VOLUME XXVII, NO. 1
JANUARY 2, 1974

THE BIRTH OF PHILOSOPHY

A SURGING longing is behind the "return to nature" that we hear so much about these days. Even if on the surface it sometimes seems sentimental, taking the form of an uninstructed primitivism that cannot possibly last, the deep feeling behind what is already a significant movement of population is no passing fad or emotion. Its expression is too diverse, too strong in its more serious manifestations, to be disposed of in this way. An actual change in human attitudes is going on, drawing on spontaneous grass-roots energies, accomplishing tangible reforms at the community, state, and national level, and finding both guidance and reflection in a variety of books and new magazines.

A new dimension has been added to all the life sciences, which are rapidly extending branches into the large area vaguely defined as "ecology," which is scientific in many of its relationships, yet flowering in undertakings which often seem inspired by a kind of earth mysticism or natural pantheism. A heroic note creeps into the declarations of the champions and defenders of Nature. A simplified or popular analysis would say that after long generations of the rule of acquisitive economic doctrine and one-dimensional technological imperatives, the people are demanding more kindly and knowing instructors, and the wonderful balances of nature, celebrated by scores of writers, seem the best possible source for learning a new way of life. One gets a sense of "Let us throw ourselves back in the arms of Nature" in the air. *Nature* will show the way. Nature knows best. It is as though there were nothing to question in the wonders which nature performs.

In recent months several voices have been raised to caution against the "only man is vile" contention, of which the most persuasive may be that of René Dubos, who points out the numerous ways in which human beings are able to improve on nature through the exercise of intelligence. Dubos speaks as a sober-minded observer who refuses to become a simple-minded partisan of the splendors of nature without man, whatever the messes and outrages his misdirected energies and magnified capacities have made possible. He speaks as a humane scientist and a man of enlightened common sense.

There are, however, other approaches to this question. In the November *Atlantic*, Annie Dillard, a poet who lives in Virginia, writes about "The Force that Drives the Flower." A dream which became a nightmare stirred her to regard almost with horror the endless fecundity of nature. The nature with which she is surrounded in her rural home became an enormous hatchery of countless forms of life and omnipresent death. Insects, fish, animals, birds all reproduce without ceasing. Hardly a square inch of the earth's surface is not an incubator of teeming multitudes. This zeal for self-duplication is described—"a lone aphid, without a partner, breeding 'unmolested' for one year, would produce so many living aphids that, although they are only a tenth of an inch long, together they would extend into space 2500 *light-years."* And even "the average goldfish lays 5000 eggs which it will eat as fast as it lays, if permitted." Miss Dillard's appalled "nature study" goes on and on.

Consider the barnacle, unwelcome to boatmen and hostile to bare feet:

> The larvae "hatch into the sea in milk clouds." The barnacles encrusting a single half-mile of shore can leak into the water a million million larvae. How many is that to a human mouthful? In sea water they grow, molt, change shape wildly, and eventually, after several months, turn into adults, and build shells. . . .

> My point about these rock barnacles is those million million larvae "in milky clouds" and those shed flecks of skin. Sea water seems suddenly to be but a broth of barnacle bits. Can I fancy that a million million human infants are more real?

Here the poet, the rudimentary philosopher, speaks. Or perhaps, not just rudimentary but a singing philosopher. She wants to know what all this life-in-death or death-in-life *means.* "Are we dealing in life, or in death?"

> Do the barnacle larvae care? Does the lacewing who eats her eggs care? If they do not care then why am I making all this fuss? If I am a freak, then why don't I hush?

But poets—which is to say human beings and/or rudimentary philosophers—are not able to hush. Nature is not just nature, to be observed, catalogued, mined, or "harnessed." Nature is a metaphor with a meaning behind all it does. But the tough-minded scientists tell us only that life is like that.

> All right then. It is our emotions which are amiss. We are freaks, the world is fine, and let us all go have lobotomies to restore us to a natural state. We can leave the library then, go back to the creek lobotomized, and live on its banks as untroubled as any muskrat or reed. You first.

For her part, she will say:

> Any three-year-old can see how unsatisfactory and clumsy is this whole business of reproducing and dying by the billions. We have not yet encountered any god who is as merciful as a man who flicks a beetle over on its feet. There is not a people in the world that behaves as badly as praying mantises. But wait, you say there is no right and wrong in nature; right and wrong is a human concept. Precisely: we are moral creatures, then, in an amoral world. The universe that suckled us is a monster that does not care if we live or die—does not care if itself grinds to a halt. It is fixed and blind, a robot programmed to kill. We are free and seeing; we can only try to outwit it at every turn to save our skins.
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> This view requires that a monstrous world running on chance and death, careening blindly from nowhere to nowhere somehow produced wonderful us. I came from the world, I crawled out of a sea of amino acids, and now I must whirl around and shake my fist at that sea and cry Shame! . . . We little blobs of soft tissue crawling around on this planet's skin are right, and the whole universe is wrong.

Hubris or the Promethean fire which is it? The poet admittedly makes a picture, while the philosopher looks for remedies, or for a meaning which allows resignation. So the poet may be only a rudimentary philosopher, which favors the lyrical muse. Meanwhile, the situation remains:

> This is the way the world is, altar and cup, lit by the fire from a star that has only begun to die. My rage and shock at the pain and death of individuals of my kind is the old, old mystery, as old as man, but forever fresh, and completely unanswerable. My reservations about the fecundity and waste of life among the other creatures are, however, mere squeamishness. After all, I'm the one having the nightmares. It is true that many of the creatures live and die abominably, but I am not called upon to pass judgment. Nor am I called upon to live in that same way, and those creatures who are mercifully unconscious. . . .
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> But about the topic of my own death I am decidedly touchy. . . . The terms are clear: if you want to live, you have to die; you cannot have mountains and creeks without space, and space is beauty married to a blind man. The blind man is Freedom or Time, and he does not go anywhere without his great dog Death . . .

Well, that is an aspect of the Nature revered by many who now think their leaders and guides deserted it years ago, and to which they are now longing to return; and that, too, is the Nature of those who never left it but are still trying to understand its often ruthless ways. This search for meaning has a long history.

What was the poet's nightmare? Was it, perchance, a portion of the vision vouchsafed to Arinna in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* an ordeal which he couldn't *stand?* He saw Krishna in all the fullness of his divine character of Vishnu—the entire universe of manifested being—seething with rampant life and voracious death—

> "As the rapid streams of full-flowing rivers roll on to meet the ocean, even so these heroes of the human race rush into thy flaming mouths. As troops of insects carried away by strong impulse find death in the fire, even so do these beings with swelling

> force pour into thy mouths for their own destruction. Thou involves" and swallowest all these creatures from every side, licking them in thy flaming lips; filling the universe with thy splendor, thy sharp beams burn, O Vishnu. Reverence be unto thee, O best of Gods! Be favorable! I seek to know thee, the Primeval One, for I know not thy work."

Withered by the spectacle—which only true immortals can endure—Arjuna pleads with Krishna to resume his ordinary shape, and the god does so, then comforting his disciple. He told Arjuna that *he* would escape the all-encompassing death, but the hero, shaken by the awful sight of endless cosmic metabolism, seemed not to comprehend this hope, which required the victory that Krishna had urged upon him. Still trembling, he asked only for relief from supernatural vision.

The *Gita* is a treatise on immortality and other matters, although the rich meaning of immortality in this philosophy includes all else. Thus the great war which provides the setting of the *Gita* is a metaphor of the inward struggle of the soul to overcome the illusions of embodied existence, while the vision allowed to Arjuna by Krishna is an emblem of the totality of that existence, as seen and comprehended by those no longer subject to the *Mahamaya* and able to "go home" from its wars.

The great world philosophies look at history and at nature as schemes of meaning to be understood by man. The *Gita* represents the Indian view or philosophy. In the West, the Platonic and Neoplatonic systems made a similar use of the world of nature. Interestingly, as part of the "second look" at the origins of modern scientific inquiry, scholars have been showing that its initial impulse came from the philosophers of the Platonic tradition. This is plain enough in the case of both Copernicus and Galileo, and a recent article on Giordano Bruno in the *Scientific American* (for April, 1973) indicates that Bruno's use of the Copernican doctrine was as "part of a vast metaphor" of the Neoplatonic metaphysics. Dorothy Waley Singer, Bruno's biographer, speaks of his work as going beyond the order pictured by Copernicus:

> It was truly a marvelous intuition of Bruno that the new framework which Copernicus had sketched was but a part of a great cosmological pattern. It is true that this pattern had been glimpsed by certain earlier writers. But both critics and followers of Copernicus in the sixteenth century saw in his work a rearrangement of the well-established world scheme. Some might regard the rearrangement with contempt, and some with admiration. To Bruno and to Bruno alone the suggestion of Copernicus entered into the pattern of a completely new cosmological order. In this sense Bruno not only anticipated Galileo and Kepler, but he passed beyond them into an entirely new world which had shed all the dross of tradition. It was a great vision which, from the very nature of the case, could be shared in full neither by his own nor the succeeding generation.

Bruno saw in the Copernican theory the means of introducing the philosophical idea of an infinite universe containing an infinitude of worlds, an elaboration of the infinite universe proposed by Nicholas of Cusa, by whom Bruno was greatly influenced. Man, the microcosm, Bruno held, was able to conceive of the infinite work of divinity through his mind, which was in essence of the nature of Deity itself. The liberating cosmology of this outlook would free man from the confinements of his earthly nature, stressed as evil by Christian theology. The writers of the *Scientific American* article, Lawrence S. Lerner and Edward A. Gosselin, say:

> In contrast to the orthodox Christian view that man had fallen from a state of grace through the original sin, the Hermetists believed man had descended voluntarily from the nonmaterial world of the Divine Mind to earth and continued to partake of the divine nature that had been his before the descent. . . . Bruno was supremely confident that man was at least in part a divine being and not merely the detestable product of original sin, destined to fall lower and lower in the absence of some more or less capricious divine intervention in human affairs. Such a belief was heretical from the standpoint of both orthodox Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, which were pessimistic concerning natural man. Bruno's advocacy of the Neoplatonic view made him a leading figure in the rebirth of man's confidence in

himself, the like of which had not existed since classical antiquity. That confidence came to its greatest flowering in the 18th and 19th centuries, when serious men could believe that an earthly paradise was in prospect. Though this view has been somewhat clouded in the 20th century, it still forms the basis of action for most Western people.

In other words, it was the *spirit* of Bruno's thought, and his conception of human potentiality, which gave breadth to his utterances and made him so influential, along with his championship of Copernican ideas. Moreover, his contention that the human mind had the power to comprehend the universe was a strengthening influence for the newly-born scientific movement, as the *Scientific American* writers point out.

They also remark that it was fear of a repetition of Bruno's heresies, much in the minds of the officials of the Holy Office, which led to the unreasonable persecution of Galileo later in the seventeenth century.

The point of this *SA* article, and the relevance of noticing it here, lies in Bruno's conception of the world of nature as a great analogue of the path of inner enlightenment. This is a view to which distinguished scientific thinkers sometimes turn after long years of physical inquiry. Meanwhile, there is another figure of history, also of deep Platonic and Neoplatonic persuasion, for whom nature appeared in the same light. Kathleen Raine remarks, in *Blake and Tradition,* that when a progressive friend showed him a copy of the *Mechanic's Magazine,* Blake said, "Ah, sir, these things we artists hate," and he wrote elsewhere that "Art is the Tree of Life," while "Science is the Tree of Death." He meant that the one-dimensional universe of Newton's laws shut out from "reality" the visionary aspect of human existence. Of Blake and nature, Miss Raine says:

> Blake was not a poet who was against the natural world, in contrast with Wordsworth who "loved" nature. It is true that Wordsworth writes more about man in a natural setting than does Blake, and that much of Blake's characteristic imagery is taken from the city, from philosophy, and from myth. But the contrast is not between a poet who loved nature and a poet who did not; rather it is between one view of nature and another. Wordsworth, Blake thought, was at times (though not always, or at his best) inclined to nature worship, when Blake writes about nature, it is invariably as "vision," alive with the spirit. He is invariably animistic—closer to Shakespeare than Wordsworth. . . .
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> Nothing is external, nothing is lifeless matter. "I see everything I paint In This World . . . to the eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees." . . . When man begins to conceive his world as separate from his spiritual life, all its creatures "wander away." A meadow or a pasture or a mountain or a flock of sheep is then no more beautiful to him than a machine.
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> Life in harmony with a living nature, as the Chinese landscape painters supremely conceived it, is also Blake's pattern of the good life. This oneness of man and his world is conveyed in every line of the illustrations to Vergil's Pastorals, whose human figures, houses, and animals belong to their landscapes as do those sages, fishermen, villages, and bridges in the middle distance of Chinese landscape paintings, those figures entirely occupied with their coming and going or standing still, merged with their surroundings. The sage looks at the tree, and the tree looks at the sage, in the same way as Blake's cloud, mountain, and rock are "vocal." So in Blake's woodcuts the line of the houseroof repeats the line of the hill, or the rays of the sun are repeated in the bright horns of the oxen and shafts of the plow, smoothed by the hand of the plowman. The sheep repeat the forms of the woods and thickets, the energy of a shepherd and his dog running on a hill seems part of the flood of sunlight behind him; all are animated with one and the same life. Every shepherd seems to be imaginatively at one with the world, to possess it as no mere purchaser of land can ever possess; for possession is vision, and every man is the possessor of his own Eden, his "garden on a mount."

A reading of Kathleen Raine's work makes clear that the poet used nature as the source of settings for his metaphysical vision. And all the great poets have read nature for her resonances of meaning, for the sermons in stones and blades of grass. The very beauty men celebrate in nature is structured by the imagination, as indeed the idea of beauty is a Platonic concept by means of which

we understand an entire range of human experience, in terms of its delighting harmonies.

But the problem of good and evil, which is set by Annie Dillard in her *Atlantic* article, hardly has solution in any abstract analysis or even a great poem. The sense of the *Gita* would seem to be that understanding evil is possible only to those who are able, in their wholeness, to rise above the endless polarities of experience, and such beings, when they speak, use the language of paradox. A present-day scholar, A. L. Herman, whose translation, with commentary, of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., $7.95) has just been published, proposes that Krishna skips back and forth, sometimes using the language of eternity—of the absolute perspective of the wholly uninvolved sage or *jivanmukta*—and sometimes adopting the limited meanings of incarnated intelligence, and in this way seems to escape from the paradoxes of what he says. Speaking as sage he tells Arjuna it is not "evil" to kill all those friends and revered teachers ranged against him on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, since the soul is immortal and cannot be destroyed in battle, while in Arjuna's earthly view such slaughter appears as a violation of *dharma* or well-established duty. "Krishna," Herman says, "has inadvertently jumped ahead in a metaphysical discussion that Arjuna and the common man are quite unprepared for." This may be precisely so, except for the supposed "inadvertence," and a literal reading of the *Gita* probably brings insoluble moral dilemmas. For such, indeed, is the dilemma which confronts Annie Dillard, who sees the omnipresence of death throughout nature, and finds it tolerable only by the sacrifice of self-consciousness or a return to the inchoate mindlessness of unimproved nature. But what is an avatar but one who deals with insoluble problems with the bifocal vision of both spiritual intelligence and the common man—intimating, in various ways, that the resolution of such difficulties comes only as the distillate of the life of the persisting aspirant. The truth behind such dilemmas is and must be a transcendent realization; thus a *life* is the solution, not an "answer" from the sage.

Yet the words of a great scripture, such as the *Gita,* have a kaleidoscopic aspect; one reads them day after day, year after year, turning the content around, changing the focus, until, somehow, the text grows luminous with deepening meanings.

REVIEW
PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

MOST readers of MANAS through the years will have noticed our perennial enthusiasm for Pico della Mirandola, brightest star of the Florentine Revival of Learning, and will perhaps remember the reason for it—the clarity and strength of his conception of human nature, set forth in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man.* This essay, which was the introduction to nine hundred theses he offered to debate with the doctors of the Church, contains the foundation idea of both Humanism and Liberalism, in their classic meaning, declaring as the prerogative of all human beings the capacity and need to shape their own destiny.

Pico was born in 1463 to the noble family of Giovanni Francesco Pico, prince of Mirandola. At fourteen he went to Bologna for schooling but after two years became disgusted with what was taught there, spending the next seven years wandering through the schools of Italy and France, collecting a notable library. He learned Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic, and studied the Kabbalah. In 1486, when he was twenty-three, he propounded the nine hundred theses, but their publication was prohibited by the Pope, who found in them a number of heresies. Seeking a more congenial atmosphere, Pico left Rome for Florence, where he joined Marsilio Ficino in conducting the Platonic Academy which had been started on the hills of Fiesole, just outside the city, under the patronage of Lorenzo de Medici, whom Ficino had tutored as a boy, imbuing him with reverence for the Greeks and Platonic thought. Pico, friend of Savonarola, colleague of Reuchlin in Humanist education, lover of Plotinus, tireless student of theosophic doctrines and synthesizer of high religions and old philosophies, died at thirty-one, leaving evidence of extraordinary erudition, and an insight into philosophical questions and problems that has hardly been appreciated until recent years.

It is difficult to find good published material on Pico, except for the handy paperback edition of his *Oration* published by Henry Regnery (Gateway) in 1956. In a two-part article, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola," in the April and June 1942 issues of *Journal of the History of Ideas (*Vol. III, Nos. 2 and 3), Ernst Cassirer draws on many sources, but most of them are in Italian and have not been translated. One of these, a work published in Florence in 1902, sounds promising on the role of Pico in the Florentine School, and we are making an effort to get it; meanwhile a pleasant account of the School (probably available in the larger libraries) is given by John E. Sandys in his *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning* (1905), recently put back into print by the Benjamin Franklin Press.

For those concerned with education, the work of Pico in the Florentine School should be fascinating reading, as would the similar work of Johann Reuchlin in Germany, who was a natural teacher as well as a man like Pico in being one of the few Europeans who knew both Greek and Hebrew. Reuchlin became a heroic defender of the Jews against the bitter persecutions of the time. But here we plan to look briefly at some of Pico's ideas, drawing on Cassirer's admirable summary in the *Journal of the History of Ideas.* His object is to vindicate Pico as a serious thinker. As we have suggested, Pico's erudition and wide interests, which ran in practically every direction, made scholars unable to recognize either his genius or his profound intent, regarding him rather as a somewhat careless eclectic. While his concern with Kabbalism and magic could hardly add to his reputation among skeptical moderns, the temper of thought is changing, now, and Cassirer noticed years ago the depth of Pico's understanding of widely disparate materials. Speaking of the theses, he says:

> This wealth of material seems bounded by no intellectual form. But if we look more closely, we find that it is just in this extravagance and excess that a new and distinctive way of thinking comes to light—that the apparent chaos of the nine hundred

> theses nevertheless takes on the form of an intellectual cosmos. . . . What is here characteristic of Pico, and what distinguishes him from all the other thinkers of his time, even from Nicholas Cusanus, is the extent of his intellectual horizon and the breadth of his survey, which tries to exclude or limit no single aspect. It is as though he had made it his goal to render vocal at the same time *all* the intellectual forces which had heretofore cooperated in establishing religious, philosophical, and scientific knowledge. None of them is to be merely attacked or rejected each of them is granted a definite positive share in the totality of philosophic knowledge and truth. There is no longer for Pico any limitation or dogmatic restriction. He proposes to conjure up the whole great chorus of minds of the past—and to each voice he gives ear impartially and willingly. For he is convinced that only by means of this *polyphony* can that inner harmony be won that is the mark of truth.

Pico did not regard himself as a "discoverer," but as a student, a synthesizer, a revealer of unnoticed verities, and Cassirer quotes Goethe to sum up Pico's intent. "The truth," Goethe declared, "has long been known, and has been the bond of the wisest spirits. This old Truth—reach for it!" And that is exactly what Pico did, using his superb scholarly equipment. As Cassirer says:

> For Pico the *scholar* it is one of his great and imperishable claims to fame, that in his passionate zeal for learning and in his almost unbounded ability to learn, he left almost no field of knowledge untouched. He came to terms with almost all the great intellectual forces of his time. Not only did he go to school to scholasticism, to Arabian philosophy, to Humanism; in all these movements he himself took part independently and advanced them productively. . . . If we measure Pico's thought by strictly philosophical standards, we often get the impression that we are here dealing less with a fixed doctrine of definite form and clear outline, than with a kind of intellectual alchemy. It is as though Pico never tired of assembling all the positions he encountered, uniting them all with each other, mixing and combining them, in order to see what kind of a product would arise from this treatment.

Cassirer sets out to examine the body of Pico's thought to see if there is indeed an inner unity, a synthesis achieved, and he begins by leading the reader through the great philosophical questions, such as, first of all, how the One becomes the Many, showing how Pico deals with the problems arising from this question, which was the source of endless medieval contention. Between Creation and Emanation, Pico chooses the Neoplatonic scheme of Emanation, yet examines opposing doctrines with great subtlety, to find value in them. Throughout he is the champion of total freedom of thought:

> Even against the Church Pico boldly defends this basic thesis of *libertas credendi;* he is certain that no one can or ought to be forced to believe. This free attitude toward the Church and toward dogma was possible for Pico because he did not stand for any *doctrine* opposed to theirs, but in opposition to both was trying to assert the validity of his own *principle of knowledge.*

The ultimate solution for philosophical questions, he believed, was to be found in mysticism, but, Cassirer says, "what distinguishes Pico from many other forms of mysticism is the circumstance that he is and remains primarily a theoretical *thinker."* The knowledge obtained through mystical insight was not, for him, "mere mystic *feeling,"* but had "an independent theoretical meaning and content."

> Hence Pico is by no means willing to renounce the power of pure thought; he seeks rather to increase it and carry it to the point at which it can be supplemented and enhanced by another purely intuitive kind of knowledge. But at the same time he maintains the position that our thinking, in so far as it is directed toward the Divine, can never be an adequate expression, but only an image and a metaphor.

As for his role in the history of science, or scientific origins, Cassirer says:

> So far as the empirical knowledge of nature is concerned Pico doubtless has a place in its history, and he must be named amongst its promoters and predecessors. For by his decisive attack on astrology he prepared the path for the modern way of astronomical thinking. But this achievement of Pico's springs, as we shall see, from another source than the empirical observation of nature. It is founded on a purely speculative principle: on his conception of man and of human freedom. From Pico's own basic presuppositions there is thus no path that could lead immediately to a scientific mathematics and an exact

> knowledge of nature. From the ideas of Cusanus there extends an influence that leads to Leonardo da Vinci's and Galileo's idea of experience and truth. But the form of mathematics recognized and fostered by Pico's work is essentially magical mathematics; it is continued by Reuchlin in his *De arte cabalistica* and *De verbo mirifico.*

The second part of Cassirer's study has two main points to make. First, the carefully structured advocacy and defense of human freedom in the *Oration,* and second, Pico's essentially philosophical criticism of Astrology, which is founded on his conviction of freedom. In the *Oration,* Pico makes it clear that man is not only the microcosm of the macrocosm, having in himself elements of all the world, but is also distinctly different from the entire natural creation, in the fact that "he owes his moral character to himself." This is Pico's core position from which he never retreats. As a result man's life is seen as continual self-creation. "Pico declares that no other form of truth is granted man. Indeed, he almost anticipates the saying of Lessing that not the possession of truth, but the search after it, is the vocation and lot of man." Each man must find out *everything* for himself, or verify what he learns or is taught. "Individual inquiry, ever-renewed examination, is therefore indispensable for the subsistence of every truth, philosophical as well as religious; only from and through such inquiry can this subsistence be won and preserved."

The attack on astrology grows out of his view that while the behavior of matter is strictly determined, the spirit is essentially free.

> The conclusive objection Pico raises against astrology is that it fails to see this distinction. Instead of understanding each of the two realms, the world of bodies and the world of spirits in its own specific sense, and instead of applying to each its appropriate method of knowing, astrology willfully obliterates all distinctions. It tries to derive the being of man from the heavens, and to read his destiny in the stars. But for Pico the destiny of man lies in himself; it is determined by his will and his actions. And this will not be reduced to an external material compulsion, since matter would thus be proclaimed the master of spirit.

This is but a portion of Pico's argument, although its main ground. His contention against astrology was part of a major work he had planned, and the only part he was able to complete. Of Pico, one might say, as of some others, that he has become a "modern thinker" only quite recently! Those who read Cassirer's splendid essay on him will almost certainly want to look further into his thought.

COMMENTARY
AN ANCIENT MYSTERY

THE dilemma which results from contrasting the facts of life with the moral ideas we hold has many forms. The dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna turns on one of them, the *Atlantic* essay by Annie Dillard gives another. One can recognize still another in the section called "Pro and Contra" in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.*

There Ivan asks his saintly brother, Alyosha, to explain to him how there can be justice in a world which condemns innocents to so much pain. And there is also the suffering of children, who are blameless. Ivan muses:

> "With my earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly; that everything flows and finds its level—but that's only Euclidian nonsense. I know that and I can't consent to live by it! . . . I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth. Justice that I can see myself. I have believed in it. I want to see it. . . .
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> "While there is still time, I want to protect myself and so I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It's not worth the tears of ... one tortured child. . . . It's not worth it because those tears are unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how? How are you going to atone for them? Is it possible? By their being avenged? But what do I care for avenging them? What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? And what becomes of harmony if there is hell? I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth the price . . . too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much. And so I give back my entrance ticket, and if I'm an honest man I give it back as soon as possible."

Seldom has the dilemma been put so compellingly. Gandhi found a resolution in the *Gita*, and others have seen clues in the voluntary sacrifice of Prometheus or Christ, but there is hardly one to be found in the objectivities of nature. For Blake the answer lay in the dissolving power of the imagination—the Fourfold Vision. But these answers, like Pico's thought, seem to have an alchemical character. Meanwhile, the dilemma stands as an agonizing moral focus of the human situation. It remains an all-pervading mystery, yet not wholly without keys, or tortuous pathways of approach to hidden meanings.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THEORY AND PRACTICE

PLANS and talk of education, schools, ways of teaching, and reports on all these things, we have decided, should be richly interspersed with accounts of the inimitable achievements of the great autodidacts—men who taught themselves. For they are the people who set the pace, who give education its meaning, since all the rest of what is done never gains any real importance except in helping the individual to become a self-starter—to educate himself. Education which does not have this ideal amounts to a conspiracy against the next generation.

In education, there are no new ideas, only *great* ideas, which have periodically to be revived. The task of the teacher is to free the student of his dependencies, so that self-education can get under way. Asked why the liberal arts were called "liberal," John of Salisbury, the twelfth-century scholastic, secretary to Thomas à Becket, replied: "Those to whom the system of the Trivium has disclosed the significance of all words, or the rules of the Quadrivium have unveiled the secrets of nature, do not need the help of a teacher in order to understand the meaning of books and to find the solutions of questions."

What needs to be established is the virtual irrelevance of schooling to significant human development. This does not mean, of course, that ordinary schooling, whether obtained in a particular place, from a tutor, or through the acquisitiveness of an insatiably hungry mind, can be done without. Obtaining the tools is like eating a meal—you must do it in order to do other things, but eating is hardly connected with the excellence of what you do. Standards are important, of course, and should be taken for granted, just as decent food for growing children can usually be taken for granted, except in the advanced industrial societies where even the most commonplace standards of daily life have been systematically undermined and neglected. (As the editor of *Environment* asked a while ago, "How in the blazes did a country which puts industrial waste in its drinking water ever manage to send a man to the moon?")

But what about the younger ones, and what do you do if you *have* a school, and parents with children they want to have some schooling? We found some simple answers to this question in an old copy of the *Bulletin* of the School in Rose Valley (Moylan, Pa.) which we've been saving for reasons that will become plain enough. In this one—for June, 1967—Grace Rotzel, then head of the school, tells about the early thinking that shaped the curriculum (material that probably became part of her book, *The School in Rose Valley).* The following is about "Social Studies":

> Educators have always accepted the fact that learning how to think was a goal, but have generally assumed that this was an end-product of acquiring skills and information. In the early nineteen hundreds those who were taking John Dewey seriously began putting activity into the curriculum, for they had learned in their own teaching that the acquisition of knowledge did not necessarily produce the ability to think clearly. Under the old system, a great difficulty was caused by the concept of the separateness of mind and body, mind being engaged in absorbing knowledge, and the body going along as an intruder that had to be disciplined while the mind was at work. The child development research changed all that, demonstrating that learning took place most successfully when the whole child was engaged.
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> As teachers discovered that motion and the active use of the senses were a part of the child's learning process, they began using this in the approach to subject-matter. It was easy to understand the importance of this in the pre-school, for the stage of growth there calls for mobility, it also seems sensible in the study of science to expect and plan for questions that call for physical effort and keen senses to find answers, but in the case of history there is a considerable gap between the child's need to know, and what we want him to know. History is relatively inaccessible to the child; it is remote, being traditionally written as a series of events that have no understandable connection with his life. Hence the change-over was made from geography and history,

courses designed for memorizing facts, to social studies, a course combining the two with particular emphasis on their interrelationship with man's adaptation to his environment. This made sense as it recognized the natural way for a child to get a handle on subject-matter, that is, to find his own relationship to man and the universe. If he can use his vivid imagination in reliving the historical event if he can directly confront, or participate in, something going on, there is a chance that the experience will sink in and become a part of him in a way that memorizing the facts can never accomplish. . . .

The curriculum we worked out involved the environment and the children's relation to it: the here and now, the faraway and long ago, other cultures, the past, current events, and withal continuing work on governing and understanding themselves. In the first two grades the subject-matter derived from the sources of our daily needs such as bread, milk, water, and from the organizations serving the community such as mills post offices and railroads.

Local field trips grew naturally out of these ideas:

For example, a trip to see a boat unload at Scott Paper Co., one to visit the Media Water Works, another to interview a railroad man at Thirtieth Street Station, gathered facts worth considering, though they seemed to some observers just a lot of riding around. In fact, one father, objecting to the train ride to Thirtieth Street, brought up the complaint, "We as a family take plenty of trips in this area, and it seems to me the school ought to have better things to do." He was more understanding, however, when he listened to the children's plan, the list of questions they had made for the interview, and the account of the railroad map under way. Other trips traced the relationship of land and water in the area. For example, in a series of walks we followed Ridley Creek to the Delaware, visiting Sackville and Irving Mills on the way, and following northward the water's meanderings through Media and Sycamore Mills. One of the results of this was a six-foot papier mâché map which had an incidental interest almost as great if not greater than the map itself, because to find space for it, we had to hoist it by pulleys to the ceiling. . . .

The outcome of these trips was in maps, oral reports, pictures, diagrams, stories, even dances. I never ceased to marvel at the children's ability to represent in a dance, what they had seen, and remember with some vividness the dance of Sackville Mills with a child narrator, and music to accompany the cartwheels and whirls representing the different processes. The music teacher in these events followed the children's lead and intuitively brought out in music what they were trying to say. These reports, I should say, were the temporary, visible results; the permanent result was in the habit of finding out for oneself, and in the imaginative adaptation of the material to one's own uses, a good background for finding out how to use books.

Wondering why these *Parents' Bulletins* are so consistently interesting and valuable, we decided that it is because the teachers at Rose Valley School have a quiet confidence in what they are doing; they are not trying to prove anything or persuade anyone of anything, but do the *Bulletin* to be informing and friendly and to coordinate parent-teacher activities, which are extensive and exceptional in quality. The present principal or head teacher, Dode Israel, continues in the same spirit as Grace Rotzel. In the *Bulletin* for September, 1973, she wrote:

In a time when population encroaches on the land, our eight acres becomes a very precious item in our educational scheme. More than ever we're cognizant of this. Looking back through the years we are aware and appreciative of a continuity in the philosophy and practice of the kind of education which has been transacted on these acres. We have called ourselves "progressive" or "open" or "vertically grouped," but whatever the name, we have been committed to trusting the individual to determine his own pace of exploring, learning, and sharpening the skills which the larger society describes as necessary to pursue our way of life. Our grouping, scheduling, and terminology have never changed over the years, but by and large the nature of education at the School in Rose Valley has tended to dissolve barriers and to encourage the easy movement of children as they are given room and stimulated to develop their bodies and their souls, to realize their powers as human beings, and, yes, to tend to their mastering of the curriculum.

FRONTIERS

Negative Amnesty; or— The Sins of the Father . . .

[Lowell and Virgina Naeve, artists and farmers, live in North Hatley, Quebec, Canada. Both have been active in the peace movement. This article is Virginia Naeve's account of what happened to their son a little over three months ago.]

ON September 23, 1973, our son Gavin was in transit from Bermuda, where he works as head baker in a luxury hotel, to Calgary, Alberta, Canada, for a vacation. His ticket read: "Bermuda to New York City, to Toronto, to Calgary," and return. He was arrested on the plane, before alighting in J. F. Kennedy Airport, taken to the West Street Federal jail in New York, and put in a cell with two maximum security offenders—a plane highjacker and a bank robber. The two FBI agents that picked him up would not allow Gavin to stop at the Pan American building, enroute to the jail, to tell his girl friend what had happened. They had a date and she waited until 8:30 that evening, then called Bermuda. Finding that he had taken the plane, she asked the airport desk if he had come in on the flight. They said he had, but nothing more. Where was he?

Gavin was allowed his one phone call, but the FBI men had taken his list of addresses and phone numbers—and have not yet returned them! He couldn't locate his girl friend because the phone wasn't listed under her last name. For three days he tried to get to the long-distance phone which was available two hours a day for five minutes per person. His cell was on the third floor of the jail and the phones were on the first, and he never made it to the long-distance phone in time to call his family.

Meanwhile, the jail authorities had removed everything from his pockets and sent them to his sister in Vermont. He waited for five days, hoping these articles would reach his older sister and help would come. On the fifth day, our daughter Adrienne called us. She was crying. She said she had received three small parcels and couldn't make out what they meant. They were Gavin's things, but there was no explanation. The front of one package was stamped West Street Federal Detention, like a postmark. The parcels contained a gold chain and medallion, a watch, a cigarette lighter, a ring, a book of plane tickets from Bermuda to Calgary, a clipping from a Toronto paper (want ad), a book of travelers' checks (all removed) showing about $650 in stubs. My first thought was that the "morgue" had sent his possessions. I told her I would get Lowell, who was out picking apples, and we'd call back. In the meantime Adrienne's husband phoned the West Street Jail and found out that Gavin was there. Charges? "Draft evasion."

The federal judge in New York set Gavin's bail at $50,000, and when the court-appointed lawyer said that was pretty high, the judge said, "It runs in the family." So the bail stayed at $50,000. The judge no doubt had before him the FBI reports on Lowell Naeve, Gavin's father, who spent four years in prison during World War II for not being willing to kill.

Some time later, through the efforts of an ACLU lawyer, the bail was brought down to $10,000. But when a friend in New York offered to post bail—usually ten per cent of the bail bond—he found that they wanted the whole $10,000 cash. There was no way it could be raised.

The day after we found out that Gavin was in jail we sent our younger son, Brandon, who is almost eighteen, to New York to see Gavin and to find out what was happening and what we could do. We called Jim Peck, an old friend Lowell had been in prison with, and he met Brandon and took him to his home. Brandon stayed there while he was in New York. He saw Gavin the following morning. He told us that when Gavin came to the small glass window through which he could look at his visitor, he seemed in a daze. He didn't know whom to expect and he didn't think it would be his brother.

Why had Gavin been arrested?

On October 10, 1965, we emigrated to Canada—the whole family. We waited until we had full, landed-emigrant status before we moved here. It took a couple of months to fill out all the forms, attend to the medicals and other details. Then there was a six-week delay while a hearing was held in Ottawa about Lowell's past. They finally ruled that a prison term for conscience was acceptable. (Ordinarily, they do not let people with jail sentences in their background into Canada.) So all this delayed our departure until Oct. 10. Gavin would be eighteen years old on the 20th of the month, but he was still seventeen when we arrived in Canada.

On Sept. 30, 1973, we found out that Gavin had been indicted for draft evasion back in 1967. In 1966 we had had two visits from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (admittedly at the instigation of the FBI), but they merely asked to speak to Gavin, who both times was away at school. They did not show any indictment or speak of one. Some time in 1970, five years after our emigration, an FBI man came to our older daughter's house in Vermont and harassed her about her brother. He said he had a warrant for Gavin. By that time we had filed for Canadian citizenship—actually, back in October, 1965. We were all Canadian citizens as of April 1, 1971. We have been here now, eight years.

Gavin was twenty-six on Oct. 20, 1973, and there is no longer a draft in the U.S.A. He was eventually removed to Burlington, Vermont, by the federal authorities and released on his own recognizance by the court there after his sister said she would pay a $5,000 bond if he failed to appear for trial. Then he returned to Canada for a few days, but decided he would re-enter the U.S.A. to see his Vermont lawyer, and try to recover his impounded luggage and the $524.84 taken from him at the West Street jail. When he was stopped at the border by officials, he showed them the court ruling saying he could go where he wanted so long as he returned to stand trial. The officials said that the ruling was from the Justice Department, but that *they* represented Immigration and he had seven days to do his business and get back into Canada, since Immigration had never agreed to letting him into the country at all. (I wonder would they even get him out of jail to deport him?)

So Gavin returned to Canada seven days later. His luggage, it seemed, was still down in Bermuda, never having been put on a plane. The money was sent here by the jail after Gavin told them on the phone he would hire a lawyer to get it.

Then, late in October, a check came for him from the hotel in Bermuda. It covered some back pay and reimbursement for the air flight. We all studied it, wondering if this meant he was fired. Gavin called one of the chefs and found out that the people working in the kitchen had asked the management to send his pay to him, since he might need it. And a day later he went back to Bermuda on a Canadian flight, to work until a date is set and he has to go to trial in Vermont.

R.R. 1, North Hatley VIRGINIA NAEVE
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