

2/22/1975

Dear David,

I'm trying to alleviate some of the confusion and annoyance — ?

In a nutshell, the military judged me three ways at once in giving me the Undesireable discharge, as:

- 1) a conscientious objector
- 2) crazy
- 3) criminal.

It wasn't just a decision at Riverside, that's the way the whole thing developed.

(1) is problematic, because I could have presented the same case as in Riverside in Alaska. The legal office there turned me away. I gave them the same core statement, and they said my chances were virtually nil. Should you have to become (3) to prove (1)?

The jist of the psychiatric experience, or abuse, was that "conscience is crazy." The military acts as if it were; first of all, towards the people within its ranks. Secondly, towards the world, cf. "Saving Southeast Asia", "Pacification", the sign over the gate of every AF base: "Peace Is Our Business". Is conscience crazy?

It would be interesting to see if the differentiation between insanity and criminal responsibility has followed a parallel course to the differentiation of legally dissenting conscience in law. Should insanity be regarded as criminal?

The opinions upon which I was awarded the "Undesireable" discharge often repeated the phrase: that I deserved the bad discharge "because of the seriousness of the crimes committed." In apposition to this, a fourth element appears in the appeal — humor.

Does humor have much to do with healthy and wholesome honesty, thinking, and the ability to persevere and respond to the world faithfully? Yes! If I can anchor my case here, so much the better!

Humor releases the stress from language. It is what prevents us from losing the tools by which we think.

I have a peripheral anecdote at this point. I was in the crowded San Diego marine brig for 4 days in sweltering August. On a Tuesday nite the Catholic chaplain gathered us together, and told us at one point that "from the Greek, literally," Jesus came to make us all hilariously happy! Can you imagine that? And then we were herded back to our cells.

What is conscience? I would say that any wholesome and honest choice is conscientious. That is not what everyone would say. That is not what the military would say. Furst & Wagnalls 1947 lists "3, (arc.) consciousness." It is not clear to me that deserting was the right thing to do. I only feel clearly that "I fried."

The Review Board may read my appeal closely and determine that I am sane, that I have no conscience, and that I belong in jail. Perhaps they will downgrade my discharge!

Meanwhile, I guess I'm having a bit of a catharsis. I love letters, and I'm happy with the music of this monkey business. I'm only sorry if Grovcho Marx was unrecognizable. I'm happy with the (Talmudic, seminarly) structure I'm giving the hearing. You are always welcome to play!

Most amazing of all, I do desire an "Honorable" discharge! Do I deserve it? Is it a fetish?

Just off the wall, Captain, what do you think about marriage? (This is not a proposal.)

I've got my eye on Western Australia, and figure the Peace Corps may help both, and, and all others.

I think several people I know about marriage. Kerri Plein is pretty tough! She's the kind of girl I'd like to have holding me if I was riding with the Hell's Angels. Penny's pretty bitchen, but she's already got the tags. Sara said she "can't." Well, how about some backpacking next summer? what are your plans? love, Mike

Attempt to play with com. metaphors:
how is to philosophy of humor is to
psychology?