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CROSSROADS FOR DEMOCRACY

IT is not the excesses of human behavior that we need to fear, so much as the justifications of them. Disasters of death and suffering are often unavoidable in human experience. The race can survive them. What it cannot survive, we are told, and it is true, is moral decline—the condition in which men no longer honor ideals, coming, instead, to determine their courses of action by the standards of a low expediency.

The ultimate argument is always the moral argument. It may be a pretense, but it is always used.

Concerning the issue of war, for example, those who demand a continuance and reinforcement of the policy of obtaining absolute military superiority for the United States, seldom speak only of "survival." The military strength they want is also and finally for our *moral* protection. We are to be invincible because an unfree life is not worth living. Defeat or submission in war is held to mean an intolerable degradation, not to be endured at any price. The moral argument for military preparation is intended to produce, to some extent produces, a surge of emotional certainty that we have no real choice—we *must* accept the destiny of becoming the most powerful nation on the face of the earth, capable of overcoming any or any combination of our opponents.

Facts and figures cannot prevail against the moral argument. Actually, facts and figures *ought not to prevail* against a moral argument. The moral sense is the most precious thing we possess. If we lose that, we are no longer human.

The other side of this argument is also a moral one, but with a difference—in the case of the advocates of military means, our moral condition is thought to be determined by what we are able to keep from having done to us, whereas those who reject the military means define morality as arising from what we do or are unwilling to do to others.

This difference is the basic issue—it is a question of whether morality lies in a condition or in an intention.

If it lies in a condition—if a morality preserved by a favorable condition is the highest good—then *anything* is justified that can be seen to maintain that condition. The highest good controls the right and wrong of everything else. It makes the definitions of all the lesser goods.

But if, on the other hand, a man's intentions embody his true morality, then his external condition is entirely secondary. Loss of freedom, for such a man, is never loss of his moral integrity. He will not, therefore, do evil in order to prevent evil from coming to him.

Unfortunately, the issue seldom appears before us clothed in these simple terms. There is for example the problem of the young. Although a philosopher like Epictetus, or a Saint like Paul, may be able to preserve the integrity of his intentions while imprisoned, children have not yet matured their convictions. They, it is argued, must be protected against their vulnerability to the suggestion of false doctrines. So, the argument runs, for children and other suggestible people we need to preserve the conditions of true morality. It is all very well to talk of the subjective purity of distinguished individuals, but this does not apply to *us*. An oppressive environment would pervert us from our way of life, so that, even if intentions constitute the highest morality, we must fight to the last breath for the kind of society in which the correct intentions may be taught.

At this point, the problem of the moral life becomes a social question. At this level, men

assume moral responsibility for the decisions of others—the young, the misled, and the immature.

Now the fact of the matter is that some men have always assumed a measure of responsibility for the young, the misled, and the immature. It is practically a law of nature that it is so. In some societies, the assumption of this responsibility is bold, brazen, and triumphant. In other societies it is done in secret, with tacit agreement that this is something that one does not talk about. Then there is the responsibility assumed by the educator—openly, but without coercive authority.

It is the general opinion in the West that the societies which give exclusive authority to some men for making decisions are conceived in infamy. Of course, if the authority is *delegated*, as by an election, then social morality is preserved, since orderly government is possible for a democratic society only by the delegation of authority. But if the authority is seized, as by a tyrant; or if it inheres in certain persons, because of some dark *mystique*, as in the case of Hitler; or if it is maintained by a clique of leaders, in violation of equalitarian pretensions, as in certain communist states, then the society is from the democratic point of view condemned as an evil society. The blanket term for all such societies of the twentieth century is *totalitarian.*

In the solution of the problem of authority, you have to make assumptions. These are assumptions about the nature of man and about the knowledge which is possessed by man. The theocratic solution of the problem of authority declares that the correct order of society is defined by divine revelation, and that the persons who are to exercise authority are revealed by heavenly omens of one sort or another. Men, it is held, are of such a nature that they ought to be docile before the divinely constituted authorities and obedient to the laws which arise from the Author of their being.

The democratic solution assumes that all men have equal authority by nature, or in principle; that the best social order is the order which is defined by rational determinations, upon which all men agree, or upon which a majority of them agree. But the democratic solution also assumes the fallibility of the majority, and therefore provides a region of freedom from the majority will for all individuals and minority groups. This region includes the critical area of religion and philosophy, and the entire range of intellectual inquiry, and all activities legitimately connected with intellectual inquiry and expression of opinion. This region is provided for two reasons: first, it preserves individual freedom in the non-social areas of private belief and opinion; second, it allows for the possibility that a single individual or a minority may come upon a truth unperceived by the majority, but of value to all, since it is truth. In short, the freedoms established by democracy allow for rational change in majority or ruling opinion.

Broadly speaking, the authoritarian societies hold that men in general are unfit to devise their own government for themselves, and that it must be done for them. The democratic societies take the opposite view—that men *are* fit to govern themselves.

Both types of society suffer from practical difficulties. The authoritarian societies must practice the utmost severity to maintain a single social philosophy among their populations. They are continually indoctrinating and propagandizing their people, to assure submission and cooperation. The democratic societies, in turn, are continually having to hide the *relative* unfitness of the people to govern themselves. The democratic societies are all honeycombed with petty little satrapies of arbitrary authority—paternalistic, irrational, sectarian—which extend throughout all the social institutions of the West. Politics, business, and religion are full of these groupings and foci of control. A comparatively small number of people operate according to the theory of democratic decision. Instead of the beautifully rational conclusions which the entire population is supposed to arrive at, a host of

dictated and often contradictory opinions shape the mass "views" of a democratic people, which are in turn "interpreted" by leaders in justification of their own actions and decisions. This is not to decry the leaders in this instance. They can do very little else, although abuse of power is an obvious possibility in such circumstances. The mechanisms of discovering what the people "want" are clumsy at best, and the question is complicated by the fact that many, many people do not know what they want—they want, rather, to be told what they *ought* to want, in such a way that they can take satisfaction in believing that they have reached their conclusions by a respectable process of investigation and reflection.

This is not intended to be a cynical view of the democratic processes. Further, there are some qualifications to be entered. A certain safety for the people is provided by their feelings. Leaders are followed by no means for rational reasons alone. Earnestness and honesty get a high appraisal almost by instinct. Of course, people make mistakes in assessing the qualities of the men whom they tend to follow. Clever men are forever exploiting the moral simplicities of the population at large. And if the moral tone of social life generally is at low ebb, the people become more vulnerable to schemers and demagogues.

For more than a generation, sociologists have been becoming aware of these difficulties. An obvious educational measure directed at correcting this weakness in democratic societies is emphasis on self-reliant action in smaller areas of social and political relationships. The more participation there can be at the level of the face-to-face human community, the more competence is developed to react to larger problems intelligently. The choice of experts to handle difficult problems which are over our heads is, after all, an *administrative* sort of decision, involving, not specialized knowledge, but sagacity in evaluating human qualities. Especially in a technological society is there this need, since practically all major problems of government are filled with complexity.

But however we may pursue these educational expedients, the basic problem remains. The majority of people look to others for their opinions, even while they want, in the abstract, to make up their own minds. Democracy honors the abstract ideal, while the authoritarians rely upon the prevailing tendency.

If we look at the history of the past two hundred years in these terms, we may experience considerable encouragement over what would otherwise be an extremely depressing situation. In the light of typical human behavior, the birth of democracy in the eighteenth century appears as a highly optimistic leap into the political unknown. The astonishing thing is that in the case of, say, the United States, self-government has been so successful. Even if we admit the extraordinary advantage of having a relatively untouched continent rich in natural resources to develop, the achievement is still monumental, and not only in the area of economic growth. The measure of genuine freedom, available to, if not used by, Americans is truly miraculous by comparison with conditions in the seventeenth century. In fact, it is by no means clear how it was all accomplished, unless we are willing to admit that the release of idealism and individual initiative effected by the political philosophy of the eighteenth century, put into practice by the American people, was a new force in human history.

Has this force exhausted itself? A better question to ask, perhaps, is, Can this force be renewed?

Much could be written about the different ways in which the primitive moral energies of the democratic community are dissipated. For one thing the heavily weighted structure of a vast technological society has taken the place of a collection of rural, agricultural communities. The economic life of this society has come to be dependent upon the studied manipulation of human desires. Further, the requirements of

politics have recently changed into the requirements of the politics of total war. All these influences have complicated as well as regimented the forms of political decision. Meanwhile, we are being made increasingly aware of the controlling role of dozens of small "authorities" who mold opinion as a professional activity. Recognition of the small degree to which we do "think for ourselves" acts as a disillusioning force. We begin to see that we are not what we thought we were. The free individual begins to look like an impossible myth, a kind of folk hero we can no longer believe in because he does not, can not, exist, in our society.

The intellectual level at which people begin to be aware of this situation is about the same as the level at which dozens of small *élites* pursue their activities of shaping opinion. Usually the members of these élites regard themselves as the glue which holds modern civilization together. They get people to do the things that have to be done in order to make the wheels go round, whether it is buying goods, or putting in the right man at election time. They think of themselves as filling the vacuum between the unfulfilled ideal of people intelligently governing themselves and the awkward, amorphous mass of population which doesn't know what it wants and has, in fact, no coherent identity at all. The élites give the mass an identity in terms of their slogans and the pattern of behavior they have designed, and this becomes a somewhat haphazard facade that is loosely spoken of as "public opinion." But it is neither public, nor is it opinion. It is simply the shadow of a clandestine authoritarianism operating with the subtleties of persuasion and suggestion instead of the rule of political authority. The extraordinary success of this sort of authoritarianism lies, as John Lukacs pointed out recently, in the fact that it is anonymous. Writing in the second *Anchor Review,* he said:

> In some ways, the making of opinion has more dangerous implications in a free than in a totalitarian nation. In the latter the opinion-makers are official persons. In the former they (except for the new rapidly increasing propaganda agencies) are not. But because of the now standard practice of coloring and distorting the "news," when even the "straight news" comes from the press wires in an already pre-cooked form, opinion and reaction in the free countries, as Canon Bell wrote, "is manageable as truly as in any censor-controlled totalitarian state, perhaps more effectively than in such a state because the reader in this country thinks he is perusing independent journals while, with rare exceptions, he is not. His suspicion of being manipulated is thereby lulled."
>
> While I prefer to live in a society where I can buy my shirts from among a number of designs established by an elite of to me unknown shirt designers, to living in a society where shirt design is established by an official Ministry of Clothing of the existence of which I am very much aware, this is not true when it comes to opinions. The notion of an officially imposed current opinion may lead the simplest mind to some inner question, to some rebellion; but the more anonymous, the less visible the opinion-making process, the deeper and more pernicious its influence. For this it is not even necessary that the opinion-makers themselves should know what they are actually doing. A hack writer for Time may not know that he is a public opinion-maker; yet his influence may, at times, reach deeper and farther than that of the scribbler for *Pravda* whose "columns" are broadcast by slow dictation for transcription to trans-Siberian provincial capitals every night from the central radio station of Moscow.

Mr. Lukacs continues:

> But whether we call it "intellectual élite," or "creative minority," it is sadly evident that their performance is not much different from that of the advertising or ideological hucksters. The pernicious practice of categorization, the adulation of the scientific method, the inclination to judge, not men's deeds or words, but their motives, has been very typical of the contemporary intelligentsia who, after all, are and remain important opinion-makers. Their influence is made felt largely through magazines, and these have already exercised an influence on honest writing which is nothing short of damnable. I believe that the magazine is the typical, and the most intellectual, vehicle of the twentieth century; in itself, a symptom of our obsession with the ephemeral (consider, for instance, how many books are written today in the form of articles for magazines first, and for books only second). Few writers today feel they write for a reading public, but neither can they afford to write for themselves. They write for editors. The

> article-writer dares not concern himself with what he sees ominous or important; he must direct his attention to what is currently running as intellectually obvious, to the currently fashionable political opinions and clichés—not to what is important but to what, at a given time, the editorial world considers important.

Thus, what we now have is a fairly clear understanding of the abuses of the weakness of the democratic system, not only because of its difficult ideal, but also because of a failure to take into realistic account the fact that only a small minority of people are prepared to function as effective citizens of democracy. The question is: what shall we do about that fact?

There are two alternatives. One is that the democratic system can be openly turned into a contest of institutionalized groups, each competing for privileged position and a share of the power of government. This is the alternative we have actually been following, although not avowedly. The other alternative is to realize for the democratic system what it already is, implicitly—an educational situation in which the maturer members take the responsibility for shaping opinion in the same spirit as that which animates the university professor or any conscientious teacher: he seeks to awaken and foster the principle of independent decision in his students, and he refuses absolutely to manipulate their minds, since this is the betrayal of the educational process.

It would seem that there is no other way to renew the force of the ideal of democracy, since the alternative of manipulation means the practical ruin of democracy and a voluntary submission to authoritarian techniques.

The only argument against the ideal alternative is that we haven't the *time* to await the slow process of education; we are confronted by emergency after emergency, and the people must be manipulated into doing what is "necessary," for their own good. This argument has also been implicit in the misuse of persuasion in connection with "opinion shaping," for many years. The distinction of this argument in the present is that it is now forced out into the open. At the same time, there is a general tendency of the manipulators to coalesce into a solid group of self-appointed masterminds who conceive it their responsibility to cajole and coerce mass behavior and decision into various predetermined directions. This is the burden of C. Wright Mills' recent book, *The Power Elite.*

So, it is a time of painful dilemma for those who are able to recognize what is happening to our society. Again, it is not so much what we do, but the reasons we give for what we do, which reveals our morality. And when the reasons for the betrayal of the educational aspect of the democratic process begin to be given openly, we have reached a critical crossroads of decision.

REVIEW
PAPERBACK BREAK-THROUGH

WE have never polled MANAS readers to discover how many happen to share with the editors a persistent attraction to Western novels and novelettes. From time to time we have discussed elements of the Western story which remind us of missing ingredients in a mechanized culture, but it is also necessary to be aware of the fact that few "Westerns" are credible, and few of those which attempt intrigue by the addition of "psychological" dimensions are in any way instructive.

Recommendation: a Gold Medal paperback by Steve Frazee called *Running Target.* Mr. Frazee is certainly credible, and the psychological dimensions of his story lay claim to considerable insight.

The book concerns a present-day manhunt in mountain territory. As the four escaped convicts work their way deep into a wilderness of peaks and valleys, both they and the pursuers find themselves in an ever more remote relationship with patterns of thought and action common in city life. Leadership of the posse finally falls to a young deputy sheriff who cares little for his task, and who is engaged in a perpetual struggle with an "amateur" deputy—a saloon keeper who has a positive lust for hunting down "the biggest game" of all. Deputy Newton has seen action in Korea, was once seriously wounded and, in his case, the experience generates a sympathy for any man threatened by bullets.

During the pursuit Newton also senses that the boldest of the convicts is a man of rare strength, one much better able to enjoy the mountain vastness than the posse member with the pet gun who asks nothing more than a chance to kill. The following passages present the beginning of Newton's musings on the irony of association with a "representative of the law" who seems more vicious than those they are pursuing:

> He listened to water dripping from the needles into the rain-soaked forest. Jaynes was sound asleep, snoring gently, wheezing a little and gurgling when he shifted position. Jaynes could sleep like a child. Things were simply cut and outlined for him. All he wanted was a fair shot at Kaygo. As far as Jaynes was concerned, that would settle the affair permanently and to everyone's satisfaction.
>
> Jaynes could return to his bar, and business would be helped by the fact that curious people would come to see the man who was such a deadly shot, such a nemesis of felons. "He got three out of four himself. What the hell did they need with the clowns they sent along with him?"
>
> Not that Jaynes was out chasing escaped convicts to gain a reputation that would help sell drinks; there was a darker, deeper compulsion in him that drove him to stand safely behind the law and kill men on the other side. . . .
>
> Newton rolled around restlessly. Why didn't Kaygo run? Everything he was doing was contrary to the pattern of a city criminal. There was too much about him that was unknown. It should be enough to know that he had killed two policemen. Newton should have no interest in him beyond that; and at the first, that had been the extent of Newton's interest. Then he had seen young Weyerhauser blasted and shocked into the long darkness, and Jaynes had been so callous about it. Maybe that was where the whole thing stood: he was fighting Jaynes, not the fact that he was an officer of the law who must bring back a dead man as a trophy to prove his worth as society's hired hand.

But even in his viciousness, Jaynes is a man to be pitied rather than to be disposed of after a trick revelation of his own criminal connivance at the end. Jaynes is simply a man without perspective, completely devoid of a sense of humor—a case of arrested or distorted emotional development. He senses that the other members of the posse disapprove of him and is hurt and troubled. Frazee conveys this during a conversation between Newton and Jaynes, when the deputy has failed to join the long range fusillade when they glimpse Kaygo for a moment:

> "I'd still like to know why you didn't shoot," Jaynes said. "You didn't even try. You act like the stinking louse is your brother."

My brother. The thought ploughed through Newton, leaving a fresh wake of wonder. It was not correct to speak of men as brothers; you killed your brother, just like anyone else. . . .

"You've acted all along like that stinking con was your brother!"

"Get on your way, Jaynes. Get out of my sight before I forget I'm a brother to you too !"

Jaynes began to back away. "What are you talking about? Brother!"

"It's hard to admit, Jaynes, but that's the word."

There is nothing unusual about extolling the virtues of "brotherhood" or "reverence for life." But there is something compelling in these perceptions of the meaning of human identity as it is dramatically unveiled amid complicated and paradoxical circumstances. Newton is helped to his new comprehension, almost mystical in its manner of arrival, by a realization that he feels closer to the leader of the convicts than to three members of the posse. While both Newton and the fugitive he is tracking know what to do with guns, there is an indication that they don't *like* guns. Those who caress their rifles, to whom hunting and shooting are a kind of primitive religion, belong to another sub-species of human being.

Finally, circumstances compel Newton to press for a showdown, after unaccountably allowing Kaygo, the last convict, to break away from his sights during one phase of the pursuit. Newton wishes that he didn't have a gun, even though he knows he must use it:

That some fine grinding of unknown mills that had put the task in Newton's hands had seemed inevitable. Newton resented his selection, resented the fact that there was no other way to settle the problem of Marty Kaygo. And he knew that he would do precisely what he was hired to do when Marty Kaygo came into the saddle. It would be no more than a hundred yards.

You act like that stinking con is your brother!

Yes, my brother down there, Newton thought. As much a brother as Jaynes, as Rudd, as any other man. When he comes close enough, I'll call out to him to drop his rifle and raise his hands. I'll do that, knowing all the time how useless my plea will be.

He looked at his hand. The lines were dark with the dirt of camp life. The palm was torn and stained with dried blood from climbing among the rocks. It was a strong, sure hand. The three-jointed thumb was the great development of evolution that had sent man far ahead of the lower beasts of the jungle.

The thumb would serve as a minor brace to steady his hand on the dark wood and cold steel of the rifle, while a slight tug of the forefinger would unleash the improved fangs of mankind against an erring member of the tribe.

The sweat was chilling on Newton and the wind scampered with new coldness through his clothing.

Genuine "pacifism," we take it, is a discovery and not a doctrine. It would be hard for anyone to argue that a person who makes Newton's sort of discovery is other than a better *peace* officer because of his disinclination to continue the chain reactions of violence. And it is also possible that many of those who read *Running Target*, or other stories cast in a similar mold, will come much closer to the sort of understanding which forms the only guardian wall against the endless repetitions of hate-filled slaying.

There are no classical villains in Frazee's book, and courage is evident on both sides of the law. But some idea is provided of the consequences which flow from different attitudes of mind—consequences which can be seen in politics and international affairs as well as throughout the whole gamut of lawlessness.

COMMENTARY
TWO MORALITIES

NORMAN COUSINS, editor of the *Saturday Review*, was the guest of the Soviet Peace Committee two months ago and on June 25 he addressed the Presidium of the Committee on the subject of Soviet foreign policy. His speech was not complimentary. While there was no notice of what he said in the Moscow papers, Mr. Cousins made the text of his address available to the press when he returned to the United States. The New York *Times* (July 20) report said:

> Asserting that "anything less than open and direct talk between us is actually a form of treason to the human race," Mr. Cousins explained in address why Americans felt as they did about the Soviet Union. He made these points
>
> I. "The Communist party in the United States has been a party without honor because it works, not for the United States, but for the Soviet Union."
>
> 2. This Communist party was for many years an apologist for a dictatorship that engaged in "a series of purges the extent and harshness of which produced shock waves throughout the world" and were later disavowed by "the man who now has the honor to be Premier of this mighty nation."
>
> 3. The height of the United States' moral separation from the Soviet Union came in August, 1939, when the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact with Hitler.

Mr. Cousins is peculiarly free to speak in this way to the Russians, since he is the editor of one of the very few mass circulation papers in the United States which on occasion undertakes to be outspokenly critical of the foreign policy of the United States.

But what we are led to reflect upon by this brief critique of Soviet behavior is the curious lack of embarrassment on the part of the Communists, in the face of the record. There has been some confusion, of course which is perhaps a form of embarrassment—but no real shame.

Why not? For the convinced communist, it seems to us, there is no moral life except the political life, so that he can have no serious concern with any consequences of mistakes, unless they are *political* consequences. If the standards are all political, there is no need to explain one's position to one's self. All the important explanations are to others, as a form of political action.

The man of this psycho-emotional constitution cannot permit himself the moral luxury of disillusionment. Nor can he withdraw from politics because, for him, there is no place he can go. To *be*, for him, is to be political. He has no moral existence outside of politics so how can he be affected by moral judgments which arise outside of the political frame of reference?

Of course, people of this sort are not all communists. It happens simply that communists are excellent illustrations of the type. The doctrinaire communist is a man whose potentialities are exhausted by his relation to the State.

All judgments of the political actions of States must originate in some region of authority which is independent of States. Unless this region exists, there can be no judgment of States, no morality except political morality.

It is in the character of our times that the necessities of States are increasing the area of State control, so that in more and more cases, State authority (or State "morality") is invading the region of independent morality. In Soviet Russia, the conquest of independent morality by State morality is complete. In the West, there is clash and challenge between the two authorities. Westerners are divided among themselves on this issue. There are those, for example, who seldom fail to argue that a "true" private morality will always agree with the State's current definition of righteous behavior.

The problem, for Westerners, lies in the difficulty of *imagining* a society in which an independent morality can be permitted to prevail against the State morality. Westerners believe in

principle in the superiority of private morality, but the ugly question of "survival" has become an insistent argument for the supremacy of State morality.

How will this issue be settled? You hear all sorts of things about a rising spirit of inquiry in Russia, about the new educated classes and the promise of their demand for a rational social order; but predictions concerning Russia would be foolish at this time. A more general view of the issue as a *world* problem suggests two considerations. First, there is the long suppressed and more or less hidden moral aspect of human beings everywhere, which would welcome an opportunity to live in freedom without the pressures of the State. No doubt the impulse to a life based upon independent morality lacks strength and discipline; no doubt it lacks a rationalizing philosophy; but it exists as a seed and, given a proper soil, it may flower.

Second, the idea of State (which is no more than the idea of State *power)* may meet its *reductio ad absurdum* in the unmanageable character of nuclear armaments. That is, the means to survival in the terms of the State is also the means of universal destruction. On this basis, the "survival" argument for State morality becomes meaningless.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

UNNECESSARY FEARS

SOMETIMES, when dealing with the subject of education, Henry Miller sounds a little wild, but his extremes are not only provocative, but also frequently hit various nails of truth fairly on the head.

In a new quarterly titled *Coercion* (Spring 1959), Mr. Miller discusses the treachery of adults in their treatment of children:

> We bring them into the world, we remark on their purity and innocence, then we abandon them to their cruel fate.
>
> Who are the children and who are the adults?
>
> From the moment they enter this world of ours they are victims of ignorance, cruelty, hypocrisy, tyranny. What chance have they to defend themselves? If they are angels they are crucified; if individuals they are maimed and tortured and if they are "bent" who will raise a hand to straighten them?

What justification may there be for this rhetoric? What Mr. Miller seems to have in mind here—and all the time is that most of the so-called "adults" of the civilized world are conditioned to patterns which dissolve opportunities for knowing themselves as they really are. Even the "beast" within the breast of the average person is not faced honestly and nakedly; our lip-service opposition to the downgrade emotions is directed into orthodox channels. We fight wars, allow heresy and witch hunts, we perpetuate the machinery of capital punishment, we seek a position where, securely protected by the inbred thoughts of a particular group, party or religion, we can safely condemn those of different opinion. That is, this is what many of us do, most of the time, culturally and politically. And this is the world into which our children are born. So perhaps Mr. Miller is justified in saying: "Whatever adults do, say or teach I find questionable. What have they thought out for themselves? Wherein have they proved their freedom? By what right do they command, judge, punish, discipline others?"

The fears which prevent self-discovery go back far beyond observable cultural patterns. If it is true that only the philosopher is unafraid, it is also true that only a philosopher is fit company for a child. The philosopher's freedom from fear is based upon a single profound perception—that no one ever need be afraid of an *idea*. Physical fear is merely an instinct to preserve the body. It turns no one into a coward unless he is also afraid of the *idea* of pain or possible death. Fear of *ideas* is the real destroyer of our creative energies, and we can have little regard for theological traditions which have spread a dread of what may come when the body dies.

Here we can augment Mr. Miller's argument with a recent experience.

This morning, when we took a five-year-old to his nursery school, the director asked for a moment of private consultation. This little boy was in trouble. The parent of another child had called up the school and complained. *Her* little boy, after a conversation with ours, went home terrified by thoughts of death. He had great difficulty going to sleep, and suffered nightmares.

Who was responsible for this unhappy state of affairs? Well, it turned out that the writer of this column was the real culprit. His child, during a short bike tour, had encountered a funeral procession forming at a church. After observing, and asking a member of the party what was going on, he was told it was a funeral and that he should stay away. So he rode home and asked, again, what was going on.

We told him that many people, when a friend or relative dies, hold a special sort of get-together, in order to think about the person who has died and to hope that everything will go well with him now that he has left his body. (We thought this pretty tolerant of us in the matter of funerals.) But since he had seen the coffin and divined its contents, he wanted to know why they brought

the *body* along to the funeral. We had no good answer for that one. The questions continued. "What," he asked, "do they do with the body after they take it away?" We described the two chief alternatives—burial and cremation. This, it must be confessed, seemed to provide a welcome opportunity for treating of the subject of "dead bodies" impersonally. Cremation, among other things, reduces the precious elements of body chemistry to interesting bits of color. There is nothing horrible about the sight of human ashes, but rather a reminder of the miraculous complexity which makes all life possible—the forces of life and consciousness are perhaps better seen to be the true components of man, since the remainder is merely reminiscent of pretty crystals from a rock formation.

This was all very interesting to him and he appeared to think that the cremation way of handling the problem was much better than the other. Then he wanted to know if that was what I was going to have done when my body died. Yes, sir. But death seemed to him to be as natural as everything else, nothing spooky or scary about it—not an idea of which to be frightened. So, during the day at nursery school, something led him to repeat his new-found information, and the other child was frightened.

The other child had never been told anything about death, but he *feared* the idea of death because his parents felt that death was a terrible subject, never to be mentioned. This, we think, is the real tragedy. We teach people to be afraid of ideas when we are afraid to discuss them. We teach a child to fear when we have no cheerful answers to his questions, and once a fear of this nature takes root, the child will attract similar fears, like filings to a magnet.

A philosopher knows enough to separate the event from the person, the person from his body, the mind from any particular disturbing attribute of personality. The philosopher accepts death as a phase, every political opinion as a phase, every appearance of destructive action as a sign of temporary ill-health—and, as Miller implies, every child is born with a natural inclination toward philosophy. It is in our failure to recognize this fact, and in our unconscious foisting of the atmosphere of our own fears upon the child, that we betray him.

FRONTIERS

Lambaréné Revisited

THE old-fashioned plane sank through dense clouds and there it was again: cabbage patches of virgin forest floating in the soupy network of the Ogowe river. Skimming over the palms and kapok trees, over the Hospital and the Catholic mission we landed, recurrent miracle, on the airstrip. From the window I spotted Emmy, the housekeeper who had come to deliver a guest to the same plane. I had come earlier than expected and she looked at me as if I were an apparition from outer space. I decided to go to the hotel in Lambaréné, for it was the 14th of July and although the Gabon Republic is an independent country now, with only token ties to France, the French national holiday was apparently still being honored.

I took the primitive ferry across the Ogowe to Lambaréné-Downtown just as the first dancers were appearing. In the distance I saw a tall frightening presence: a man in a mask with closed eyes, a huge straw lion's mane crowning it, came leaping towards me, his red cassock and wide, straw, skirt-like trousers floating in the wind. He was preceded by another man who had painted his black face white, brandishing something like a nightstick. The demon flew past me, his two leopard tails flying behind him. The figure which followed him also had his face painted white with a simulated streak of blood running down his forehead. He was swinging an axe. Eight others danced the rearguard, weeds wound around their heads, palm branches waving in their hands. Further down a figure on stilts, twice as tall as a man, burlap rags flying in the breeze, a Buddha-like white mask covering his face, was doing a nightmare dance. Young men challenged him with sticks, whipping up his frenzy. He used the broom he held in one of his hands as a scourge, swinging so far out of the vertical that it was inconceivable that he could keep his balance on the enormous stilts. Men and women watched in trance as the drums went madder and madder. In another circle two lion-like demons were somersaulting, charging every now and then into the spectators who scattered in mock, or perhaps not-so-mock, panic. . . . I was fascinated and uneasy. This was just a little too much of Africa to fall into from the sky!

I intended to go to the Hospital the next day, for I was two days early. After ten strenuous days in the new and baffling Republic of Ghana I had wanted to take a few days rest in Douala (Cameroons), but I found out that Douala was the wrong place for a rest. Arriving at the airport there, I saw a few soldiers with bayonets but didn't pay much attention. When the Customs officer fumbling in my luggage had asked: "Any arms?" I had joked: "Oh, just a little cannon." He had given me a strange look. Then I heard the word "curfew" and found that I had arrived in a horrible and mysterious wave of terrorism. Some fourteen people had been killed that week: shot in a movie house, beheaded in a café, chopped up with machetes after a car accident. Planes had been burned on the airfield. The city looked peaceful enough, but it was rather dead, for long before the curfew was effective not a soul was to be seen. Only two Americans, innocents abroad, were walking around trying to take pictures. Later they sauntered into the hotel and while I was eating my "bifteck" they came to ask my advice, giving me all the unappetizing symptoms of what sounded like an ugly dysentery. The only thing on the French menu which I could advise them to eat was halibut, *poché, sauce mousseline*. In the deserted diningroom they sat down together unhappily, washing the fish down with Coca Cola, the black *maitre d'hotel* studying them from his corner with the detached scientific interest reserved for the observation of American natives.

Douala obviously was less than ideal and I took the first plane out of it. At the hotel in Lambaréné it felt immediately like home. The lumbermen and merchants of the region who had come to celebrate their 14th of July had been my patients and even the forbidding gendarme left the

bar to show me how well my fillings had held up. My professional future was assured! Next morning early the Schweitzer fleet came paddling down the river to pick me up. The leper oarsmen with Obiange as their chief, were very enthusiastic to see me again and as we paddled up the placid river an undulating phalanx of pelicans winged over the pirogue as if welcoming me back. Nothing had changed except that a large Catholic school was being built near the bend which hides the Hospital from view. A boy standing up in his pirogue was waving his arms at me and I recognized Aduma, who is going to be a teacher. Close to the Hospital the oarsmen started to sing loudly: *"C'est le telephone pour le Grand Docteur,"* explained Obiange unnecessarily. Under the trees I recognized Ali coming down to the landing followed by Dr. Schweitzer running like a young man and Mathilde Kottmann trying to keep up with him while preserving her dignity. We all were touched and kissed each other on both cheeks. But Schweitzer scolded me right away: "So glad you are back," he said, "but why didn't you come yesterday?"

"I didn't want to get everybody hopping on a holiday," I replied.

"Still didn't lose your blasted good manners," he growled, "they are just no use." And immediately he wanted to know all about Ghana and Douala. It felt as if I had only been away for a few days by the time we sat down for lunch and the familiar voice said quietly: "Thank the Lord for He is kind and His goodness is everlasting."

There were some of the familiar faces, but many new ones: new nurses, new helpers for the building projects, a new Japanese doctor for the Leper Village. My neighbors at table were Professor Linus Pauling and his wife. Professor Pauling had interrupted a lecture tour all over Europe and flown all the way down to the Equator to spend a few days with Dr. Schweitzer, a fellow Nobel Prize winner with whom he shares a deep concern about genetic damage caused by atomic experimentation. Apart from the human newcomers I noticed two gay young chimpanzees, a pelican, a femur, a tame wildcat called Maurice, a tiny white-nosed monkey chattering like a canary and an earnest gorilla youngster, Peterli, with long soft hands which gently but inescapably clasp my legs while his profound eyes seek mine. The chimps are always ready to smile but Peterli remains grave, slowly folding his hands over his belly when I tickle him.

After dinner in his room Schweitzer spoke about the hard work he had done in building a new road to the Hospital for the transport of the 10,000 lbs. of bananas and the other foods needed each week for the patients. Importation has become more difficult and reluctantly he had to break the traditional isolation of the Hospital. Next day I even saw him supervise the building of the garage. He was mixing concrete himself.

"You never dreamt you would have to start building garages," I said.

"No," said Schweitzer, "I hate to see our simplicity go. . . ."

"It was so much more beautiful long ago," mused Mademoiselle Mathilde, "when not everybody was writing about us." And she told me that next day two plane-loads with journalists were expected who would bring incidentally hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of drugs. It had simply been started by the idealism of a young American boy in Naples, but soon snowballed into a large publicity-hullaballoo.

"They did not ask us, they just announced their coming by telegram," said Schweitzer, "just like the people who came here with a piece of iceberg as a publicity stunt." All of a sudden he looked all of his eighty-four years old. "Do you need all these drugs?" I asked. Mathilde answered: "We'll give most of them away to doctors and hospitals in the territory."

"How terrible that you have to entertain so many people again," I said to Dr. Schweitzer.

"What can you do?" he answered with a smile. "When it is raining, it is raining." The next day I had started my work and from the window of my clinic saw the forty or so American and Italian journalists, hung with cameras big as anti-aircraft guns, combing the Hospital grounds, stared at unhappily by the patients. Dr. Schweitzer with some doctors and nurses was trying tactfully to keep the invaders in line. We all wondered what crazy stories would come out of this again.

After they had left in their chartered motorboats and pirogues, the Old Man looked worn out yet immensely relieved.

"Still, there were some very nice chaps amongst them," he said. "What a terrible life these poor creatures have, always chasing after a scoop. You just can't turn them away. They would lose their jobs . . ."

With kindest regards and au revoir!

FREDERICK FRANCK