

## Does Man Really Want Peace?

**War, like religion, serves basic psychological needs, says an eminent theologian. Can we find a faith that can overcome both meaninglessness and the will to combat?**

By NELS F. S. FERRE

**W**AR IS A SYMPTOM of human unhappiness. Greed, race prejudice, religious fanaticism, narrow nationalism—all occasion war but do not cause it. They are important contributing factors that touch off conflict, and they provide the stereotypes by which nations rationalize and whip up war fervor. To justify fighting, the state usually also ties in religion in some form. War becomes a noble cause, say, for man's God-given right to freedom (or whatever), and into the cause are then subtly interwoven such secondary interests as economic advantage, national prestige, or racial hatreds.

Subconsciously, however, without even wanting to admit it to themselves, men court war to escape meaninglessness and boredom, to be relieved of fear and frustration. War becomes an intensification, qualitatively transformed, of our craze for sports, the magnification of our *abuse* of sports. A man who experiences no genuine satisfaction in life does not want peace. William James deplored man's inability to find a moral equivalent for war. Nothing awakens man's deepest devotion or focuses his concen-

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trated energies as does war. Did peace ever engender a similar sustained and genuine passion?

A prescription for peace, therefore, must encompass two levels. The immediate need is to procure a viable basis for cease-fires and negotiations and for practicable arrangements for erecting and protecting the conditions for peace. Without practical arrangements for settling a conflict all general prescriptions are irrelevant. But if the deeper causes of war are meaninglessness and boredom, fear and frustration, multiplied by crowd psychology—itsself intensified by modern means of mass communication—no number of concrete settlements will make peace. Practical arrangements allow only for lulls in fighting. New enemies and new causes will arise as soon as man recovers from his exhaustion and war-weariness. Therefore a full prescription for peace must aim at letting and making man want it. It must face the fact that men, more than we like to think, do not want peace.

Just as the final justification for war always becomes religious in quality, so the prescription for permanent peace must equally be religious. Even though they may not use religious language, those who rationalize war work themselves more and more into the dimensions of man's depth-experience. Are there religious resources fundamental enough to cure these underlying causes attendant on meaninglessness and to provide the positive basis for peace? If war is basically generated in human nature under our present historic circum-

stances, it is there that our prescription for peace must also begin.

A life without meaning occasions boredom, fear, and frustration. Meaninglessness is not a coordinate but a basic term; thus, although the other terms can hardly be reduced to it in concrete situations, the best medicine for man's malady of not wanting peace is faith. Faith at its simplest and strongest is affirmation of meaning. To deny or to avoid meaningfulness is lack of faith; to accept and to affirm meaning is faith. Meaningfulness in this sense is the living by and for some purpose. It is the feeling of some sense of the why of life; and as Nietzsche puts it, he who knows the why of life can stand almost any how. Boredom, fear, and frustration at their depths arise from inadequate meaning or from a lack of the realization of it. They spring from lack of faith and from failure to attain an adequate faith. Thus man's deepest enemies of peace call for a faith that is adequate and realizable.

**P**ERHAPS the most difficult task today is to make it clear to nonreligious modern man that all must live inescapably by faith. Life cannot go on without some affirmation of meaning. To live is to choose, and all choice involves meaning. To be sure, faith may involve no more than a vague acceptance of life, just to go on. Or it may mean Camus's deliberate acceptance of life because it is absurd; Sartre's finding meaning in the choosing of a concrete way of loyalty even though all roads lead equally nowhere; Heidegger's Buddhistic authen-

tic existence in the face of death, i.e., nirvana as true “suchness” in the face of final meaninglessness; Tillich’s power for existence and for harmony of existence in the midst of the devastations of non-being and the demonic; the Old Testament trust in the everlasting arms; surrender to the inscrutable will of Allah; or the incredible New Testament assurance that all things work for good within the love of God.

**H**AVING faith, then, is no option. All who live have faith. The question is, which faith? Weizsäcker, in his Gifford Lectures, “The Relevance of Science,” charges that man’s old religions died in the twentieth century, if not before. Men may even now confess Christianity in the West and other major religions in the East, but, West and East, educated man in fact worships science. Science has a creed, a cult, and a community. The creed is the scientific method, constantly proved (as man assumes!) by man’s general acceptance of technology; the cult has both a priesthood of scientists who can read the esoteric scriptures of scientific formulae that common man takes for granted to be true, and a worldwide community of modern confessors of the final authority of science.

Science has occasioned a faith, turned into scientism, which constitutes the religion of modern man. All other faiths are called before the bar of science and found wanting. But now suddenly science itself is proved a god with feet of clay, impotent to make man choose his own salvation and to control his own weapons of destruction. The crumbling of scientism as man’s modern faith is our deepest cause of present meaninglessness.

Modern man has tasted too much of the general flavor of science to return to the traditionalistic faiths. Is there, then, some other faith that can be open and objective like science but which can deliver man from self-destruction? Can man find a higher and fuller faith within which to use science constructively? Can man discover an open-ended truth to which he can commit himself genuinely?

The only meaning for faith that is large enough for peace is now a com-

mon meaning. Such is the case not only because we now face the concrete problems of effecting a world civilization; this claim is true also because full faith must also satisfy universal man. Just as there is no Chinese, American, Buddhist, or Christian cure for cancer, so there is no final religious cure except for man as man. Faith can never be proved and remain faith; finite man can never possess the perspective and the power of his Source of significance and reality, but he can open himself in life and study to a *warranted* faith. Faith, while remaining faith, need not be an arbitrary faith. Even though faith finally, as choice of life’s presuppositions—its directive meanings—has ultimately to be life’s daring affirmation, that faith can also become precisely *warranted*.

Perhaps we can put the case like this: Man must live by faith, since to affirm meaning is to have faith, and life itself consists in choices of meanings. Yet man need have no particular faith. The very varieties of faith show that he is free to create and to choose his faith. The value and reality of his faith, however, are revealed by the consequences of his choices in personal life and human history. Contemporary man may have to be-

come post-Christian, post-Jewish, post-Buddhist, and post-any-concrete-religion except as it is completely open to universal truth in the sense of the fullest and most competent interpretation and directive of experience. Faith man must have, but postscientific believers must find a *warranted* faith.

Can man find such a faith? I believe so. To be sure, such a faith cannot become knowledge. It can never be proved. Even though knowledge can never take the place of faith, we remember, faith must do the fullest justice possible to the problems knowledge poses. Faith cannot both remain faith and also have all the answers, but unless faith can propose answers that point as fully as knowledge can at some locus or some direction of solution, faith cannot be deemed *warranted*.

I believe that concerned commitment, as response to reality, or love’s commitment to meet as far as possible all human needs, is our only answer to man’s search for peace, the precondition for effective peace today and precisely the cure for his aversion to peace. A faith for one world can be founded on nothing less than universal concern. The whole of man must be involved—not solely his



“Have you seen a little brass stick, about six inches long?”

intellect—and be involved positively.

Perhaps man's most important affirmation of meaning right now is to let his interests mature until they grow all-inclusive. He must realize his humanity in community with other selves, and, in Jaspers's terms, obtain his very existence by reunion with the divine ground of all existence. Rousseau once started a passionate search for the will of All. He roused the will of many; what an enormous power in history he had! What is the will of All, deepest down, except Common Concern? This will of All, Common Concern, is based on that deepest need of man to be rightly related to the whole world, to the human, the natural, and the historic. At his depth man is universal in his potential nature, and I doubt not that his potential nature is his most proper nature.

But such a relationship, to all men and to their total environment, granting man's freedom, is a responsibility that puts demands on each person and on each community. The demand of duty within the will of All, however, is precisely to be concerned before and beyond duty. Such concern, moreover, engendered ultimately within the Common Concern, cannot be for the individual as such or for local and limited interests. It must be for all individuals *and* for all local interests, as far as relevant, but within their own organic inclusion within the common good.

Even an extreme existentialist like Sartre understands that man abuses his freedom unless he uses it for the common good. If it is a question of freedom, then, Sartre holds, the freedom in question must be the freedom for all. If it is a question of opportunity, then opportunity must be afforded all. If it is a demand for democracy, then the demand must be for universal democracy and for democracy in all areas of life.

The main problem, however, is to secure effective motivation for universal meanings. A narrow faith seems far more effective in moving people concretely. Family pride and national honor engender motivation easily. Peace all too readily takes a back seat to pride. Since it is these narrow loyalties which occasion war, within the situation of man's

sense of meaninglessness or dissatisfaction with life, a *warranted effective* faith must provide equivalent motivation for the universal good. Our problem centers at this point. What can constitute a genuine answer?

First of all, universal concern generated within Ultimate Concern includes all concrete legitimate loyalties and all distinctive historic heritages. Ultimate Concern is by nature universal interest, but in Ultimate Concern no abstractive universal is a substitute for the concrete interests which provide man's main motivation. The true universal man is no abstract generic man but rather the embodiment of whatever is common to man as man precisely within the richness of his concrete situations. Thus universal concern causes no loss of local loyalties; it occasions, *au contraire*, only a loss of the meaninglessness, boredom, fear, and frustration which make him put himself and his in-group in conflict with other groups. What such faith does is to dissolve man's feeling of overagainstness which occasions war and prevents peace.

**T**HE faith that centers in universal concern as the meaning common to all men becomes increasingly open to all relevant needs. If one's need is to be left alone for the sake of privacy or for maturation, universal concern leaves the person or the group alone. If the need is for help, concern is not indifferent nor does it substitute good intention for concrete study and action. Such universal faith, courting common meaning, is concretely challenging and indefinitely open to ever-widening interests and far-reaching adventures. Nor does it experience the fears and frustrations that spring from self-protection and self-promotion.

In a way, the secret of motivation for full meaningfulness is a new sense of self and of self-regard both for the person and for the nation. Selfishness and selflessness give way to *self-fulness*. There is a new sense of the inclusive or common self which only Ultimate Concern can give. The self and narrow national self-regard is more than sublimated within the larger interest, as it becomes effectively real through living, thinking, and acting. The common good

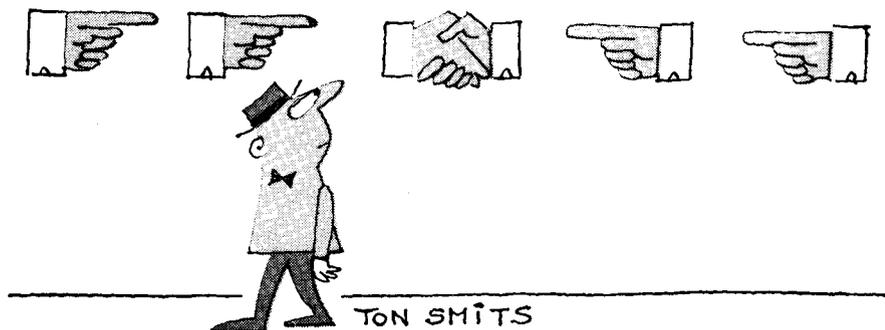
now matches motivationally the common meanings. Genuine motivation cannot be forced. It cannot be bid. It balks at commitment. Authentic motivation accompanies genuineness of life. It comes from seeing oneself and the meaning of life truly. When faith *means* Ultimate Concern not only universal meaning but universal motivation ensues.

The how to be rests ultimately on what must be. The how to get motivation depends on what is the true nature of self and the world. Both meaning and motivation, therefore, come from faith. In order to become universal in meaning and motivation, or world-wide in thought and affection, man must experience a religious revolution. Before man can find the faith that delivers him from dread of peace and brings him the will to peace in terms of the adventuresome satisfaction of universal concern, there must be a radical religious revolution within which not only a few men but mankind turn from a narrow, fear-filled self-regard to a world-wide concern that is corrective, constructive, creative.

How can we bring about such a revolution? How can we find the new *noogenesis*, the new level of evolution, which Pierre Teilhard de Chardin held to be the critical focus of man's "need now within the long history of his evolution"? How can faith for modern, postscientific man become not only intellectually warranted but motivationally effective?

The answers to this question cut athwart our entire alignment or our total approach on the secondary so-called practical level. On this level we can still speak of a "satisfactory kill-ratio" in Vietnam; substitute, ever so subtly, NATO, SEATO, and similar military arrangements, for an effective espousal, revision, and implementation of the United Nations; or only mention incidentally man's best hope as man now, the supernatural approach of world-law and world-reign (however then regionally delegated and made practicable) in even the best testimonies on Vietnam before Senator Fulbright's Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The more immediate "practical" level of strategy and manipulation has its own inescapable history and must necessarily find appropriate answers on its own level. But all such copings with the presence and power of war are futile and fugitive if man cannot find and make peace on the deeper level where the vital meaning and pursuit of life can find adequate fulfillment within an effective and warranted faith. To find, to appropriate, and to cultivate such a universal faith in integrity within the Common Concern—rooting in the very reality of God, man, and all creation, and bearing the fruit of a viable, universal ethos—is man's essential prescription for peace.



## “Tom Jones”

By KENNETH REXROTH

**T**OM JONES has been compared to Ulysses and Huck Finn. Huck he somewhat resembles; Ulysses not at all. He is more like a compound of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, not a mixture but a chemical compound of antagonistic qualities and virtues which has produced a new being. You do not read far in the novel before you become aware that Henry Fielding is constructing a character to demonstrate a thesis. He is not preaching; Tom is not a dummy or a stereotype on which proofs are hung like clothes. On the contrary, the thesis is precisely his humanity, but Fielding's is a special vision of man, common enough now, especially in America, but strange to English fiction in his day.

If the novel were simply the portrayal of an ideal human type it would have soon become unreadable. It is, of course, an immense panorama of mid-eighteenth-century England, as populous as any novel of Tolstoy's or Dostoevsky's. Comparison, however, with a work like *War and Peace* immediately reveals a profound difference. The plot of *Tom Jones* is not a “real life” story but a fairy tale, a *Märchen*, disguised with realism. Nor are the subsidiary characters fleshed out like the minor characters of the major Russian novelists. Fielding carefully subordinates all other characters to Tom and Sophie in a graded series of realizations. The nearer and more important they are to the principals, the more complex they are, but they are never very complex.

Blifil and Squire Allworthy are scarcely more rounded than the characters of Ben Jonson's Theater of Humours. The minor figures are reduced to bare essentials, quickly drawn stereotypes. The fairy-tale plot is spun out and complicated endlessly but it never becomes complex. Its situations are simple. They are pervaded with a mocking double irony by the ambiguous comments of the omniscient author; the relations between the characters constantly lapse into farce. All this gives the book an air of quiet madness—life is seen in an imperceptibly warped mirror or through a telescope, with an abnormally sharp definition, the clarity and distortion of myth.

The plot and the thesis are one: Tom is that universal hero of folk tale and myth—the foundling prince, the king's

son raised by wolves, Moses in the bullrushes, whose princely qualities shine out in all his acts and eventually determine events so that his true heritage is revealed. Fielding is defining a gentleman. The fact that many of the characters are as well or better born than Tom does not disturb the logic. They are the bad aristocrats. He is a natural gentleman—but not a noble savage, rather a noble fallen among savages; a savage noble, actually not a noble but a gentleman, quite a different concept from Rousseau's.

There is hardly an episode that does not demonstrate Tom's gentlemanliness. Fielding defines gentlemanliness as generosity of soul. Sin he may, but always for others' good. His relations with women are always motivated by the desire to please or help. When he is seduced by an old rip like Mrs. Waters, he responds with gratitude—the reaction of a generous man to generosity. This response overwhelms Mrs. Waters, and she responds at the crucial moment with a generosity that literally saves Tom's life.

Tom is the Good-Natured Man, but by this Fielding means more than his contemporaries meant by the eighteenth-century catch phrase—something very like the “human-heartedness” of Confucius. Several times Fielding interpolates little lectures on good nature that sound exactly like translations from the Chinese. Tom is very much the typical Chinese hero, and the novel could easily be restated in Chinese terms and setting. Not least of its Chinese characteristics is its decorum. Fielding wrote *Tom Jones* against the lachrymose soul-probing of Richardson's heroines, as a protest against bad manners.

**F**IELDING has been criticized again and again by a psychologistic age for his characters' total lack of interiority. Whenever they so much as reflect, the omniscient author makes fun of them and always points out that they are deluding themselves. This is part of the thesis—actions speak louder than words, and words than thoughts, especially about oneself.

When his characters become unruly—when they violate his special concept of the etiquette of human-heartedness—Fielding intrudes and admits that they are creations of his imagination and he can make them do as he wishes (and then usually comments that they have taken on a certain autonomy that escapes



his control). This horrified Henry James, who considered it artistic treason and said he would be no more shocked to find such admissions in the histories of Gibbon and Macaulay. Of course Fielding's point—the double point of his double irony—is that it is precisely such personal historians who should make such admissions. Ultimately, the decorum of Brechtian alienation is a judgment on real, undecorous life.

The blubbery self-revelations of Richardson's novels, says Fielding, are lies. He would doubtless consider those of Proust or James lifelong evasions on the part of their authors. What he thought of the novel of objective revelation of character, of Defoe and his descendants, I do not know. The evidence is that Tom himself is patterned on Defoe—but the other characters not. Defoe, however, wrote false documents—novels presented as actual memoirs. Fielding did the opposite. As the novel approaches the conviction of reality Fielding always pulls the reader back—“this is not real.” What is not real? Our judgments of “real life”? This is the essence of his irony. The omniscient author hoaxes the reader into believing *he* is omniscient and then pulls the throne from under him. Richardson, James, and Proust, on the other hand, really believed they had revealed the essences of human behavior.

Tom Jones is Fielding's conception of optimum man—but seen entirely from the outside. You feel, reflecting on the novel after long familiarity, that his imperviousness to probing and disinterestedness in self-probing was, to Fielding, an essential part of the optimum. Behind Rousseau's new and revolutionary concept of man at his best lies the inward-turning eye of Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*. Behind Fielding's Tom lies the clear and definite external sense data of John Locke, but he is an equally revolutionary type of person. Out of one came the endless self-questioning, Continental, radical, intellectual. Out of the other came the active, pragmatic man of whom Jefferson is probably the best exemplar—if the truth be told, a man who probably resembled Tom in more ways than one.