human imagining—that we were not the cool observers of that world, but its passionate creators. We were all poets and the world was our metaphor. . . .

Thinking about these matters in the fall of 1967, it became clear that the agonizing rift between the arts and the sciences, or between mind and matter, that had plagued me since childhood was false and contrived. My troublesome inability to separate the "two worlds," to concentrate on pure science and to exclude questions of meaning and value from the study of physics, suddenly seemed more of a blessing than a curse—a kind of life preserver, thrown to me as I thrashed wildly about in a sea of illusion. . . .

I believe that the human search for meaning and value is of paramount importance, and that physics can shed light on that search, provided first that it stops masquerading as an objective body of knowledge and reveals its subjective nature. By probing the human and imaginative aspects of physics in this book, and breaking down its false subject-object barriers, we shall find new life in science. We shall see that the celebrated ability to quantify the world is no guarantee of objectivity and that measurement itself is a value judgment created by the human mind. The scientized concepts of space, time, matter and number will be explored as metaphors, expressing the human need and ability to create meaning and value. These metaphors have an intuitive, mythic, life-giving character which completes and enhances their quantitative meaning and which is motivated by basic human fears and yearnings. It is the fear of death and chaos that gives the metaphors of science their modern lifeless and alien character. But we can restore life to our metaphors and meaning to our lives by renouncing scientism and accepting responsibility for our own creative part in the cosmos. Then, perhaps, we shall be able to frame the metaphors of the future through a conscious, moral act of the imagination.

Roger Jones proposes the recovery of ourselves as causal and moral agents in the world, no longer an insignificant bundle of reflexes and "secondary qualities," plus a few odd chemicals which somehow combined to make us "alive." How did we become persuaded of this idea of what we are? By accepting the wonders of Galilean and Newtonian science—it *works!*—and being overwhelmingly impressed by the virtually magical exploits of the new physics wrought by Einstein and his colleagues—which also, happily, led to the questioning now going on.

Prof. Jones looks at physics in terms of its "four major constructs, space, time, matter, and number." These, he says, are the "cardinal metaphors," and if we are able to get outside or on top of them—recognize that we, humans, invented them as ways of thinking about the world, and that we are able to invent other ways—then science will regain its role of natural philosophy. Jones sets the task in the early part of his book—seeing how to release ourselves from the prison of our past inventions.

It is no easy task to open ourselves to alternative ideas of space and time. We are all unknowingly indoctrinated into the religion of physicality. This is especially true within the study of physics, for it is almost impossible to be exposed to so profound and beautiful a subject without acquiring its habits of thought and succumbing to the spell of its power and success. But the problem extends far beyond the study of physics. It is not simply a matter of the modern habitual acceptance of television, computers, atomic power, and rocket travel. We recognize these as triumphs of science and technology and accept their evils along with their benefits. This, too, is a kind of hypnosis. But what I am referring to is a much subtler matter. It is the unconscious assumptions we make about the world which have largely been determined and reinforced by the development of scientific thought in the last few hundred years. It is in the texture of our consciousness: how we experience and view the very chairs we sit on and all the other solid objects we see and use, how we conceive of space, of our movement through it, and of the motion of external bodies; how we picture the dimension of depth and utilize other perspective notions, how we experience the passage of

time; above all, how we feel ourselves to be isolated, physico-biological entities governed by the laws of matter, with our life and consciousness soon to be explained away by an edict from the biochemists and cell biologists.

Prof. Jones does not avoid confrontation. He seeks it, insists upon it. Those very chairs we sit on—will they float away with the dirigibilities of philosophy?

Are they not solid? Do they not support us? You bang on the table before you (at least, I often do to make this point) and demonstrate the irrefutable solidity and substantiality of matter. What can be said in the face of such concrete evidence? Well, these are not easy questions to deal with. It is no simple matter to dislodge experience and assumptions that are imbibed with our mothers' milk, and to conjure up alternatives to them.

Are we then to replace one set of abstractions with another? Well, yes, but at the same time to include *ourselves* in the picture, the primary reality being that we will have to change our functional abstractions again and again, and thus need an outlook, practical as well as philosophical, which will enable us to go through these changes or evolutions of assumption without dismay. This transformation of attitude is far more than taking on another set of "illusions."

In his conclusion, at the end of *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, David Bohm identifies what Roger Jones names metaphors as "proposals." There is no limit to them, although there are rigorous rules for making them. Bohm says:

The fundamental law, then, is that of the immense multidimensional ground; and the projections from this ground determine whatever time orders there may be. . . . Is this ground the absolute end of everything? In our proposed views concerning the general nature of "the totality of all that is" we regard even this ground as a mere stage, in the sense that there could in principle be an infinity of further development beyond it. At any particular moment in this development such set of views that may arise will constitute at most a *proposal*. It is not to be taken as an *assumption* about what the final truth is supposed to be, and still less as a *conclusion* concerning the

nature of such truth. Rather, this proposal becomes itself an *active factor* in the totality of existence which includes ourselves as well as the objects of our thoughts and experimental investigations. Any further proposals on this process will, like those already made, have to be *viable*. That is to say, one will require of them a general self-consistency as well as consistency in what flows from them in life as a whole. Through the force of an even deeper, more inward necessity in this totality, some new state of affairs may emerge in which both the world as we know it and our ideas about it may undergo an unending process of yet further change.

In short, finality in physics is over, never to return. Its truths will always be relative, yet appropriate to our needs—our changing needs—and will alter or grow with our awareness. We can never again be shut out of this universe because we are its collaborators and even in some deep sense its makers. One might say that these physicists, as educators, are now doing far more effectively—because its time has come—what Kant and Schopenhauer tried to do: to persuade us that what we perceive through the senses is not the real world. In an appendix to the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, an essay both appreciative and critical of Kant, Schopenhauer has this passage:

Now as Kant's separation of the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself . . . far surpassed in the profundity and thoughtfulness of its argument all that had ever existed, it was infinitely important in its results. For in it he propounded, quite originally and in an entirely new way, the same truth, found from a new aspect and on a new path, which Plato untiringly repeats, and generally expresses in his language as follows. This world that appears to the senses has no true being, but only a ceaseless becoming; it is, and it also is not; and its comprehension is not so much a knowledge as an illusion. This is what he expresses in a myth at the beginning of the seventh book of the *Republic*, the most important passage in all his works. . . . He says that men, firmly chained in a dark cave, see neither the genuine original light nor the actual things, but only the inadequate light of the fire in the cave, and the shadows of actual things passing by the fire behind their backs. Yet they imagine that the shadows are the reality, and that determining the succession of these shadows is true wisdom. The same truth, though presented quite differently, is also

a principal teaching of the *Vedas* and *Puranas*, namely the doctrine of Maya, by which is understood nothing but what Kant calls the phenomena as opposed to the thing in itself. For the work of Maya is stated to be precisely this visible world in which we are, a magic effect called into being, an unstable and inconstant illusion without substance, comparable to the optical illusion and the dream, a veil enveloping human consciousness, a something of which it is equally false and equally true to say that it is and that it is not. Now Kant not only expressed the same doctrine in an entirely new and original way, but made of it a proved and incontestable truth through the most calm and dispassionate presentation. Plato and the Indians, on the other hand, had based their contentions merely on a universal perception of the world; they produced them as the direct utterance of their consciousness, and presented them mythically rather than philosophically and distinctly.

Well, it may be that to present something "philosophically and distinctly" is to give it a mistaken air of "finality." Fortunately, our two modern physicists refuse to do this, except in a *relative* way, where a limited finality—this is the way things look just now—is appropriate. We should note, moreover, that both Plato and the *Vedas* (most of all the *Upanishads*), are still read and studied to great profit, while Kant and Schopenhauer have hardly any audience at all. Real teachers never teach "finalities," but the modes of learning and growth, which include the drama of overcoming illusions—an essential part of human life, which will no doubt go on and on.

REVIEW

BOTH GREAT IN THEIR WAY

HAVING long wished that someone would restore to print Leo Tolstoy's *Confession*—we have often quoted it, through the years, and been obliged to tell readers to find the book in the library—it is a pleasure to report that this extraordinary account of the great change in Tolstoy's outlook and life, which began in the 1870s, when he was at the height of his literary powers, has become available in a beautiful book produced by Joseph Simon. The new translation is by Peter Heinegg, and bound with it, as a very different personal "revelation," is Heinegg's translation of Heinrich Heine's *Confession*—the full title of the volume being *Heine: Confession—Tolstoy: A Confession* (\$30.00, from Joseph Simon, P.O. Box 4071, Malibu, Calif. 90265). Simon is a bibliophile publisher whose books are all classically designed and encased in slip covers.

The meat of the volume is Tolstoy's dramatic and moving story of his religio-philosophical awakening, which might be called a protracted "peak experience." Heine, by contrast, is frivolous, although immensely engaging. Tolstoy exposes his heart, Heine his wit, and yoking these two is a tour de force from which the reader may not easily recover, although both were great in their way. It is difficult to believe that Heine took anything seriously except his genius as a songster and impressionist critic. He will mock almost anything, himself included, if his humor will yield a finely turned phrase.

Why did Heine give up his youthful atheism? Because, he explains, he could not bear the vulgar manners of the atheists he knew. What if he should be mistaken for one of *them*? He rambles along with this theme, hinting at deeper feeling but saying nothing that would subvert the light-hearted mood of his discourse. He introduces the change in his views by explaining that he had been persuaded by reading Hegel that he was himself a "god," with no need of heavenly assistance. But

then, for a variety of reasons, none of them especially profound, among them the strain of maintaining his sublime role, and stricken by illness and lack of money, he abdicated.

I crept back to the lowly fold of God's creatures and paid homage once more to the omnipotence of the supreme being who superintends the destinies of this world and who, from here on in, will guide my earthly affairs. The latter fell into a confused and shaky voice when I was my own Providence, and I was glad to turn them over to a heavenly manager, so to speak. Omniscient as He is, He really takes much better care of them than I could. . . .

I am too modest to meddle with Divine Providence as I once did, I no longer attend to the general welfare. I am no imitator of God. With holy humility I have given notice to my former clients that I'm only a pitiful human. . . . I'm happy to be relieved of my usurped glory, and no philosopher will ever again talk me into believing I am God. I am only a poor human being who is, besides, no longer in the best of health, who is, in fact, extremely sick. In this condition I find it a genuine comfort to have someone in heaven to whom I can whimper my litany of pain. . . .

These admissions are likely to seem too stylish to impress either believers or freethinkers, but as the translator says in his introduction, "Heine spoke too often and too forcefully about his curious, self-mocking faith for us to write it off as a cynical joke."

A long pause is called for here, before turning to Leo Tolstoy. One cannot imagine a conversation between Heine and Tolstoy; neither one could find anything to say.

With Tolstoy one moves to another universe of discourse. This master of the writer's art felt that he carried the whole burden of Western civilization on his shoulders. His sense of responsibility was archetypal, his response to the ultimate questions, which began to haunt him in midlife, Promethean. No literate human should go through life without exposure to the confrontation that Tolstoy experienced and described with consummate skill. The translator says he exaggerates; very well, he exaggerates, but that is

only to say that he brings the services of his art to heighten the drama of his search for truth. Thoreau's apology for exaggeration may be evoked in Tolstoy's behalf:

He who cannot exaggerate is not qualified to utter truth. No truth, we think, was ever expressed but with this sort of emphasis, so that for the time there seemed to be no other. Moreover, you must speak loud to those who are hard of hearing, and so you acquire the habit of shouting to those who are not.

Tolstoy was born to affluence, received the university education of his time, and rose to fame in his youth because of his enormous talent as a writer. He had good health and increased it by arduous exercise. No promising and ambitious artist could have been better endowed, yet Tolstoy had also a personal Socratic gadfly which allowed no complacency but drove him relentlessly to inquiry into the meaning of his life. He had everything, yet for him it amounted to nothing. Orthodox religious belief fell away from him during his university years, and for a time he was comfortable with the egotisms of his class. He was, as an author, he said, the "teacher" of ordinary folk, entitled to the rewards of fame. "All of us were convinced back then that we had to talk and talk, and write and publish, as much and as quickly as possible, and that all this was needed for the good of humanity." They did their prestigious work,

. . . not noticing that we knew nothing, that we had no answer to life's simplest question: "What is good, what is evil?" All of us, deaf to one another, spoke out at once, sometimes indulging and praising one another to get the same indulgence and praise from them, and then sometimes losing our temper and shouting one another down, exactly as in a madhouse. . . . although we did such useless work, we were very important people, we needed an argument to justify our activity. And so we thought up the following: everything that exists is reasonable. What exists is always developing. Everything develops by means of culture. Culture in turn is measured by the dissemination of books and newspapers. But we are paid money and esteemed for writing books and newspaper articles, and therefore we are the best and most useful people. This argument would have been

fine, if we had all been in agreement. But every time anyone expressed an idea, someone else always expressed a diametrically opposite idea, and this should have given us pause. But we were oblivious to it. We were getting paid, and our partisans paid us; and so we, everyone of us, considered ourselves in the right.

It's now clear to me that there was no difference between us and a madhouse. But at the time I only vaguely suspected this, and then, like all lunatics, I thought everyone crazy except myself.

Meanwhile, the questions from within became more insistent. You have, his inner monitor said, all that land, substantial wealth, and will no doubt acquire more, but then what?

And I would be completely nonplussed, and not know what to think. Or, beginning to think about how I should educate my children, I would say to myself, "What for?" Or, reflecting on how to help the peasants become prosperous, I suddenly asked myself, "What do I care?" Or, thinking of the glory that my works would bring me, I told myself, "Very well, you will be more famous than Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Molière, than all the writers in the world—what of it?"

He inspected the conventional reassurances of his time, finding them inadequate or unworthy. The scientific answers, to which he gave continued and close attention, were fine for managing material things but they said nothing to human hungers, human wonderings. Finally he reached the point of saying to himself, "There is only one question worth pursuing, the meaning of my life, and no one has an answer to that." Then thoughts of suicide threatened him.

Tolstoy relates vivid allegories to illustrate the psychological and moral tortures he endured. The reader may wonder, "Did he really have that awful dream?", but it doesn't matter. The dream conveys the feeling he suffered, whether he had it or invented it. Tolstoy generates a respect for truth in his readers; this is the lasting effect of reading him, and how he produces it is of little consequence save as evidence of his art. He interviews the Buddha, Socrates, Solomon, and

Schopenhauer—the full spectrum of both rational and sacred answers—and still feels lost.

Tolstoy's *My Confession* is a dialogue between an uncompromising intelligence and the mystery of life. This is what makes it great, not the answers he found, which are inward and almost incommunicable. His confession is an allegory of self-discovery; no revelation, but better than a revelation.

Life is all. Reason is a fruit of life, and this reason rejects life itself. I felt that something wasn't right here.

Life is a meaningless evil, that could not be doubted, I told myself. Yet I lived, and still live, and so did, and does, all of humanity. How is that? Why does it live when it might not?

Were Schopenhauer and I the only ones clever enough to grasp the absurdity and evil of life?

The argument that life is vanity wasn't so tricky—the simplest folk have long known of it, and still do, but they lived, and are living now. Why do they go on living, and never think to doubt the reasonableness of life. . . . the thought crossed my mind that perhaps there was something I still didn't know. For this was exactly how ignorance behaves. Ignorance always says the same thing. Whatever it doesn't know it calls stupid. It turns out, in fact, that there is a whole body of humanity that has always lived, and does now, as if it understood the meaning of its life—for otherwise it couldn't live. But here I was saying that all this life was meaningless, and I couldn't live.

This brings Tolstoy to the last chapter of his confession. He tells what he decided. But the beginning is as important as the ending. The questions are more valuable than the conclusion. We leave it at that.

With, however—in justice—one addition. Heine's last years were spent in almost continuous agony from a spinal disease. With one eye paralyzed, lacking a sense of taste, he lay in his "mattress-grave" in Paris, always cheerful and carefully considerate of those who loved him. He concealed his pain from his mother, whom he wrote every month, by having a separate volume of his poems printed for her alone, from which all

allusions to his malady were expunged. Whatever the significance to be attached to his "Confession," he wrote toward the end of his life that he had not "retreated to the threshold of any sort of church," adding, "I have foresworn nothing—not even my old pagan gods, from whom it is true I have parted, but parted in love and friendship." And as Emma Lazarus says (in her introduction to a collection of Heine's poems and ballads): "During the long sleepless nights when he lay writhing with pain or exhausted by previous paroxysms, his mind, preternaturally clear and vigorous, conceived the glowing fantasies of the *Romancero*, or the Job-like lamentations of the Lazarus poems."

COMMENTARY THOREAU'S CHOICE

THE great thing about A. S. Neill's Summerhill was the variety of self-chosen options available to the children. By choosing for themselves, they experienced freedom and learned responsibility. For adults, finding options means using the imagination.

In the matter of the threat of nuclear war, the champions of preparation narrow the options to submissive agreement with them. They invoke freedom from the Communist yoke and repeat a variety of slogans brought forward, empty and threadbare, from the eighteenth century. We must, they say, resist evil.

Their opponents seem chiefly concerned with the logic of what E. P. Thompson has called "Exterminism." They are against being the victims of nuclear war, and develop the implications of preparations for such a war in as much detail as they can. Pretty horrible.

Casting about for variety in this argument, we came across something in Henry Miller's *Stand Still Like a Hummingbird* (New Directions), part of his introduction to some essays by Thoreau. He said:

With the creation of the atom bomb, the whole world suddenly realizes that man is faced with a dilemma whose gravity is incommensurable. In the essay called "Life without Principle," Thoreau anticipated that very possibility which shook the world when it received the news of the atom bomb. "Of what consequence," says Thoreau, "though our planet explode, if there is no character involved in the explosion? . . . I would not run around a corner to see the world blow up."

That is certainly another option in thinking about nuclear war. Fear does not even occur to him. This might be the most effective choice. Miller comments:

I feel certain Thoreau would have kept his word, had the planet suddenly exploded of its own accord. But I also feel certain that, had he been told of the atom bomb, of the good and bad it was capable of

producing, he would have had something memorable to say about its use. And he would have said it in defiance of the prevalent attitude. He would not have rejoiced that the secret of its manufacture was in the hands of the righteous ones [written in 1946]. He would have asked immediately: "Who is righteous enough to employ such a diabolical instrument destructively?" He would have had no more faith in the wisdom and sanctity of this present government of the United States than he had in our government in the days of slavery.

CHILDREN

... and Ourselves

THE LIVES OF THE YOUNG

EARLIER this year we read in the papers that a Moral Majority preacher in Amarillo, Texas, declared that the 2,400 workers there in the Pantex plant—which puts together in final assembly all the nuclear strategic weapons, bombs, and missile warheads of the U.S. atomic arsenal—are "doing God's work." There are, of course, people of another opinion in Amarillo, who are trying to make themselves heard, and becoming somewhat unpopular as a result.

The preacher's claim recalled an article in *Fellowship* for last March, in which the writer, a campaigner in opposition to registration, musing on how to get the antiwar message through to "draft-eligible young people," proposed a fresh circulation of a piety by Mark Twain.

He [Twain] was impressed that too often preachers in their pulpits prayed for victory in war but never described what it was they were asking God to bless and sanctify—the killing and maiming, the death and destruction.

So Twain wrote his own war prayer. In part it read: "O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle—be Thou near them! With them, in spirit we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe.

"O Lord our God help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells, help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead, help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sunflames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it—for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their

steps, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet!

We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts, Amen."

Perhaps some contemporary writer will update this prayer with heightened imagery for current use in the "nuclear age."

Two letters on the refusal to register (in *Peacemaker* for April 16) are of sufficient general interest to quote. Referring to the Military Selective Service Act, Russel F. Ford (of the Ecology House in Middletown, Conn.) wrote to the S.S. General Counsel to say that he had not, and would not, register, and that—

I have willfully violated as many parts of this law as possible. In newspapers, over the radio, and on television (including Washington, D.C. NBC evening news) I have encouraged others to break this law. I am no doubt guilty of violations of other laws I don't even know about. "Continuing conditions beyond my control" have prevented me from registering. These include my responsibilities as a human being and as an American, my anarchist's convictions, the nuclear weapons in this country's arsenals, my sympathies for the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador, the threatened use of American troops (including me, if I allow myself to be drafted) against those people, and the absurdity of obeying a law which puts people in jail for being too peace-loving.

The other letter is by Jerry Chernow, of Madison, Wisconsin. After affirming that "non-registration" is the "clearest and strongest response one can make," he reflects that—

Very few of us are able to become "instant resisters." I have seen too many folks, from the Vietnam era, who were pushed in this direction, beyond the point they could emotionally or psychologically deal with. Some of these folks wound up doing time; coming out either bitter or just kind of "lost." Others backed down from their resistance stand filling them with a sense of guilt and betrayal, or turning them completely against the anti-war movement. . . .

I, too, filed as a conscientious objector. . . . I came from a conservative Chicago family which never had any connection with the peace movement. It was only by accident that I came into possession of a *Handbook for Conscientious Objectors* and even became aware of what a C.O. is. If I had not filed as a C.O., I most likely would have become one of the sheep who were inducted and sent off to Vietnam. You see, I was not ready to deal with resistance at that time. It was only the experience of attempting to be recognized as a C.O. which started to radicalize me. By the time I was sent an induction order, I was just able to say no.

I think my story is similar to that of many others. We all grow by small steps. If we try to over-reach ourselves, we falter and fall back. For this reason, I do not (necessarily) counsel young men to resist registration. I counsel *choice*, the belief that individuals need to determine what is appropriate to their own lives.

One reflects wryly that the young people to whom this decision comes are expected to be fully capable of reasoning thoughtfully about the issue at age eighteen. But youth is precisely the time, as Kenneth Keniston has pointed out, when such questions are far from decided. It is manifestly unfair to oblige them to make up their minds suddenly, when the natural course of maturation is to "grow by small steps."

The foregoing adds relevance to a report in *Peacework* (New England) for April:

Parents Against the Draft is a true grassroots movement that cuts across traditional political, economic and religious lines. In addition to the groups in Boston and in Hartford, others have sprung up independently and quite spontaneously in many other parts of the country.

There never has been a movement quite like this. It includes parents of sons and daughters, parents of children of registration age, parents of toddlers. One of the most moving letters to us read: "We are the parents of two sons aged 5½ and 4. What can we do to stop the draft?"

That says it all. What kind of a world will there be for our children? . . . Senator Mark Hatfield wrote a parents' group on Long Island: "Draft legislation is the cornerstone of a process that increases this nation's reliance on military solutions to global problems. It furthers the regimentation of society and

is subservient to the end of the State. It reasserts the State's God-like prerogative of owning the lives of its young and gives the Executive branch great flexibility to engage in and sustain unpopular military actions. . . .

To learn more, contact Parents Against the Draft, P.O. Box 833, Brookline, MA 02147.

Then, in *Rain for May*, Norman Solomon, co-author with Harvey Wasserman of *Killing Our Own* (Delacorte/Delta), says:

For all their imminence, nuclear weapons remain something of an abstraction in our society. Unlike nuclear power plants with their conspicuous cooling towers, stacks of industrial pollution, auto-clogged freeways and the like, the massively financed thermonuclear arsenals rarely become visible. . . . The nuclear weapons assembly line is strewn across the United States, and though sometimes low-profile nuclear facilities have a presence in hundreds of communities, ominously comprising both a "local hazard" and a "global threat." They must be challenged in the communities which host them. The military mean business; so must we. All segments of the population are potential allies in the arduous tasks of shutting down these facilities. . . . A statewide ballot measure calling for a bilateral arms freeze (currently in progress in California) must be seen as one of many possible small steps in a long, difficult and multifaceted groundswell; electoral campaigns are unlikely to provide the basis for a strong movement. Systems sanctioned by the state are prone to deflect us away from strengthening true community-based movements with independent power that cannot be co-opted, sidestepped, or betrayed by politicians and administrators. Our best hopes are to be found in developing movements that will continue to gain momentum no matter who is in political office and no matter what ballot measures win or lose at the polls.

Light, it seems, is breaking out all over.

FRONTIERS

III and Prescription

IN *Rain* for last April, Edward Humberger tells what happened as the result of the attempt of the United States to restore Puerto Rico to economic health. In 1950, President Truman signed "Operation Bootstrap" into law, making the Caribbean island an "associated free state," subject to mainland laws and eligible for various benefits such as food stamps. The experiment, Humberger says, "was supposed to produce a showplace for American capitalism," and while growth was substantial, "in terms of long-term development it was a failure."

Operation Bootstrap's first enterprises were large sugar plantations which displaced the small farm economy. Prior to their development, fully ninety-three per cent of the land was arable and the agricultural economy was moderately diversified. By 1977, however, only forty per cent was still arable and Puerto Rico had become a net importer of \$800 million in foodstuffs annually. The second industrial transfusion brought the textile and shoe industries to the island—but they began leaving when labor in Taiwan and Central America became cheaper. Next came the petrochemical industry, which created few jobs, and the pharmaceutical industry, which did not need much unskilled labor. Like an addict, the economy's next transfusion of investment rests on the recent discovery of nickel and copper deposits which will be extracted by the large oil corporations.

Yes, there was economic growth, and the economy was transformed. But the economy is no longer self-reliant or diversified. Puerto Rico has a colonized economy, dependent on American investment and welfare for survival. In human development terms, not only have people left the island for jobs but, among those who remain, there are major drug addiction, alcoholism, and crime problems. Puerto Rico has not been revitalized—it has simply been made dependent. Operation Bootstrap did not produce long-term balanced development because the local economy became hostage to outside investors who did not reinvest in that economy. It is a classic case of *economic growth without development*.

The inherent logic of a free market is that investors place their capital wherever they will

receive the greatest short-term return. Firms, particularly larger multinational corporations, able to move large amounts of investment capital anywhere in the world on short notice, feel no special obligation to the local economy or population of a given community. They are free to move in and out as they please. The experience of Operation Bootstrap reminds us that the inability of a community to control or influence capital investment and job creation for the benefit of local residents leaves it vulnerable to a boom or bust, growth without development syndrome.

This writer draws a parallel between what happened in Puerto Rico and the similar impoverishment and dependency of the inner cities of America, the only major difference being that in Puerto Rico, "because it is an island, the effects of the free market approach to economic growth are much easier to track."

Obviously, there is little hope for improvement of conditions in Puerto Rico until people who care about Puerto Ricans are able to apply investments in another way.

Wherever one turns, the problem is much the same. A writer in *Science for Villages* for last April, G. Shankar Ranganathan, points out that while in Europe the growth and prosperity which attended the Industrial Revolution came to nations with comparatively small populations, this could not happen in India. Industrialization was brought to India in this century, at a time when there were already a large number of unemployed. As this writer says, "the priority should have been to provide gainful and productive employment to them before setting up capital intensive industry which does not require much labor."

Industry is not able to provide even half a million more jobs a year, while more than seven millions enter the job market every year. Six times as many people are employed on the land as in government, industry and trade put together. Hence poverty and disparity in India will grow if emphasis is continued on industrialization. Industrializing is in fact, creating unemployment among those who have until now been gainfully employed. There are about seven million traditional fisherfolk using more than 200,000 country craft. Just three per cent of the

fisherfolk who use mechanized boats in India now account for 30 per cent of the annual catch. If we call ourselves civilized, we ought to think of ways to solve the problems which we ourselves have created. Population must be checked, but it cannot be done by merely exhorting the rural masses not to have more than two children or by offering them sweets or transistors. With employment and a better life, the rate of growth of population will automatically decline, as it has done elsewhere in the world.

It is possible to provide employment for many millions through productive work by utilizing more than a hundred million acres of land which was deforested for cultivation and then abandoned as the soil was not fit for sustained agriculture. *The actual area under forest cover shown in satellite photographs is possibly not more than ten per cent of the total area, i.e., a third of what it should be. . . .*

Reforestation would create more wealth and would do it faster. In the two decades since 1960, China has reforested more than 50 million acres and provided employment to many millions. Three hundred fifty million people can be drawn out of the well of poverty by giving national priority to reforestation and good land management, combining it with pisciculture and animal husbandry, including poultry. The employment that agro-forestry would generate would raise general income and improve our whole environment. Undoubtedly, too, it would be a major step toward stabilizing India's population.

Commenting on India's present drive for more "productivity," the editor of *Science for Villages*, Devendra Kumar, remarks that while during this century both productivity and consumption have vastly increased, "yet the gulf of inequalities has only widened." Half the world population has insufficient food, and every year tens of millions of people die of hunger.

We have, therefore, to evolve a new system of production which serves the purpose of distributive justice as well. This is possible when the very plans of productivity-increase are also the ones which help the weaker sections to get strong. The weaker a group is, the more imperative it is to make it a vehicle of greater productivity. . . . The right strategy for this effect is not known to anyone. We do, however, know that if the assetless poor are to be provided with modes of production and occupation which will increase their income, such a productivity-increase requires industry of low capital and high labor

intensity and skills of a kind which can be easily developed. . . . The science and technology disciplines could take up this challenge and show the way to productivity combined with social justice and ecological balances.

Think of the *esprit de corps* meeting this challenge could arouse.