

August 7,

1966

Dear Bill,

I imagine that you have by now just about given up on me and my garrulous (sp?) correspondence. My God! When I think how long it has been since I last wrote, I just can't believe that six months have passed. However, I imagine that those months have been somewhat longer for you. As far as news is concerned, I've got plenty, though not all of it is very good. Do you by chance remember an old guy that used to appear on the tonight show a bunch of times -- his name was Alexander King? Well, in one of his many books, he came up with the following statement that "every day opens up as just another shit-bomb." I am inclined to agree with him on occasion, and on June 7, exactly two months ago today, the biggest shit bomb of all was dropped on my head. It came in an envelope with the big words, "SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM" printed in the corner. I don't know if I read the letter (my hands were shaking too much) or whether Scott read it to me. It simply informed me that I had lost my student deferment and that I would be called for my physical soon. Since I was given thirty days to make an appeal, I started to work trying to think of what to do. Of course it was rather difficult just to get over the initial paralysis, but it was not long before I was thinking of trying to go for the conscientious objector bit. Oddly enough, Bill, I really am one. I also think that you are one too, but I was, unlike you, determined to put up some sort of fight before I would be drafted. During the next month, I dug back through some of my private papers which I had written over the years and which concerned basic theological problems that I had been deeply concerned with. I started to try to pull something out of them, something unified and consistent, if that could be done.

Well, Bill, you wouldn't believe it, but Scott and I did it. Both of us working together have "discovered" a coherent, logical approach to God and in this system I was amazed by how quickly it seemed to sweep all the basic religious issues before it. It reconciled what had so long appeared to me as irreconcilable "opposites." In all honesty, I have never seen anything like quite like it. It is the closest possible approach to proving the existence of God that I have ever heard, and what's more -- not only does this view resolve the apparent conflicts of science, it actually needs and uses science to explain it.

I have begun to read the works of Philosophers to whom I had in the past paid but little attention. In Henri Bergson's metaphysics is put forth a view that is startlingly similar to the system that Scott and I have discovered.

This system seemed to answer all sorts of questions of seemingly secular significance, and the very few people to whom I have discussed this system all have been impressed profoundly by it. One of them, a boy who is pretty religious, just couldn't understand why he had not seen it before, since the system is actually very simple, though at first appearance it looks as though the variegated complexity of existence, or the manifestations of EXISTENCE would make any simple understanding impossible. I have found that the basic quality of western thinking is shaped by and colored by analytical approach. Our systems of science are based upon this fundamental process of objectification. In a sense, our basic intellectual orientation is thus divisionist by nature. This approach stands in marked contrast with the Oriental approach to theology which is essentially synthetic in nature. Of course both approaches exist and exert powerful influences upon the thinkers of both East and West, but the synthetic approach is to some degree more sophisticated than the analytical approach, for you must not only know the various qualities of reality in an analytical way in a separate way, but then you must see and realize that these seemingly separate elements are but the part of a larger plan and that opposites are, indeed, very much related to each other by the mere fact of their contrast and that their close relation in turn related to still other elements. This process of realizing this maze of interrelationships should and will move closer and closer to the realization that there are no separate elements at all but merely separate functions dictated by the highest order of unity and purpose. The realization of this, then, is, essentially a mystical one, and since it is mystical, it is always looked upon with suspicion. I know that this brief glimpse is not a particularly clear one. It takes a great deal of time to talk about it, but it can be explained, and perhaps you will want to listen. I think you will be more than amazed at it. If you are at all sympathetic you will see that even the existence of a functional separation which I just mentioned is not separate after all. I have been doing a lot of writing about it recently, and the roughest thing about it is the problem of beginning. Where do you begin when you want to convey a sense of unity. Ironically you have to approach the subject analytically and then synthesize. Language, at least our language is simply not able to cope with it very well, but I know

that another person can be put on the right track toward understanding this brand of metaphysics. In the end, it is that elusive process of intuition that eventually resolves the apparent paradox of indivisibility.

Anyway, to get back to the draft board situation a friend gave me a book, called "A Manual For Conscientious Objectors." I never looked at the questions which the draft board ~~2~~ as the manual explained, would ask me. I Could answer everone of them according to this religious system. I kept remembering what you told me, and your words, "Stay out any way you can." But you know what Bill?/ I was too chicken to try to make a stand as a Conscientious Objector. I was too chicken to want to go to Viet Nam too. Also since I had come up with this religious system at such a convenient time made me feel dirty if I were to use it just to get out of going to Viet Nam, in other words, just using it to suit my own selfish motives. The end result of all this conflict was almost total inaction. I kind of froze up, and I suddenly realized that I was going to allow myself to be swept right into the vortex of all this without ever opening my mouth. I don't think that I ever been more unhappy about anything in my life. After June 7, and for the next month and a half I was a walking shell, a zombie, completely apathetic to the problems of anybody but myself. I was dating a real good looking girl that I met at the beginning of the summer, and though we had a few dates after I received my nasty letter, it was I who became a shit and finally I stopped dating her.

I have never believed in providence, and I don't think I do now. However I am much more sympathetic to it, for by the time I went over to Dallas for my physical I was a nervous wreck, so nervous, in fact that my blood pressure made me ~~xx~~ I-Y, and now I'm free. However, my blood pressure has remained and it may have been with me for a long time. I don't care. At least I have been spared the shit that you are going through.

I know that this letter has not been very interesting. But as I said I do have a lot of news and I'll tell you about it in my next epistle. Part of that news concerns ^{the world} Loffland and I went around in April and we hunted in India. In fact we flew right over Danang, and I hope that is the closest that I ever get to Viet Nam.

John
P.S. Write back as soon as you can so that I know you are receiving my letters.