

RISING UP AND RISING DOWN
WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN

VOLUME I

THREE MEDITATIONS ON DEATH

INTRODUCTION:
THE DAYS OF THE NIBLUNGS

DEFINITIONS FOR LONELY ATOMS

RISING UP
AND
RISING DOWN

VOLUME ONE

WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN



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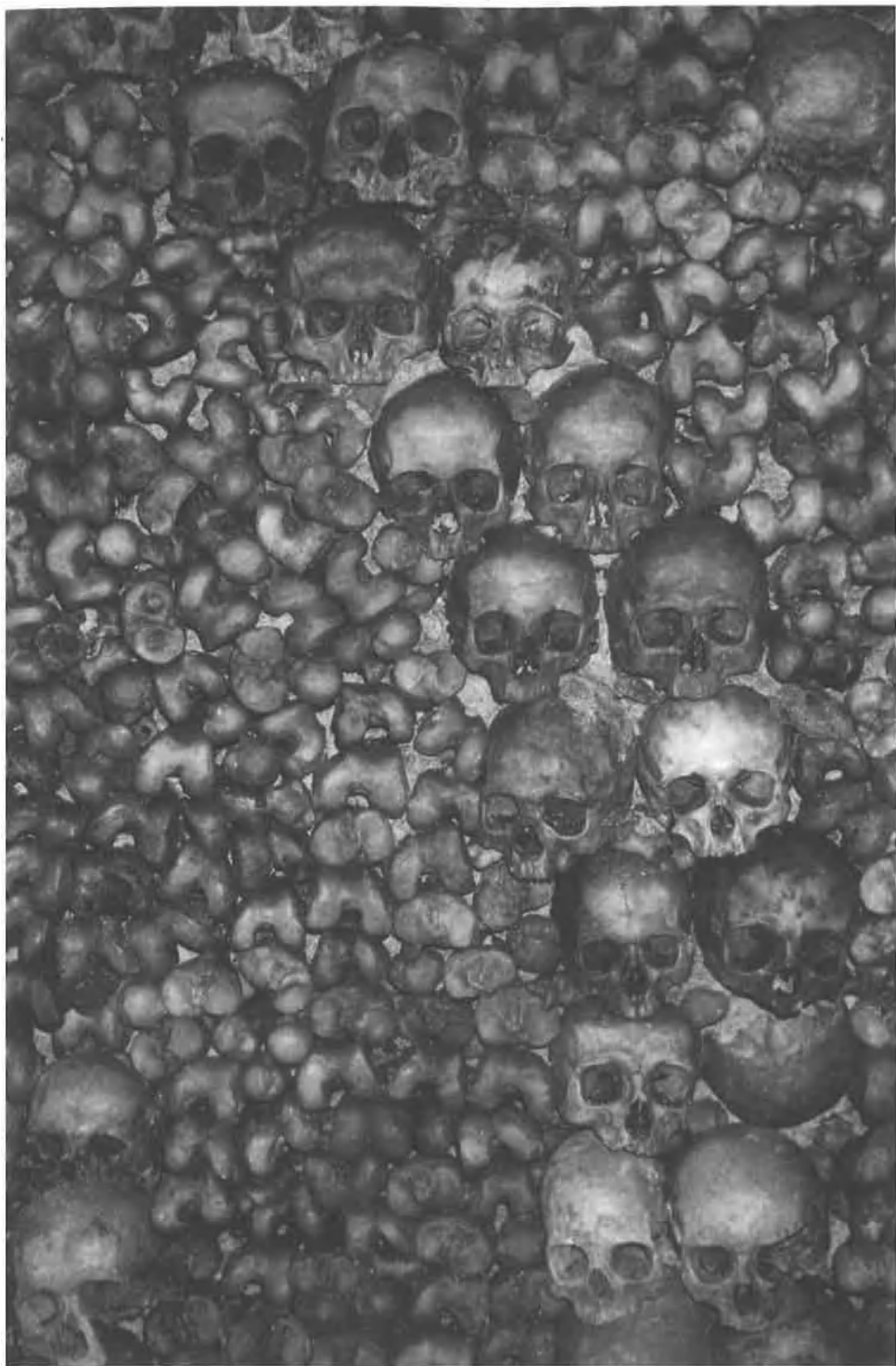
THREE MEDITATIONS ON DEATH

I. CATACOMB THOUGHTS

Death is ordinary. Behold it, subtract its patterns and lessons from those of the death that weapons bring, and maybe the residue will show what violence is. With this in mind, I walked the long tunnels of the Paris catacombs. Walls of earth and stone encompassed walls of mortality a femur's-length thick: long yellow and brown bones all stacked in parallels, their sockets pointing outward like melted bricks whose ends dragged down, like downturned bony smiles, like stale yellow snails of macaroni—joints of bones, heads of bones, promiscuously touching, darkness in the center of each, between those twin knucklespurs which had once helped another bone to pivot, thereby guiding and supporting flesh in its passionate and sometimes intelligent motion toward the death it inevitably found—femurs in rows, then, and humeri, bones upon bones, and every few rows there'd be a shelf of bone to shore death up, a line of humeri and femurs laid down laterally to achieve an almost pleasing masonry effect, indeed, done by masonry's maxims, as interpreted by Napoleon's engineers and brickmen of death, who at the nouveau-royal command had elaborated and organized death's jetsam according to a sanitary aesthetic.

(Did the Emperor ever visit that place? He was not afraid of death—not even of causing it.) Then there were side-chambers walled with bones likewise crossed upon bone-beams; from these the occasional skull looked uselessly out; and every now and then some spiritual types had ornamented the facade with a cross made of femurs. There had been laid down in that place, I was told, the remains of about six million persons—our conventional total for the number of Jews who died in the Holocaust. The crime which the Nazis accomplished with immense effort in half a dozen years, nature had done here without effort or recourse, and was doing.

I had paid my money aboveground; I had come to look upon my future. But when after walking the long arid angles of prior underground alleys I first encountered my brothers and sisters, calcified appurtenances of human beings now otherwise gone to be dirt, and rat-flesh, and root-flesh, and green leaves soon to die again, I felt nothing but a mildly melancholy curiosity. One expects to die; one has seen skeletons and death's heads on Halloween masks, in anatomy balls, cartoons, warning signs, forensic photographs, photographs of old S.S. insignia, and meanwhile the skulls bulged and gleamed from walls like wet river-boulders, until curiosity became, as usual, numbness. But one did not come out of the ground then. Bone-walls curled around wells, drainage sockets in those tunnels; sometimes water dripped from the ceiling and struck the tourists' foreheads—water which had probably leached out of corpses. A choking, sickening dust irritated our eyes and throats, for in no way except in the abstract, and perhaps not even then, is the presence of the dead salutary to the living. Some skulls dated to 1792. Darkened, but still not decayed, they oppressed me with their continued existence. The engineers would have done better to let them transubstantiate. They might have been part of majestic trees by now, or delicious vegetables made over into young children's blood and growing bones. Instead they were as stale and stubborn as old arguments, molds for long dissolved souls, churlish hoardings of useless matter. Thus, I believed, the reason for my resentment. The real sore point was that, in Eliot's phrase, "I had not thought death had undone so many"; numbness was giving way to qualms, to a nauseated, claustrophobic realization of my biological entrapment. Yes, of course I'd known that I must die, and a number of times had had my nose rubbed in the fact; this was one of them, and in between those episodes my tongue glibly admitted what my heart secretly denied; for why should life ought to bear in its flesh the dissolving, poisonous faith of its own unescapable defeat? Atop bony driftwood, skulls slept, eyeholes downwards, like the shells of dead hermit-crabs amidst those wracked corpse-timbers. This was the necrophile's beach, but there was no ocean except the ocean of earth overhead from which those clammy drops oozed and dripped. Another cross of bone, and then the inscription—SILENCE, MORTAL BEINGS—VAIN GRANDEURS, SILENCE—words even more imperious in French than I have given them here, but no more necessary, for the calcified myriads said that better than all poets or commanders. In superstition the carcass is something to be feared, dreaded



A wall of the Paris catacombs (1996)

and hated; in fact it deserves no emotion whatsoever in and of itself, unless it happens to comprise a souvenir of somebody other than a stranger; but time spent in the company of death is time wasted. Life trickles away, like the water falling down into the catacombs, and in the end we will be silent as our ancestors are silent, so better to indulge our vain grandeurs while we can. Moment by moment, our time bleeds away. Shout, scream or run, it makes no difference, so why not forget what can't be avoided? On and on twisted death's alleys. Sometimes there was a smell, a cheeseey, vinegary smell which I knew from having visited a field-morgue or two; there was no getting away from it, and the dust of death dried out my throat. I came to a sort of cavern piled up to my neck with heaps of bones not used in construction: pelvic bones and ribs (the vertebrae and other small bones must have all gone to discard or decay). These relics were almost translucent, like seashells, so thin had death nibbled them. That smell, that vinegar-vomit smell, burned my throat, but perhaps I was more sensitive to it than I should have been, for the other tourists did not appear to be disgusted; indeed, some were laughing, either out of bravado or because to them it was as unreal as a horror movie; they didn't believe that they'd feature in the next act, which must have been why one nasty fellow seemed to be considering whether or not to steal a bone—didn't he have bones enough inside his living meat? He must not have been the only one, for when we came to the end and ascended to street level we met a gainfully employed man behind a table which already had two skulls on it, seized from thieves that say; he checked our backpacks. I was happy when I got past him and saw sunlight—almost overjoyed, in fact, for since becoming a part-time journalist of armed politics I am not titillated by death. I try to understand it, to make friends with it, and I never learn anything except the lesson of my own powerlessness. Death stinks in my nostrils as it did that chilly sunny autumn afternoon in Paris when I wanted to be happy.

In the bakeries, the baguettes and pale, starchy *mini-ficelles*, the croissants and *pains-aux-chocolats* all reminded me of bones. Bone-colored cheese stank from other shops. All around me, the steel worms of the Metro bored through other catacombs, rushing still living bones from hole to hole. In one of the bookshops on the Rue de Seine I found a demonically bound volume of Poe whose endpapers were marbled like flames; the plates, of course, hand-colored by the artist, depicted gruesomely menacing skeletons whose finger-bones snatched and clawed. I spied a wedding at the Place Saint-Germain, whose church was tanned and smoked by time to the color of cheeseey bones; I saw the white-clad bride—soon to become yellow bones. The pale narrow concrete sleepers of railroads, metallic or wooden fence-rails, the model of the spinal column in the window of an anatomical bookshop, then even sticks, tree-trunks, all lines inscribed or implied, the world itself in all its segments, rays and dismembered categories became hideously cadaverous. I saw and inhaled death. I tasted death on my teeth. I exhaled, and the feeble puffs of breath could not push my nausea away. Only time did that—a night and a day, to be exact—after which I

forgot again until I was writing these very words that *I must die*. I believed but for a moment. Thus I became one with those skulls which no longer knew their death. Even writing this, picking my letters from the alphabet's boneyard, my *o*'s like death's-heads, my *i*'s and *l*'s like ribs, my *b*'s, *q*'s, *p*'s and *d*'s like ball-ended humeri broken in half, I believed only by fits. The smell came back into my nose, but I was in Vienna by then—whose catacombs, by the way, I decided not to visit—so I went out and smelled espresso heaped with fresh cream. The writing became, as writing ought to be, informed by choreographies and paradigms which mediated that smell into something more



Paris catacombs (1861)

than its revolting emptiness. I take my meaning where I can find it; when I can't find it, I invent it. And when I do that, I deny meaninglessness, and when I do *that* I am lying to myself. Experience does not necessarily lie, but that smell is not an experience to the matter which emits it. Death cannot be experienced either by the dead or the living. The project of the Parisian workmen, to aestheticize, to arrange and thus somehow to transform the objects of which they themselves were composed, was a bizarre success, but it could have been done with stale loaves of bread. It affected bones; it could not affect death. It meant as little, it said as little, as this little story of mine. It spoke of them as I must speak of me. I can read their meaning. Death's meaning I cannot read. To me death is above all things a smell, a very bad smell, and that, like the skeletons which terrify children, is not death at all. If I had to smell it more often, if I had to work in the catacombs, I would think nothing of it. And a few years or decades from now, I will think nothing about everything.

II.

AUTOPSY THOUGHTS

It shall be the duty of the coroner to inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner, and cause of all violent, sudden or unusual deaths.

CALIFORNIA STATE CODE, SEC. 274911

Aldous Huxley once wrote that "if most of us remain ignorant of ourselves, it is because self-knowledge is painful and we prefer the pleasures of illusion."² That is why one brushes off the unpleasantly personal lesson of the catacombs. But we can extend the principle: Not only self-knowledge hurts. Consider the black girl whom an investigator pulled from a dumpster one night. Her mouth was bloody,

which wasn't so strange; she could have been a homeless alcoholic with variceal bleeding. But, shining the flashlight into that buccal darkness, the investigator caught sight of a glint—neither blood nor spittle sparkling like metal, but metal itself—a broken-off blade. In her mouth, which could no longer speak, lay the truth of her death. The investigator couldn't give her her life back, but by this double unearthing—the knife from the corpse, the corpse from the stinking bin—he'd resurrected something else, an imperishable quantity which the murderer in his fear or fury or cold selfishness meant to entomb—namely, the fact of murder, the reality which would have been no less real had it never become known, but which, until it was known and proved, remained powerless to do good. —What good? Quite simply, determining the cause of death is the prerequisite for some kind of justice, although justice, like other sonorous concepts, can produce anything from healing to acceptance to compensation to revenge to hypocritical clichés. At the chief medical examiner's office they knew this good—knowing also that the job of turning evidence into justice lay not with them but with the twelve citizens in the jury box—what coroners and medical examiners do is necessary but not sufficient. Probably the black woman's family had figured that out, if there *were* any family, if they cared, if they weren't too stupefied with grief. The morgue would be but the first of their Stations of the Cross. (Afterward: the funeral parlor, the graveyard, perhaps the courtroom, and always the empty house.) Dealing with them was both the saddest and the most important part of the truth-seeker's job: as I said, knowledge hurts. Dr. Boyd Stephens, the chief medical examiner of San Francisco, would later say to me: "One of the things I hoped you'd see was a family coming in here grieving. And when it is a crime of violence, when someone has her son shot during a holdup, that makes it very hard; that's a tremendous emotional blow." I myself am very glad that I didn't see this. I have seen it enough. In the catacombs death felt senseless, and for the investigator who found the black woman, the moral of death remained equally empty, as it must whether the case is suicide, homicide, accident or what we resignedly call "natural causes." Twenty-six years after the event, a kind woman who had been there wrote me about the death of my little sister. I was nine years old, and my sister was six. The woman wrote: "I remember you, very thin, very pale, your shoulders hunched together, your hair all wet and streaming sideways. You said, 'I can't find Julie.'" She wrote to me many other things that she remembered. When I read her letter, I cried. Then she went on: "I am tempted to say that Julie's drowning was a 'senseless death' but that's not true. I learned the day she died that there are realms of life in which the measure of sense and nonsense don't apply. Julie's death exists on a plane where there is no crime and no punishment, no cause and effect, no action and reaction. It just happened." Fair enough. Call it morally or ethically senseless, at least. (I don't think I ever wrote back; I felt too sad.) Only when *justice itself* condemns someone to death, as when a murderer gets hanged or we bombard Hitler's Berlin or an attacker meets his victim's lethal self-defense, can

we even admit the possibility that the perishing had a point. Principled suicides also mean something: Cato's self-disembowelment indicts the conquering Caesar who would have granted clemency, and whose patronizing power now falls helpless before a mere corpse. But most people (including many suicides, and most who die the deaths of malicious judicial *injustice*) die the death of accident, meaninglessly and ultimately anonymously discorporating like unknown skulls in catacombs—and likewise the black woman in the dumpster. No matter that her murderer had a reason—she died for nothing; and all the toxicology and blood-spatter analyses in the world, even if they lead to his conviction, cannot change that. The murderer's execution might mean something; his victim's killing almost certainly will not.

FROM THE WHITE HEARSE TO THE VIEWING ROOM

In fiscal year 1994-95, slightly more than eight thousand people died in San Francisco County. Half of these deaths could be considered in some sense questionable, and reports on them accordingly traveled to Dr. Stephens's office, but in three thousand cases the doubts, being merely *pro forma*, were eventually cleared, signed off by physicians—that is, explained circumstantially if not ontologically. The remaining 1549 deaths became Dr. Stephens's problem. His findings for that year were: 919 natural deaths, 296 non-vehicular accidents, 124 suicides, 94 homicides, 30 mysterious cases, 6 sudden infant death syndromes and 80 vehicular fatalities, most of which involved pedestrians, and most of which were accidents (there were six homicides and one suicide).³ And now I'm going to tell you what his people did to reach those findings. In San Francisco they had a white ambulance, or hearse as I might better say, which was partitioned between the driver's seat and the cargo hold, and the cargo hold could quickly be loaded or unloaded by means of the white double doors, the inside of which bore an inevitable reddish-brown stain: anything that touches flesh for years must get corrupted. It smelled like death in there, of course, which in my experience is sometimes similar to the smell of sour milk, or vomit and vinegar, or of garbage, which is to say of the dumpster in which the murdered girl had been clumsily secreted. A horizontal partition subdivided battered old stainless steel stretchers into two and two. Because San Francisco is hilly, the stretchers, custom-welded years before by a shop just down the street, were made to be stood upright, the bodies strapped in, and rolled along on two wheels. "Kind of like a wheelbarrow in a way," one stretcher man said. This might be the last time that the dead would ever again be vertical, as they serenely travelled, strapped and sheeted, down steep stairs and sidewalks. The ambulance pulled up behind Dr. Stephens's office, in a parking lot that said **AMBULANCES ONLY**. Out came each stretcher. Each stretcher went through the door marked **NO ADMITTANCE**, the door which for those of us whose hearts still beat might better read **NO ADMITTANCE YET**. Inside, the body was weighed upon a freight-sized scale, then wheeled into the cen-

ter of that bleak back room for a preliminary examination, and fingerprinted three times (if it still had fingers and skin), with special black ink almost as thick as taffy. Finally it was zipped into a white plastic bag to go into the fridge overnight.⁴ If the death might be homicide, the investigators waited longer—at least twenty-four hours, in case any new bruises showed up like last-minute images on a pale sheet of photographic paper floating in the developer, as might happen when deep blood vessels had been ruptured. Bruises were very important. If the body of a man who seemed to have hanged himself showed contusions on the face or hands, the investigators would have to consider homicide.⁵

By now perhaps the family had been told. In the big front room that said ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE. I heard a man say, "Yes, we have Dave. I'm so sorry about what happened to Dave." If the family came, they would be led down a narrow corridor to a door that said VIEWING ROOM. The viewing room was private and secret, like the projectionist's booth in a movie theater. It had a long window that looked out onto another very bright and narrow room where the movie would take place, the real movie whose story had already ended before the attendant wheeled in the former actor. The movie was over; Dr. Stephens needed the family to verify the screen credits. They only saw the face. There was a door between the viewing room and the bright and narrow room, but someone made sure to lock it before the family came, because they might have tried to embrace this thing which had once been someone they loved, and because the thing might not be fresh anymore or because it might have been slammed out of personhood in some hideous way whose sight or smell or touch would have made the family scream, it was better to respect the love they probably still felt for this thing which could no longer love them, to respect that love by respecting its clothes of ignorance. The people who worked in Dr. Stephens's office had lost their ignorance a long time ago. They blunted themselves with habit, science and grim jokes—above all, with necessity: if the death had been strange or suspicious, they had to cut the thing open and look inside, no matter how much it stank.

A Solomonic parable: Dr. Stephens told me that once three different mothers were led into the viewing room one by one to identify a dead girl, and each mother claimed the girl as hers, with a desperate relief, as I would suppose. I know someone whose sister was kidnapped. It's been years now and they've never found her. They found her car at the side of the road. My friend used to live with her sister. Now she lives with her sister's clothes. From time to time the family's private detective will show her photographs of still another female body partially skeletonized or not, raped or not, and she'll say, "That's not my sister." I know it would give her peace to be able to go into a viewing room and say (and *believe*), "Yes, that's Shirley." Those three mothers must all have given up hoping that their daughters would ever speak to them or smile at them again. They wanted to stop dreading and start grieving. They didn't want to go into viewing rooms any more. And maybe the glass

window was dirty, and maybe their eyes were old or full of tears. It was a natural mistake. But one mother was lucky. The dead girl was really her daughter.

THE INNOCENT METER MAID

To confirm that identification, someone at Dr. Stephens's office had already looked inside the dead woman's mouth, incidentally discovering or not discovering the gleam of a knife-blade, observed her dental work and matched it to a dentist's files. Somebody had fingerprinted her and found a match; somebody had sorted through her death-stained clothes and come up with a match. Starting with flesh and cloth, they had to learn what the mothers didn't know. The meter maid didn't know, either, and I am sure she didn't want to know. A young man eased some heroin into his arm—maybe too much, or maybe it was too pure (heroin just keeps getting better and better these days). He died and fell forward, his face swelling and purpling with lividity. The meter maid didn't know, I said. Even after he began to decompose, she kept putting parking tickets on his windshield.

"I'M A HAPPY CUSTOMER"

A stinking corpse, pink and green and yellow, lay naked on one of many parallel downsloping porcelain tables each of which drained into a porcelain sink. The man's back had hurt. Surgery didn't help, so he took painkillers until he became addicted. The painkillers proving insufficiently kind, he started mixing them with alcohol. When the white ambulance came, there were bottles of other people's pills beside his head. He was not quite forty.

"Everything's possible," said one morgue attendant to another, leaning against a gurney, while the doctor in mask and scrubs began to cut the dead man open. "You're limited only by your imagination." I think he was talking about special effects photography. He had loaned his colleague a mail-order camera catalogue.

Meanwhile the dagger tattooed on the dead man's bicep trembled and shimmered as the doctor's scalpel made the standard Y-shaped incision, left shoulder to chest, right shoulder to chest, then straight down the belly to the pubis. The doctor was very good at what he did, like an old Eskimo whom I once saw cutting up a dying walrus. The scalpel made crisp sucking sounds. He peeled back the chest-flesh like a shirt, then crackled the racks of ribs, which could almost have been pork. His yellow-gloved hands grubbed in the scarlet hole, hauling out fistfuls of sausage-links—that is, loops of intestine. Then he stuck a hose in and left it there until the outflow faded to pinkish clear. Beset by brilliant lavender, scarlet and yellow, the twin red walls of rib-meat stood high and fragile, now protecting nothing, neatly split into halves.

The dead man still had a face.

The doctor syringed out a blood sample from the cavity, sponged blood off the table, and then it was time to weigh the dead man's organs on a hanging balance, the doctor calling out the numbers and the pretty young pathology resident chalking them onto the blackboard. The lungs, already somewhat decomposed, were indistinct masses which kept oozing away from the doctor's scalpel. "Just like Jell-O," he said sourly.

The right lung was larger than the left, as is often the case with right-handed people. Another possible cause: the dead man had been found lying on his right side, a position which could have increased congestion in that lung. Either way, his death was meaningless.

His heart weighed 290 grams. The doctor began to cut it into slices.

"This vessel was almost entirely occluded with atherosclerosis," explained the resident. "He used a lot of drugs. Cocaine hastens the onset of atherosclerosis. We get lots of young people with old people's diseases."

That was interesting to know and it meant something, I thought. In a sense, the investigators understood the dead man. I wondered how well he'd been understood before he died.

"God, his pancreas!" exclaimed the doctor suddenly. "That's why he died." He lifted out a purple pudding which splattered blood onto the table.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Basically, all these enzymes there digest blood. This guy was hemorrhagic. The chemicals washed into his blood vessels and he bled. Very common with alcoholics."

Out came the liver now, yellow with fatty infiltrations from too much alcohol. "See the blood inside?" said the doctor. "But the pancreas is a sweetbread. The pancreas is a bloody pulp. Blood in his belly. Sudden death. We got lucky with him—he's an easy one. This is a sure winner."

Quickly he diced sections of the man's organs and let them ooze off his bloody yellow-gloved fingers into amber jars. The pathology and toxicology people would freeze them, slice them thinner, stain them and drop them onto microscope slides, just to make sure that he hadn't overdosed on something while he bled. Meanwhile the doctor's knowledge-seeking scalpel dissected the neck, to rule out any possibility of secret strangulation. Many subtle homicides are misdiagnosed as accidents by untrained people, and some accidents look like murders. The doctor didn't want that to happen. Even though he'd seen the pancreas, he wanted to be as thorough as he could to verify that there was no knifeblade in the mouth, that all the meaning had come out. —"Okay, very good," he grunted. Then the attendant, whom I should really call a forensic technician, sewed the dead man up, with the garbage bag of guts already stuck back inside his belly. His brain, putrefying, liquescent, had already been removed; his face had hidden beneath its crimson blanket of scalp. The attendant sewed that up, too, and the man had a face again.

"I'm a happy customer," said the doctor.

OF JOKES AND OTHER SHIELDS

If the doctor's wisecracks seem callous to you, ask yourself whether you wouldn't want to be armored against year after year of such sights and smells. Early the next morning I watched another doctor open up an old Filipino man who, sick and despondent, had hanged himself with an electric cord. I have seen a few autopsies and battlefields before, but the man's stern, stubborn stare, his eyes glistening like black glass while the doctor, puffing, dictated case notes and slashed his guts (the yellow twist of strangle-cord lying on an adjacent table) gave me a nightmare that evening. This doctor, like his colleague, the happy customer, was doing a good thing. Both were *proving* that neither one of these dead men had been murdered, and that neither one had carried some contagious disease. Like soldiers, they worked amidst death. Green-stained buttocks and swollen faces comprised their routine. They had every right to joke, to dull themselves. Those who can't do that don't last.

Strangely enough, even their job could be for some souls a shelter from sadder things. Dr. Stephens himself used to be a pediatric oncologist before he became coroner in 1968. "At that time, we lost seventy-five percent of the children," he said. "Emotionally, that was an extremely hard thing to do. I'd be dead if I stayed in that profession."

The thought of Dr. Stephens ending up on one of his own steel tables bemused me. As it happens, I am married to an oncologist. She goes to the funerals of her child patients. Meanwhile she rushes about her life. Embracing her, I cherish her body's softness which I know comprises crimson guts.

EVIDENCE

The little cubes of meat in the amber jars went across the hall to pathology and to toxicology: underbudgeted realms making do with old instruments and machines which printed out cocaine-spikes or heroin-spikes on the slowly moving graph paper which had been state-of-the-art in the 1960s. But after all, how much does death change? Ladies in blue gowns tested the urine samples of motorists suspected of driving while intoxicated, and with equal equanimity checked the urine of the dead. Had they or had they not died drunk? The drunken motorist who died in a crash, the drunken suicide who'd finally overcome his fear of guns (in seventeenth-century Germany, the authorities encouraged condemned criminals to drink beer or wine before the execution), the drunken homicide victim who'd felt sufficiently invincible to provoke his murder—such descriptors helped attach reason to the death. Meanwhile, the blue-gowned ladies inspected the tissue samples that the doctors across the hall had sent them. I saw a woman bent over a cutting board, probing a granular mass of somebody's tumor, remarking casually on the stench. If the stomach was cancerous, if the liver was full of Tylenol or secobarb, that comprised a story, and Dr. Stephens's people were all the closer to signing off that particular death certificate.

In her gloved hands, a lady twirled a long, black-bulbed tube of somebody's crimson blood. On a table stood a stack of floppy disks marked POLICE CASES. Here was evidence, information, which might someday give birth to meaning. Kidneys floated in large translucent white plastic jars. They too had their secret knives-in-the-mouth—or not. They might explain a sudden collapse—or rationalize the toxic white concentration of barbiturates in the duodenum, if the decedent's last words did not. In San Francisco one out of four suicides left a note. Some of the laconic ones might leave unwitting messages in their vital organs. "I would say that about twenty-five percent of the suicides we have here are justified by real physical illness," Dr. Stephens told me. "We had one gentleman recently who flew in from another state, took a taxi to the Golden Gate Bridge and jumped off. Well, he had inoperable liver cancer. Those are *logical* decisions. As for the others, they have transient emotional causes. A girl tells a boy she doesn't want to see him anymore, so he goes and hangs himself. No one talked to him and got him over to the realization that there are other women in the world."

Look in the liver then. Find the cancer—or not. That tells us something.

"And homicide?" I asked. "Does that ever show good reason?"

"Well, I've seen only a few justified homicides," Dr. Stephens replied. "We handle a hundred homicides a year, and very few are justified. They're saving their family or their own lives. But the vast majority of homicides are just a waste, just senseless violent crimes to effect punishment."

And accident? And heart attack, and renal failure? No reason even to ask. From the perspective of the viewing room, it is all senseless.

DEATH CAN NEVER HURT YOU UNTIL YOU DIE

On that Saturday morning while the doctor was running the hanged man's intestines through his fingers like a fisherman unkinking line, and the forensic tech, a Ukrainian blonde who told me about her native Odessa, was busily taking the top of his head off with a power saw, I asked: "When bodies decompose, are you at more or less of a risk for infection?"

"Oh, the T.B. bacillus and the AIDS virus degrade pretty quickly," said the doctor. "They have a hard time in dead bodies. Not enough oxygen. But staph and fungus grow... The dead you have nothing to fear from. It's the living. It's when you ask a dead man's roommate what happened, and the dead man wakes up and coughs on you."

He finished his job and went out. After thanking the tech and changing out of my scrubs, so did I. I went back into the bright hot world where my death awaited me. If I died in San Francisco, there was one chance in four that they would wheel me into Dr. Stephens's office. Although my surroundings did not seem to loom and reek with death as they had when I came out of the catacombs—I think because the

deaths I saw on the autopsy slabs were so grotesquely singular that I could refuse to see myself in them⁶, whereas the sheer mass and *multiplicity* of the catacomb skulls had worn down my unbelief—still I wondered who would cough on me, or what car would hit me, or which cancer might already be subdividing and stinking inside my belly. The doctor was right: I would not be able to hurt him then, because he'd be ready for me. Nor would his scalpel cause me pain. And I walked down Bryant Street wondering at the strange absurdity of my soul, which had felt most menaced by death when I was probably safest—how could those corpses rise up against me?—and which gloried in removing my disposable mask and inhaling the fresh air, letting myself dissolve into the city with its deadly automobiles and pathogen-breathers, its sailboats and bookstores; above all, its remorseless *futurity*.

III. SIEGE THOUGHTS

And now, closing my eyes, I reglimpse tangents of atrocities and of wars. I see a wall of skulls in the Paris catacombs. Likewise I see the skulls on the glass shelves at Choeung Ek Killing Field.⁷ In place of the tight wall of catacomb skulls gazing straight on at me, sometimes arranged in beautiful arches, I see skulls stacked loosely, laid out on the glass display shelves in heaps, not patterns—although it would give a deficient impression to omit the famous “genocide map” a few kilometers away in Phnom Penh; this is a cartographic representation of all Cambodia, comprised of murdered skulls. At Choeung Ek, they lie canted upon each other, peering and grinning, gaping and screaming, categorized by age, sex and even by race (for a few Europeans also died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge). Some bear cracks where the Khmer Rouge smashed those once-living heads with iron bars. But to my uneducated eye there is nothing else to differentiate them from the skulls of Paris. The Angel of Death flies overhead, descends and kills, and then he goes. The relics of his work become indistinguishable, except to specialists such as Dr. Stephens, and to those who were there. (I remember once seeing a movie on the Holocaust. When the lights came on, I felt bitter and depressed. It seemed that the movie had “reached” me. And then I saw a man I knew, and his face was very pale and he was sweating. He was a Jew. He was really there. The Nazis had killed most of his family.) *Before* the Angel strikes, of course, the doomed remain equally indistinguishable from the lucky or unlucky ones who will survive a little longer. Death becomes apprehensible, perhaps, only at the moment of dying.

To apprehend it, then, let's approach the present moment, the fearful time when they're shooting at you and, forgetting that your life is not perfect, you crave only to live, sweat and thirst a little longer; you promise that you'll cherish your life always, if you can only keep it. Thus near-death, whose violence or not makes no



"Genocide map" made of human skulls (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Phnom Penh, 1996)

difference. A woman I loved who died of cancer once wrote me: "You will not be aware of this but it is the anniversary of my mastectomy and I am supposed to be happy that I survived and all that. Actually it has been a terrible day." She'd forgotten, like me; she'd shrugged death off again, not being godlike enough to treasure every minute after all. The first time I survived being shot at (maybe they weren't shooting at me; maybe they didn't even see me), I pledged to be happier, to be grateful for my life, and in this I have succeeded, but I still have days when the catacombs and Dr. Stephens's autopsy slabs sink too far below my memory, and I despise and despair at life. Another fright, another horror, and I return to gratitude. The slabs rise up and stink to remind me of my happiness. A year before her terrible day, the one I'd loved had written: "They had to use four needles, four veins last time. I cried as they put the fourth needle in. My veins are not holding up. I vomited even before leaving the doctor's office and then spent four days semi-conscious, vomiting. I thought very seriously about immediate death. Could I overdose on the sleeping pills, I wondered... My choices aren't that many and I would like to be there to hate my daughter's boyfriends." I remember the letter before that on pink paper that began, "I know I said I wouldn't write. I lied. I've just been told this weekend that I have invasive breast cancer and will have a mastectomy and removal of the lymph nodes within the week. I am scared to death. I have three small kids... I am not vain. I do not care about my chest but I do want to live... So, tell me. This fear—I can smell it—is it like being in a war?" —Yes, darling. I have never been terminally ill, but I am sure that it is the same.

In one of her last letters she wrote me: "There was definitely a time when I thought I might die sooner rather than later—it took me awhile to believe that I would probably be okay. It still doesn't feel truly believable but more and more I want it to be the case—mostly because I want to raise my interesting and beautiful children and because I want to enjoy myself... My hair grew back to the point that I no longer use the wig."

In another letter she wrote me: "Here are the recent events in my life. I am not unhappy with them but they do not compare with being shot at and losing a friend and perhaps they will amuse you. I set up a fish tank in my study... I got the kids four fish. They named only one. I told them once they had learned to clean and change the tank and feed the fish and explain how gills work, then they could get a guinea pig. I am not into pets, preferring children. The one catfish in the tank is in great distress and swims around madly looking for a way to die."

When I close my eyes, I can see her as she looked at seventeen, and I can see her the way she was when she was thirty-four, much older, thanks in part to the cancer—bonier-faced, with sparse hair, perhaps a wig, sitting on the steps beside her children. I never had to see her in Dr. Stephens's viewing room. I never saw her body rotting. I'll never see her depersonalized skull mortared into a catacomb's wall. Does that mean I cannot envision death, her death? The six million death's-heads under



Flowers left at the house of a victim of the Kobe earthquake (1995)



Flowers left at the execution courtyard of Auschwitz (2000)

Paris weigh on me much less than her face, which you might call too gaunt to be beautiful, but which was still beautiful to me, which only in a photograph will I ever see again.

But—again I return to this—her death was meaningless, an accident of genetics or environment. No evil soul murdered her. I am sad when I think about her. I am not bitter.

I am sad when I think about my two colleagues in Bosnia who drove into a land mine trap. Their names were Will and Francis. I will write about them later. At the time, because there were two distinct reports and holes appeared in the windshield and in the two dying men, I believed that they were shot, and when armed men approached I believed that I was looking at their killers. Will I had known only for two days, but I liked what I knew of him. Francis was my friend, off and on, for nineteen years. I loved Francis. But I was never angry, even when the supposed snipers came, for their actions could not have been personally intended. We were crossing from the Croatian to the Muslim side; the Muslims were sorry, and such incidents are common enough in war.

But now I open a letter from my Serbian friend Vineta, who often had expressed to me her dislike of Francis (whom she never met) on the grounds of his Croatian blood, and who, after commenting in considerable helpful and businesslike detail

on my journalistic objectives in Serbia, then responded to my plans for the Muslim and Croatian sides of the story (my items seven and eight) as follows: "You see, dear Billy, it's very nice of you to let me know about your plans. But, I DON'T GIVE A SHIT FOR BOTH CROATS AND MUSLIMS!" At the end of her long note she added this postscript: "The last 'personal letter' I got was two years ago, from my late boy-friend. The Croats cut his body into pieces in the town of B—— near Vukovar. His name was M——." Then she wrote one more postscript: "No one has a chance to open my heart ever again."

This is what violence does. This is what violence is. It is not enough that death reeks and stinks in the world, but now it takes on inimical human forms, prompting the self-defending survivors to strike and to hate, rightly or wrongly. Too simple to argue that nonviolent death is always preferable from the survivors' point of view! I've heard plenty of doctors' stories about the families of dying cancer patients who rage against "fate." Like Hitler, they'd rather have someone to blame. "Everybody's angry when a loved one dies," one doctor insisted. "The only distinction is between directed and undirected anger." Maybe so. But it *is* a distinction. Leaving behind Dr. Stephens's tables, on which, for the most part, lie only the "naturally" dead with their bleeding pancreases, the accidentally dead, and the occasional suicide, let us fly to besieged Sarajevo and look in on the morgue at Kosevo Hospital, a place I'll never forget, whose stench stayed on my clothes for two days afterwards. Here lay the homicides. I saw children with their bellies blown open, women shot in the head while they crossed the street, men hit by some well-heeled sniper's anti-tank round.⁸ Death joked and drank and vulgarly farted in the mountains all around us, aiming its weapons out of hateful fun, making the besieged counter-hateful. Every morning I woke up to chattering bullets and crashing mortar rounds. I hated the snipers I couldn't see because they might kill me and because they were killing the people of this city, ruining the city in every terrible physical and psychic way that it could be ruined, smashing it, murdering wantonly, frightening and crushing. But their wickedness too had become normal: this was Sarajevo in the fourteenth month of the siege. Needs lived on; people did business amidst their terror, a terror which could not be sustained, rising up only when it was needed, when one had to run. As for the forensic doctor at Kosevo Hospital, he went home stinking of death, and, like me, sometimes slept in his clothes; he was used to the smell, and his wife must have gotten used to it, too, when she embraced him. (Meanwhile, of course, some people had insomnia, got ulcers or menstrual disturbances, went prematurely grey.⁹ Here, too, undirected anger might surface.)¹⁰ Political death, cancer-death, it's all the same. The night after Will and Francis were killed, a U.N. interpreter from Sarajevo told me how she lost friends almost every week. "You become a little cold," she said very quietly. "You have to." This woman was sympathetic, immensely kind; in saying this she meant neither to dismiss my grief nor to tell me how I ought to be. She merely did the best thing that

can be done for any bereaved person, which was to show me her own sadness, so that my sadness would feel less lonely; but hers had wearied and congealed; thus she told me what she had become. Like Dr. Stephens and his crew, or the backpack inspector at the catacombs, like my friend Thion who ferries tourists to Choeng Ek on his motorcycle, I had already begun to become that way. Sarajevo wasn't the first war zone I'd been to, nor the first where I'd seen death, but I'll never forget it. The morgue at Kosevo Hospital, like the rest of Sarajevo, had had to make do without electricity, which was why, as I keep saying, it stank. I remember the cheesy smell of the Paris catacombs, the sour-milk smell of Dr. Stephens's white hearse; after that visit to Kosevo Hospital my clothes smelled like vomit, vinegar and rotting bowels. I returned to the place where I was staying, which got its share of machine gun and missile attacks, and gathered together my concerns, which did not consist of sadness for the dead, but only of being scared and wondering if I would eat anymore that day because they'd shot down the U.N. flight and so the airport was closed and I'd already given my food away. Death was on my skin and on the other side of the wall—maybe my death, maybe not; trying to live wisely and carefully, I granted no time to my death, although it sometimes snarled at me. Ascending from the catacombs I'd had all day, so I'd given death all day; no one wanted to hurt me. But in Sarajevo I simply ran; it was all death, death and death, so meaningless and accidental to me.

I wore a bulletproof vest in Mostar, which did get struck with a splinter of something which rang on its ceramic trauma plate, so to an extent I had made my own luck, but Will, who was driving, discovered that his allotted death was one which entered the face *now*, diagonally from the chin. His dying took forever (I think about five minutes). Vineta said that I had been cowardly or stupid not to end his misery. I told her that journalists don't carry guns. Anyhow, had I been in his seat, my bulletproof vest would have done me no good.

The woman I loved simply had the wrong cells in her breast; Vineta's boyfriend had fought in the wrong place at the wrong time, and perhaps he'd fought against the Croats too ferociously or even just too well.¹¹ For the woman I loved, and for me in Sarajevo, the Angel of Death was faceless, but Vineta's tormenting Angel of Death had a Croatian face; she hated "those Croatian bastards." Vineta, if I could send the Angel of Death away from you, I would. Maybe someone who knows you and loves you better than I can at least persuade your Angel to veil his face again so that he becomes mere darkness like the Faceless One of Iroquois legends, mere evil chance, "an act of war," like my drowned sister's Angel; and then your anger can die down to sadness. Vineta, if you ever see this book of mine, don't think me presumptuous; don't think I would ever stand between you and your right to mourn and rage against the Angel. But he is not Francis. Francis was good. I don't like to see him stealing Francis's face when he comes to hurt you.

The Angel is in the white hearse. Can't we please proceed like Dr. Stephens's

employees, weighing, fingerprinting, cutting open all this sad and stinking dross of violence, trying to learn what causes what? And when the malignity or the sadness or the unpleasantness of the thing on the table threatens to craze us, can't we tell a callous joke or two? If I can contribute to understanding how and why the Angel kills, then I'll be, in the words of that doctor who swilled coffee out of one bloody-gloved hand while he sliced a dead body with the other, "a happy customer." Hence this book. For its many failures I ask forgiveness from all.

INTRODUCTION

THE DAYS OF THE NIBLUNGS

*The hatefulnes and hard-heartedness of humans are simply without limit.
Calling upon Heaven and weeping in pain, I lament my fate.*

LADY HYEGYONG (KOREAN CROWN PRINCESS), MEMOIR OF 1805¹

*We've become too accustomed to making overall judgments. Isn't that, after
all, the root of our superficial intolerance and dogmatism?*

SVELLANA ALLILUYEVA (STALIN'S DAUGHTER),
TWENTY LETTERS TO A FRIEND²

In 1962, with the texture of any post-Cold War world unforeseeable, and atomic mushroom clouds further darkening her crystal ball, Hannah Arendt nonetheless bravely asked:

Is it too much to read into the current rather hopeless confusion of issues and arguments a hopeful indication that a profound change in international relations may be about to occur, namely, the disappearance of war from the scene of politics even without a radical transformation of international relations and without an inner change of men's hearts and minds?³

I would have to say, yes, it is too much.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF VIOLENCE

Putting aside any notion that the world is becoming a better place was neither easy nor pleasant for me; and I've not yet given up believing both that the world *ought* to be better and that we have a duty to construct methods of improvement.⁴ But since yesterday's hopes are today's wishful thinking, how could anyone be entitled to suppose today's hopes to be any more plausible? Consider, for instance, poor Peter Kropotkin, Russian philosopher, whose well-meaning attempt to establish a scientific basis for ethics now seems as far-fetched as those of his Marxist-Leninist rivals. Convinced as he was that mutual aid is more prevalent and significant among members of most animal species than competition, that antediluvian anarchist spent his final years upon an essay rancid with senile optimism:

But if we consider each of these lines [of human social development] separately, we certainly find in each of them, and especially in the development of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, a continual widening of the conception of mutual support and mutual protection, from the clan to the tribe, the nation, and finally the international union of nations . . . notwithstanding the temporary regressive movements which occasionally take place, there is—at least among the representatives of advanced thought in the civilized world and in the progressive popular movements—the tendency of always widening the current conception of human solidarity and justice, and of constantly improving the character of our mutual relations. We also mark the appearance, in the form of an ideal, of the conceptions of what is desirable in further development.⁵

The United Nations notwithstanding, the unpersuasive impotence of these words is as good a gauge of evil on earth as the front page of any newspaper. Isolationism, greed, anger, fear, ethnic nationalism, racial and class hatred, murderous coldheartedness and native human viciousness, once called original sin, now more politely known as the aggressive propensity, continue to narrow justice even as the few seek and struggle to widen it elsewhere. None of the triumphal events which Kropotkin, Arendt, Thoreau,⁶ Tolstoy and so many others longed for and awarded themselves faith in have ever come to pass; or, if they have, they've been corroded and perverted from *ideals* fondly held into mere *reality* with its leaking faucets. Yes, we now have "laws of war"—but we inhabit a planet continually poked and plagued by wars in which the commission of atrocities remains normal.⁷ In the eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon ventured to claim that institutionalized violence against witchcraft no longer stains our planet, but just last week I read of the massacre in Africa of some alleged penis-shrinkers. And isn't the violent suppression

of magic merely a subcategory of proactive defense of creed, which slew multitudes under Stalin as it did under the Inquisition? Which outrages upon freedom, safety and peace have vanished? Rape, murder, torture, slavery and compulsion, censorship, war and institutionalized tyranny—the marks of all these I've seen with my own eyes. To be sure, the *forms* of them do vary, and so do their relative proportions and frequencies. Human sacrifice, for instance, is at present much less common than assassination and genocide as expressions of religious praxis.⁸ Violence no longer hovers over the ballot box in American cities; it's in other lands. Institutionalized slavery is neither as widespread nor as overt as it was two hundred years ago, although it can still be found in the Sudan, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and doubtless a hundred other habitats for sweatshops, forced prostitution and indentured servitude. "Whatever is universal is natural," argues a Confederate churchman, and I think he is right. "We are willing that slavery should be tried by this standard." If humankind throughout history has condemned it, then our clergyman is prepared to abandon it forever. "But what if the overwhelming majority of mankind have approved it?" he says.⁹ And, if we take the long view, they have. "What is more ancient and more universal than slavery?" cries that desperate anti-slaver, that anarchist Bakunin. "Cannibalism perhaps."¹⁰ There you have it.

Bakunin, however, possesses sufficient nobility to argue that ubiquity need not prove either inherency nor (as the Confederate clergymen was claiming) necessity; and Bakunin is not only good but correct. We must never allow ourselves to believe that progress is impossible. At the same time, we need not delude ourselves that "history" has accomplished much in the way of human improvement.¹¹ This is why Bakunin begs us, "Let us, then, never look back, let us look ever forward; for forward is our sunlight, forward our salvation."¹² Fair enough; maybe the improvements will occur someday. It is with the hopeful backward-gazers that I take issue—with the rosy present-assessors, once their printed documents get backward-swirled by time.

Robespierre's nineteenth-century biographer, Lewes, may be considered a member of that deludedly hopeful crew, for he points out the fact that torture used to be legal before the French Revolution as "sufficient to indicate the immensity of the progress that has since been made."¹³ But a century later, Frenchmen were torturing Algerians.¹⁴ Indeed, torture, now in its renaissance, is committed by a third of all the governments on this earth.¹⁵ While such statistics may provide nourishments to certain of those scholarly rodents who infest archives, the telling fact is the sameness of the calamities we inflict upon one another. (Yes, the forms change; the shapes of the wounds change.)

Gandhi's biographer was forced to conclude that "his troughs of depression and his ceaseless activity were the repercussions of unacceptable and inexpressible anger."¹⁶ Christ violently turns the money-changers out of the temple. A shocked mother wrote me that when her son was two years old, "he put on a suit of plastic

armor and wouldn't take it off for weeks (a gift from a relative that we decided not to give him because of the sword and we'd hidden it ineffectually in a closet). He played war, planned battles. Weaponry wasn't part of my kids' vocabulary. His elder brother's idea of war was to play chess. But he made both offensive and defensive weapons out of duplos and the duplo giraffe became a fire gun. I couldn't imagine where Mikey the tactical warrior came from."

Induction leads to the conclusion that human behavior winds on morally unaltered, and probably unalterable.¹⁷ "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight," says the Book of Genesis, "and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."¹⁸ If violence is a kind of dust that lies inside the house of the soul, there does not seem to be any way to sweep it out the door. We can only sweep it into one corner or another. Go back fifty thousand years to the Neanderthal man whom archaeologists would find "frontally stabbed in the chest by a right-handed antagonist."¹⁹ To murder is not only human, but proto-human. A millennium and a half before Homer, the men of Uruk were complaining in their houses of clay: "No son is left to his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute."²⁰ The gods listened, and what did they do? They created a companion warrior for Gilgamesh so that he'd leave his own city in peace and go with his new friend to slay the guardian of the Land of Cedars!

CAUSATION AND JUSTIFICATION

We can, if we wish, invoke a dialectical explanation. Thesis gives birth to antithesis. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, combined with victory over the Confederacy, brings into being the Ku Klux Klan. Violent expressions of French and U.S. imperialism in Cochin China create the Viet Cong. Nehru's secular modernization in India nourishes vicious Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism.²¹ And what is the resulting synthesis which dialecticians demand? It is *change by means of blood*. Administrations, bureaucracies, leaders, governments, nations, even whole peoples come and go; nobody, however, can change human nature. Some, like Prussian general Moltke the Elder, wouldn't want to. To them, eternal peace is a bad dream.²²

So blossom the days of the Niblungs, and great is their hope's increase
 'Twixt the merry days of the battle and the tide of their guarded peace²³

Nor, for that matter, can the fact of *change* be changed. The dream of a Hitler or a Robespierre to create a New Man, the project of a Roger Williams to create a New Commonwealth, must be doomed *a priori* to supersession by somebody newer—in

whom, we must grant, much of the old will remain. (Trotsky, having complained about Taine's parochial view of the French Revolution, went on to say: "A still greater perspective is needed to view the October Revolution. Only hopeless dullards can quote as evidence against it the fact that in twelve years it has not yet created general peace and prosperity."²⁴ In 1929 this was a fair statement. In 1979 it would not have been.) History suggests, therefore, that whatever a revolution may achieve, its effects upon *morality* (unlike, say, its effects upon *culture*) will be temporary and local. Likewise, "the result in war is never absolute"²⁵—the same goes for the result of any act except perfect genocide.

THE MUTABILITY OF VIOLENT FORMS

Someone will certainly invent new institutions for the mediation of human behavior. The Christian religion, the automobile, Communist praxis, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and repeating rifles, for instance, have all altered their respective milieus considerably, and the number of such inventions is potentially inexhaustible. But, as that Neanderthal homicide proved, human violence itself cannot be altered without altering human nature. "Vice and virtue form the destinies of the earth," said Robespierre;²⁶ and on the day that that is no longer true, there will be no more human beings as we understand them.

My premise may be quarreled with on the grounds that certain movements have in fact permanently and drastically altered the moral condition of entire societies. This is true and not true. In the Muslim countries which I have visited, for example, I generally feel safer from robbery and violent attack than I do in my own. This ambience of safety—no, of outright helpfulness, of deeply felt hospitality and kindness (as long as a *jihad* has not been declared against me)—is in some measure due to the teachings of the Qur'-An. So many times I've heard: "No, no, I'm a Muslim; I *must* help you; you are a stranger in my country!" —Truthfulness, temperance and chastity, too (for some reason there are those who respect it), are more frequently met there than in non-Muslim countries such as Thailand and Madagascar. And yet, while I'll always prize my memories of the multitudinous undeserved favors which I've received in the nations of the Crescent, can I honestly claim that Muslims are more free or more moral ("better") than non-Muslims?

To a Muslim, one is either inside or outside the law. Certain generous souls may grant outsiders honorary status; thus to some Pakistanis, Afghans and Somalis, the fact that I had been born in a Christian country was sufficient to elect me; I was one of the "People of the Book."²⁷ But what about Buddhists? They seem no less decent than anyone else. And yet most of the friends I made in Islamic countries regarded them almost as animals. (One old Afghan brigadier kept telling me: "They are *wild*, my dear son. Wild like horse, like donkey; they are not people.") There was a narrowness, an exclusiveness and sometimes a simple excluding-ness. And again, my

friends were all men. We were excluded from the world of women. It would have been *shameful* (a common term of judgment) to have women friends.²⁸ Because I had lived under other conditions, I knew what we and the women were missing in not being allowed to talk to one another. Perhaps the loss was justified; perhaps not. One could say, though, that a mind to whom some categories are prescribed and other categories are proscribed must be a mind prone to categorize, at least as far as those "others" are concerned, on the basis of insufficient information. I remember how in Egypt I was talking with some men about Salman Rushdie. They all said that the author of *The Satanic Verses* deserved to die for mocking Islam. None of them had read the book, and none planned to: a fine illustration of the vice of the committed mind—the revolutionary mind, if you will. After all, the more used one is to acting, the less time one has for thinking. As Solzhenitsyn writes disgustedly of the Soviet regime:

Should we wrap it all up and simply say they arrested the *innocent*? But we omitted saying that the very concept of *guilt* had been repealed by the proletarian revolution and, at the beginning of the thirties, was defined as *rightist opportunism*! So we can't even discuss those out-of-date concepts, guilt and innocence.²⁹

The Muslims I met, in short, were in my opinion less likely than Americans to be violent thieves, and more likely to be violent ideologues. Doubtless homicide, assault, rape and burglary rates varied: by such measures, one group would probably come out as more violent than another at any given time, or perhaps even (who knows?) for all time.

RISK OF BEING MURDERED (1995)

In Japan: ³⁰	0.6 per 100,000
In the USA: ³¹	8.2 per 100,000

But that hardly proves that we won't find murder anywhere and everywhere...

IS VIOLENCE DISPLACEABLE, ELIMINABLE, SUBLIMATIBLE, OR STIMULABLE?

"Somehow or other, order, once it reaches a certain stage, calls for bloodshed."³² So does disorder. To deny that is to deny yourself. In Merleau-Ponty's words, "A regime which is nominally liberal can be oppressive in reality. A regime which acknowledges its violence *might* have in it more genuine humanity."³³ Our society devours itself with violence because we are not completely homogenous (which means, according to the definitions of social insects, that we fail to entirely compose a society) and because we cannot devour others. The two go together: To devour others is

to become homogenous, and to become homogenous is to devour others (or at least otherness).³⁴ But that solution, the way of pogroms and invasions, doesn't appeal to our tastes sufficiently for us to more than kill a thousand in Panama, let's say a hundred thousand in Iraq (plus or minus uncounted thousands) and suchlike very occasional orgasms. —Good. —Another way might be the way of the Roman circuses. Were our future mass murderers given the chance to kill one another on television, the whole being government-taxed and glamorized, it is conceivable that the level of *uncontrolled* violence would sink.³⁵ When Julius Caesar, pretended man of the people, furnished for the people's pleasure³⁶ 320 pairs of gladiators whose armor was made of pure silver,³⁷ did he therewith not only honor his dead father and buy goodwill for his tyrannical projects, after the fashion of the period, but also sustain civic tranquility through the sympathetic magic? —An affirmative answer presupposes (which might not be true) that the amount of death-lust is finite at any one time, so that by opening a legitimate channel for it we leave less to flow into illegitimate channels. (In a carnelian intaglio from the first century, we see a man in a fish-crested helmet holding in front of him a long slender shield which resembles a beetle's wing. He himself is buglike, the only remotely expressive part of him being his stance: resigned, bracing himself, one knee forward, his sword lost behind the shield. Like a friendly dog, a lion is jumping up into his face.)³⁸ However, I have before me a monograph on gladiators which posits a negative answer. Dismissing what he calls "the dubious 'hydraulic' theory of violence," our scholar, Robert Wiedemann, cites evidence that (I) the Romans believed that gladiatorial spectacles hardened citizens to fighting and wounds, so that they'd be better soldiers;³⁹ that (II) the trainers of gladiators sometimes drilled recruits;⁴⁰ and that (III) Roman legions deployed in the distant provinces constructed their own arenas and sometimes actually owned troupes of gladiators, which apparently "reassured Roman soldiers far from home that they were part of the Roman community"⁴¹—in short, that gladiatorial violence *stimulated, emblemized or facilitated* military violence. And did military violence diminish civilian violence? (Send our soldiers marching as far as their legs will carry them, an aristocrat advised shortly before the French Revolution. That way they can't return to cut our throats.) The case is almost impossible to prove. Meanwhile the games go on (Romans attended them for six hundred years). A Vestal Virgin sits in the front row, and the fourth-century poet Prudentius is watching her. "What a sweet and gentle spirit she has! She leaps up at each stroke, and every time the victorious gladiator plunges his sword into his opponent's neck, she calls him her sweetheart."⁴² Do her thrills make her more violent, or do they actually waft away her desire to pinch her fellow Vestals when they annoy her? The latter would seem to be Trotsky's assumption: he claims that in Russia after the failed 1905 revolution, terrorist acts (assassinations) increased as the ability of the masses to strike weakened: one way or another, the revolutionary impetus must come out.⁴³ All we have to do is decide how we want to express it.

The prevalence of infanticide in the U.S. has considerably decreased as a result of increased availability of abortion.⁴⁴ And yet we read of a dead baby; the list of her bone fractures and dislocations, some old, some new, takes up almost an entire page. The mother explains that "two days prior to the child's death she had twisted its arms and legs because her crying had been so annoying."⁴⁵ One gets the sense that her offspring had annoyed her often. Violence had become a habit. Could it have been directed against punching-bags instead of human flesh? We don't know.

A woman gets raped in an elevator by a man she's never met. The police spokesman states the obvious: "It appears to be a crime of opportunity."⁴⁶ Had a different woman ridden that elevator with that man, the chances are that she would have been the victim instead. It was not any particular victim, but the rapist's *uncontrolled need* which provoked the crime. How could he have controlled it, then? Perhaps he could not.

A woman hires a contract killer to murder her husband. But by the time the killer (actually an undercover cop) comes to her home to discuss the details, she's decided to kill her boyfriend's wife instead.⁴⁷ Had she not been arrested, who knows whom her wandering impulses might have chosen to murder next?

In all three of these newspaper cases, the victims seem to be mere placeholders, almost accidental outlets. Violence rises up and takes the sacrifices it finds. It employs the means that it finds.⁴⁸ It even takes whatever motives it finds. How could some benevolent hyperrationalist cabal ever eliminate murder by eliminating the reasons for murder, when in different countries we find such different reasons—and varied objects?⁴⁹ We read that "when Soga [tribespeople] and Philadelphia Negroes kill kinsmen, they kill spouses; when Danes kill kinsmen they kill their children."⁵⁰ If we could ever stop Danes from killing their children, would they more or less stop all killing, or would they switch to killing their spouses, or their parents? The obvious (if presently unverifiable) answer is that they would switch. Homicide rates do vary over time and between populations, but they never reach zero.

Out of almost thirteen hundred murderers arrested in Japan in 1995, the two leading causes out of twelve (which were mostly quite specific) comprised, in this order, "grudge" and "other." There went two-thirds of the cases!⁵¹ In the United States during the same year, the most common murder circumstance was "unknown." Next came homicides committed in the course of a felony (robbery and drug offenses being the most common of these). Then came non-felony homicides, of which the following two highly illuminating categories ranked first and second: "other arguments" and "other—not specified."⁵²

One American criminologist vaguely speaks of "defective ethical standards" as the causative agent in non-sociopathic homicides.⁵³ But there have always been murders, no matter what the general ethical tone. If the general tone is defective, then we know only what we knew before.

In cases of strictly expedient violence, action is readily susceptible to expedient

change. If only there were a good war... Do homicides in fact go down in wartime? The imprisoned anarchist Alexander Berkman describes how during the Spanish-American War "the patriotic Warden daily read to the diners the latest news, and such cheering and wild yelling you have never heard... The Warden admits that the war has decreased crime;" the prison population is lower than it has been in over a decade.⁵⁴ In fact, the data is wildly at variance on this matter also. In England, Wales and Scotland, for instance, per capita murder rates actually increased in 1943-45.⁵⁵ Hence some people argue that violence stimulates itself, so that digging any legitimate channel only increases the scarlet flow through all the other creekbeds that rattle our rock. (I have often noticed as I read the morning paper that certain kinds of homicide [drive-by-shootings, parental killing of children, etcetera] seem to occur in spates, as if the perpetrators had been reading the newspaper, too.) This question can only be resolved by experimentation (which we possess neither the courage nor the intelligence nor the malignant coldbloodedness to permit).

Even more optimistic than this is our would-be wise and gentle guardian, the United Nations, which essentially follows the theory of placeholders, advising us to work against handgun possession, make cars more theft-proof, teach urban planners to design crime-unfriendly cities and generally to save ourselves through social engineering, my favorite being this:

Further analysis of the relationship between violence and levels and types of alcohol consumption seems worthwhile to assess whether some governments should reassess fiscal policy with a view to discouraging the consumption of beer.⁵⁶

In other words, let's all become more hardened targets. This is the principle of arms races, but its practicality is not undisputed. If all cars become more theft-proof, then I believe all burglars will merely become better thieves.

I happen to own a wonderful volume called *The American Boy's Handy Book* (1882), whose purpose is as follows:

Let boys make their own kites and bows and arrows; they will find a double pleasure in them, and value them accordingly, to say nothing of the education involved in the successful construction of their home-made playthings.

The development of a love of harmless fun is itself no valueless consideration. The baneful and destroying pleasures that offer themselves with almost irresistible fascination to idle and unoccupied minds find no place with healthy activity and hearty interest in boyhood sports.⁵⁷

This is a laudable approach. Times have changed, of course. Of the various activities that the book suggests, most are out of fashion, either because Baneful & Destroying Pleasures & Co. can make and sell better items for less than we would

pay if we made them ourselves, as with kites and water-telescopes; or because our abuse of the environment has rendered them unethical, as with owl-stuffing, egg-collecting, mole-trapping, jug-fishing; or because we consider them too dangerous, as with blowing soap-bubbles from gas pipes, making lethal boomerangs, blowguns and spring shotguns. Up until very recently, most societies would have considered these activities innocent and rewarding. What do we teach our children to do instead? —I remember the boy who cried and screamed and punched his playmates because he couldn't put his robots together; his parents had to do it for him. He was not a rich little boy, and he wasn't poor; he had a pretty average toy-chest, all things of someone else's invention, most requiring four batteries before they'd greet him, all doing things by themselves, leaving him only to sit and watch. He couldn't murder moles or build his own kite for the summer kite-wars, so he punched his playmates instead. I knew him for several years, and I never saw him happy until the day his mother took him to the fort where every day at noon the soldiers "volunteer" people to load the cannon. The little boy loved guns.⁵⁸ Seeing how rapt he was, the soldiers picked him among others, and gave him a job which one would have thought to be beyond his strength: to take the cannonball from another volunteer and insert it into the barrel of the great weapon. The boy, who almost never did anything his parents told him, obeyed the soldiers' loud curt orders in ecstasy. He tried to march like them; he listened and watched; he was a part of something at last. —"Now, son," one of the soldiers shouted, "If these other men are killed, your job is to DO YOUR JOB and KILL THE ENEMY. Understand?" —And the little boy nodded and took the cannonball and staggered with it to the cannon, while the drums sounded and all the Americans clapped...

TOWARD A MORAL CALCULUS

No credo will eliminate murder. But if we think about a sufficient number of cases we may be able to plant the seeds of a tentative ethics which others could consider, pick and choose from and hopefully even benefit from even if they cannot improve. That is my hope for this book. I know that other people's advice has rarely made me better than I was. When it has, it was less often the advice itself than the spirit in which it was given which helped me, requiring me out of sheer respectful reciprocity to listen, search and consider, like Saint Ignatius being guided by an old woman to seek his own God as if he were a hunter employing all craft in a dark and wild forest. As it is, I wish that I were a more worthy person to embark upon this project called *Rising Up and Rising Down*. I am not a theoretician. Nor have I seen enough, suffered enough or thought enough about violence. I have never been tortured; I haven't *lived* in the mouth of violence; I've only paid a few visits. In a hopeful rather than confident spirit I close my research, and offer this book to you. My own life is also of value to me (this is an explanation, not an excuse), and I do not

really want to see or suffer or think about violence any more than I have to—not that I can get away from it, either. In other words, the suffering of others shames me and awes me, but does not invite my emulation. This essay will therefore be more broad than deep.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

How does one begin an inquiry such as this? To describe universal forces, one must by definition take many excursions into alienness, where the pattern may be tested, but also where one's own ignorance makes it very easy to be deceived. A handbook for intelligence officers offers the following metaphor: "A cow can turn grass into milk, but a further process is required in order to turn the milk into butter."⁵⁹ In other words, gathering data is hardly the same as interpreting it. If it were, how could Robespierre be described by Carlyle as a "sea-green tyrant" when Lenin depicts the very same man as progressive within the limits of his class and even historically necessary?

Regard the four photographs of bruised and beaten men. A man from a human rights organization in Sanzjak, Serbia, took them.⁶⁰ He told me that they were Muslims who had been beaten by Serbs. I personally believe that these Muslims probably *were* beaten by Serbs (it is well known that Serbs did and do beat Muslims; my Muslim friends told me that the men in the pictures looked Muslim, and, Serbian violence against Muslims was



widespread in 1994). But the photographs are inadmissible—or, I should say, incompletely admissible. I was not given permission to interview the victims, on the very rational grounds that since I was being watched by Serbian police this might subject them to further abuse. An observer is free, of course, to make his suppositions. But it would be irresponsible on my part to claim anything definitive in this case, to claim even that these insufficiently identified men had been in fact beaten; the marks could be makeup. What would *you* do in such a case? Would you suspect, allege or accuse?

And what constitutes a large enough experiential sample to validate induction? My impression in 1991 of the Khmer Rouge cadres as scared, uneducated boys came from a single interview with captives in the presence of the prison's deputy director.



Photojournalist documenting anti-nuclear action at Seabrook, New Hampshire (1980)

Of course they would be scared. Only if I put myself into their power would I know for certain exactly how they tortured and swaggered. That is why I went back years later and sought to give myself into their hands (not that they would meet me except one or two on one, scared and uneducated again, lurking). My impressions hadn't changed. But I knew perfectly well that whatever I might find to substantiate or undermine my previous opinions of the "Khmer Rouge personality" would not be enough, would merely obligate me to return again and again, until I chose either to abandon the uncompleted work (for in this world no inquiry can ever be completed), or else to press on and pay the ultimate price, which I was unwilling to do. Subsequent interviews continued to confirm my perception of their scared ignorance. But how much did I fail to see? At border points, I was frequently advised by the Khmer Rouge themselves or their sympathizers that I was likely to lose my life if I proceeded in this direction or that direction, and I always heeded that advice.⁶¹ What do I know, then? Not what a Khmer Rouge cadre knows.

And Khun Sa, the Opium King—did he truly lead a Shan liberation movement? I saw only the tiniest piece of Shan State; I could not say for sure how many Shan supported and revered him. The fact that almost everybody I met praised him before he could possibly have known that I was coming suggests that he truly was well regarded. But again, he himself I met only once. Had I limited myself to writing about Khun Sa over the past decade, I would no doubt have known more about him than I do. But then I would have known less about the Khmer Rouge. As I said, I chose broad knowledge, not deep. Even had I chosen depth, my conviction that Khun Sa was a good man could never be demonstrated to anyone's satisfaction in the way that the fact of whether or not the men in the photograph were Muslims beaten by Serbs could have been discovered once and for all. For we human beings scarcely know ourselves, let alone others.

ON THE PLEASURES OF MAKING AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS

Many traps have been prepared for the amusement of the gargoyles who overwatch the generalist's path. The common snare is that of casting inductions based on mere personal experience (as might be the case with my opinion of Khun Sa). I do not deny that experience is essential in this work. In fact, one cannot have enough of it. Sooner or later the intriguing things, the colorful things, the logical things pile up; one begins to feel informed, longs to fit them into a theory that will show them off to best advantage. Eventually the "big thing" happens. One gets permission at last to pass the secret way into Opium City, or one's friends are killed before one's eyes, or one witnesses something special on a walrus hunt. Certainly such occurrences impart knowledge of a sort, but only within a more or less local context. Yet to those even less well informed, one has become an "authority." An authority is by nature

noxious, a windbag, a parasite, a professional vulture. One such bird of prey crowed: "The greatest moment of my professional life was standing in the Piazza Loreto, Milan, on April 29, 1945, literally amid the bodies of Mussolini, [his mistress Clara] Petacci, and the others."⁶² This is not only despicable, but dangerous.⁶³ This journalist standing over Mussolini's corpse (did he trail his toes in the blood?) might



Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci (Milan, 1945)

be inclined to pontificate on the nature and destiny of Italian fascism; and doubtless the experience would impart the sort of cachet accepted by sensationalists. But what would he necessarily know about Italian fascism, even were he Italian and a fascist? —More than I, but more is not enough. —They say that Soviet frontline officers in action against the Nazis thought that they had seen it all, but death in Stalin's prison camps was entirely a different sort of death. Solzhenitsyn was for eleven years a prisoner in those camps. He suffered, bore witness, had, one would think, the necessary experience. His account of the day-to-day struggle there, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, deserves our appalled respect. Yes, he can be called an authority, an expert. But Solzhenitsyn himself says that "the Kolyma was

the greatest and most famous island, the pole of ferocity of that amazing country of *Gulag*."⁶⁴ The man with the unhappy fortune to be an expert on Kolyma was Varlam Shalamov, and Solzhenitsyn asked him to collaborate with him on his grimly impressive three-volume history of the camps. Shalamov, old, sick and tired, declined. Solzhenitsyn writes of him in reverent terms, as if he, not Solzhenitsyn, had had the privilege of staring into evil's face. What did Shalamov pay for this opportunity? Seventeen years of his life, the ruin of his life, the destruction of his health, the wounding of his capacity for interest in life, trust and other human beings, of his very integrity. When the brilliant *Kolyma Tales* was published abroad, Shalamov was pressured into denouncing the people who'd sought thus to do homage to his genius. He possessed the authority; he had won it; keeping it was not worth his further suffering. His own translator wrote that this shocked "his former admirers so deeply that some literally removed his portrait from their homes. [Shalamov had] betrayed his own major achievement."⁶⁵ If this is the price required for the sad knowledge that swarms between the lines of *Kolyma Tales* like lice, better to forego it. Books like mine suffer as a result of just that decision to forego, the attendant flaws being speculation in the place of certainty, ignorant misstatements, dilettantism and mere adventurism.

STATISTICAL NICETIES

There is a natural tendency on the part of any investigator to believe that "doing one's homework" will solve all these conundrums; but more often than we would like to believe, research will prove merely necessary, not sufficient. For example, a quick browse through one or two reference books ought to yield a reasonably consistent figure as to the number of Pol Pot's victims. One source gives the figure of "300,000+."⁶⁶ Another proposes a number from 800,000 to one million.⁶⁷ A third insists on "more than three million."⁶⁸ Thus the first estimate differs from the last by an entire order of magnitude. Doubtless in ten or a hundred years the whole thing will be settled.⁶⁹ (In 1995, when I first wrote this paragraph, not even the present population of Cambodia was certain.) In the meantime, if one wishes to interview living, breathing revolutionaries and then characterize them while one is still oneself living and breathing, the only way is to rely on contemporary data—a difficulty which would afflict even the Shalamovs, unless they somehow gained access to secret archives—and even then we may be dealing with the statements of those who, as Roosevelt remarked to Churchill, "do not use speech for the same purposes that we do."⁷⁰ In the Kolyma, Shalamov saw corpses by the thousand. How many more didn't he see? "I realized that I knew only a small bit of that world, that twenty kilometers away there might be a shack for geological explorers looking for uranium or a gold-mine with thirty thousand prisoners. Much can be hidden in the folds of the mountain."⁷¹ In fact, in the Kolyma alone several *million* prisoners died.

WHAT "REALLY" HAPPENED?

As for old and "settled" data, the dust has indeed settled on it, to the point of blurring its truth. Can we trust Herodotus?⁷² —As a teller of moral fables, certainly (and in an ethical treatise such as this one, the presentation of exemplary choices will occasionally suffice). —As a historian, only with qualifications. —We are free, as we are in considering the Bible, to ask: If somebody did in fact commit the stated act, is it right or wrong? We cannot, however, say with certainty: The named person committed the stated act.

NO CONTEXT, NO JUDGMENT

And this is but the beginning of the problem. Not only can we not be certain whether violence has occurred, and to what extent, but *sometimes we do not even know what violence is*. Most often, of course, it is all too clear.

Arendt might well reject this argument entirely, insisting that Shalamov's uncertainty as to exact numbers, even orders of magnitude, remains irrelevant. She witnessed the Eichmann trial, and described the audience as "filled with 'survivors,'

with middle-aged and elderly people, immigrants from Europe like myself, who knew by heart all there was to know."⁷³ In her sense, Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, those frontline officers and perhaps even that vulture of a journalist were also in the know, and would have had little trouble in understanding the workings of, say, Buchenwald, although there were stylistic differences between Buchenwald and Kolyma: the former place employed a "factory" for mass shootings rather than the Arctic cold; and its punishments often took the character of sadistic public displays accompanied by music, instead of solitary starvation in some ice-house. The fundamental purpose of both institutions remained the same: to convert human beings into objects living and nonliving, extracting ideological, psychological and commercial profits along the way.⁷⁴ —But differences deeper than stylistic remained. In the Kolyma camps, escape was quixotic, given the location: a prisoner wandering around in the Arctic vastness hadn't much of a chance.⁷⁵ Still, it was a choice; it empowered, and it affected only the individual involved. At Buchenwald, collective reprisal was the policy. Hence an escape would bring punishment to the inmates remaining behind. In short, escape from Kolyma was suicide; escape from Buchenwald was homicide. One cannot simply be told that somebody escaped "from a concentration camp" and be ethically in the know.

One more example of the need to everlastingly expand one's knowledge, to seek, listen, qualify: What constitutes rape? We think we have it figured out. It is sexual knowledge without consent, or sexual knowledge of a person deemed unable to comprehendingly consent, such as a minor or a mental incompetent. And, like violence generally, its lineaments are frequently unambiguous. Here, for instance, we find both of these kinds of rape rolled into one:

FISHERMAN RAPED HIS OWN DAUGHTER

SINGAPORE: A fisherman and part-time medium, who raped his 15-year-old daughter on 3 occasions 2 years ago, was sentenced to 20 years' jail and 18 strokes of the cane by the High Court yesterday [which] rejected the accused's defence that the rape report against him was a conspiracy by the victim and her elder sister because he had been harsh with them and had often beaten them very badly.⁷⁶

No matter how one looks at this, it would seem that either the fisherman beat his daughter (by his own testimony), or else he beat her and raped her. In any case, he abused her. Regardless of what the circumstances might have been, I think that the High Court was correct in judging that the man had done wrong.

But many such determinations are not so facile, as even the FBI has concluded.⁷⁷ I once had the dismal opportunity of hearing both sides of a rape story. To the woman, at least, it was rape. She told me that the man had cornered her and tried to kiss her while she kept pleading, "I can't, I can't." Her remembered terror, helplessness, humiliation and disgust crawled across her face as she told it. He had

grabbed her breasts. He had started to do other things, but her entreaties finally stopped him. She said that she had never been capable of mentioning this to a soul before, and she was speaking of it now only two years after the fact, because I knew the man (he was my friend) and because she trusted me and needed to tell somebody. —To the man it had been no big deal. A rough fellow from a rough town, he was accustomed to casually aggressive methods of courtship. She had a boyfriend? So what? They were alone, after all. He gave it a whirl, but she wasn't in the mood, so that was that. Had he been told that what he had done was attempted rape, he would have shrugged incredulously. Hadn't he stopped when she said, "I can't"? Had he hurt her? Had he left marks? Call it an exploratory grope. Such divergence is to be expected, for when did victim and violator ever agree?

I think that given the norms of the area this was *not* attempted rape—merely insensitivity carried almost to brutality.⁷⁸ To equate it with actual forcible penetration is to remove our ability to graduate in comprehension, judgment and penalty between these two very unhomogenous wrongs. But now reflect upon still another case, seemingly quite similar, for it, too, involves kissing and breast-grabbing:

COPS LOOKING FOR MOLEST CASE SUSPECT

PENANG: Police are looking for a factory bus driver who allegedly fondled the breasts of a 23-year-old woman in Air Itam here recently... It is learnt that the suspect also kissed the woman.⁷⁹

Malaysia being a Muslim country, what the bus driver did was very likely a terrible assault upon the woman's pride and sacred secretness. She must have been veiled, in which case his kissing her would have been as much an act of exposure, of humiliation, as his snatching her breasts into his hands. Call it rape. When I asked my Thai companion, D., how she would have responded had he done this to her, she said, "Me? Maybe I laugh. Don't like so much. Maybe little bit angry, but I try to talk to him. I think he need some girlfriend. Maybe I say to him, you very silly boy."⁸⁰

The conclusion I come to (one abhorrent to any local law, but agreeable to the contradictions of international customs) is that a major defining ethical constituent of violence is *the unique relationship between each victim and perpetrator at a given time*.⁸¹ That is why even the sternly consistent Martin Luther warns the sixteenth-century German princes that they must be guided by their own minds and consciences in any given case of legal judgment⁸²—and why it is permissible, for instance, for somebody to kill one person in wartime but not another, and neither one in peacetime. And if the motive and the context are so crucial,⁸³ then we must ask whether one can with equal justification kill out of hatred, out of fear, out of rational self-defense or out of mercy?

Arendt, musing upon the "pale" and "ghostlike" figure of the accused Eichmann in his glass booth, insisted: "If he suffers, he must suffer for what he has done, not

for what he has caused others to suffer.⁸⁴ As a general rule this principle is demonstrably untrue. D., a live-and-let-live Buddhist from a sexually more easy country than Malaysia (the rural markets usually have on the walls colored advertising posters with photos of naked women), would not have suffered what the twenty-three-year-old Muslim woman presumably did. I know this because I know D. This is not to say that she would have suffered nothing; for in public life Thais are sufficiently modest that the public kissing of European lovers inspires them with disgust. Nor would that brute of a bus driver be any more justified in fondling her than he would have in the case of a Muslim girl. But D. never wore a veil. She would have been kissed without being uncovered. In short, she would have been humiliated, not raped. She would have shrugged it off and tried not to be shamed; the Muslim girl might well have been hurt to the core. And had, let's say, a man in Mexico City done this to D., and not a bus driver whom she could not get away from but a seat-mate whose escalating flirting she had ignored; had the bus also, let's say, been filled with drunken soccer players who were groping giggling cheerleaders at least some of whom desired an orgy, I would, again, not excuse the brute, but I would be slightly less angry, thinking of him (as I do of my friend from the rough town) as someone who didn't know where to stop as opposed to someone who coolly initiated something. And I would think even worse of the Malaysian bus driver had he forced his attentions on the woman if no other passengers were on the bus than if the bus were crowded; for if the bus were empty the woman would feel more alone and helpless, the act hence more the vicious one of intimidation, domination and humiliation. If the same action can cause significantly different degrees of injury to different victims, then the deed itself cannot be adequately described without context.

Arendt gets around this by substituting the social fabric as a whole for the personal vagaries of any victim—a Kantian strategy which

may be rendered by saying that the undeserved evil which anyone commits on another is to be regarded as perpetrated on himself... This is the right of retaliation (*jus talionis*); and ... is the only principle which in regulating a public court, as distinguished from mere private judgement, can definitely assign both the quality and the quantity of a just penalty.⁸⁵

Thus Eichmann's genocide was in Nuremberg parlance a crime against humanity because it attacked human diversity, without which the whole concept of humanity becomes reduced to ethnicity or nationality. This argument is valid in Eichmann's case, and would remain so if his expertise had killed only one person instead of millions; who except the suicidally inclined (whose case will be taken up later in this book)⁸⁶ would be at variance over the ultimate negativity of death? Had the Malaysian molester done his deed not with a kiss but with a dagger, then D. and the woman on the bus would have been more equally harmed.⁸⁷ If not, then the merely normative approach fails to hold.

Interestingly enough, the importance of context from the other point of view—the aggressor's—was recognized up to a point even at Nuremberg. Just as the military court which tried and sentenced the assassins of President Lincoln endured (and probably instigated) experts' haggles on whether they were mentally or morally insane—in the end, they decided that the law didn't care—so too the Nuremberg tribunal ground through the motions of debate as to whether Rudolf Hess was sane enough to stand trial. In Churchill's memoirs he's implied to be mad; and the prosecutor Telford Taylor portrays a defendant rarely able to concentrate, listen or remember.⁸⁸ The remarkable point is that the issue was raised at all. In the end, expediency, justice or perhaps vindictiveness won out, and Hess was tried. A decade and a half later, so was Eichmann, who displayed a different sort of madness. I wish that Kant had been there, for vis-à-vis the "I just followed orders" defense the philosopher expresses agreement: "The good or bad consequences arising from the performance of an obligated action—as also the consequences arising from failing to perform a meritorious action—cannot be imputed to the agent (*modus imputationis ponens*)."⁸⁹ The implication is that the social medium in which one swims (or, as Kant probably would have preferred to put it, the institutional uniform in which one clothes oneself) automatically justifies the actions which it condones and commands. By conforming and obeying, the Eichmanns are exculpated.⁹⁰ I would have loved to see the look on the chief prosecutor's face. —Well, if I'd been there when Eichmann was speaking, I guess I would have seen it; for this was precisely the argument which that monster used. Whether one agrees with his line or not (and I don't), it surely makes a difference to our moral or metaphysical understanding of his crimes ("I committed mass murder")—as opposed to our juridical comprehension ("I upheld my obligation to authority," or perhaps the very different "I violated the international laws against war crimes")—whether Eichmann donned the livery of the state in 1939 or simply flew the colors of a nonrepresentative cabal whose "agent" he was.⁹¹ In one case (the most likely one), the regime made him what he was. In the other, he would have done it regardless, like the opportunistic rapist in the elevator. Either way, let's hang him, but if the first cause is the dominant one, then we've learned that there's something very useful we can do with our lives: study Nazism in detail, in order to discover how to prevent it from coming to life again. If the second case gets privileged, it's more utilitarian to study the various Eichmanns.

IS JUSTICE OBJECTIVE OR PASSIONATE?

Hence perpetrator, deed and victim must all be considered—taking care, by all means, never to *underweigh* the deed, either, which might for an apologist (e.g. a Holocaust revisionist) be all too convenient in any case where the identity and circumstances of violence are clear;⁹² as they were for, say, Shalamov, no apologist in spite of his other sins, who looked silently on from within his scorched and frozen

ragas while the bulldozer transferred bodies to another mass grave. Here the individuality of victims and perpetrators remains immaterial to our judgment: by their very numbers, the dead in that pit constitute a silent scream of crime. We know all we need to know (except, of course, how to stop it next time). Understanding, even empathy, must not lure us into active sympathy. (I "understand" Eichmann—how



Thucydides

pitiable he is!) Should I fail to come out and say that what happened there in Kolyma or Buchenwald was wrong, then I'll stand available for the friendship of all the killers I meet, in which case I can be worthy of Luther's sarcastic question to the easygoing Erasmus: "Perhaps you have in mind to teach the truth so that the Pope does not object, Caesar is not enraged, bishops and princes are not upset, and furthermore no uproar and turmoil are caused in the wide world, lest many be offended and grow worse?"⁹⁵ The Soviet battle correspondent Ilya Ehrenburg remarked more bluntly still that all journalists who report a war objectively ought to be shot.⁹⁶ Such a position is not only foul (presumably, it saves Soviet murderers from uproar and turmoil),⁹⁵ it is also fifty percent likely to be wrong—a demonstration of which was left us by the bilious genius of Thucydides. Over and over in his pages we meet a city-state on the eve of decision. Two delegations come before the assembly, representing arch-foes. The web of their war has widened. Now it's reached this city previously neutral and exempt, and the grim drama begins. Soon, one of the two rivals will be the city's friend, and the other will be the enemy. There'll be as little room for neutrality as in Ignatius's spiritual exercises, in which the meditator must choose between the army of Christ and the army of Satan. "In critical moments," a revolutionary warns, "to declare oneself neutral is to expose oneself to the anger of both contending parties."⁹⁶ This is not a moral judgment, nor a paraphrase of Ehrenburg, but a very practical and realistic social law. For expedient reasons alone the choice must be made. Ah, but who is Christ and who is Satan? In 1632, a Protestant landgrave, about to be dragged into the Thirty Years' War, asks the wise men: "If his princely Grace is forced to choose between one of the two warring parties in the Empire, ... with which side must he unite himself?"⁹⁷ The assembly listens anxiously, trying to decide that very question. In turn the competitors address them in all sweet reasonableness, justifying their actions, offering civil affection, threatening the reverse and, of course, denying each other's goodness and very legitimacy. Much in these speeches comprises the merest rhetorical garnish of expediency, and it is most likely on expedient considerations that this assembly will shortly decide which of the two city-states, spurned, its representatives stalking back to their waiting ship, will shortly send bronze-armored infantry to lay waste the houses, fields and vineyards it so

lately visited in a state of suppliant or commanding neutrality; and which city-state will send relief and protection (or, if the assembly guessed wrongly, send nothing) —Which side is stronger? Make *them* our ally!

And yet for those who listen, worry and debate, whether or not we can be menaced or advantaged by either side, the issue of right and wrong remains. —If those issues were irrelevant, the Spartans, say (renowned for their practicality), would hardly bother to mention liberating the Hellenes from Athenian tyranny; they'd speak merely with arrow, javelin and sword. —But no, I forgot: An appeal to *justice* is most *expedient!* It can't hurt, and it may trick a couple of archons into voting for my side (if only the other side doesn't do the same!)⁹⁸ Anyone who's still trying to make up his mind where justice lies ought to be shot!

Now the speeches of the first city-state are over. As the opposing delegates rise, the assemblymen of the host city, one can be sure, sit tense, because they *must* choose and this is their sole remaining chance to know both sides before it comes to a vote. Ehrenburg's sin is not that he has already chosen, but that he would deny us our right to choose, without which we bear no responsibility, without which we join the guiltless inhuman legions in whose ranks Eichmann enrolled himself.

Indeed the Ehrenburgian stance proves empirically as well as morally unsound, there being data which it absolutely cannot explain. Tito's former deputy, Milovan Djilas, admits that when he and other committed Yugoslav Communists were entertained by a British major in Iraq,

in our doctrinaire way we could not understand how it was possible, much less rational, to sacrifice oneself 'for imperialism'—for so we regarded the West's struggle [against Hitler]—but to ourselves we marveled at the heroism and boldness of the British.⁹⁹

Ehrenburg's position does have its place in a desperate war, for propaganda can help people to fight, and counter-propaganda, if effective, becomes treason; but there must be a clear understanding that at a specific moment the blinders will be pulled off—say, at the instant of the enemy surrender (or one's own). No doubt Ehrenburg approved of the procedure followed by the Nuremberg Trials, which years after the German defeat refused to admit evidence of Soviet atrocities comparable to those of the Nazis who were being hanged.

When I first got called for jury duty in California—and every other time, too—the judge, sitting high between flags, insisted again and again that we retain the presumption of innocence unless convinced otherwise by the evidence, and that we be persuaded by any reasonable doubt to refrain from conviction—a noble principle not in accordance with any instinct of human or social self-preservation; for even the lady who ushered us into the courtroom had said: "There's a defendant in there, so be careful." I believed and still believe that the twelve silent ones in the jury box

were prepared to be fair. By Ehrenburg's maxim, they should have been shot. (I quote my Serbian friend Vineta: "That's so disgusting, the way you Americans presume those criminals to be innocent.") The court reporter, aloof and distinguished-looking, played the keyboard with long slender fingers, his words white upon the blue screen. He would not lie, and the jury, while they might be wrong, would do their best not to be biased. —"I'd like you to remember that there are always two sides to every question," the judge said, so Ehrenburg would have had to shoot him, too. In other words, as we already knew, expediency rules. Djilas's anecdote about his own failure, thanks to his moral system, even to *comprehend* British loyalty to the imperialist cause is a classic, showing how solipsistic subjectivity prohibits the very perceptions on which induction and analysis must be based. If we deny any moral basis whatsoever to the Other Side—the capitalist exploiter British, the horrific Eichmann—then each of them stands before our gaze merely silhouetted, creature of the same featureless moral velvet—are they the same? If we good Stalinists truly act and speak as though they are, we are liable to make some serious mistakes. This is the trouble with Ehrenburg's way of transacting ethical business.

Yes, the mass graves of Shalamov's world *remain wrong*. Justice can and ought to be passionate about that. But what else is wrong, and is it as wrong as they are?

JUDGMENT VERSUS RESPECT

Back to "understanding" Eichmann again: For the author of this book, as for any reporter of living, uncoerced human words, passionate justice offers an additional practical difficulty: If I am not allowed to be objective, to point out that every evildoer has a good side and may even mean well, then there is no reason on earth why the Other Side which I am writing about should sit down to be attacked by me. The fact that I invade its privacy is bad enough.

This leads to one of the central ethical questions of biography, portraiture and journalism: Do I betray and humiliate those who have trusted me, or do I soften my conclusions?¹⁰⁰ My policy will always be to treat with empathy and respect anyone agreeing to be studied, interviewed, exposed. I would have been courteous to Eichmann. My obligation, however, is to the truth. But again, what is truth? My study of literature and life has taught me that sometimes there isn't any—or that it has so many sides that one is permitted only rarely to condemn it. And what if there is more than one perpetrator of even the most clearly evident crime; what if one man orders, another signs, a third conveys and a fourth shoots?¹⁰¹ If there is any doubt, isn't it better not to condemn? If, on the other hand, doubt has nowhere to hide, as in Eichmann's case, then one *must* condemn, but never without respecting the human being inside the evildoer. I hope that it is possible to follow this muted course, and still answer, however gingerly, the question of when violence is and is not justified. Sometimes, as the reader will see, my condemnations are passionate in

spite of everything; other times, you may conclude (although I hope you won't) that I have tried so hard to be respectful and fair that I have become an accomplice. I am not and never will be one of those journalists who actively does wicked things for the sake of deeper understanding. In Madagascar I twice paid bandits to stage their lethal activities for me rather than agreeing to observe the real thing; in Sarajevo I refused to involve myself in the execution of a Serbian sniper. But in Malaysia, when I met the chuckling old terrorist Hadji Amin, a man whose bombs have killed many innocent people, I tried to tell his side of the story,¹⁰³ and I promised never to reveal where he is—a promise I have kept. (Anyhow, he is dead now.) I was always polite to him on the telephone; I asked after his health (it was heart disease that he died of), his wife, his family. It is my hope that you will encounter that politeness in what I have written about him, no matter that he horrifies me. In short, I would rather be a coward, and write a work of ornately descriptive ethics, than to be Ilya Ehrenburg.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Rising Up and Rising Down, then, is divided into two parts.¹⁰⁴ The first, being more theoretical and general, attempts through induction, common sense and consideration of the deeds of certain contemporary, historical and even mythic people who have behaved violently, or not—among others, Trotsky, Napoleon, Cortes, Christ, Lincoln, Jefferson, Stalin, Tolstoy, "Virginia" of the Animal Liberation Front, the Amazons, the Marquis de Sade, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Lawrence of Arabia, Robespierre, Gandhi and the Heike prince Taira Shigemori—to arrive at a way of ethically categorizing violence. It is possibly the more valuable half of the book (assuming, despite all the caveats above, that my ship has not been entirely wrecked on the shoals of hagiography), and certainly the less likely to be read. It concludes with a "moral calculus" extracted from the foregoing. "Explanatory power theories for interpersonal and systemic levels will probably differ,"¹⁰⁵ and this goes for explanatory ethical theories also; thus you will find the "equations" in my calculus to be blurred and sometimes ambiguous approximations rather than strict identities, because some degree of mistiness is required when one endeavors to be personal, inclusive and systematic.¹⁰⁶

With the dubious exception of my discussion of John Brown's letters, this part of the book does not qualify as archival or even scholarly research. My intention was neither to uncover new facts about the doings of historical figures, nor to formulate new interpretations of them. What I tried instead to do was to lay out the received wisdom concerning Caesar's mercy, Joan of Arc's honor, Hitler's territorialism, etcetera, and then judge that. No doubt my reading of classical sources in particular betrays a sort of credulity. But who knows what Leonidas the Spartan really said at Thermopylae, or to what extent Thucydides, who was an actual eyewitness of the Peloponnesian War, might have subordinated literal accuracy to elegant pathos? No

matter. The reader is invited to consider each of the moral decisions undertaken by our historical protagonists as the centerpiece of a parable. For our purposes it matters less whether Leonidas existed at all (although I've done my best to rely on scholars who can tell me that he did) than whether *we can imagine ourselves into the circumstances described*.

Hence this "theoretical" portion of the book comprises a set of what Wittgenstein would have called "thought-experiments." Future scholarship may prove that Stalin's drive against the kulaks enjoyed more or less popular support than my reading (largely of secondary and translated sources) has led me to believe. It may also very likely come out that Stalin never for a moment believed his own justifications. No matter. When is violent defense of class justified? We'll inspect the ogre's justifications as if they meant something, for he placed them on public record and his cadres invoked them in the process of starving peasants to death. We'll try to determine their context and their implications. Then we'll judge their merits.

In deference to the examples which inform it, each theoretical chapter is organized somewhat differently from the others, but the basic scheme consists of arriving at a definition (or sometimes a more open-ended understanding) of the category which is being defended, then (or simultaneously) considering the fairness of invoking violence for the sake of that category. Imagine that you are the judge in a courtroom. The violent act has already occurred. Napoleon stands in the dock. The witnesses have finished explaining to you how and why he defended his honor. You must decide: Is defense of honor a legitimate category at all? In due course you will judge Cortes and you may well decide, as I do, that his offered justification of defense of ground is specious. You have already judged Joan of Arc, and you have determined that Napoleon's honor is different from hers. Well, is it worth defending, and do you accept his means?

I invite you to read each "theoretical" chapter with the moral calculus volume in hand, because it is there that the chapter in question has been boiled down to its own verbatim skeleton. Were you to read only the moral calculus, you might find the assertions to be more tendentious and peculiar than they are. There is almost nothing in the moral calculus which does not come directly from the theoretical chapters.

METHODOLOGICAL WEAKNESSES OF PART I

1. A broad approach necessarily results in superficial and inaccurate treatment of many topics.¹⁰⁶
2. Therefore, a broadly comparative approach may well produce misleading over-generalizations, or else reproduce the stereotyped conclusions of that mediocrity miscalled posterity.¹⁰⁷
3. In particular, a focus upon moral actors in positions of political leadership is bound to overpersonalize and falsely render monolithic their respective causes.¹⁰⁸

Although I have done my best to overcome these failings, I must sometimes have succumbed to them.

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR PART I

1. My aim is, where possible, to let the reader briefly peep through each moral actor's eyes, and to exemplify universally human decisions. Their universality can only be shown through comparison.
2. If we cannot situate ourselves in history, if we cannot match ourselves against our moral peers now dead and gone, what good is history?

The second part of this book owes more to my own experience, and comprises a series of case studies in violence and the perception of violence: Inuit seal-hunting and animal rights, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and Cambodian gangs in the United States; the civil war in Bosnia, U.N. peacekeeping in Somalia, cattle rustlers and street robbers in Madagascar, child prostitution in Thailand (and how and why I kidnapped one girl engaged in that trade) teenage suicide on an Apache reservation in the U.S., opium politics and ethnic guerrilla movements in Burma, the Libyan-funded PULO terrorist organization in Thailand and Malaysia, the Guardian Angel movement in the U.S., the Christian Patriot movement in the U.S. (with some references to neo-Nazis and the Militia) the Baraku ("Untouchable") class in Japan, and voodoo and folk religion in the American South as a means of "dealing with" violence. This section ends with applications of the moral calculus to strike at a brief ethical evaluation of each of the situations described.

A NOTE ON THE CASE STUDIES, AND ON LITERARY AESTHETICS

Finally, it may be worth explaining why a work organized on a theoretical basis indulges so much in description (indeed, as I already said, ornate description). The colors of the Burmese jungle at twilight, or the scorched smell of a shelled city, do not of themselves further analytical understanding. In fact, it might be argued (as I have done in my remarks on authorities and experts)¹⁰⁹ that their very particularity gets in the way of it.¹¹⁰ That don of military strategy, Liddell Hart, whose paean to Sun-tzu's indirect methods of warfare was studied religiously by both Patton and Guderian, put at the very beginning of his opus the following statement: "Direct experience is inherently too limited to form an adequate foundation either for theory or for application. At the best it produces an atmosphere that is of value in drying and hardening the structure of thought."¹¹¹ And in his detailed recounting of the feints, swoops, ambushes, tricks and deceptions which made various contingents, from the ancient Greeks to the Allies of World War II, kings of the hill for their own instants, he almost never employs the adjectives of verisimilitude. His task, however, is quite different from mine. Who won this battle, who lost and why? The answer may well have something to do with a certain general's digestion, but the *objective* cause of a result on the battlefield will be pegged by less than introspective

men, hence will derive from that lengthy category of causes available to those who are not mind-readers: mobility, communications, trenches and counterstrokes.

Meanwhile, even Liddell Hart approvingly quotes Napoleon's dictum that "the moral is to the physical as three to one." Morale is a subjective factor, which might as well be considered subjectively. Ethics, especially as I have presented above, comes even more from within—so much so that Liddell Hart's disparagement of direct experience does not hold: While we may not expect a parochial intellect to produce broad strategy, we would not fail to keep the person to whom that intellect belongs accountable for the good or evil that he does. The reason is that this keeping accountable is in large measure also local, parochial. That is why a Somali man can have four wives and be respected, while an American man cannot.¹¹² What does all this have to do with the color of jungles? It is precisely because local conditions have such an effect upon a person's outlook that they ought to be described. (The first chapter of this book goes deeper into the subject.) I admit that I've behaved this way partly because it is my bent, and partly because I figured that if my theorizing were wrong or unpalatable, the reader might at least have some moments of pleasure (this especially goes for the case studies). There is another reason. Even the pious materialist Trotsky, to whom people and places were but the local expressions of collective force, went out of his way to praise

the ability to visualize people, objects, and events as they really are, even if one has never seen them. To combine separate little strokes caught on the wing, to supplement them by means of unformulated laws of correspondence and likelihood, and in this way to recreate a certain sphere of human life in all its concrete reality, basing everything upon experience in life and upon theory—that is the imagination that a legislator, an administrator, a leader must have, especially in a period of revolution. Lenin's strength was chiefly this power of realistic imagination.¹¹³

Trotsky and Lenin might not value my own visualizations, since collective force interests me only insofar as it relates to personalized ethical decisions about violence. Nonetheless, I too in my way seek to recreate various "spheres of human life" in order to make identification with each moral actor more feasible. Descriptions of personalities, appearances and the settings in which people act and react will hopefully provide further means for the reader to make that re-creation himself, and thereby to evaluate my judgments.

In the theoretical half of this book I will attempt to define as vividly as I can the ethos of a homeland,¹¹⁴ the identity of a place¹¹⁵ and of an animal,¹¹⁶ etcetera. "A homeland is a language, the way that the streets curve and the color of the sky in winter, the fashion in which coffee is served, the tempo of traffic."¹¹⁷ It is this that people commit justified violence to save, and unjustified violence to aggrandize. I truly believe in the utility of such a conception of motivation—people kill for what

they cry for—and I want you to believe it. How else can I convey the feeling of a specific place except through description?

Above all, the blossoming days of the Niblungs deserve vivid records.¹¹⁸ “Despite confusion and uncertainty,” writes the military historian John Keegan, “it seems just possible to glimpse the emerging outlines of a world without war.”¹¹⁹ Maybe so—if thermonuclear war exterminates all of us Niblungs.

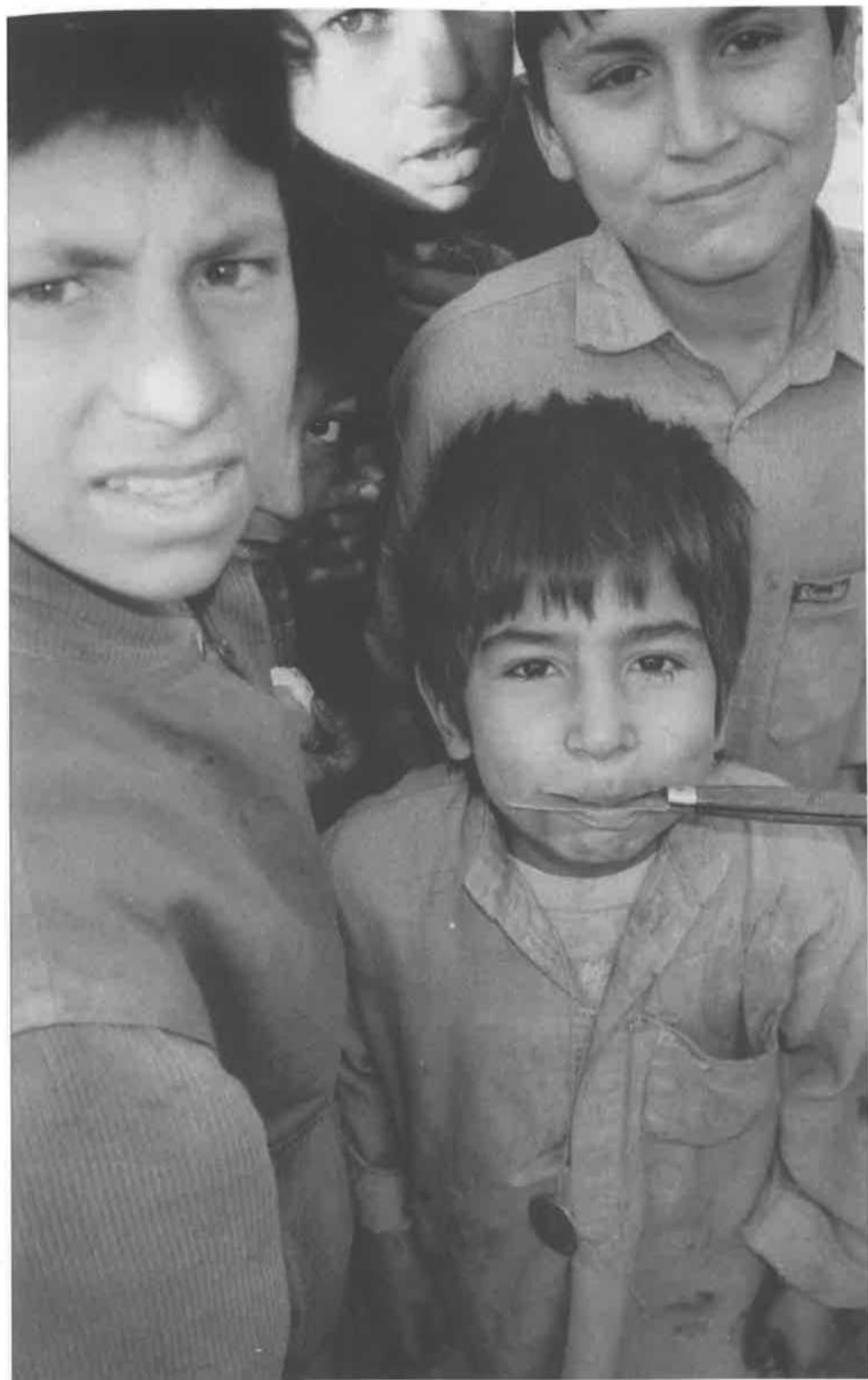


WEAPONS ON PARADE

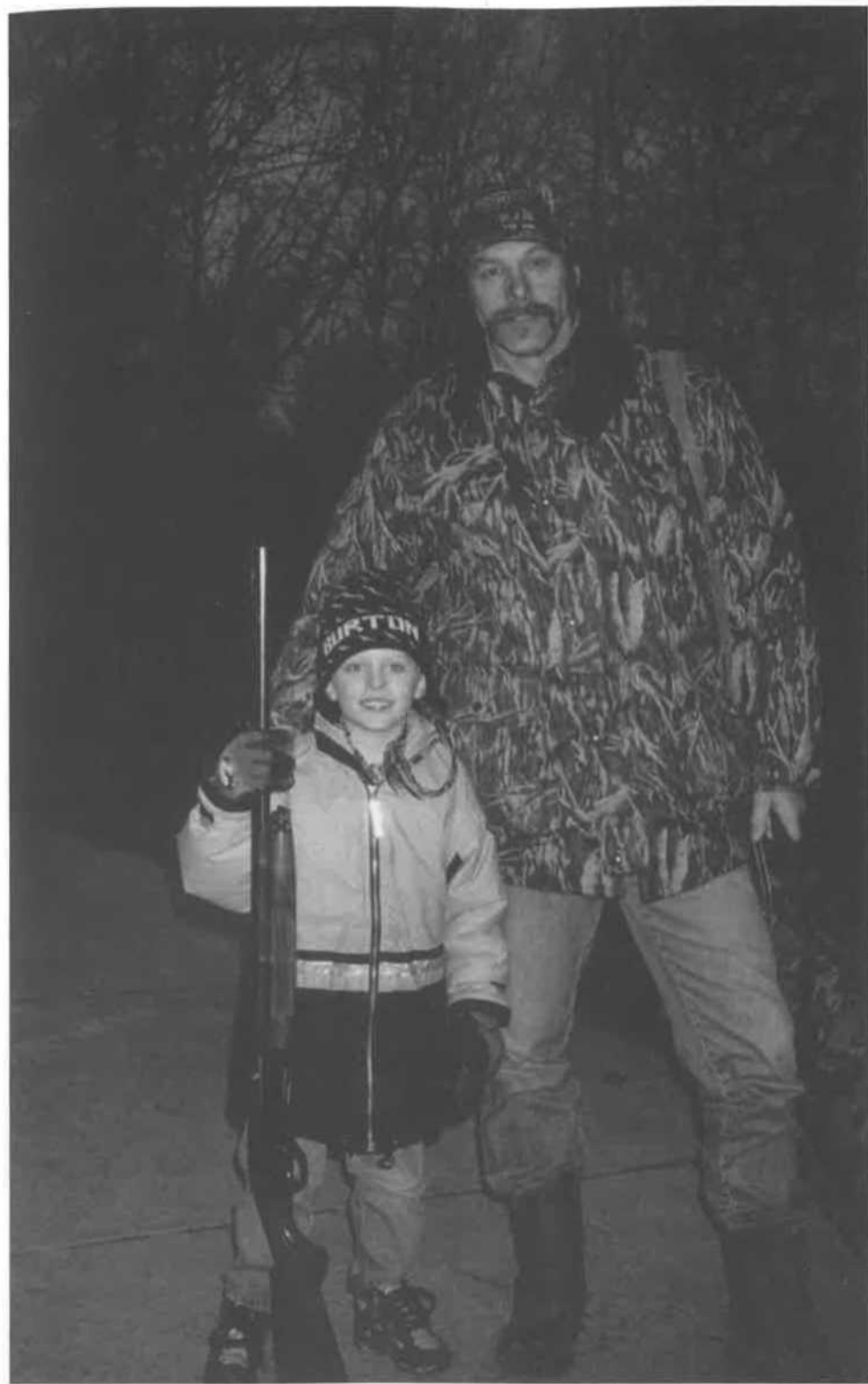
Everyone deploras violence. So why do so many of these people seem so happy?

58. Boy with knife "for defense," central Madagascar, 1994.
59. Boys and knife, Peshawar, Pakistan, 2000.
60. Boys with toy gun, southeast Thailand, 1996.
61. Rock and roll star Ted Nugent with his son and a hunting rifle, Michigan, USA, 1997.
62. Afghan Mujahid's son, with toy rifle carved for him by his father, near Parachinar, Pakistani-Afghan border, 1982.
63. Afghan Mujahid with Kalashnikov, near Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 1982.
64. Boys with toy gun by bulletpocked wall, East Mostar, Bosnia, 1994.
65. Basque volunteer who fought with Muslim side, East Mostar, Bosnia, 1994.
66. Policewoman in women's prison, Bogotá, Colombia, 1999. She loved guns.
67. My government-appointed Iraqi interpreter with his pistol, Baghdad, 1998.
68. Iraqi soldiers raising their Kalshnikovs on Saddam Hussein's birthday, Tikrit, 1998.
69. Karenni insurgents, Karen State, Burma, 1994.
- 70a. Boy with toy machine pistol, Japan, 1995.
- 70b. Boy with squirt gun, Louisiana, USA, 1994.
- 71a. Boys with toy gun, southeast Thailand, 1996.
- 71b. My friend Craig, with my Desert Eagle .50 caliber, California, U.S.A., 1995.
- 72a. Young Mujahideen with guns and rocket launcher, near Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 1982.
- 72b. Military parade, Vienna, Austria, 1996.





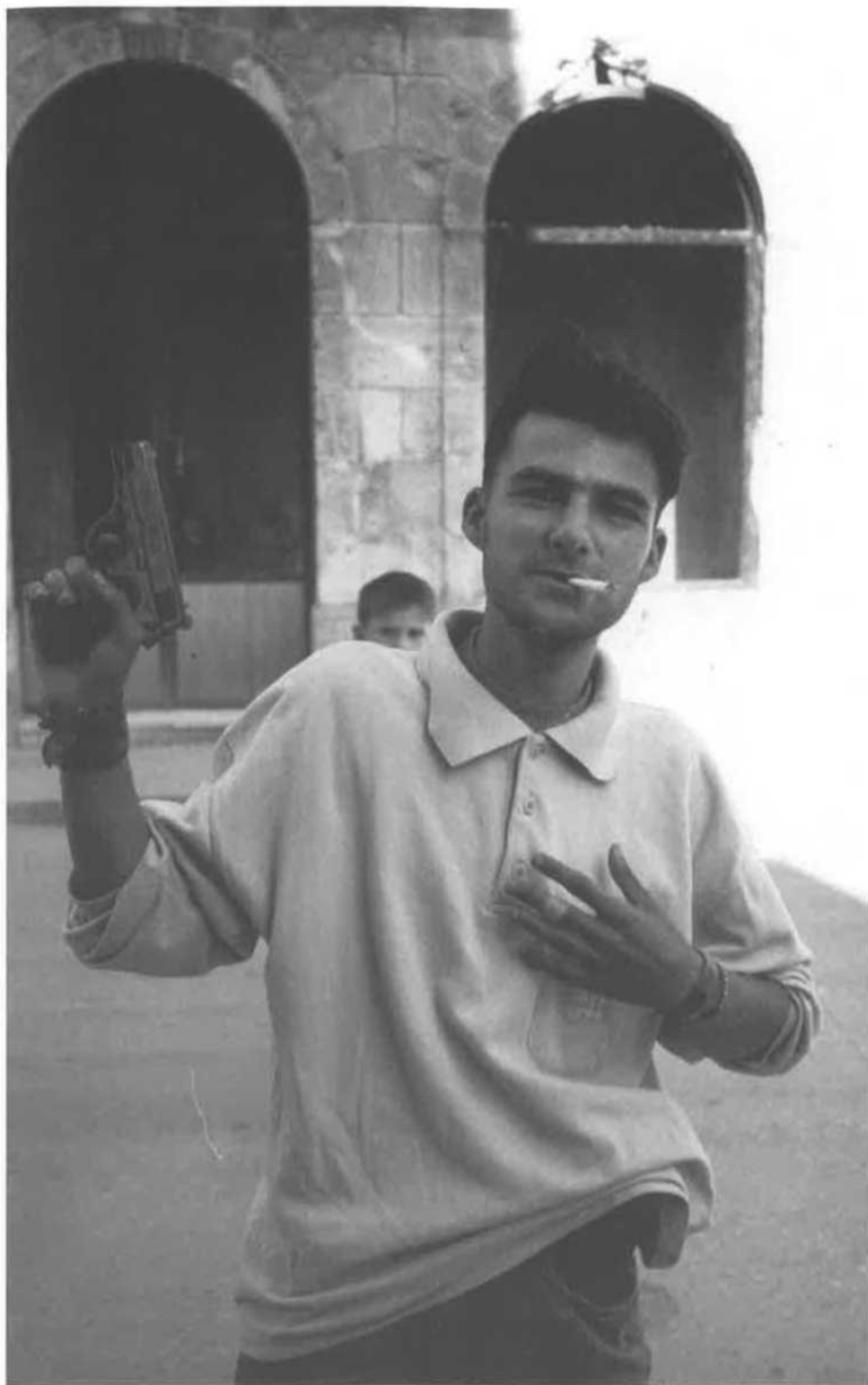


























PART I
CATEGORIES AND
JUSTIFICATIONS

DEFINITIONS FOR
LONELY ATOMS

CHAPTER I

ON THE AESTHETICS OF WEAPONS

In our salesroom, we have on view upwards of 1,000 Different Kinds of Guns, from the early matchlock, up to the present day automatic. What a story some of these old arms could tell, of victories and reverses, of heroism and valor, but they lie silent now.

BANNERMAN CATALOGUE, 1927¹

Guns are an interesting prop.

ABBIE HOFFMAN, 1968²

People who dislike weapons do so on the basis of their *function*. Those who like them do so on the basis of either *function* or *form*. I myself admire well-made weapons. I am no sadist, and therefore do not cherish the purpose for which weapons are crafted—namely, to harm³—but it would be hypocritical to deny that the death and pain reified in a weapon, the power of it, invests it with glamor.⁴ Use can swiftly transform glamor into loathsomeness, which is why the planners of air shows and military parades usually content themselves with moving their machines

on each bullet in the magazine?) will assist the jury in determining the severity of the penalty. For this reason alone, an understanding of the aesthetics of weapons is worthwhile. But an even more important reason is that—to a lesser or greater extent—so many people feel that aesthetic. If one truly wants to comprehend human beings, one must comprehend what touches them. I myself freely admit that when I was boy, lacking sufficient experience of guns for the novelty to tarnish (my father kept in the basement a disassembled Swedish Mauser that I never knew about until I was grown and he gave it to me; neglect had rusted the bore, and the barrel had warped), the cool greasy black grooves of an M-16 magazine used to slide me into the same reverie as some thriller stuffed with sweetmeats of piracy on the high seas. We tranquilize our own lives with episodes real and unreal to sweep us aloft like Skorzeny rescuing Mussolini from the castle in his amazing glider.⁸ Science fiction with its fearful methane worlds, romance with its medley of ingenious coitus interrupt uses up to the second-to-last page, biography with its trudging travails, headlines with their horrors—all these have but one object: to inform life with easy triumph, by drawing us into these plot complications which, perhaps, have laid others low—but not us! real or not, they were never real *for us!* (here as usual I'm pretending that those yellow bones in the Paris catacombs don't exist)⁹—and so, returning to the reality of the armchair, having dreamed away another afternoon, we can believe for a second or two that we've earned our ease.

WHAT DOES A VAGINAL PEAR PROVE?

Dislike sometimes enters when the obstacles are or have been actually experienced. I once met someone who hated my guns because her brother had been murdered with a gun. And yet she herself enjoyed movies of aquatic terror, which sometimes make me queasy because my sister drowned. Both dislikes are legitimate; neither ought to be imposed. To object to weapons because you have seen what they can do is on a par with rejecting history because it is largely a record of unhappiness. That is one reason why when I go to the shooting range I so often see old soldiers enjoying their target practice, undaunted by their knowledge that death surrounds and is enveloped by life. The same steadiness burns in a doctor I know who enjoys the beauty of the giardia parasite. Beauty has nothing to do with morality. (Weapons, of course, have everything to do with morality.)

From a failure to comprehend precisely that leaps a kindred objection: namely, that to aestheticize weapons is to glorify them. Examples of this point of view are everywhere. In a description of a torture device called the "vaginal pear," whose lobes expand by means of a screw ("the inside of the cavity in question is irremediably mutilated, nearly always fatally so"), the essayist writes:

Mutilation of breasts and female genitalia has been an omnipresent and constant

usage throughout history... Since the soul of torture is male, and in the tenebrosity of his unilluminable nature the male is terrified by the mysteries of the female's cycles and fecundity, but above all by her inherent intellectual, emotional and sexual superiority, those organs that define her essence have forever been subjected to his most savage ferocity, he being superior only in physical strength. Hence centuries of witch hunts, with unspeakable methods.¹⁰

Having read this, one imagines how damnable it would be to aestheticize vaginal pears, or, by extension, any torture implement, perhaps even any weapon. But it depends on how they are aestheticized. Our essayist deploys at its highest degree of transparency the strategy of elevating the victim to that kind of expedient sainthood which it would be heresy to challenge: the mere existence of the vaginal pear proves that men are criminals and women the angelic objects of their criminality. Have most torturers down the ages been male? Almost certainly. (Most of the witches burned in medieval Europe, for instance, were women; their executioners were men). Well, then, is *violence* something ontologically male, inflicted almost exclusively by men upon women? I feel embarrassed that I have to devote a single line to this notion.¹¹ And yet seemingly intelligent people express it so frequently that it must be dealt with. A single case would not demolish it; several, however, might at least call it into question. Why not that of Dorothea Binz, assistant to the *Oberaufseherinnen* at Ravensbrück concentration camp? "One literally felt touched by the breath of evil," writes a survivor. "She would walk slowly among the ranks, her crop behind her back, searching with menacing little eyes for the weakest or most frightened woman, simply to beat her black and blue."¹² Why not that of the all-female Asian gang in Little Saigon (near Los Angeles), reputedly formed because the members' boyfriends would not allow them to participate in torture?¹³ We ought not to leave out the Libyan queen Pheretima, who, says Herodotus, had her husband's murderers impaled on stakes; then, turning her attentions to "those organs that define her essence," "she also cut off their wives' breasts, and stuck those up, too, in the same position."¹⁴ Bring back to mind those seventeenth-century Iroquoians: Their doomed captives comprised generally, although not without exception, male warriors. In tones of horrified loathing, European observers, who preferred their public burnings done by male functionaries, commented on the fury, the ferocity and sometimes the preeminence of the women in torturing them.¹⁵ Moreover, the cruel rites of the Iroquoian longhouses frequently did have sexual undertones¹⁶ whose intensity equaled that of the vaginal pear—all the more reason, then, to see the female category participating in sadism to an extent morally comparable to the male. (And why not? Sexuality goes both ways.) "Women are no less cruel than men." This cannot be upheld. In the United States, five males for every female are arrested on the charge of murder. (For that matter, three males are murdered for every female¹⁷—and here, if we wish to meet the vaginal pear's essayist on

his own ground, we might symmetrically cite the anal pear, which was employed upon male homosexuals. Men harm women—and men harm men—and sometimes women harm men. End of story, sort of.) “Killings in the family unit constituted twenty-five percent of all homicides in 1970. In over half of these incidents the principals were husband and wife, with wives making up more than half the victims.”¹⁸ But women, even if men may outdo them generally, can be said to be *cruel enough*. This book will be about them, too.

Hence I would describe the vaginal pear¹⁹ thus: We see a pale bronze thing shaped actually less like a pear than a bulb or tuber, whose nether end tapers into an unobtrusive, innocuous-looking point. From the tuber grows a stalk—a sturdy iron screw with many threads—and atop the stalk we even find a blossom: two cut-out bronze faces (the lower one perhaps a horned fanged devil’s) connected to one another by the proud, outward-facing profiles of a pair of seahorses: in effect, this bloom is an embellished keyhead of rather uninspired workmanship. Insert the seed into mouth, vagina or anus, turn the key, and the tuber begins to take root by opening, splitting into three so that the innocuous point becomes three points now swiveling into an increasingly perpendicular relation with the soft tissues they’re now about to rip.



Vaginal pear

What does it emblemize, then? Hideous cruelty to women—but, if we remember the anal and oral pears, hideous cruelty to men, too.

And what is the “point” of aestheticizing it? For me, in this case, none. The thing sickens me. And yet, in its crude way, the vaginal pear is not entirely without beauty. Taking its cue from the womb it was meant to destroy, it has been constructed as a kind of mold or cast of the womb. The womb’s shape is beautiful. So then is the vaginal pear’s.

To aestheticize is to distance, hence to reclaim. The child reaches for the parent’s neglected gun because it is a fascinating object. “All things are pure to the pure.” He pulls the trigger; his playmate dies. But we ourselves may combine the child’s appreciation of color, mass and shape with the adult’s knowledge. We can make visual and emotional associations removed from murderousness. We can touch the vaginal pear without employing it.

“FOR INFORMATION ONLY”

Is this a cynically shallow formulation? Sometimes it can be. Consider the disclaimer at the end of the following blurb:

When you want to know how to construct a big bang, don't theorize—get the facts! Making an advanced improvised explosive can be as deadly to the manufacturer as to the target, so learn how to do it right!

Author of *Improvised Explosives: How to Make Your Own*, Seymour Lecker details how to make explosives which, upon detonation, combine a strong industrial acid with a common industrial chemical. Fifty common industrial chemicals are described, as are two detonating acids, five explosive device designs, and a reference of other books.

*For information only.*²⁰

And yet it may be that even this is acceptable. I bought that book for information only. Who am I to say that everyone else didn't?

This essay, too, is for information only. —What kind of information? —Well, there's the amoral fascination of engineering for any purpose, and the shuddersome fascination of evil and death—in other words, the beguilement of afternoons. I remember, for instance, the pleasant spring afternoon I spent at Yorktown Battlefield, over which the lookout signs directed me to redoubts and batteries, every earthwork clothed in grass and all the grass well-mown, each cannon painted and picturesque—not a single bloodstained bandage to be found! It was all beauty, honor and strategy. Since much of this book will concern itself with the bloodstained bandages, can we not be permitted to enjoy the view? After all, over the past two centuries Yorktown has gathered to itself a certain sweetness. The purpose of the monument overlooking the York River is, as the chiseling reads, “to commemorate the victory by which the independence of the United States of America was achieved.” I am grateful for this independence, and proud of it. The bloodstained bandages were not for nothing. Here is where a cause was won. I admire the cause; the implements and entrenchments by which it was won fascinate me, and, yes, today the battlefield is green and lovely—why not present it as such? *Any* sort of presentation ought to be legitimate which does not increase the number of victims! Hopefully the following will be maintain its own interest; you are welcome to be offended, also, if that pleases you.

CATALOGUE

The examples which I will discuss are personal and arbitrary, as is appropriate in any aesthetic endeavor. Not all are lethal or even harmful in and of themselves. The deficiencies I most lament are the lack of any discussion of: voodoo dolls,²¹ seppuku swords, poison rings, death-warrants, ornamental and presentation guns,²² mechanical suicide devices, automatic shooting devices, as on the former Berlin Wall, assault rifles, grenade launchers, atomic bombs,²³ homemade street and prison

weapons,²¹ shotguns and blowguns. Here, at all events, is the list, whose order follows (with certain exceptions) the continuum from ornamentality to functionality:

1. Two ornamental Rajasthani daggers.
2. A Ghurka knife.
3. The Buck Pathfinder.
4. The Feinwerkbau 65 air pistol (Mark II).
5. The Sig Sauer P226 nine-millimeter pistol.
6. A handmade Pakistani pen pistol.

You may fancy this assemblage to be too eclectically varied, showing an almost narcissistic didacticism. The thirteenth-century *Speculum Regale*, however, states the case: "But take good care to collect as many types of weapons as possible, while you still have no need of them; for it is always a distinction to have good weapons, and, furthermore, they are a good possession in times of necessity when one has to use them."²⁵

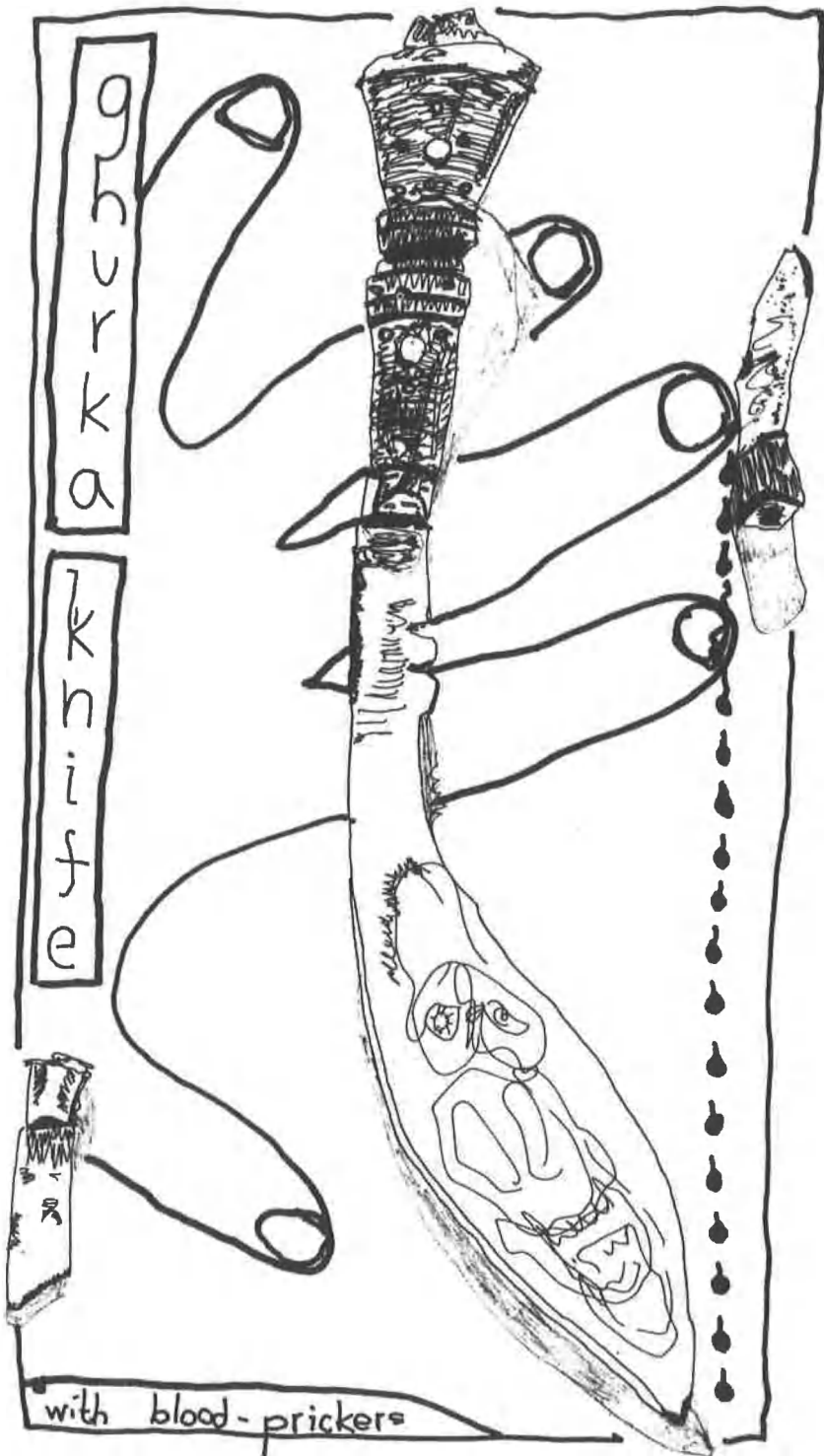
TWO ORNAMENTAL RAJASTHANI DAGGERS

The most significant characteristic of these lovely pieces is that their edges are blunt. Their purpose, in short, is to symbolize the power and authority of weapons, much like an officer's pistol, or even a policeman's uniform, which is a weapon in the sense that it enables him to commit otherwise forbidden acts of violence. They are talismanic, like crucifixes or Platonic forms. Evidently beauty was an absolute requirement in their crafting, since any such dagger was metonymous with the official function of the Maharajah, whose life had to symbolize perfection to the rest of society. —What purpose now? The Maharajahs are impoverished, and even such new-fashioned distant cousins of these S-shaped daggers²⁶ as straight-and-narrow bayonets find infrequent use. For acts of war we have our bombs, flying machines, crawling machines, swimming machines; for acts of legislation, the truncheon and the gun; for acts of atrocity, again the gun, among other things. The knife has become a poor man's weapon. Thus these daggers are doubly removed from sharpness. It is emblematic (to use that word again) that the little store in Udaipur that sold them (they were lubricated well with coconut oil, wrapped in bundles of old newspaper) was equally forward in displaying jointed silver fishes made up of many small pieces more complex than bones—which made the daggers seem even more beautifully useless, metonymic still of the Maharajah, but only the Maharajah of Astonishment—for instance, Sawai Madho Singh I, who was reputedly seven feet tall and four feet wide. In Jaipur, I saw his Maharani's eighteen-pound dress—"That must have been heavy," I said. —The guide smiled. "The Indian women don't feel the weight when it is real gold," he said. —The real gold of these daggers is, of

course, their craftsmanship. The longer I handle the smooth yellow ivory of that camel's head, or peer into the checkered gape of that flower-inlaid tiger, the more I perceive this, and the more fairylike the pieces become. (No need to meditate on catacomb-bones at all!) I have seen the Maharajah's sun-emblem: it was composed of muskets raying outward from sacredness. Surely these muskets were never fired. How blasphemous it would have been to wrench off a ray from the sun!—I went to another palace whose wooden gates were forty feet high. I saw the high window where the Maharani used to welcome her husband with rose-flowers. I passed through green-bordered receding arches which resembled the leaves of artichokes. —Now: the Hall of Glory, whose ceiling was inlaid with silvered glass in tiny complex pieces, to shimmer a million reflected flames of a single candle. Skeletons dazzled me in the perforated marble screens. —But the guide said: "Before, the Maharajah had elephants. Now, not a single!" —So little utility in these old blades! Consider the so-called "tiger knife," which is shaped like a letter A with two horizontals. The hand grips one of them; the legs of the A curve inward into parallels to enclose the wrist and lock it. The tiger comes; the point of the A stabs him; he falls dead. —Functional, no doubt. But many of these tiger knives—old ones, gilded, Damascened, tawny-striped like tigers—are for sale. A good one goes for three thousand dollars²⁷ (less, of course, if you bargain, cash in hand). A Maharajah had placed it on consignment. The Maharajahs sell things incognito, I heard; the Maharajahs are ashamed. Sometimes, to decrease the likelihood that the knives will be recognized as theirs, they sell to distant provinces, even though there's less money that way. (Recently an art connoisseur came to buy Moghul miniatures. He asked a Maharajah if anything was for sale. The Maharajah said no, but if the man was serious, he knew another noble who might sell. It had to be understood, however, that the connoisseur would never meet him or learn his name...) —What is a tiger knife without its Maharajah? And indeed the matter is worse, much worse, for in Udaipur I saw towers alone and incongruous upon the desert hills. Sentries used to watch there for tigers, but that was when there were still forests. The trees are all burned now. —What use, then, a tiger knife without tigers? —No matter whether any blade is sharp.

A GHURKA KNIFE

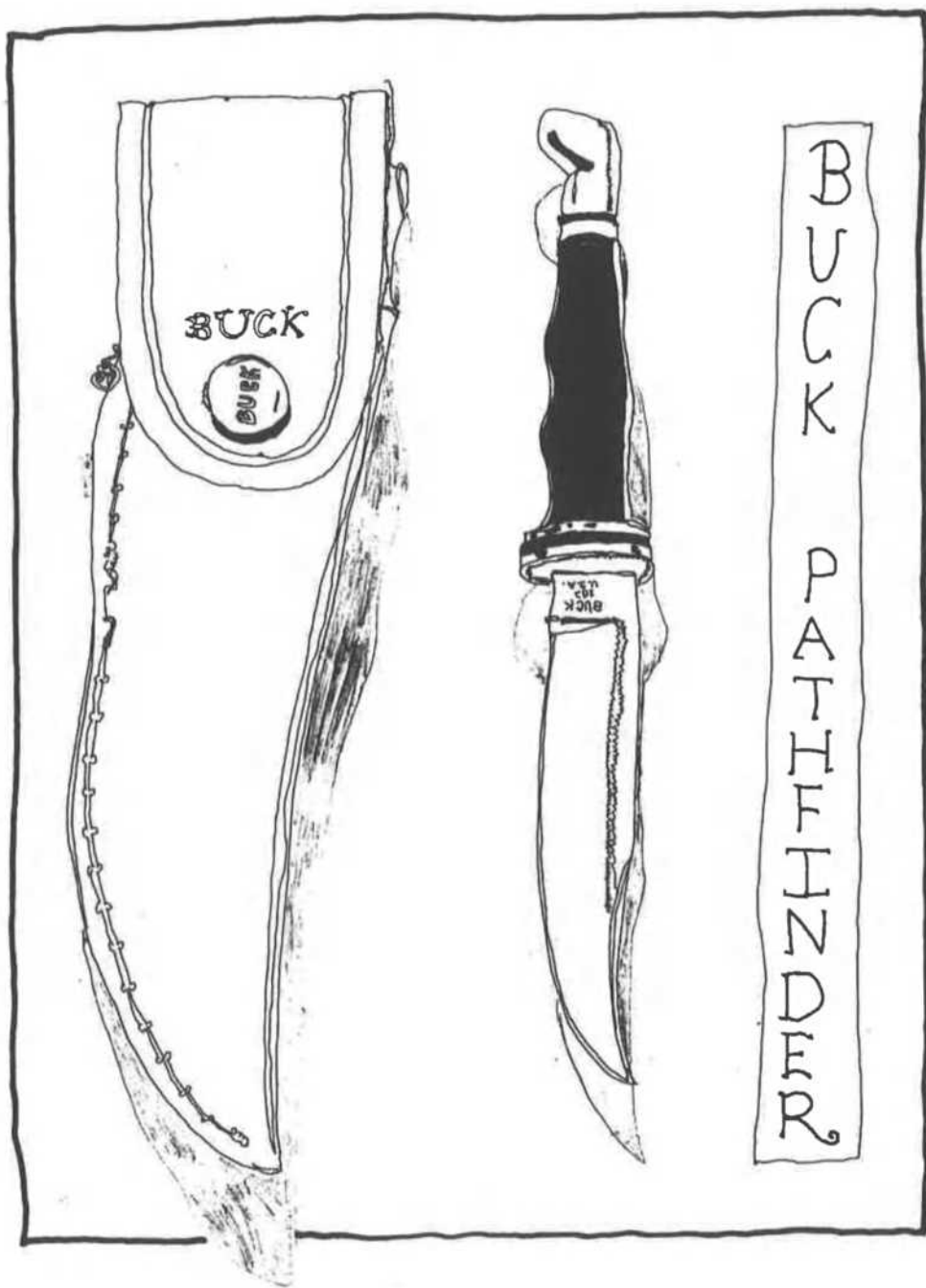
Like the samurai sword, the Ghurka knife must taste blood whenever it is drawn. For this reason it comes furnished with two small daggers for the owner to prick his finger with if he does not use the knife to kill somebody. Is this knife a living being? If so, my own must be suffering, because its sheath was riddled with mites and I had to throw it away, leaving the knife itself perpetually drawn and unblooded. The two little daggers rattle around loosely in the drawer of my desk, useless as any tiger knife now; they're no longer any part of the Ghurka knife itself with its boomerang-



shaped blade, its black-on-silver handle with four iterations of the pattern: three lesser dots, then two, then one, in a pyramid; a great dot between the two in the middle row. As an object it seems poorly made. But the life of it becomes apparent in hand, when practically any motion is utilized by the curve of that weighted blade to pull the hand down in a curve, curving the wrist, slicing down with violent grace; in enemy flesh you would cleave and draw as well as stab. This knife was made for vicious purposes. One can imagine how easily it would slit someone's throat. But does it perhaps lose power month by month, like an old battery—unsheathed, I said, unblooded? In Calcutta they said to me that the sacrificial knife in the temple of Kali was alive, and it may be that the knife needs blood more than the goddess (or that the faithful believe that it does, which is the same thing). Medieval Japanese swords were said to take on the benevolence or malice of the smiths who made them.²⁸ Do you want to objectify violence? Supposing that cruelty and malice could be reified, I believe that it is a knife with a shape like this that would coagulate from screams and blood and humid breath, a knife whose blade overpowers the handle like this, sweeping it and the hand around it down in that fatal curve which it craves to draw.

THE BUCK PATHFINDER

In the case of the Buck Pathfinder, beauty becomes subjective. In shape and use this weapon, or tool as most of its owners would call it, is ordinary. The blade has no unusual curve like that of the Ghurka knife; it is not at all ornamented, although it does possess that essential quality of a nineteenth-century heroine, "a certain slender grace." What does a decent general-purpose knife mean to you? My own, being stratified with scratches, and nicked slightly here and there from my negligence, work and abuse, could be easily and cheaply replaced, and yet the truth is that I like what it's taken on. The sweat-corroded handle is a souvenir of the various times I've blistered and cut my fingers using it, and so it makes me feel like a survivor in a minor way. —What have I actually used it for? Whittling, slicing meat, severing water-vines in Belize, skinning cows, cutting rope and cleaning fish; I've used it many times to divide apples and open shipping cartons. This Buck knife has acquired an aesthetic of random disfigurements, which would be rewarding only to me and to those who care for me. It is a simple utilitarian blade which I have kept for a long time. If someone were to secretly switch it with another Buck Pathfinder which had been used comparably, I probably wouldn't notice. Therefore it is not the scratch-patterns themselves which provide meaning, but only the associations arising from the fact that it bears scratches which my life has made. I like the knife as an artifact because it fits well in my hand and is reliable. In shape, in heft, in overall appearance it is perfectly pleasant rather than outstanding. I have never used it as a weapon, although several times I carried it with me into unpleasant neighbor-



hoods and was happy to feel it under my coat—does that mean that I did use it so? The fact that nothing evil happened on those occasions requiring me to pull out the knife and defend myself has, if anything, made my knife somewhat of a talisman. It comforts me. When a soldier goes into combat, he's less anxious if he knows and trusts his weapon. If he's less anxious, he'll be a more effective soldier: calmer and bolder. Native Americans say that living things have Power, and that fashioned things have a different sort of Power available to the maker or the user. Hence the shaman's pouch, which was often disposed of with the dead shaman, being of use to no one but him.²⁹ Like the samurai's sword by whose ringing blow its owner sealed a sworn oath,³⁰ my knife is one of the externalizations of my life—not the only one, to be sure, since like many of us I wallow in possessions; nor even the most important one, but I am proud to own it and would miss it if I mislaid it.

In George R. Stewart's novel *Earth Abides* (1949), an ordinary hammer serves the same purpose. At the beginning of the book the hero has just been bitten by a snake. He sees that he has left the hammer behind. "For a moment he thought that he would go on and leave it there. That seemed like panic; so he stooped and picked it up with his left hand, and went on down the rough trail."³¹ By the end of the tale the hammer has become a ritual object, and the hero hands it to his successor. "Jack picked up the hammer, and stood with it dangling from his right hand. The other three then drew off a little, and Ish felt within himself a strange pang of sorrow to the young man to whom the hammer had descended."³² In this story it is the fact of the hammer's prior importance to another which makes it important to the successor. The difference between the hammer and the shaman's bag is that the hammer was openly used, whereas the contents of the shaman's bag were a secret. The hammer therefore has a public character and may be publicly handed on.

Let us now suppose that the successor continues to use the hammer as a ritual object, and passes it on to his successor, and so on, until one day the last Hammermeister falls into a tar pit, and so he and the hammer are preserved for future archaeologists. Seeing the hammer in its quillworked pouch, the archaeologists will at once experience the aesthetic of the hammer as something more than a hammer, because it has obviously been well-used, adorned, cared for, thought about. I once had occasion to feel a sense of awe much like this, when an Inuk friend of mine in the Canadian Subarctic showed me a knife, a true gallery piece (but the gallery was her apartment), and she let me handle it and study it. Here is what I wrote:

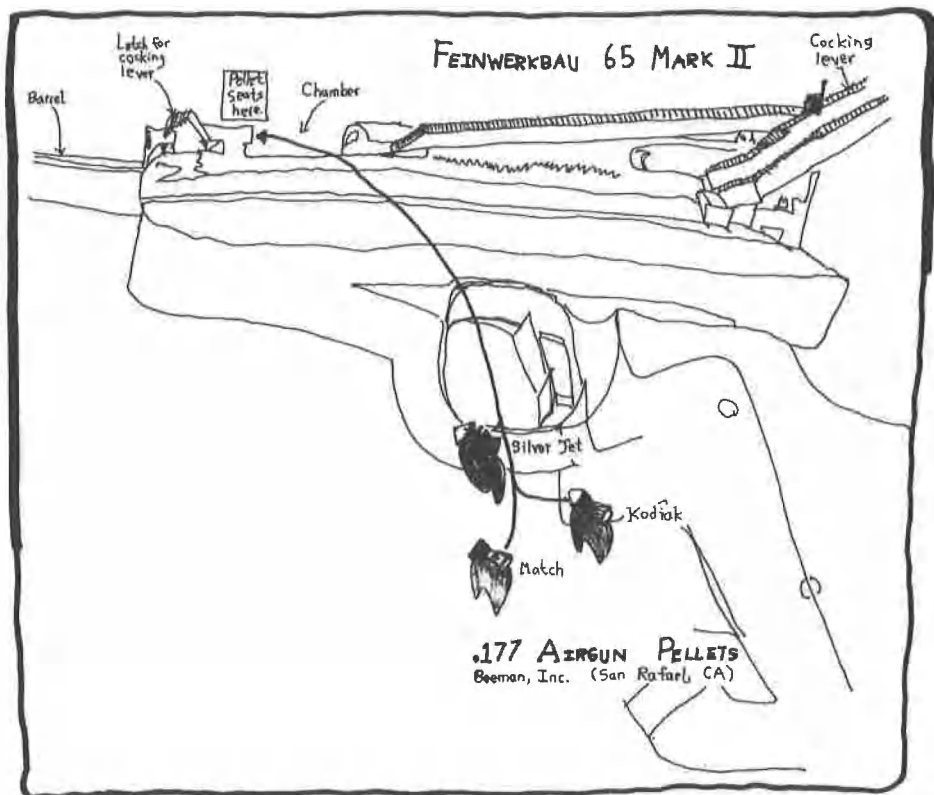
Reepah showed him the old knife she'd found once when she was ten years old walking across the tundra and spied it, picked it up and said: Ohhh!—a blade of some kind of pitted iron, pitted almost to shimmering, an L-shaped handle of caribou bone, which was discolored to an off-sheen of the greenish-white lichen, and it was fastened to the blade by means of four iron nails in a Y pattern. The blade itself was not sharp, except at the very tip. He ran his finger along it and it was no thinner or

sharper than the topmost edge. The entire blade, in other words, was of exactly the same thickness, as if it had perhaps been fashioned from some sheet of metal left by a European. Were the nails obtained from the same source? They were the same red-brown color; they were pitted the same way. The split in the handle into which the blade had been fitted was still well closed at the top, but on the bottom it had worn and widened so that the blade could be pivoted squeaking from one of the topmost nails. This gave the knife a strange "intentionality," as they used to say in literary criticism, for the blade and handle were of almost equal weight, and that balanced movement seemed what the tool might have been made for. Certainly it was hard to imagine cutting with it—it was so old and eerie and strange! The handle was smooth; the blade was pitted-smooth, and there it was, a survival like a coelacanth, in Reepah's house—³³

It was what this knife had endured which made me respect it. And, as a matter of fact, for one of my bookends I do have a hammer, an ordinary hammer which someone once lost on an Arctic island and which I discovered after God alone knows how many winters had rusted and loosened the head and scoured the handle to the bleached unevenness of driftwood. It is the Power of winter rather than of hammeringness which throbs in this hammer! If I resided in the Arctic permanently, I would not be impressed by the novelty of winter, whose Power would find me every year, and I would throw the hammer away. The ancient knife, on the other hand, is a one-of-a-kind piece (no matter that others very similar may exist), and to a much lesser extent, so is my scratched Buck Pathfinder. Twenty years from now I will be even fonder of it than I am now; if it is a weapon, it is a weapon against forgetfulness; it reassures me that it is still the same although I am no longer the same; which may be why so many men used to be buried with their weapons in the old days.

THE FEINWERKBAU 65 AIR PISTOL (MARK II)

An ordinary knife that cuts is better armament than an ivory-handled knife that doesn't; and a gun is more effective than a knife—sometimes. In this marriage of metal and wood called the Feinwerkbau 65, more functionally ambitious but far less time-tested than the one in Reepah's knife, function gets once again divested of lethality almost entirely—but not in the fashion of the Rajasthani daggers, whose function was symbolic. Like the Buck Pathfinder, this weapon signifies nothing in and of itself. One might call it a rich man's toy, a target trainer or rodent-killer; it simply does what it does, and the user can invest it with any meaning or none. The Feinwerkbau 65 has been engineered to fire .177 caliber pellets. The minimal mass of these, and their leisurely velocity (about four hundred feet per second) forbids them to do the harm usually demanded by self-defense or aggression against humans. A mouse or gopher would be ended by one well-placed pellet, and if a per-



son were shot in the eye at close range, he might be blinded or killed. But someone shot in the chest with a twenty-two, directly into the heart, will almost certainly die. Someone shot in this same spot with the Feinwerkbau 65 will receive a very painful bruise. Shoot this gun into a windowpane, and the glass will present a hole the size of a quarter, from which cracks extend most impressively, but there will be no shattering out from the pane. —In short, this is a weapon which does what larger-caliber weapons do, but it does so without *power*. —Why then would someone want to use the Feinwerkbau? —Because it possesses *accuracy* to an astounding degree. —“I love German things,” gushed the woman from whom I bought the squat lockbox in which I store certain pistols. —“Why?” I said. —“Well, take that box there,” she said. “It’s like everything else the Germans make. It’s so *beautiful*.” —If beauty is function alone, then she did have a point, because the box has always done its job perfectly. —The same for the Feinwerkbau 65, which genuinely is beautiful, and which proved itself in the Olympics. —The same, too, no doubt, for the vaginal pear.

The harmony of this pistol is airy, like Finnish furniture, and quite futuristic. I used the Feinwerkbau as a model for a sketch I did for my first novel *You Bright and Risen Angels*. The grip flares in strange angles and curves, yet proudly flaunts its

wood-grain; the metal part, the chassis of the gun, eerily approaches featurelessness, but only asymptotically; it is apparent that much lurks beneath that pretty skin (is beauty skin-deep? Not in this case.). —Open the long latch (cocking the gun in the process) and you've drawn back a silver cylinder, exposing a recess the size and shape of a small roll of quarters. At the front of this a hollow cone juts toward you, awaiting its bullet; at the back, a blue counter-cone waits to cup itself around it in an orgasm of moving air.

Most air pistols are powered either by a cartridge of carbon dioxide or by a handle which pumps air into the chamber, thereby compressing gases around the little bullet. The result of both systems: wild variation in velocity. The *Feinwerkbau 65*, therefore, utilizes a spring-piston. Before inserting the pellet into the bore, you cock that long lever on the side of the gun, as I've mentioned, to force a piston back against a spring for a nicely constant distance. Cocking takes some effort, as well it should, the potential energy of the piston being so high that when it is converted to kinetic energy at the moment of firing, the temperature inside the chamber rises far beyond that of combustion. Having brought the cocking lever back as far as it goes, then, you return it to its original position and latch it shut. The pistol is now ready to fire. When the trigger is pulled, the piston will slam forward, creating a shockwave of air which thrusts the pellet down the bore at exactly the same rate as it did the previous pellet: hence accuracy.

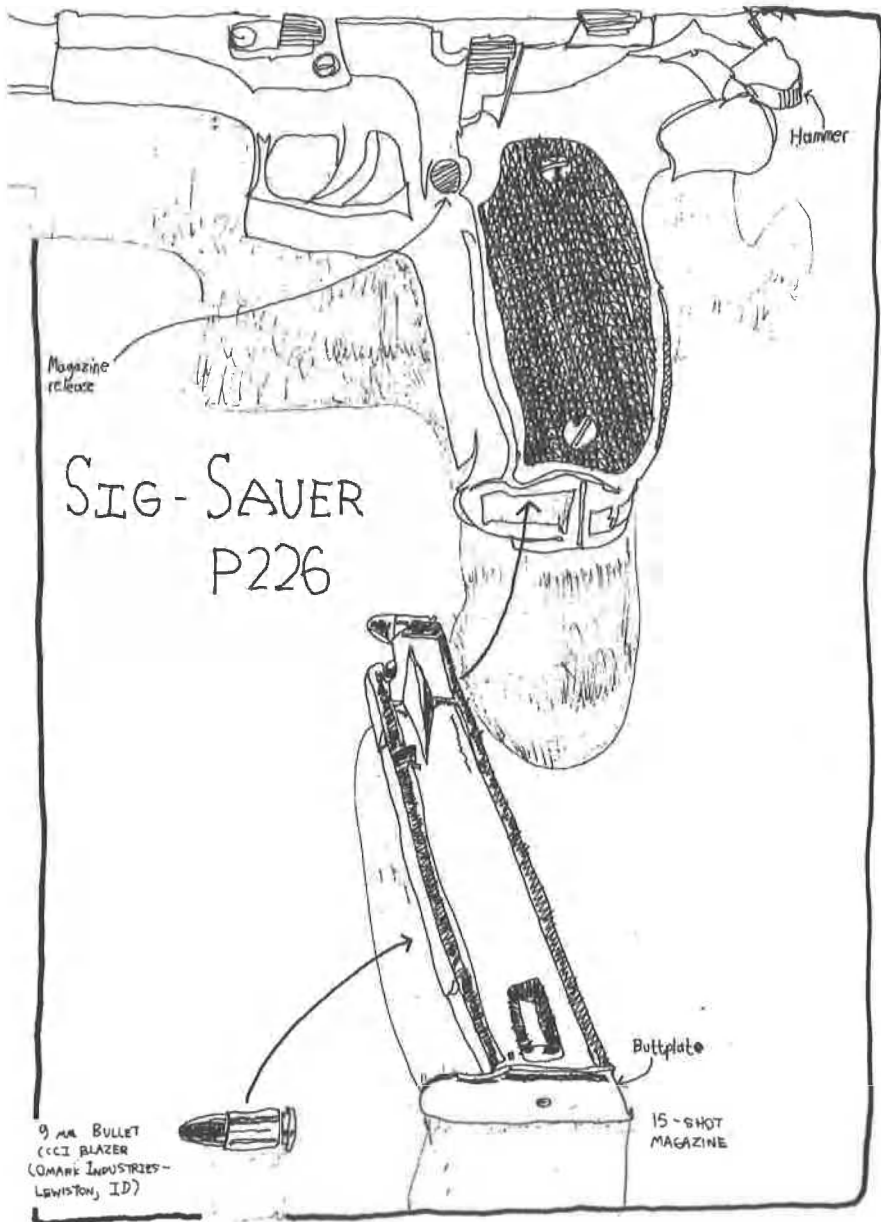
The precision of the *Feinwerkbau 65* has been increased by several other features, including a click sight adjustable for windage, a grip specially contoured for the left or right hand, and a mechanism to reduce recoil almost to nothing (the gun come accompanied by a small plate which may be attached to create recoil, if one wishes it for firearms training purposes). On a windless day I have often made bull's-eyes at the firing range at twenty-five yards, and I am a terrible shot. (Wind affects the light pellets more than it would heavier high-velocity bullets whirring in rifled twists.) How satisfying it is to stand between two shooters whose thirty-eights or forty-fours boom with smoke and fire on either side of me, their ejected shells pattering against my cheek, while the air pistol discharges with only the faint twang of a tweaked rubber band! Some people shoot because they're afraid of others, and want to defend their lives; some because they're fixing to kill; some because it's their job; and some because their goal is perfect praxis—that is, constructing a moment when the dot aimed at is identical with the dot penetrated, when the will accomplishes no more and no less than its end in this imperfect world. —How many of us can say that our loves, travels or other great deeds turned out exactly as we planned? Can you say that your life has been what you made it? But if you want to enough and your union of hand, arm, shoulder and eye has been refined to a sufficient closeness, then you will be able to make the bull's-eye three times in a row, or maybe even a dozen. (I have never yet accomplished more than two perfect shots in a row.) Then, at the end of a sunny day at the range, having murdered nothing but paper,

having spent nothing but pennies (five hundred pellets cost five dollars), you'll take your last target down, zip the *Feinwerkbau* into its case and descend the tree-lined road, accompanied by butterflies; the sounds of shots grow fainter; you admire your close-focused groups once more, throw the targets into the ash can and walk on care-free, with nothing material to show for the day anymore but leadstained fingers, and you can fool yourself that maybe you're a little closer to that ideal state when ten pellets make one single hole in the center dot (on this day there will be no more bones in the catacombs), and you're refreshed and happy. —Or maybe the weather is bad, or the range feels too far away. Out with the "Experiment Lab"—once a 1950s chemistry set, whose cover shows a crewcut boy and his father admiring a smoking test tube, while atoms spin like spiders in an innocent paean to the nuclear age. Of the poor Experiment Lab I possess only the box, whose aluminum walls will halt an air-gun pellet in its tracks. The interior has been lined with ballistic putty, courtesy of James the Engineer (modeling clay would have done in a pinch), speckled with dead pellets as a pudding is with raisins. I lock my door so that no one can intrude upon the sacred rites, which might be literally injurious. The Experiment Lab, now open on a chair, awaits. I slap a tiny airgun target against the sticky clay. —Twenty-five paces backward along the bookshelf, where in the shadow of perfectionist Proust and action-packed Malraux I unzip my air gun, unlatch the cocking lever and prepare the first lead sperm to be ejaculated as my tastefully chosen loud music crescendos in delighted cries.

THE SIG SAUER P226 PISTOL

But there comes a time when dalliance is not enough, and I long like a three-year-old to express my power in a series of bangs and smashes. I want my ears to ring. I want to smell burned gunpowder and see glass bottles burst apart and rise like a flock of cutting birds. Having suffered some slight or reverse, I desire to take my revenge on washing machines or junked cars and all the other dragons who menace the innocent at this desert dump and must be stopped. Here I am at one with those who watch gangster movies,³⁴ hoping for blood and excitement that hurts no one. —Time for the Sig Sauer.

Fifteen bullets click down into the magazine as I thumb them. (A sixteenth in the chamber if I wish, but I never do.)³⁵ The slide is already retracted in "combat-ready" position from the previous shots. I shove the magazine in with the heel of my hand and pull the lever on the grip. The slide slams viciously forward, chambering the first round. The hammer is cocked for double-action fire. I don my black *Silencio* Magnum hearing protectors, whose insignia are guns, one over each ear. —What's that in my field of fire? —A piece of thin-gauge sheet metal. —What's the world coming to these days? That thing had better be DESTROYED. —I take aim, lining up the white dot. My finger tightens on the trigger and slowly draws it back...





Window display in military surplus store (St. Petersburg, Russia, 2000)

I strive to keep the front sight from dancing ... back and back ... BOOM! The piece of sheet metal pings and a hole appears in it and then it smashes down on top of an old rusty plough. Dust rises with the echo. —What next? Well, look at that—a tin can! What an imposition! BOOM! The can flies backward and wire screeches. —Why, I'm saving the world out here! —Two bullets gone, and thirteen left. —That old Chevy truck still has the windshield left in! What an oversight! But I can fix that. How fast can I pump five rounds into it? —This fast: BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! —But half a dozen bullets are still weighing me down. I set the pistol down on top of my bandanna and venture into that nest of potential pings and bangs to scrounge for I know not what—well, this old-style Coca-Cola bottle will do. How about if I stand it up on top of that dryer?—Now, let's see. My sights are in alignment; I've let my breath half-out; I keep the white dot in focus; surely I'll hit it... BOOM! —Missed. —BOOM! —Missed. —BOOM! —Missed. —I really am a bungler. —Fortunately no one's here to witness my shame, so I'll just take a few steps closer... BOOM! —Ah, that did it—KER-SMASH! —And one bullet left! Suppose we get the towbar of that superobsolescent tractor? —BOOM! *Gooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!*¹⁶

The Sig Sauer has a very serious look. Unlike many other handguns, whose silver skins provide them with an easy beauty,³⁷ the Sig Sauer is black on the outside, with the exception of the hatches and sphincters of its three orifices: the muzzle (a silver ring filled with blackness), the extractor (a silver trapezoid halfway between the sights, which flicks open just after firing to eject the casing) and the buttplate of the magazine (a half-ellipsoid slightly less black than its surroundings). High on the grip, just opposite the trigger, squats the magazine release button, scored with parallel grooves and ridges like all the levers of this gun. Push it, and an inch or more of magazine will be ejected with surprising force. You can now draw the rest of the magazine out, and it will stand up by itself on that wide buttplate, a canted tower of bullets gripped tight, up-aiming with gold noses and silver casings,³⁸ and there is a true beauty in the way that it stands. Now guide it back into its dark well; shove with the heel of your hand and it clicks eternal, the weight of its contents enhancing the serious character of the gun. My target-play may please me, but this is a machine (now there can be no doubt) whose end, whose Platonic virtue, is killing. Its loveliness derives from heft and grooves and moving parts, clicking or sliding or pivoting in miniature arcs of almost perfect replicability; it does not possess the beauty of the Rajasthani daggers whose remaining purpose is but to be. —Pick it up and use it, and it comes to life. In a sense, my Sig Sauer has never *fully* come to life, since I've never killed anyone with it. But it has offered me self-defense insurance over the years; and on past occasions, when in the pinchclaws of morbid depression, it seemed to me that I could *feel* the doom-rays of my guns even through the shielding of their massive box, chilling me in other rooms, behind thick walls; and at moments of particular sensitivity I thought to distinguish the Sig Sauer's



Movie theater in Peshawar, Pakistan (2000)

own coldness and malignancy from the chills of the others. It is at such times that I almost did believe that everything is alive, in the sense that the Ghurka knife is supposed to be, and that the Sig Sauer sought to fulfill itself by luring me into self-destruction. I have not felt this way for years, and am glad of it. But the memory of that feeling adds to the mystique of the gun. Perhaps killers become attached to their weapons in this way; the person and the instrument need each other to do what they've been fashioned to do. That explains the pride of a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old boy I saw once in Harlem, showing off his illegal automatic, the grip already painted with two red stripes to memorialize the two kids he claimed he'd sent to hell because they owed him money. Who cares if he was lying? To my way of thinking, the boy and his gun have become evil, but my Sig Sauer is only a thing of potential evil—and potential good, too, which we tend to leave alone; but we all love potential evil, as I have been saying, in order to prove ourselves good by surmounting it—especially when the evil is imaginary, when the vampire is only a fruit bat, when the gun is only a gun. “We cannot but pity the boy who has never fired a gun,” writes Thoreau; “he is no more humane, while his education is sadly neglected.”³⁹ Those who believe that this sentiment justifies the deeds of the Harlem boy are poor readers and worse judges; those who would stop up the bleeding chinks in that boy's education by taking away his firearm would succeed as well as if they sought to end

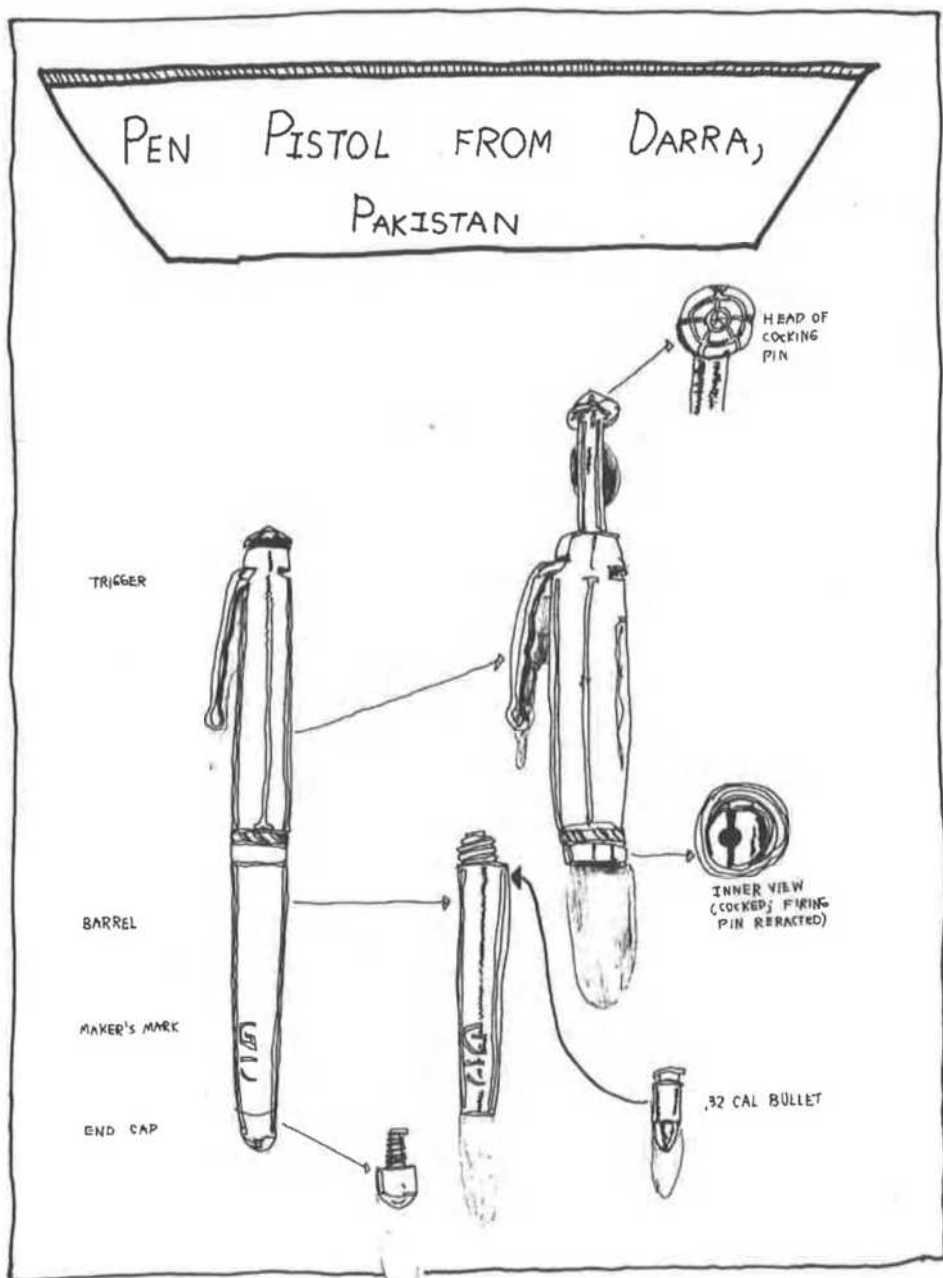
the homicidal riots between Hindus and Muslims in India by banning the possession of knives and stones, "No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood," Thoreau goes on, "will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child."⁴⁰

In 1990, I think it was, I had the honor of being questioned by the F.B.I. My interrogators reminded me of American street prostitutes in that they strove to get as much as possible while giving as little as possible. In this case the commodity was neither sex nor money, but simply information. Because they hoped to indict on spurious child molestation charges a photographer friend of mine who takes beautiful nudes of young girls, they'd unhesitatingly ask me how I felt about the idea of having intercourse with thirteen-year-old females, but then they'd bristle when I asked them what kind of guns they used! Nonetheless, I did get it out of them at last, and can happily report to you that my questioners carried Sig Sauer P226es, just as I do. However, they revel in copper-jacketed hollowpoints, which are not available to the public. ("Or at least we hope that they aren't," said my interrogatrix modestly.)

The P226 comprises one of the most superb examples of functionality I know. Unlike most mass-produced pistols, it sports a fully machined slide, which adds smoothness and reliability to its blowback operation. I have fired at least eighteen thousand rounds through it, and probably considerably more; it never jammed until well beyond the fourteen thousandth. The recoil spring being replaced, it shot beautifully again.

A HANDMADE PAKISTANI PEN-PISTOL

The charm of this last piece has very little to do with functionality at all.⁴¹ Unsafe and awkward to operate, its capacity a single round, this gun does possess the quality which also gives luster to sexual encounters:—namely, novelty. (Should I have mentioned this to the FBI?) Disguise may be beauty, as we know from the James Bond films. And at first glance the gun does resemble a pen, a blocky heavy Stalinist pen with a crude gleam of light down its length. What kind of pen it is you hesitate to say, because the integral screw-on cap prevents you from seeing the tip—perhaps a fountain pen; it's certainly fat and stubby enough to be one. But usually fountain pens show more styling these days, and observation finds only two decorations on this pen: firstly (and this may not even be a decoration at all), a sort of collar halfway up the pen's length, composed of a break where the pen comes apart, a lip on either side; the top lip bears a series of slanted grooves, not unlike those on the levers of the Sig Sauer, and perhaps they are ornamental, or perhaps they simply imitate the knurling and checkering on the grips of other guns. The other decoration is the maker's mark, yellow on the black steel: a sort of G, but what would be the small arc just below and adjoining the horizontal bar of that Roman letter becomes



here (since none of this has anything to do with G's at all, the alphabet in these parts being Pushtu) not an arc at all, but a straight line at right angles to the G-bar; then beneath the G runs an underline; beneath which we discover our arc after all; a double of the lower half of the letter G's lefthand semicircle. The maker's mark, they told me, has been furnished as a guarantee; some of these pen-pistols blow up in your hand, so it's best to buy one from a reputable maker. —Unscrew that end-cap and notice the wobble: it was hand-turned on a lathe. Look in, and you see only what lies in any gunbarrel: darkness. But unscrew the pen at the middle, beneath the knurling, and you begin to learn things. The lower half, now resting in your right hand, is but a hollow tube banded with darkness; the bullet⁴² goes there. Inside the screwthreaded well of the upper portion lies a slotted plate, from the middle of which the firing pin projects. Cock the weapon by gripping between your fingernails a flattish star-incised cone at the top of the pen; work your nails down into the groove between it and the pen body and then pull outward. You may have to do this three or four times before the hammer fully extends and is securely caught. Now the flattish cone has come a nailhead, the body of the spike separating it from its groove by almost two inches, drawn against the power of a temperamental spring. If you look inside the pen at this stage, you will see that the firing pin is retracted: nothing but darkness as usual in that center hole. —Insert the bullet into the lower half of the pen, and screw the halves together. Remove the end-cap and aim. You fire by squeezing the penclip. If you push too close to the bottom of the clip, nothing will happen. Too close to the top, where it joins the pen's body, and when the nailhead comes slamming down it will pinch the skin of your finger until blood runs. —Just right, a fifth of the way down. —The firing pin then stabs into the primer of the bullet. The gun jerks back into your hand (I hope that you were holding it tight!) and gives you a blister. The bullet explodes and goes its way..

Would that all creation were as mysterious and two-faced as this pen-gun, which was manufactured in a place where they also build anti-aircraft guns by hand... —How interesting it would be if every pen or pencil laughed with secret death, if women were really men, as they are in transvestite bars, and men were women; if humans were aliens and spies; if flowers were microphones; if water were fire; and kisses were pacts of unknowable transcendence, which they sometimes are; if trolls and treasure lived inside every mountain; if wishes were horses; if guns could really solve anything—



VIOLENCE AGAINST NONVIOLENCE

SEABROOK, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1980

Who "won" this standoff between violent defense of authority and nonviolent defense of earth? The answer depends on whether the answerer is a Gandhian or a Clausewitzian.

102. Protesters and National Guardsmen at the north gate of the Seabrook nuclear plant. Several hours after I took this picture, the demonstrators were hosed down and maced.
103. Attempt to enter the grounds of the plant from the ocean side. The man in the river was stymied by the authorities waiting on the other side.
104. Attempt to cross the river with a homemade bridge. All such actions led to polarized concentrations of the antagonistic sides.
105. Attempt to blockade the road near the north gate. Not effective.
106. An activist couple in the street.
- 107a. Affinity group linking arms.
- 107b. Row of National Guardsmen preparing to disperse an affinity group.
108. A solitary protester with his flag. What was his end? If it was, as some of us said, to "dramatize" the situation, he might have achieved it. If it was, as the Coalition for Direct Action at Seabrook's handbook asserted, to shut down the nuke, he most certainly did not. (Karl Marx: "Between equal rights, force decides.")















CHAPTER 2

ON THE MORALITY OF WEAPONS

Sedentary people have become used to laziness and ease... They are carefree and trusting, and have ceased to carry weapons... They have become like women and children, who depend upon the master of the house.

IBN KHALDUN, 14TH CENTURY¹

When I enter a house, I want to be the only one with a gun.

POLICE OFFICER MICKI BASHFORD, 1997²

The handgun's primary purpose is to save lives, not take them.

CHUCK TAYLOR, 1982³

I sometimes laugh when people get emotional about our weapons. I'll tell you something really emotional ... the day we finally convinced the people in the villages about the importance of boiling the water they drink and cook with.

MAJOR ANA MARIA, INSURGENT IN CHIAPAS, 1996⁴

Knife and gun provide three things: security, autonomy (which is almost the same thing, but active rather than passive) and power (which is most active of all).⁵ Calling upon the Communist Party to arm the Chinese proletariat against the invading Japanese (who ironically had a tradition of denying weapons to their own lower classes),⁶ Trotsky wrote: "A people that today, with weapon in hand,

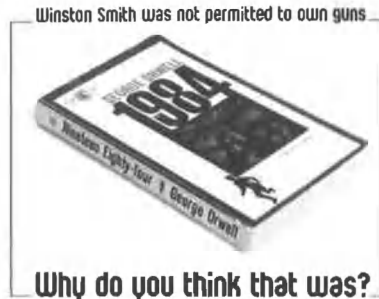
knows how to deal with one robber, will tomorrow know how to deal with the other one." By "the other one," of course, he meant the class enemy, but his logic would apply to *any* "other one." In Pancho Villa's Mexican utopia, citizens would have spent three days a week working and three days a week in military training. "When the Patria is invaded, we will just have to telephone from the palace in Mexico City, and in half a day all the Mexican people will rise from their fields and factories, fully armed, equipped and organized to defend their children and their homes."⁸ A gun in my hand prepares me, transforms me. If I can accurately shoot paper targets from a distance today, I have a better chance of being able to shoot my enemies tomorrow.

The simple law of might accords respect to an armed individual, who may well come to respect himself accordingly—another way of saying that security is the precondition for autonomy. One longstanding labor unionist and civil rights activist had to contend with the active hostility of American police. In a certain town, Ku Klux Klan recruiting posters adorned the police station. The activist recalls: "I am convinced that I'm alive today because I travelled with firearms—and that this fact was generally known."⁹ Whether self-respect will nourish bravery and honor, as it seems to have done in his case, or whether it will subsidize egotistical cruelty, must remain dark to our knowledge until deeds are done, or at least until we can invent an X-ray machine for souls. But self-respect in and of itself can never be a bad thing, because timorousness and incapacity in and of themselves can never be good. Incapacity to do evil is of course a *relative* good, a least-bad, a good-by-default; but when we reduce the evildoer to that state we are doing the right and necessary thing *for us*, and only incidentally for him (by, say, preserving his existence at the price of rendering him helpless). We read that in ancient Athens the franchise was bestowed only upon those men who had or could get the implements of war.¹⁰ We do not read that it was granted to trussed and defanged men whose virtue was that they could not harm the polity.

THE AMORALITY OF EMPOWERMENT

Thus the capacity to do violence extends the self: it does not only arm it, it also "hands" it, awarding it extra fingers of choice. The weapon becomes a limb, a friend. American frontiersmen so greatly valued their rifles' ability to feed and protect them that some bestowed affectionate pet names on them: "Ol' Ticklicker," "Deer Killer," "Indian Lament."¹¹ A Soviet lieutenant en route to ambush Afghan Mujahideen "pats the cannon of his APC as if it were a faithful dog."¹² In other words, no matter what an appalled examiner of the Pakistani pen pistol might believe, they solve some difficulties.¹³ "The intended victim is the only one in a good position to stop a criminal act," insists a gun writer.¹⁴ And, indeed, a U.N. study of fourteen nations decided that the greater the number of times somebody had been

victimized by crime, disarmed and unhanded, the more likely he was to be or become a gun owner, which is to say, of course, either a blood avenger or a self-defender; but I would be inclined to give such people the benefit of the doubt (since they were aggressed against), and assume self-defense until proven otherwise. The gun possession figure for three-time victims attained almost twenty-five percent.¹⁵ (The weapons owner's maxim: *If authority cannot protect me, I must protect myself.*) Did these guns ever help their owners? An FBI report I opened for the random year 1995 acknowledged that most justifiable homicides were committed with handguns.¹⁶ Can we agree that justifiable homicides are another relative good? In 1995, in the U.S.A. and Japan, twenty-two thousand people seemed to have lethally saved themselves:



Pro-gun poster

SELF-DEFENSE HOMICIDES (1995)

	BY MEN	BY WOMEN	TOTAL	TOTAL HOMICIDES
Japan ¹⁷	36 (3.4 percent of male total)	5 (2.0 percent of female total)	77 (5.9 percent of homicide total)	1,295
	BY POLICE	BY CITIZENS	TOTAL	TOTAL HOMICIDES
USA ¹⁸	383	268	651 (3.1 percent of homicide total)	20,694 ¹⁹

COMPARISON CAVEATS: U.S. figures are for justified homicides and do not include felony homicides whose perpetrators claimed self-defense. Japanese figures are for homicides which may or may not be justifiable. In any case, the legal criteria for justifiability may not be the same in the two countries.

We need not set out to increase the number of justified homicides; a more worthy end would be to decrease the need for them.²⁰ But if homicides must be committed, better that they be justifiable.

And what comprises justifiability? Would it be broadminded of us, or prudent, or merely evasive to assert the crucial relevance of the psychological context of any moral act? Those daredevils who reduce their purview to facts alone, like the Roman stonemasons who chiseled terse recitations into marble, excluding case and punctuation, will surely stride forward impatiently to brush away like cobwebs all the complex nuances revealed in the case of Bernhard Goetz, which we'll examine shortly.

Reread that gun writer's aphorism: "The intended victim is the only one in a good position to stop a criminal act." Shall we bring his axiom to imaginary life—

which is to say, to death? In a 1922 advertisement attempting to bring Thompson submachine guns into the American home market, we see a cowboy type crouching against one of the pillars of his long, shaded porch, firmly grasping a Thompson in both hands while shooting down a rifle-waving bandit whose arms outstretch as—inevitably in this secular liturgy—he begins to fly off his rearing horse. Other



The Thompson Submachine Gun
The Most Effective Portable Fire Arm In Existence

This ideal weapon for the protection of large estates, ranches, plantations, etc., is constructed, reliable, portable and unobtrusive, should offer the form of a pistol. A compact, simple.

Advertisement (1922)

rustlers gallop in toward the herd, two of them taking direct aim at the defender of self and property, whom we can only hope will triumph—no, we'll hope with good reason, for only he has a Thompson. "The ideal weapon for the protection of large estates, ranches, plantations, etc.," begins the ad, which offers two versions of this life-saver: a semi-automatic capable of discharging a mere fifty shots per minute (given four or five already loaded magazines, a Sig Sauer could better this), and a full automatic, "fired from the hip, 1,500 shots per minute."²¹ Who wouldn't prefer full auto?

Certainly the rustlers would; in fact, they'd very likely consider a Thompson "the ideal weapon for attacks upon large estates, ranches, plantations, etc."

CRIMINALS PREFER HANDGUNS

WASHINGTON: About 1.3 million U.S. residents faced an assailant armed with a gun during 1993, and the use of semiautomatic weapons by juveniles is rising fast, particularly in murders, the Justice Department said Sunday. Of the victims of rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault by offenders carrying a firearm that year, 86 percent, or 1.1 million, said the weapon was a handgun, the department said.²²

OF CRIMSON STORMS AND THEIR WEATHERMEN

There lies the obvious difficulty with violence's tools, which seem to have been distributed on this earth with the utmost carelessness: should we happen to be Indians, how "ideal" a weapon will we consider "Indian Lament?" Go back to Julius Caesar's day, when an officer in the African campaign warns that one side's war-elephants comprise "a menace to both sides."²³ Consider the old cliché: "a double-edged sword."²⁴ Were it possible to create a weapon which would function only in self-defense, most of us would be all for it. *But what is self-defense? When is violence justified?*

When only an elite possesses weapons, the masses will be subject to active or potential tyranny. But when everyone owns weapons, then the climate becomes

more prone to storms of undirected violence. Which is worse? It depends on the times. The American myth of the Minutemen, those self-reliant, decent fathers and brothers ready at a moment's notice to repel a common enemy with "Ol' Ticklicker," is out of favor,²⁵ because nobody agrees on who our common enemy is; indeed, we are too often each other's enemies—and always have been, as a pioneer woman recognized when she wrote of thirsty cowboys who bought whiskey at her father's store in the 1870s: "they could not refrain from partaking too freely, with the result that generally they felt an irresistible impulse to draw their pistols and shoot in a frolicsome way at whatever might be around."²⁶ Was it merely that the legislative and executive branches exerted insufficient control? The sixth-century historian Procopius describes the Constantinople of his day as a disorderly tyranny, weighed down by the fear not only of the ruthless emperor and his favorites, but also by an ambiance of street violence, originally politically motivated by the Blue and Green factions, now transformed into simple extortion. "At first practically all of them carried weapons openly at night, but in the day-time they concealed small two-edged swords along the thigh under their mantle, and they gathered in groups as soon as it became dark and would waylay men of the better classes."²⁷ I live in an atmosphere of inconceivably greater government control; and yet as I write, Procopius's words could be applied to almost any large American city. How many single women do I know who are afraid to leave their windows open even on the hottest nights? How many people have told me, "Oh, I don't go to that area. That's a bad area; that's a gang area . . ."? How many people have said, "I wouldn't advise you to go out after dark"? Instead of double-edged swords, our Blues and Greens carry double-edged guns with which they kill their enemies, their friends, strangers, lost souls, lost children. Take their guns away, and at least some of them will go back to swords.²⁸

In Hindu-Muslim riots in India, people kill each other, as Cain killed Abel, with stones. In the U.S.A., back in the middle of the twentieth century, where guns were more widely available than in India—indeed, there were far fewer controls on them than at the time of this writing—a sociologist noted: "If Negro, the slaying is commonly with a knife, if white, it is a beating with fists and feet on a public street."³¹ In Poland we find that as American baseball enters against the protests of a dying communism, the baseball bat becomes the murder weapon of fashion.³²

A NOTE FROM THE AMBASSADOR

How then can we take shelter from these inevitable crimson storms, much less predict them? They *will* come, whether my neighbors and I wait weaponed or weaponless. The common enemy will regularly be recategorized, and the power of the Minuteman remains now and forever also the power of the rapist-murderer.³³

The power of the murderer is now and forever also the power of the watchful householder. Let us then consider not the weapon, however much it may have been

WEAPONS USED IN HOMICIDES AND ROBBERIES (1995)

JAPAN ²⁹		USA ³⁰	
MURDER	ROBBERY	MURDER	ROBBERY
Edged tool (52.7%)	None (42.6%)	Gun (68.2%)	Gun (41.0%)
Misc. (27.4%)	Edged tool (30.2%)	Edged tool (12.7%)	Strong-arm (40.7%)
None (13.7%)	Misc. (25.6%)	Fists, feet, etc. (5.9%)	Edged tool (9.1%)
Sword (6.3%)	Sword (4.4%)	Blunt tool (4.5%)	Misc. (9.2%)
Gun (3.7%)	Gun (2.4%)	Unknown (4.8%)	
Poison (1.7%)	Poison (0.8%)	Strangulation (1.2%)	
		Explosives (.095%)	
		Fire (0.82%)	
		Asphyxiation (0.67%)	
		Drowning (0.14%)	
		Narcotics (0.11%)	
		Poison (0.06%)	
PERCENTAGE TOTALS (<i>which make one wonder</i>)			
105.50%	106.00%	100.05%	100.00%

reified into "Indian Lament," but the degree of necessity. Because *they* have guns, I want a gun. Once acquired, my gun then perhaps becomes myself, as in Plato's maxim "the actor's mask becomes his face," but to consider only the psychology of weapons ownership belittles ineluctable self-preservation: they will not disarm, so I will not disarm, either. Give place to Winston Churchill's eloquence:

We may ourselves, in the lifetime of those who are here, if we are not in a proper state of security, be confronted on some occasion with a visit from an Ambassador, and may have to give an answer, and if that answer is not satisfactory, within the next few hours the crash of bombs exploding in London and the cataracts of masonry and fire and smoke will warn us of any inadequacy which has been permitted in our aerial defences.³⁴

I myself was confronted by some of those ambassadors once in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. They had knives. They informed me that they were going to use them. I happened to be carrying a Browning, in regretful defiance of local law, so my answer was satisfactory—to me, at least, hence perforce to them. They apologized and went away.³⁵

MANTRAS AND BLOOD-STAINED SNOW

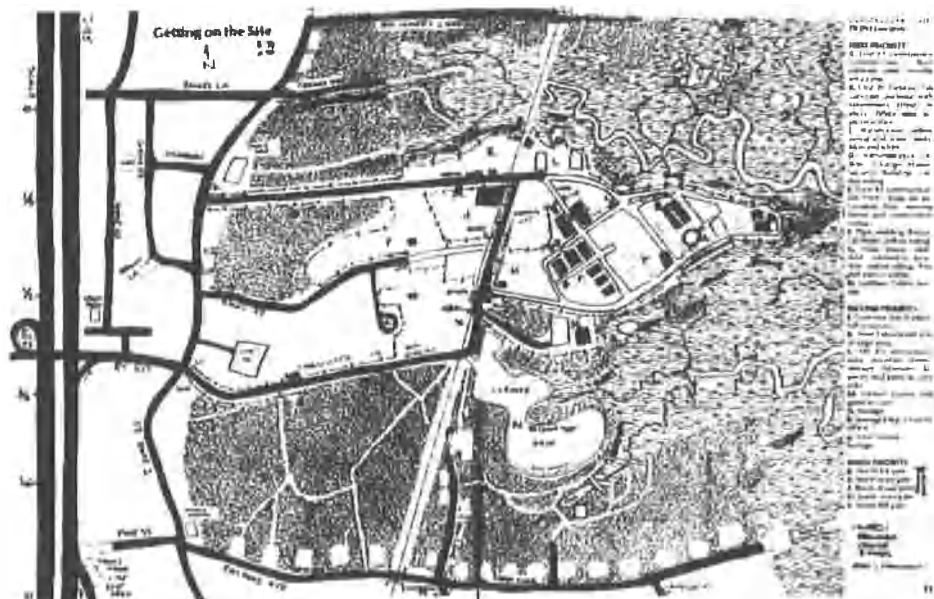
The three goods of violence—security, autonomy and power—can also be provided (on occasion) by nonviolence. Having been a member of an anti-nuclear affinity group in the face of police violence³⁶ (which, depending on how one weighs corporate business and property rights versus the dangers of nuclear power, might or might not be justified), I remember the security that came from the loving trust we felt, or at least sincerely tried to feel (or perhaps pretended to feel) toward one another in our AG, which was called Cost of Freedom. I remember the autonomy that came from making our own decisions and acting as we thought was right; and the power which our security and autonomy gave us. We did not feel invulnerable by any means (and we weren't).³⁷ After all, our adversaries owned far more security and power than we: they were armed and in authority. From a personal point of view they might have had less autonomy, but they didn't seem to miss it. We were at Seabrook, New Hampshire. Our rhetoric: "Shut the nuke down!" Among the throng who blockaded the street gate, our AG was not hurt when authority made its move. It was May, 1980. In the middle, not the forefront, I saw the National Guardsmen suddenly file out of the gate very rapidly; then as light made vertical gleams upon their face-shields they stabbed nightsticks down upon the nonviolent ones who tried to protect their heads; I remember so many raised hands and scared, grimacing faces of people (mainly young and white) who were trying to be brave; on the Guardsmen's faces (also young and white) I saw mainly wary concentration, with the occasional rare tight-lipped smile. (On one weapon I saw the words RHYTHM STICK.) They dragged a limp, bespectacled, denim-shirted girl away by her long red hair; she screwed up her face in silent pain. Everywhere they were bending over to grab people, their motions not unlike those of snow-shovelers. A stocky green-clad cop, his handcuffs riding high and gleaming in the small of his back, grabbed somebody by her shirt-collar and wrists, dragging her along between his legs, her bottom all dirty from having sat on the pavement; she resembled the quarter of some cow-carcass being hauled out of the slaughterhouse. But, while I've used the word "violence" in reference to authority's activities, I'm referring only to the smashings-down of nightsticks on wrists and



*Pamphlet promoting the
Seabrook nuclear power plant*



*Anti-nuclear handbook
for Seabrook*



Access map from the Seabrook anti-nuclear handbook

heads: the dragging-off, arresting and citing of the limp is not violence. Authority intimidated and occasionally employed pain; it could have done worse. Should I mention that the protesters, frustrated in their objective of occupying the plant, had begun jeering abuse at the police, or that one policeman had been seriously wounded by a protester's grappling hook?³⁸ Mainly what they did was to meet us *outside* the fence rather than behind it, as before, the result being that activists succeeded in cutting only about two hundred feet of fence.³⁹ Those of us who crossed the marsh river on a makeshift bridge, approaching authority's cadres on the other side, those (they didn't include me) who in ponchos huddled under plastic groundsheets, waiting for the riot hoses mixed with mace, even those who felt the nightsticks on their heads, were free to assume they wouldn't be summarily liquidated. All the more security, autonomy and power! Still, there is something about practicing what one preaches, and living it, that makes for serenity. Of course, who knows for sure that what one preaches is right? That is why, in my opinion, only a saint can practice nonviolence in isolation; the rest of us have to do it in gangs.⁴⁰

MY GUN WAS MY ROSARY

Anybody in possession of a weapon and the ability and will to use it immediately gains some security, autonomy and power, even if he is alone—as most people are in American cities; Thucydides remarks that “internal strife is the main reason for the decline of cities,”⁴¹ and by cities he means city-states, nations. Internal strife is one reason (in “democratic” countries the only reason) that city-dwellers are afraid—

afraid of violence. Such fear, like Churchill's, is based on *a perceived probability of harm*.⁴² One morning in early 1995 I was preparing to go on a long trip, and remembered that my pistols needed cleaning. As it happened, two nights previously a couple of people had been shot in a park very near my house. (Years later, I opened the newspaper to find the executioners finally arraigned in court. One of their victims had died. The other, although shot in the face, had kept some grip on life, no matter that his security, autonomy and power left much to be desired. While testifying in the courtroom, he had a seizure and began to vomit.) In my memory I also saw an elderly couple who lived a mile away in another direction; they'd been shot in the back while they were walking their dog. My friend Linda, who's lived in this neighborhood for almost thirty years now, often walks to the supermarket late at night. She has never yet been bothered. She describes her deportment on those strolls as cautious, but not afraid. She knows the couple who were shot in the back. The husband told her that he saw the car come circling round the block the first time, and then it went on because the gang kids inside it had to get up their nerve. Perhaps it was an initiation mandate. When he saw the car coming the second time and then it stopped and the kids stuck their pistol out the window, he said to himself, "It's all over."—"They're doing fine," Linda said to me the other day. "As soon as they were out of the hospital they went out to walk their dog, and they've been doing it ever since." But someone else I used to know, a woman who is dead now, lived in Queens and wrote me a letter: "I'm a walking target, literally, since I like to walk late at night. No one out here walks at night. The police know me, think I'm insomniac or something." She walked, but was always afraid. (Actually she died from something else.)

The woman whom I would eventually marry was usually as fearless as Linda, but every now and then she asks me to keep her company when she must walk her dog late at night in that same park. The double shooting terrified her. She said that she would be getting home from work long after dark tonight, and it was going to be foggy; would I please, please go with her? I promised that I would. Then I made myself a bowl of cereal and opened the newspaper. More murders—maybe they'd happened a hundred miles away, but they made an impression. I had just finished breakfast when somebody else I knew well telephoned. Her car had broken down late at night; while waiting at a pay phone for more than an hour for the towing company to come (they never showed, and at last she called the police), she'd been harassed and terrorized. She had no answer ready for her ambassadors. She said to me: "There was this one young boy who kept circling the parking lot and honking



Pro-gun poster

at me. I'm pretty sure he was a gang member. I had the feeling he was going to hurt me, and if he did he wouldn't really have given a shit. I called my best friend and she said she couldn't come get me because she was naked right then. I saw this one couple pull out and I ran after them and begged them to help me but they just rolled up the windows and looked at me like I was crazy and got out of there. Finally the cops came." She was one of the people whom Cicero had in mind when he remarked that "when weapons reduce them to silence, the laws no longer expect one to await their pronouncements."⁴³ The laws had been reduced to silence, all right, and she would have ignored their limitations on her right to stab and shoot if she could, but she didn't know how and owned no weapon. Since the cops did come, she ended up lucky, unlike the best friend of a woman I once sat beside on a plane. "I loved her so much," my seat-mate said. "They came in through her window. She was raped and tortured and then they strangled her." But I never knew the strangled one. I thought of her, though, as I was cleaning my .45. I thought of my fiancée who was afraid to walk her dog (once, then twice, then again, because she is Asian, some black men yelled epithets at her and threw bottles onto the sidewalk where they loudly smashed and almost cut the dog's eye). —Was I overreacting? Almost certainly.⁴⁴ That year it seemed that every morning when I took the rubber band off the newspaper and found the Metro section I'd met another murder! Yet when I actually looked up my home city in the FBI's *Uniform Crime Reports* I was amazed to find a total of only fifty-seven homicides for Sacramento itself, and exactly twice that for the three counties included in Sacramento's greater "metropolitan statistical area."⁴⁵ In short, I had exaggerated the murder rate by a factor of three. To be sure, taking into consideration *all* violent crimes in greater Sacramento—rape, arson, aggravated assault and the like—the FBI counted almost twelve thousand "incidents,"⁴⁶ or over thirty-two a day. Undoubtedly these were sometimes reported in the Metro section, and then there was the occasional murder from Redding or Stockton, which I'd most likely conflated with Sacramento. Sacramento was dangerous, but not nearly as dangerous as I thought. After the episode of the thrown bottles, which would not even have been an "incident," for nobody reported it, and nothing had "really" happened, violence didn't visit her there in the park for over a year. But when she went out at night I remained afraid. It is only now, when I hope I've more or less finished going to wars (this book being long enough) that I realize how crazy-anxious I was all that time. The sound of the dog getting up in the night for a drink of water would awaken me, and my heart would pound with fear; I'd be certain that somebody was trying to break in. An hour later, a floorboard would squeak, and I'd be awake again, afraid but ready—ready for nothing. When you get to some of the case studies in this book, the accounts of the war places, it may be more clear why I returned from some of my trips full of fright; and compared to a real soldier or a professional war correspondent—or a civilian trapped in a war zone—I've seen nothing. In real danger, fear is a friend; afterward he may not be, but once he first makes

**CUMMINGS, GARY DEAN**

A 46 year old, innocent victim of senseless violence, in Sacramento, on October 25, 1997. A native and lifelong resident of Sacramento, he was passionate about his pursuit of culinary arts and music. Preceded by his father Howard A. Cummings, he is survived by mother Mary I. Cummings of Sacramento, Daughter, Tera

**LEON M. PEOPLES III**

July 30, 1969-Oct 10, 1994
In life we are dealt the cards in God's Hands. He dealt myself and our children a King in you. Three years ago our King was so violently taken from us. We think and will talk of you always. And you will remain in our hearts forever. See you when we get there.
Keele, Leon IV, Kalaaha

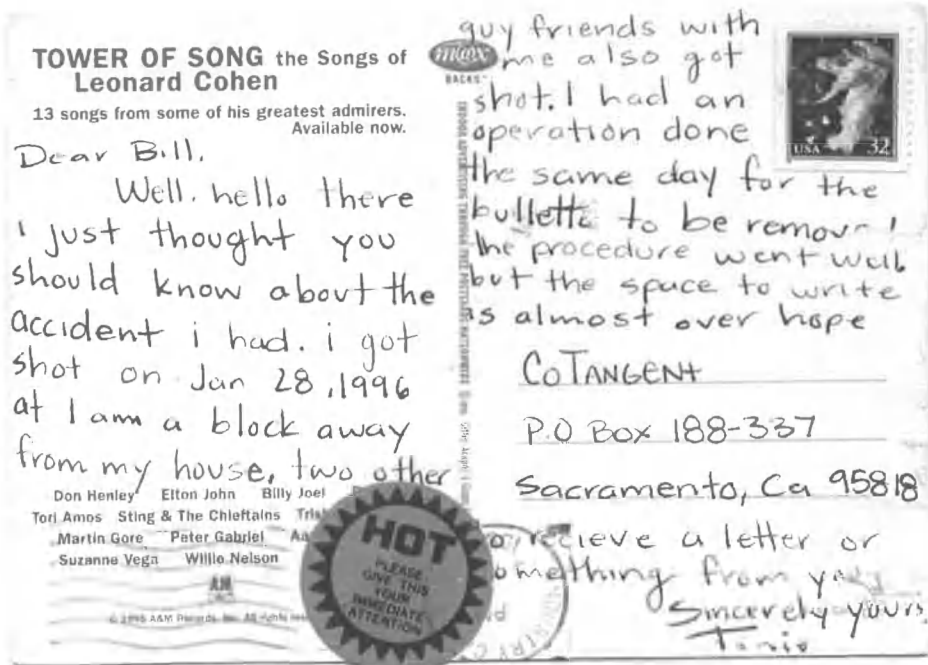
**MATTHEW DIMOS**

12-7-75 to 11-6-96
A year has passed since the day you left, leaving cherished memories for us all. You were loved by everybody who knew you, except the one who took you from us. Sadly missed by Mom, Great Grandma, your Nana, Vince, Lisa, Dave, all your nephews, and of course your "Truehomies. Lived hard, fast

Obituaries from the Sacramento Bee

your acquaintance, then, like violence, he visits as he pleases. —That was how it was with me. I thought of myself, of how my house stood exposed on a corner by a high school, of all the average little scares I'd had there, none of which would have scared Linda at all (but she was among those who closed her windows even on the hottest nights; she didn't live in a two-storey house), and I thumbed the magazine release, swung back the slide to unchamber the last round, rotated the barrel bushing an eighth of a turn or so and took my gun apart. (My next-door neighbors shook their heads. —“Don't shoot us by mistake!” they said. They liked me, but I was a nut.) The heaviness, the substantiality of those strange dark pieces, some cylindrical, some angular, some both—complex polygonal solids which fit inside one another in marvelous and obscure ways—and the smell of the nitro powder solvent, the rich blackness of dissolved lead on my fingers, the slickness of the six pieces after I'd oiled them; all these were overpowering sensory proofs, however delusional, that I could act; and the sureness with which I could disassemble my guns and then put them back together by memory (the Sig Sauer was the easiest; the DC Tec-9 Mini, whose fifty-shot capacity was offset by poor-quality cast and stamped parts, remained the hardest), the knowledge that when I'd finished, each barrel would be clean and every part, as far I could tell by inspection, in working order (of course there must always be a “so far as I can tell” because certainty does not go down to the molecular level)—these facts lulled and relieved me. All in all, call it easy, useful work whose commission always afforded me pleasure; and when I was through I felt slightly surer that my guns could keep me safe⁴⁷—a minor renewal of my faith in myself.

That night when I went out with the Asian woman to walk her dog (a lonely,



Postcard received from Los Angeles (1996)

foggy night when anything could happen), I did not feel afraid when two men sauntered toward us. I nodded at them, my hand on the loaded .45 most feloniously concealed in my coat pocket.⁴⁸ They sneered back. They were ugly, intimidating men. But I didn't feel intimidated. They walked on, and the fog ate them.

BUT THE ROSARY CONFERS NO ETERNAL LIFE

The self-confidence provided by weapons may be as fallacious as any other form of complacent puffery. How could I tell the anxious citizens of sixth-century Constantinople that if they only bought enough swords, they'd be home free? Violence, being a manifestation of misfortune and of death, can fall upon us in any number of forms. In March 1995, two or three days before my arrival in Tokyo, an organization with a high opinion of its own righteousness, called Aum Supreme Truth, released the nerve gas sarin into several subway junctions. Poor planning on the terrorists' part produced a less than spectacular number of casualties, but that was only the first of their attacks. What could the victims have done? Their government didn't allow them to carry guns; if it had, the result would have been identical, for the terrorists accomplished their purpose and escaped before anyone suspected violence. A newspaper blared: NERVE GAS NOT EVEN HITLER WOULD USE! Echoing that headline, every Japanese subway rider I talked to remarked on the cruelty of using gas, which Hitler, himself a trench-gas victim back in World War I,

certainly gave a bad name to, and which had been banned as a means of officially legitimized mass homicide (which terrorism is not) by the Geneva Protocol on Gas Warfare back in 1925. But what I suspect the subway passengers were actually objecting to was the cruelty of attacking *them* rather than subway riders in some other country. Would machine guns have been any nicer?

The most terrifying description of chemical warfare I have ever read is Malraux's fictionalized account of his father's experiences during World War I, when gas was first tested upon some Russian trenches. (When Hitler became blinded by gas near the war's end, it was all more routine.) Malraux describes the spiders dead in their webs, the birds falling out of the sky, the monstrous putrescence, physical and moral, of everything in sight, the Russians horribly, bloodlessly dead.⁴⁹ But he did not see it. How accurately did the father tell the tale to the son, and how much did the son embellish? His embellishment certainly deserves the accolades of great literature.⁵⁰ Great literature could be composed about any battlefield. It is as if we had descended back into the catacombs of Paris⁵¹ and, overwhelmed by those galleries of six million skulls, let our feelings trick us into going beyond the only real lesson of death, the stale, useless principle that *Dead is dead*, to call for a ban upon catacombs. Gassed or shot, dead is dead. And the spiders and birds? And the old man whose hovel just happened to lie downwind? There might not have been one, because World War I comprised a stationary murder-process in a zone long since cleared of noncombatants, so poison gas hurt almost exclusively the belligerents alone—which would not be the case now that battlefronts tend to be so mobile.⁵² Still, who knows for sure which way the poisoned wind blows? Such considerations led to the Geneva Protocol of 1925. And yet as late as 1937 a brigadier general in our own army wrote an essay from which some extracts may be of interest:

The measure of humaneness of any form of warfare is the comparison of (1) degree of suffering caused at the time of injury by the different weapons; [(2)] the percentage of deaths to the total number of casualties produced by each weapon; and [(3)] the permanent aftereffects resulting from the injuries inflicted by each particular method of warfare.

In general, gas causes less suffering than wounds from other weapons. It is unquestionably true that chlorine, the first gas used in the late war, did at first cause strangulation with considerable pain and a high mortality. But this was due mainly to the fact that the troops against whom these first gas attacks were launched were totally unprotected. Later when supplied with gas masks, chlorine became the most



Subway "wanted" poster for Aum Supreme Truth terrorists (Tokyo, 1995)

innocuous of the toxic gases and was least feared by both sides.

(That particular paragraph, I admit, was amusingly disingenuous—for our good brigadier would hardly recommend the deployment of a humane gas which causes no casualties—but read on.)

Among those gassed the sufferings are less severe and of shorter duration than among those wounded by other war weapons. . . . As to the ratio of deaths to total casualties, we have already shown that the mortality among those wounded by nongas weapons was over twelve times the mortality from gas. . . . Gas . . . produces practically no permanent injuries, so that if a man who is gassed survives the war, he comes out body whole, as God made him, and not the legless, armless, or deformed cripple produced by the mangling and rending effects of high explosives, gunshot wounds, and bayonet thrusts.

(I think of my grandfather's friend, a World War I survivor, who went through life coughing, getting drunk to shut out the pain.)

Chemical warfare is the latest contribution to the science of war. . . . [It] is the most humane method of war yet devised by man.⁵³

In future wars gas projectiles might be less controllable with respect to their intended targets than in World War I, unless battle-fronts once again become stationary. Surely a weapon's controllability enhances its humaneness, and gas can never be fully controlled except in an enclosed space. We condemn Severino Di Giovanni's anarchist bombings in Buenos Aires because (among other things); their destruction-power failed to be controlled: he killed innocent people, and did not thereby further his political ends.⁵⁴ (Controllability *ensures* nothing; at Auschwitz, gas was completely controlled, but no one would say that it was employed humanely there. Uncontrollability, however, uncouples the means from any end, justified or not.) The Japanese terrorists of Aum Supreme Truth did not much care about controllability. In their calculus, the strategy of the means was simply to diffuse death as widely as possible. Controllability only mattered insofar as it contributed to the terrorists' own safety.

Is poison gas reprehensible, then? Our brigadier-general didn't think so; and decades later another military ethicist argued that gas could morally be used if doing so would win the war and if the enemy had used it first and continued to use it; or even if the enemy had not used it at all but was known to be genocidal.⁵⁵

Thus once again we see, as so often in this study of violence, that principles can't be easily nailed down, that merely knowing the tool of violence employed is insufficient; we must also be apprised of the relation between victim and perpetrator. It is true that some weapons are more passive in nature, hence more likely to be morally validated for the purposes of self-defense (one example would be anti-aircraft guns



Landscapes of violence 1: Mostar, Bosnia (1994)



Landscapes of violence 2: Mostar, Bosnia (1994)



Landscapes of violence 3: Brazzaville, Republic of Congo (2001)

entrenched around a capital).⁵⁶ But those same guns could be used, say, to shoot down harmless commercial jets overflying that city. There is also the fact that a nation relying on purely defensive weaponry forgoes quite a bit in a war—and thereby potentially victimizes that nation's own citizenry. As they say on the playing field and the battlefield, the best defense is a good offense.

In my opinion, the method chosen often hardly matters, because the victims of a given terroristic act are not only those who experience it directly—that is, those upon whose flesh it falls—but also those who hear about it when rumors or the media do their dirty work.⁵⁷ That was why the newspapers called Tokyo a “city of fear.” Here is the relevant part of a letter which a near-suicidal woman wrote me about another Aum Supreme Truth gas attack in April 1995:

There was a rumor that there might have been another nervous gas [sic] incident this weekend, yesterday or today, so all crowded areas such as Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Shibuya have been guarded tightly by the police force. I didn't believe that rumor. I didn't care if I die or not by the incident if it happened because I have less hope in my future. If I did, I would be satisfied with my short life. I think I survived it anyway because Sunday is almost over.



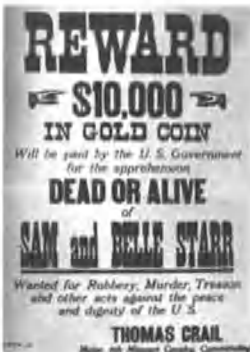
Landscapes of violence 4: Mujahid holding up an unexploded Soviet bomb, near Jalabad, Afghanistan (1982)

Obviously this attack didn't even happen. And the woman was so sad to begin with that it could scarcely depress her much further. But it did make her world a shade greyer; she was one of the many, many victims. (That is why a sociologist has proposed the notion that there are direct and indirect sufferers from every crime. If I assault you, your children get nightmares and your sister has to pay your hospital bills.)⁵⁸ Call her one of the birds who fell from the sky, especially susceptible to violence's effects by reason of her sensitive, delicate spirit, poisoned already by sadness. Other victims, lucky enough to be born stronger, or to stand farther away, get but a whiff of the gas, whose toxic effect thus attenuates into the subtle contaminations of dissociation and masked anxiety. After the Oklahoma City bombing of April 1995, a girl wrote me:

It's really very strange. I live about 5 minutes away from where it occurred, & I still haven't really grasped the whole thing. It's really a sad thing. I know of someone they haven't yet found, and a lot of my friends have been to funerals and stuff. The whole thing is just really bizarre. When you see it on the national news it's like looking at pictures of people you don't remember even though they know exactly who you are. And then there are the ribbons. People who are wearing them look at me as if I'm the one who set off the bomb just because I choose not to wear one. Did I say ONE? Most have about 30 on... I don't get it.

And of course there is nothing to "get," nothing to "really grasp." Atrocities leave only wounds, and a wound is a cavity, an emptiness. Am I belaboring the obvious in claiming that one reason for that emptiness is *helplessness*—that neither the Japanese woman nor the American woman could have done anything more to guard themselves against these storms of violence, which left them unkillable only by luck, than they could have done to deliver themselves from death in a traffic accident at the hands of some careless, rapid driver? The lesson of the catacombs: *No matter what you say or do, we skulls will see you underground.*

In short, violent self-defense, like the nonviolent kind, offers no guarantees. Well, speak of the obvious! —But let's suppose that my attacker will use only a gun and that I own a gun, along with the knowledge and the will to employ it. I may be safer—or I may not be. One black market "organizer" in Zagreb told me in 1992 when we got on the subject of his side-business, guns, that "last year the market for those was better because the government incited people to go to war. They constantly showed chopped-up bodies on TV, over and over. So they stimulated demand. People wanted arms in their homes. They didn't know if there was going to be a military attack on Zagreb."⁵⁹



Wanted poster for
American outlaws

by nuclear bombs, the danger of this reactive conception looms fierce and naked; one psycho-political text insists that "*the American preoccupation with national security began with our own atomic bomb*,"⁶⁵ which came into being out of fear of Hitler's prospective atomic bomb, just as my desire to buy and retain guns is (partly) based on the guns of others.⁶⁶ The consequences of misusing atom bombs are even more tremendous than those of abusing Saint-Étienne's, but for just that reason (thinks the statesman-strategist), how can I give up mine first?

THE RAINBOW OF LE CHAMBON

My carrying the .45 when I went to the park with the Asian woman was the result of an easier calculus than that of Yugoslavia, there being no war civil or uncivil in my neighborhood. (A) Insofar as it increased my self-respect and self-confidence, insofar as it allowed me to protect the Asian woman, what I was doing that night was moral. (Indeed, as one medieval writer insisted, "if you should see your most dear mother or your wife misused in your presence, and not aid if you were able, you would be cruel and incur the opprobrium of worthlessness and impiety."⁶⁷ Recently I had in fact seen her misused by a double carload of teenagers of another color who yelled profanities about her gook eyes and her gook language; I leaped out of the car and yelled back at them to stop, but definitely lost that argument; the medieval scribbler was correct: I found it inexpressibly painful to stand helpless when she was being insulted.) (B) Insofar as I was breaking the law, on the other hand, my carrying the .45 was immoral.⁶⁸

But these descriptors ignore the fundamental one. Writing about the French village of Le Chambon, whose people saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis, Philip Hallie addresses the distinction between being one of many soldiers and being one of many nonviolent civilians:

I had been a combat artilleryman in the European theater and I knew that decent killers like me had done more to prevent the mass murders from continuing than this pacifist mountain village had done. And so I found myself wavering between praising military valor above all and praising moral valor above all. I could easily make these two points of view consistent with each other (one was a "public" perspective and the other was a "personal" perspective, etc., but the questions that kept gnawing at me were: Where does your heart lie? ... Who, in short, or what, are you?⁶⁹

This was the question which some anti-nuclear activists kept asking themselves at Seabrook. I quote from the unpublished account which I wrote a couple of weeks later:

As everyone helped assemble the wire-cutters, ropes, goggles, gas masks, helmets and other [items] which, it was hoped, would allow entry onto the site in the face of police resistance, there seemed to be a tension in the group born as much from the ambiguity of what was happening as from the fear of arrest or injury. The arranging and packing up of equipment, the businesslike preparations of the medics, seemed like activities preceding some commando mission, something different—and yet this action was to be non-violent. We felt this oddness everywhere: in the decorated helmets, the fingers inserted behind a friend's gas mask to see if it was properly adjusted, and the nervous faces exchanging looks, breaking into laughter as they met each other's gaze and then resuming their seriousness.⁷⁰

Hallie learns where his heart lies when a lady whose children were saved at Le Chambon tells him that Holocaust was a storm and Le Chambon the rainbow.

Ever since the woman from Minneapolis witnessed to that hope, I realized that for me too the little story of Le Chambon is grander and more beautiful than the bloody war which stopped Hitler. I do not regret fighting in that war—Hitler had to be stopped, and he had to be stopped by killing many people. The war was necessary. But my memories of it give me only a sullied joy because in the course of the three major battles I participated in, I saw the detached arms and legs and heads of young men lying on blood-stained snow.⁷¹

The story of Le Chambon gives me an unsullied joy. Why?

Anybody who does not feel a sullied joy in committing violence for even the most righteous reason is probably a sadist or an inhuman aesthete.⁷² Unsullied joy cannot but be the rainbow, the end, the Good, which is why when I first began to read Gandhi's *Satyagraha*, a feeling of intense excitement struck me, and a giddy sense of hope. Here at last, I thought, was a revolutionary without hatred, a man of Christlike integrity who had not only the will to change his society for the better but also a practical program for doing so. The idea of explicitly taking upon oneself the suffering inflicted by an oppressive order, or performing a sort of aikido through which all the damage would be inflicted by the opponent upon oneself, in order that that damage be *used* to touch that opponent's humanity, thrilled me. How bold, loving, rational and good! And yet, as Hallie is honest enough to admit, violence may sometimes be necessary. The limitation (which the anti-nuclear activists at Seabrook had tacitly banked on) is this: there does have to be that humanity in the opponent to start with.⁷³ Otherwise, he'll merely laugh and redouble his slaughter. Consider the message that Gandhi had for the Jews in Nazi Germany after *Kristallnacht*:

If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge

him to shoot me or cast me into the dungeon... If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy ... can... The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews... But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant.⁷⁴

What might Hitler's reply have been? "They're ready to suffer voluntarily? Good! Send more boxcars to the Umschlagplatz!"⁷⁵

"THE STABILITY WHICH CAN ONLY REST IN A FANATICAL OUTLOOK"

No doubt Gandhi would have been the first to report to the boxcars if he could (he wrote two letters to Hitler offering to serve him in the cause of peace, neither of which India's British government permitted to be sent). Frail and joyous on the path to the gas chambers he would have gone, that strange, round-headed, toothless little man with full-moon spectacles and full-moon ears, so willing to admit error, so excellent in his aspirations, so removed from his or any other time. He would have offered up his life as a sacrifice for *all* people, including the Jews; and that would have infuriated many of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters who wanted to die with violent dignity. It was for equivalent reasons that he would never be able to get on with Mr. Jinnah, the head of the Muslim League and eventual founder of Pakistan. Gandhi longed to represent everyone in



Gandhi (1931)

India, and claimed to; Jinnah's cold reply was that Gandhi represented only Hindus. Partition would go ahead. —Gandhi, weary and almost desperate, cried that this was poison, not Islam.⁷⁶ Nonviolence being usually as much (or more) a performance for others as it is a form of discipline for oneself,⁷⁷ what can the moral actor do if the audience cries out, "No, we reject your drama and your gift; you do *not* stand for us!"⁷⁸ Christ's well-known solution was, firstly, to move on to another town and preach anew, and secondly, to suffer crucifixion. Gandhi suffered various crucifixions, too, including spells of imprisonment and finally assassination, but as a politician, a nationalist and a reasonably sincere self-improver he could not walk away from the rejecters: India was his only town; he had nowhere else to go. With Jinnah he ultimately failed, but his other opponent, the British Empire, he bested. Here is a photograph of him representing the Indian National Congress in London in 1931.⁷⁹ Beneath the chandelier is a long rectangular perimeter of table, upon which folded

name-cards and carafes of water have been strategically placed. The great men gaze at the camera. The ones nearest have half turned themselves around in their chairs (a bit out of focus; what we mainly see of them is their uncomfortably positioned shoulders; they endeavor to appear serious, bland and pleasant. The rest have much the same expression. They are being very patient.) Here's a man caught in mid-applause, as it seems—unless he's just clasping his hands and looking wise: Come on, men, let's put on a good show! And in the midst of all these dark-suited ones rests Gandhi, wrapped in a blanket, gazing down and away. His formula of challenge, self-sacrifice and deliverance exasperates and blocks them. He is winning—not here, not right away, but their morals and their policies forbid them to liquidate him; and ultimately India will be freed. —Will the credit be all his? Of course not, but at times he will be pivotal. —He is the man of the mantra; they are the men of the blood-stained snow. We cannot necessarily call them bad men, although some were, and although their India policy humiliated and exploited India; they were simply the practical men of English power politics. Hitler stripped away the wealth of conquered territories; the British did that, to a degree, but they also built, and a free India inherited that infrastructure. On one of the occasions when they jailed Gandhi in India, and needed to negotiate, they actually commissioned a special train to bring Nehru and his father out of their prison cell to meet him. Gandhi's biographer writes:

It was an amazing demonstration of the nature of the raj that it was prepared to cooperate with its own prisoners in this way for the sake of political co-operation with their self-professed opponents... As is so often and rightly pointed out, Gandhi's role and achievements would have been very different had he confronted a different type of imperialism.⁸⁰

This is putting it kindly. When one reads about Gandhi busily calling upon the Czechs to meet Hitler with satyagraha, and upon the English to do the same, one is forced to say that here non-violence (which Hitler, ever charitable to his opponents, would have called "spineless submission")⁸¹ has met its match.

What precisely *was* the difference between the imperialism of the raj and of the Reich? According to that expert in the employment of extreme violence, Hitler again, the former type could be characterized by vacillation:

The very first requirement for a mode of struggle with the weapons of naked force is and remains persistence... as soon as force wavers and alternates with forbearance, not only will the doctrine to be repressed recover again and again, but it will also be in a position to draw new benefit from every persecution, since, after such a wave of pressure has ebbed away, indignation over the suffering induced leads new supporters to the old doctrine, while the old ones will cling to it with even greater defiance and deeper hatred than before.⁸²

This was the secret of Gandhi's success, as it would be of Martin Luther King's⁸³—although what Hitler insisted was defiance and hatred was sometimes noble steadfastness. Those British negotiators with their carafes, name-cards and special trains, like the television-conscious American presidency of the 1960s, were mere alternators, hence ultimately forbearers: non-violence counted on that. Hitler's



*Gandhi with Lord and
Lady Montbatten*

solution: unremitting mercilessness, armored by rigid plates of ideology to guard it against any counter-ideology of the Other: "Any violence which does not spring from a firm, spiritual base, will be wavering and uncertain. It lacks the stability which can only rest in a fanatical outlook."⁸⁴ And the result? Well, cities burned, of course, and whole armies exterminated. That we know. And we also know the toll paid by people who either foreswore violence or else were incapable of it: children gassed, hostages shot, women burned alive in trenches, Jehovah's Witnesses sent to concentration camps...

But Gandhi would never agree that this meant that nonviolence had failed. Nor would he approve of my conflation of the foreswearers and the incapables. In Jehovah's Witnesses publications written after the Third Reich, the experiences of that sect in the camps now prove their unswerving glory. Maybe for some of them those times became indeed, at least in retrospect, "a day of thanksgiving and joy." They were potent. "I have become disconsolate," Gandhi had admitted at the beginning of the Second World War. "In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such things to go on... But the answer comes at the end of the daily quarrel that neither God nor non-violence is impotent. Impotence is in men."⁸⁵

THE SUPERIORITY OF NONVIOLENCE

Gandhi's moral calculus (1920-46)

1. "It is better to die helpless and unarmed and as victims rather than as tyrants."
2. "The purer the suffering, the greater is the progress."
3. "It may be that in the transition state we may make mistakes; there may be avoidable suffering. These things are preferable to national emasculation."
4. "We must refuse to wait for the wrong to be righted till the wrong-doer has been roused to a sense of his iniquity."
5. "One must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results."

SOURCE: YOUNG INDIA, MAY 12, 1920; HARIJAN, MARCH 17, 1946.

"Impotence is in men." This is precisely my objection, at least in regard to myself. What about the gassed children? Gandhi's "suffering voluntarily undergone" surely ought be read as "suffering for the sake of something." The famed Golden Rule, *Do unto others as you would be done by*, which is the rule of satyagraha, is practical in extreme situations only for martyrs. What if someone does not have the aptitude to be a martyr? I first got an inkling of my own deficiency in this regard when, as a child thoroughly propagandized by Sunday school, I met with my usual committee of bullies and was punched in the face. I decided to literally turn the other cheek.⁸⁷ Now, nowhere did Christ ever promise that so doing would spare one from further violence;⁸⁸ and my memory is not clear enough for me to say after so many years whether I expected such an outcome; I think my motives were evenly divided between those of a scientist testing a hypothesis and those of a young boy who wanted to believe in adults and goodness. The Sunday school teacher had assured us, perhaps too upliftingly, that turning the other cheek was the way. I, of course, immediately got punched again, this time in the nose, which began to bleed. I turned the other cheek. Another punch. I forget how many punches there were after that. "Spineless submission," Hitler had said. And Sade: "*My neighbor is nothing to me: there is not the slightest connection between him and me.*"⁸⁹ I wanted to be noble and loving, and maybe I was; maybe I should have continued as I began that day, instead of growing up to buy guns. Finally, satiated, the bullies let me go. The reason why as I trudged along home I felt a certain dissatisfaction with the Golden Rule was that the blows I'd received had not really been for any cause or reason. The martyrs one reads about are always turning the other cheek to prove their faith. I did not have enough faith, nor was I being punished for any faith. The bullies went to the same church that I did. Their punches afforded them a certain joy. By making it easier for them to punch me I had become an unwitting accomplice in their sadism. In fact, I am convinced that I made it easier for them to do what they did. It never occurred to me to hit them back, but I did start avoiding the bullies (which is the coward's method of nonviolence).⁹⁰ That veteran of snowball fights, that murderer and Golden Rule invoker, Captain John Brown, would surely have defended himself with fists and stones, without regarding himself as being in the least unchristian. A Gandhian, on the other hand, would have let them do their worst until other likeminded souls had become inspired and lined up to be punched in their turn. I know my home town, and I don't believe that anyone else would have come. Well, no matter; "one must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results." I am not saying that Gandhi was wrong; I honestly don't know. Probably it would not have been good for me, at least at that time of my life (maybe it would be a good thing now), to offer myself as their punching-bag every Sunday. It would not have developed in me any strength or self-respect. It only would have made me feel even more foolish and worthless than I already did.

BECOMING STEEL

The moral calculus of Trinh Duc, Vietnamese Revolutionary, (1954-64)⁹¹

"When I was young I witnessed a great deal of injustice ... but that hatred wasn't ingrained in me. Later I saw how people I loved were brutally tortured, and I had more hatred. Since I had been in prison that kind of thing had been happening to me personally for many, many years... I felt as if I had become like hardened steel... I was more than capable of doing the same things to my enemies that they were doing to me ... and worse."

Judged by Gandhi's moral calculus, I had two failings: my suffering was not pure, and I wanted results. *Do unto others as you would that others do unto you* is not at all equivalent with what we might as well call the Fool's Gold Maxim: *Do unto others as you hope and expect that others will do unto you*. The famous muckraker and do-gooder Lincoln Steffens learned that distinction in 1911 when as part of his experiment in applying the Golden Rule to labor mediation he persuaded two union bombers to plead guilty. Steffens had fondly believed that there would be a quid pro quo: lenient sentences for the bombers. One got life, and the other got fifteen years at hard labor. After that, he was scornfully known as "Golden Rule" Steffens.⁹² As Machiavelli wrote with his customary bluntness, "From among other evils which being unarmed brings you, it causes you to be despised... there is nothing proportionate between the armed and the unarmed."⁹³ I myself followed not the Fool's Gold Maxim, but the Golden Rule, but I did so without understanding the implications. I was a child, vulnerable to others' impressions of me, and I had almost no friends. If the violence is purely opportunistic, has no intellectual expedient or ideological basis, then, it seems to me, non-resistance is meaningless, unless the moral commitment of the non-resister makes up for the lack of moral commitment of the assailant.⁹⁴

In short, satyagraha is correct only if the sacrifice is *for* something, and only if the oppressor will eventually be moved to cease his aggression should the sacrifice become of sufficient magnitude. If one or both of these conditions remains unmet, then counter-violence is justified.⁹⁵

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS,
OR THE PURSUIT OF SULLIED JOY

A few months after that foggy night in the park with the Asian woman, her dog and my .45, there was an article in the paper about a lady who barely escaped being raped in broad daylight in the parking lot of a nearby restaurant which the Asian woman and I often went to, and I didn't say anything about it but the Asian woman saw it and was a little shaken up. That evening she went out with the dog. It was a

hot bright evening. She had been feeling unwell for the past day or two, and as I watched her go she seemed slow, tiny, awkward, weak—a victim. The excited golden retriever snapped up the leash, pulled her around the corner, and then she was gone. I sat working upstairs and a long time passed and it grew dark. I thought of satyagraha and I asked myself whether her rape or murder would serve any purpose, and I was not able to see that it would—because *she* quite reasonably did not want to be raped or murdered! I asked myself whether there would be any fewer rapes and murders in Sacramento if somebody preyed upon her, and failed to be convinced that there would. If anything, there might be more. Satyagraha is the best means of self-defense, insisted Gandhi, who was sometimes more radical than Buddha himself,⁹⁶ but it now became clear to me that satyagraha ought to be undertaken and followed to the end only by somebody who has renounced all attachments. (How strange, that extreme nonviolence agrees with extreme violence in this! “The revolutionary is a doomed man,” writes the infamous terrorist Sergey Nechaev, and we can imagine Gandhi nodding in agreement. “He has no interests of his own, no affairs, no feelings, no attachments, no belongings, not even a name.”⁹⁷ The difference, of course, is this: Gandhi would be proud of the Asian woman, and joyous, if she chose willingly to sacrifice herself to the thugs; if not, he’d happily sacrifice himself for her. Nechaev would indifferently kill her himself, should that advance his ends.) As for me, I had no right to ask her not to defend herself, nor any right not to defend her—nor any desire for either such negation.

There was the .45 on my desk. I seemed to have it near me more and more these days. In one out of every two households in America there lay at least one gun like mine, maybe a smaller one like my 9 millimeter Sig Sauer, maybe a larger one like my .50 caliber Desert Eagle, but still a gun.⁹⁸ I had a gun, I was not alone in having a gun, and right then I did not feel comforted. (Gandhi commented on that phenomenon, too.) The ugliest thing about daily anxieties is that they keep recurring. Rosary beads break. One can be brave one time, and the next, and maybe the next, but sooner or later, I suppose, something will happen for which one is simply not ready. As I said, she was not well. The black boys with bottles had unnerved me; the white woman in San Francisco who called her “fish-breath” when she wanted to use the pay phone merely made me angry; the blocked intersection (not far from our neighborhood) with the police cars and the yellow crime scene tape made me nervous, but my rosary beads had not broken yet. After all, if you break what can you do? What right had I to even think about breaking? These were the ordinary annoyances and hazards of life.⁹⁹ The books that I read and the things that I saw while writing this book affected me more than I wanted them to. I wanted to become deader inside, so that the smell of skulls in Cambodia or the hungry woman with the long knife who crouched in the stairwell in Madagascar (she was merely posing for my camera that time, but her pose demonstrated what she did for a living) would not return together as kinesthetic echoes. Near the end of the twenty years that I



U.S. government message promoting fallout shelters (1959)

spent writing this book, I began to suffer frequent nightmares of violence. I saw an evil ape with a pistol ascending to a judge's bench. (This was ridiculous, but it terrified me. I had that dream while writing about Stalin.) I was trapped in a burning plummeting airplane which had just been hit by a missile. Someone had tortured the Asian woman to death. People had moved into the house, stolen my guns and unmasked themselves as my ideological judges and executioners. I was hiding in a mass grave, the sole survivor, waiting for the murderers to discover me. I was released on bail, but would have to return for my execution in thirty days. I was lured into my basement (I have not lived in a house with a basement for years), but found only darkness and fear down there. Ascending the stairs, I saw a man with a knife in his hand, plotting to kill me. I shot him and threw him into the basement. Then I fled, knowing that I'd soon be arrested for murder. In those dreams I was always running.¹⁰⁰ They were not normal sights that I'd seen—or were they all too normal?—and these were not normal thoughts, and I knew this and sought to dampen the vibrations of my paranoia, but it had been dark a long time now and the Asian woman was not home. Well, of course, such thoughts might have seemed quite normal to Bernal Díaz, one of Cortes's sixteenth-century *conquistadors*, who until the end of his life could not sleep securely unless he was in his clothes, and even then he but catnapped. "I am so used to it that, thank God, it does me no harm. I have said all this so that my readers shall know ... how accustomed we became to our arms and to keeping watch."¹⁰¹ It was seeing his comrades get captured and sacrificed by the Aztecs that had taught him how to fear; after that, he was always a little strange. A woman I know well, who barely survived an arson fire, slept in her clothes for years after the event. She said to me that even when she lay down to make love she couldn't forget how she'd almost died in her bed, so she couldn't relax, couldn't have an orgasm. A decade or so went by, and she finally overcame this problem, but continued to be rootless, moving from house to house, not

finishing projects, restlessly packing and unpacking. The Asian woman had not returned. It was dark outside. Ilya Ehrenburg's vicious aphorism boomeranged back to me: Any journalist who reports a war objectively should be shot.¹⁰² I did not feel in the least objective. If anyone tried to hurt her, I would gladly kill that person if necessary to help her. Many times I'd discussed such imaginings with my friend Ben in San Francisco, who also had them, and considered them baneful; they alighted in his mind like dark moths; he believed (as I occasionally do) that to prepare for evil overmuch invites evil—and yet in Bosnia my two colleagues had chuckled at me goodhumoredly for wearing my bulletproof vest on that hot quite warless day; they died and I lived. A Gandhian, perhaps, would have died smiling gratefully, confident that his unprovoked murder would somehow do its mite to reduce violence. My colleagues died anguished, terrified. Epictetus scorned to fear for his body, and declaimed:

If, then, a man has the same opinion about his property as the man whom I have instanced has about his body; and also about his children and his wife, and in a word is so affected by some madness or despair that he cares not whether he possesses them or not, but like children who are playing with shells care about the play, but do not trouble themselves about the shells, so he too has set no value on the materials, but values the pleasure that he has with them and the occupation, what tyrant is then formidable to him or what guards or what swords?¹⁰³

I had once been that way; I'd been alone. But the freedom of which he speaks carries a high price: not only loneliness, but also a certain egotism, carelessness about others, an ideological indifference bordering on disrespect toward others who love one and who trust themselves to one's care. Because the Asian woman would never read or agree with Epictetus, I did not feel that I had the right to treat her as a seashell. I did not want her to be dying in some dark place screaming uncomprehendingly for me (or just screaming). And she was late. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the .45 lying heavy and black upon the work table, shining, on safe but loaded and chambered with Golden Sabre cartridges, whose jackets are slit so that when lead strikes flesh those scorings will tear into flanges destabilizing outward into claws which twist and grab and maim as the bullet shears whirling through the growing wound—after all, self-defense is not a sporting matter—Golden Sabre, they said, was even more effective than Black Talon, whose sale was now banned to civilians since a murderous idiot had misused them on the Long Island subway; my gun was well loaded, but it lay here with me, not with her, so it was useless. If it had been in her purse it would still have done her no good, because she feared guns and was ignorant of their use. On the other hand, I knew the general route she took with the dog. If she hadn't returned in another hour, say, I'd slip the gun in the pocket of my light windbreaker and go out looking for her. If somebody was hurting her, I'd hurt him to stop him. What else could I do? I preferred sullied joy to impotent fear.

1.

CONTINUUM OF THE
RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

A. Ragnar Benson, survivalist (1990)

"Imagine a small army of police, armed to the teeth, pulling up in bulletproof cruisers. Confidently and arrogantly ... they deliver their ultimatum: surrender or be blasted to oblivion. Using his homemade dragon, the survivor silently proceeds to slime his attackers ... with unlit napalm... This use of the flamethrower is strictly defensive."¹⁰⁴

B. *Handguns* magazine (1994)

"You have every right to take the life of a violent and armed criminal who is bent on your murder and once you believe this is so, act! Use the absolute extreme of force, and continue to attack mercilessly until you are certain that the criminal is utterly incapable of carrying out his heinous plan."¹⁰⁵

C. Shan State National Congress (1994)

"The owning and bearing of arms is a tradition in the Shan State with which the British never interfered."¹⁰⁶

D. United States constitution (1787)

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."¹⁰⁷

E. Swiss constitution (1874)

"This authorization will only be accorded to persons and enterprises which offer the necessary guarantees from the perspective of the national interest."¹⁰⁸

F. United Nations study (1993)

"The crucial policy question is, then, how much time may we allow ourselves to wait for more convincing research before we take any steps to curb gun ownership rates."¹⁰⁹

G. Philadelphia police officer John Przepiorka (1995)

"I don't believe citizens should be armed... These guns may

be purchased by good law abiding citizens but all too often fall into the hands of criminals."¹¹⁰

H. Monsignor Richard Alpert, gang peacemaker in Jamaica (1997)

"I don't believe any man has the right to have a gun. Garrison communities have been armed by politicians. This is modern day slavery."¹¹¹

I. Adin Ballou, "The Catechism of Non-Resistance" (late nineteenth century)

A Christian "cannot make use of weapons. He cannot resist one transgression by another."¹¹²

GENERAL WARNING ON THE CONTINUA IN THIS BOOK

The obvious caution comes to mind that one must never forget the distinctions between goal, means and result. The Khmer Rouge government, for instance, expressed a reasonable and even admirable goal: "The aim of our revolutionary struggle is to establish state power within the grasp of the worker-peasants, and to abolish all oppressive state power."¹¹³ The means used to achieve that goal were horrible, resulting in the precise opposite of that goal, namely, an oppressive state power (or, perhaps more accurately, a constellation of oppressive local fiefdoms) brought to bear against the worker-peasants.

This is why the political scholar and anthologist Walter Laqueur remarks somewhat wearily that "one learns more about a terroristic group by looking at its victims than at its manifestoes."¹¹⁴ However practical this point of view may be to a political strategist or even to a social historian, it is obviously less admissible to would-be ethicists such as ourselves. Hence the several continua in the first half of this book.

A good rule of thumb is that moderate statements may or may not be uttered by moderate people, depending on their honesty and accuracy, but extreme statements are almost certainly the property of extremists. In any event, the real-event contexts of the statements in this first continuum are less relevant for our purposes than the immediate meaning of the statements themselves. When we consider, for instance, the morality of the Ten Commandments to life, the ideas which they express far supersede in importance the history of their application, or (I should say) the customary lack thereof.

It is also important to remember that most good thinking is nuanced, and that by wrenching these excerpts out of context we simplify and distort. "No compromise in defense of Mother Earth," runs the motto of the radical ecodefense group Earth First!, but the slogan fails to inform us that Earth First!ers, ready to destroy property though they are, do compromise in that they avoid deliberate violence against human beings. Any pithy thesis (including any statement in my moral calculus) is suspect. From the principle that "heat rises" we might assume that Mount Everest is warmer than the steaming rice paddies of Thailand.



GUNS IN THE USA

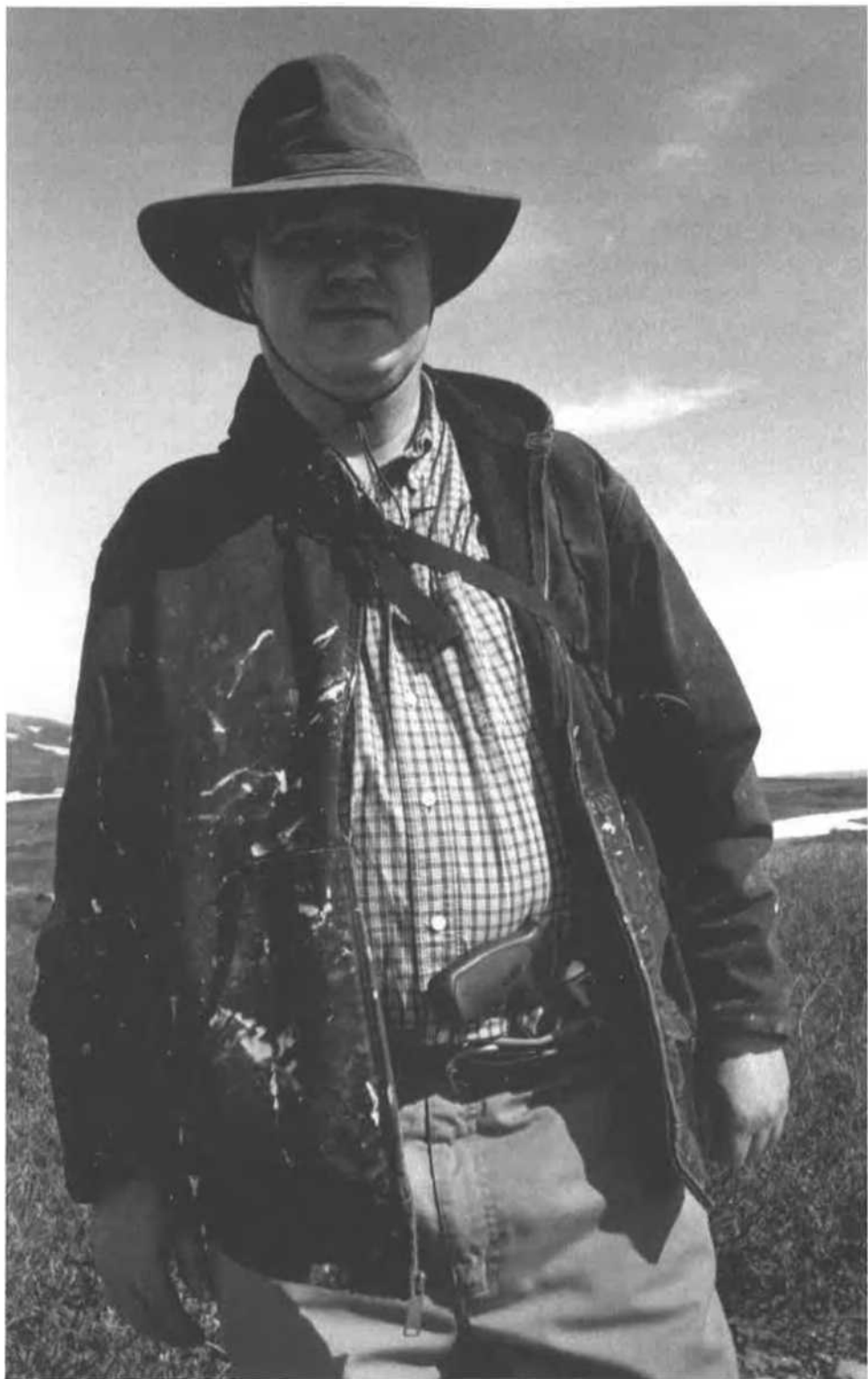
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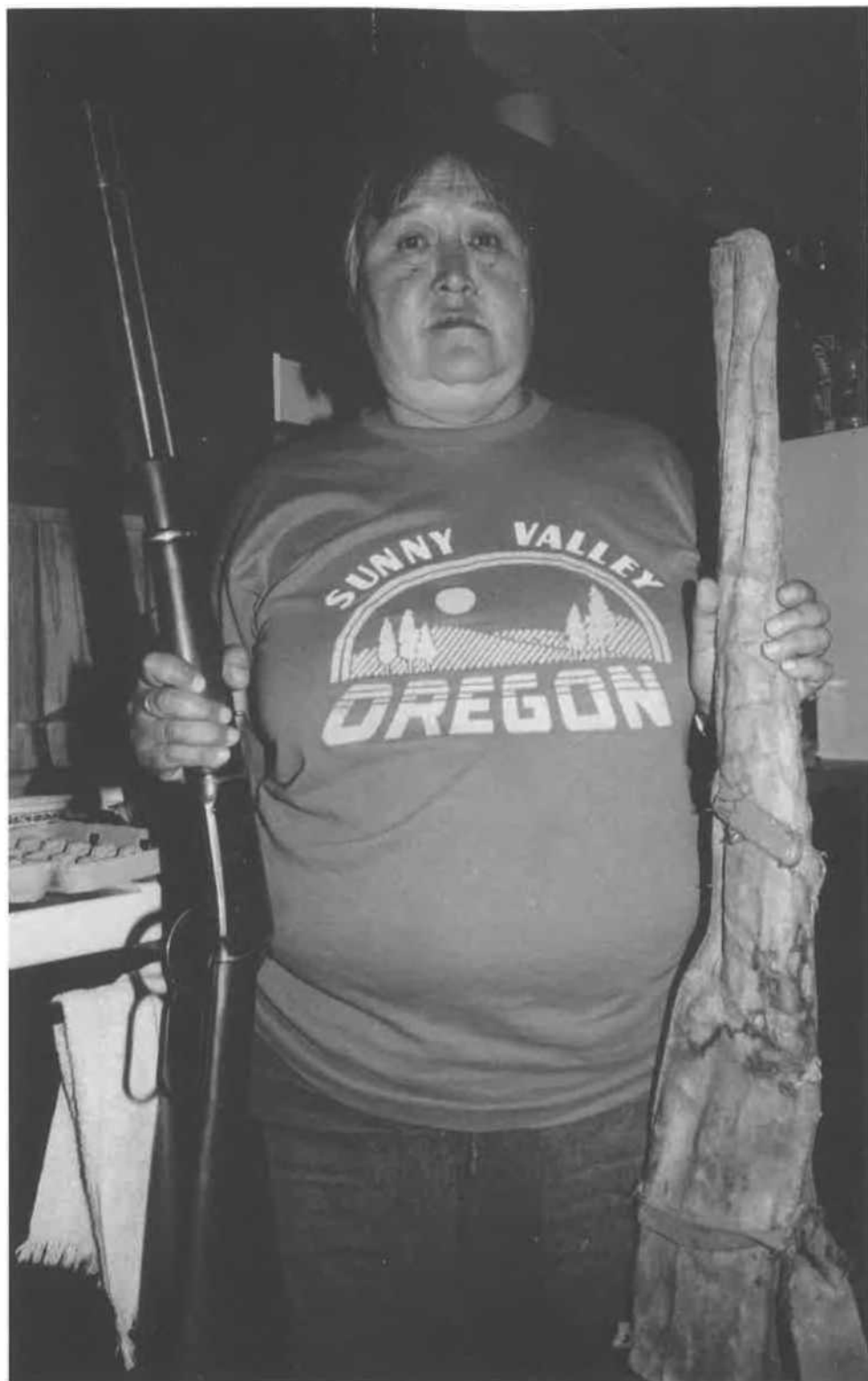
Half the story about weapons is that they empower. These images portray guns as they were employed in America when this book was written: to put meat on the table, for sport hunting, for home security, recreation and ideology. (The Colombia portfolio, which immediately follows, will tell the other half of the story.) In my opinion, every use of guns in this American photo-essay, even including Mr. Wright's (p. 165), is arguably positive. Most of the people who read this book will be educated, "cosmopolitan" and probably urban. In the USA, there is a tremendous ideological split between city and country. Many of the crimes for which the American gun culture can be legitimately blamed take place in the metropolis. So it is no wonder that the majority of the people and organizations who would defang the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution dwell in cities. Rural voices rarely get heard. Accordingly, this portfolio begins with the frontier, and then moves to the metropolis, the common thread being protection. For a decidedly less celebratory view of guns in the USA, see the Columbine and Cambodian-American portfolios.

144. Berry picker in the tundra outside of Nome, Alaska. His pistol was insurance against grizzly attacks.
145. Sarah Kakaruk, with the gun which saved her life from a grizzly bear recently. It was her father's. The gun's case in her other hand is fashioned from sealskin. Teller, Alaska.
146. June Spencer, a woman of Eskimo-Irish mix, proudly standing by the trophy head of a ram she killed with a difficult shot. Nome, Alaska.
147. June and skinned beaver carcasses in her back yard. Her

- white boyfriend Tom, who encouraged and guided her in her hunting, killed nine of them; she killed three.
148. June's refrigerator.
 149. The Hughes family's back yard in Teller. The rifles were laid out at my request.
 150. Mr. Kenny Hughes in his front yard with the pelt of a muskox he shot. Teller, Alaska.
 151. The three Hughes children: Dora Mae the biathlon champion, with her brothers Gerald and Frosty.
 152. Major John Abrant, retired, and his children, Hallie and Dean. The rifles which the children hold are their own. He had a large gun collection and very strong pro-gun views. After our meeting, he gave me a bag of delicious homemade caribou jerky. Nome.
 153. Mr. Don Smith, hunter, standing in front of his house in Nome, Alaska. He left the National Rifle Association because it's "too strident."
 154. Kellie Nelson: wife, mother and provider. Her rifle feeds her children. Townsend, Montana.
 155. Young hunter, near Townsend, Montana.
 156. Mr. High Tech, columnist for *The Trout Wrapper*, practicing the Second Amendment in Pony, Montana.
 157. Mr. D.L. Erdmann, on duty at Rebel Arms, Houston, Texas.
 158. Ian Shein, clerk at Red Star Collectors' Armoury (which is also called Red Star Military Museum and Sales), Los Angeles, California.
 159. Mr. William Linne buys himself an air pistol at Rebel Arms, Houston, Texas.
 160. Rangemaster Richard, Seattle, Washington.
 161. Mr. Kwame Moore with his girl, LAX Firing Range, Los Angeles, California. He keeps a gun for self-defense.
 162. Ms. Joretta Hernandez and friend at the LAX Firing Range, Los Angeles, California. Joretta told me, "I shoot since I'm in law enforcement."
 - 163a. Craig and Patricia Graham, booksellers, in their house in Los Angeles, California. Craig's Christmas present from his family year after year is 500 rounds of ammunition.

- 163b. Randi Michelle Lee introduces her girlfriend Bree to guns. Sacramento, California.
- 164a. Employees of the Los Angeles Gun Club: Mr. John Yato and Mr. Katsuya Tanabe.
- 164b. Mr. Ralph E. Carter, concealed handgun instructor, in front of his home in Houston, Texas. Mr. Carter was an ardent constitutionalist and a very sweet man.
- 165a. Mr. John Wright in front of his property line in the hills near Townsend, Montana. Mr. Wright is a Freeman. He rejects many aspects of American government, including its Federal Reserve system and its power to tax the citizenry. He advocates white separatism with a Germanic flavor. Like Ralph Carter (p. 164), he sometimes (as in this photograph) practices concealed carry. He told me, "I am always armed." As far as I could tell, he was hurting no one, and he has as much of a right as anyone to protect his person and property.
- 165b. Jews with guns. Mr. Dave Golden and other Jews with their Japanese wives (not all of whom have converted to Judaism) and their guns, in Dave's back yard, standing before the banner NEVER AGAIN, which refers to the Holocaust. In the kitchen was a poster reading ALL IN FAVOR OF GUN CONTROL RAISE YOUR RIGHT HAND beneath a depiction of Hitler extending his right arm in the Nazi salute. Dave is an enthusiastic NRA member.







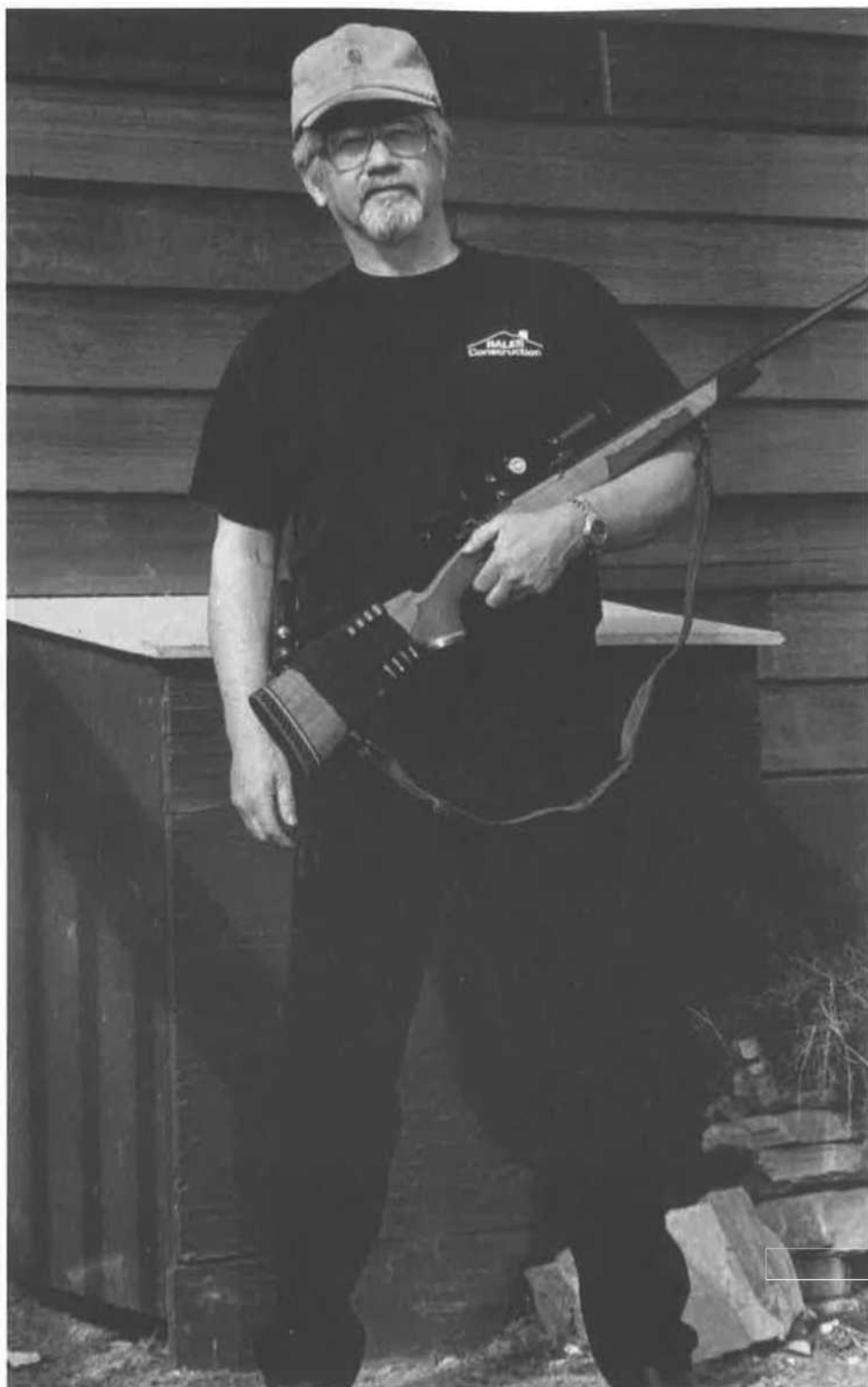




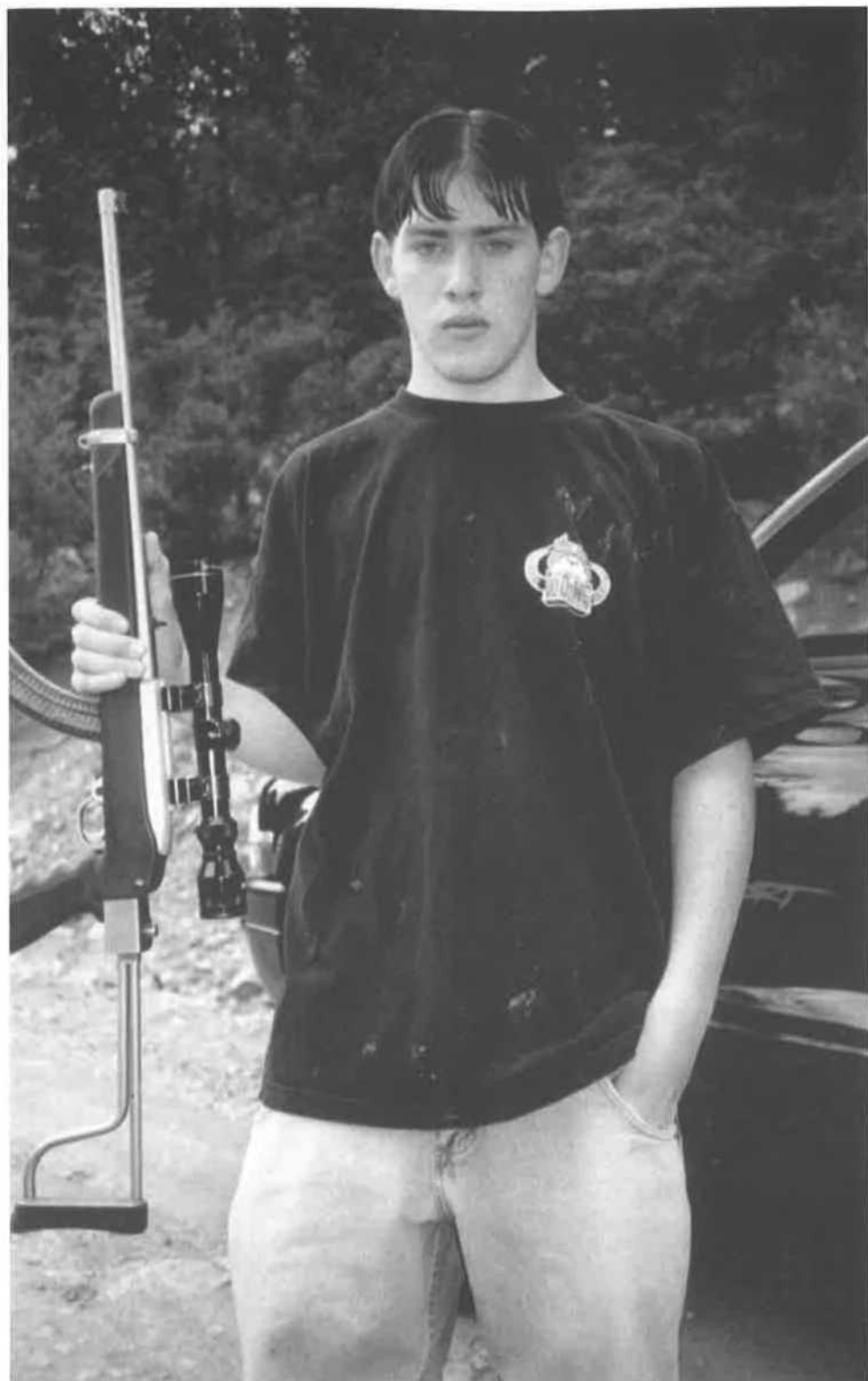


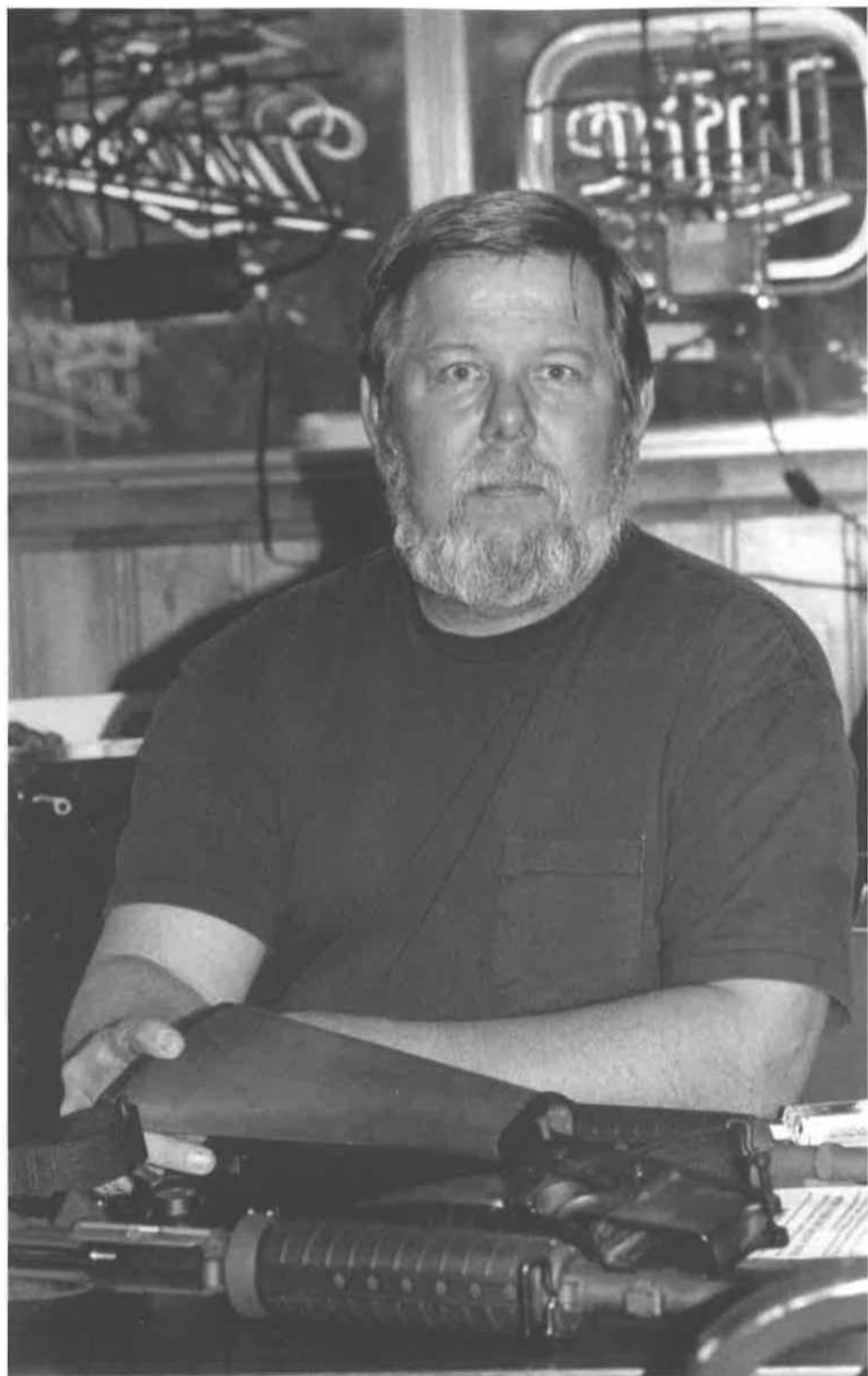




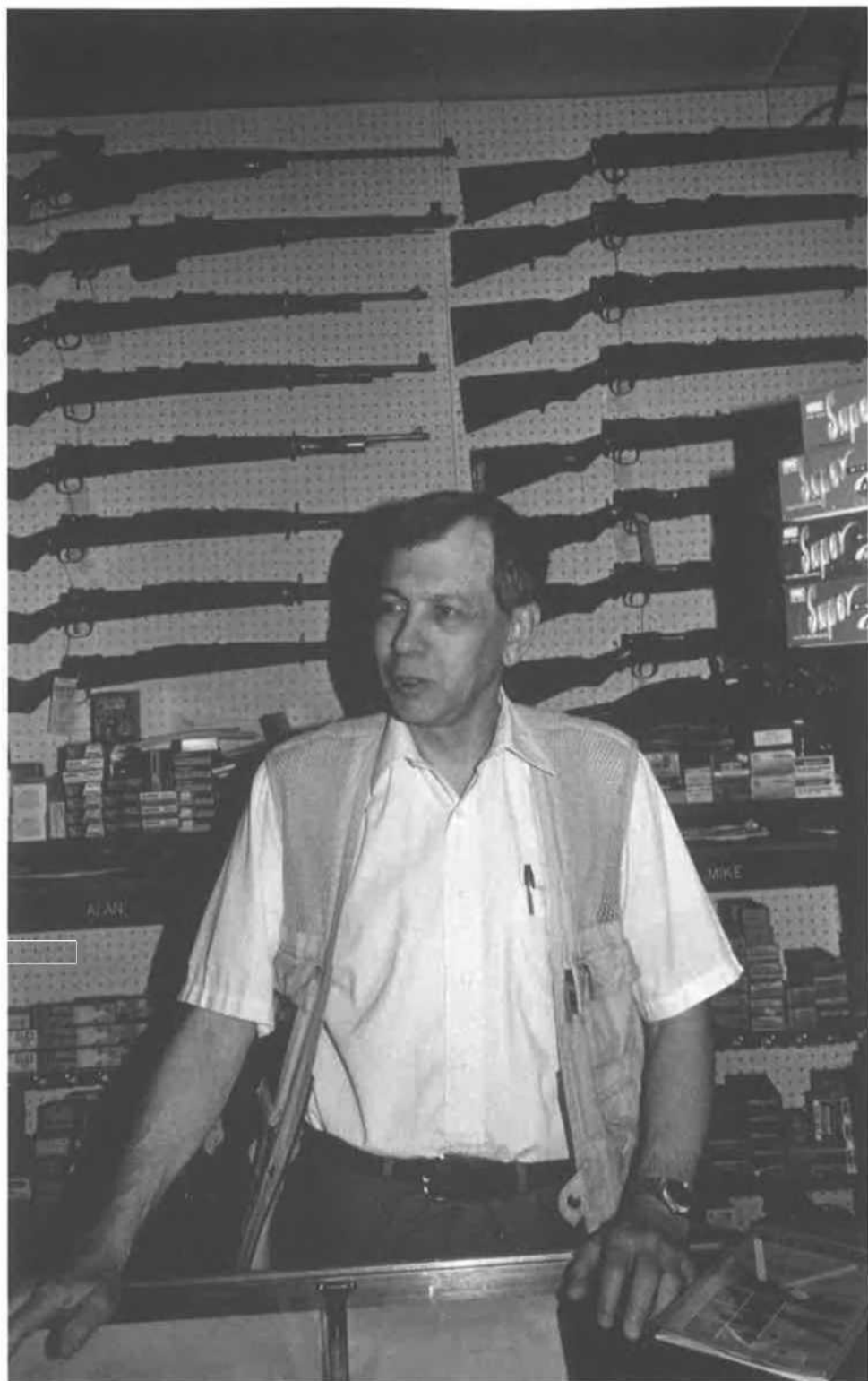




























WEAPONS AND GRIEF, WEAPONS AND FEAR

VIOLENCE IN COLUMBIA, 1999-2000

Weapons empower, to be sure—but at the cost of disempowering the weaponless. That is the other half of the story. Starry-eyed Americans sometimes refer to guns as “equalizers,” but we can be equal in this regard only if we are all equally armed, ready and competent.

For half a century, Colombia has been corrupt with violence from the right and from the left, violence from conviction and from the cocaine trade's expediencies, violence from authority and from street thugs. Colombia is the country of the quintuple-locked door. Everybody I've met there knows someone who'd been kidnapped, usually by leftist organizations (FARC, ELN, EPL); the rightists, whose most infamous strike group is Carlos Castaño's AUC, prefer to murder. Colombians are so very warm; they have done a great deal for me; they make friends almost instantly; it is almost as if, in sheer self-defense against the menace which besieges them, they've build their homes into havens of kindness and affection. They're in this together; no one is safe.

171. Twice bereaved: A woman of Ciudad del Tunal, Bogotá, 1999. A few steps from her home, her husband was beaten and strangled. The police never even came to view his body. Six months and a few more steps later, her-ten-year-old daughter was killed by a random bullet during a strike. Every day when she goes out, this mother has to pass the bloodstain on the sidewalk. Here we see her holding up a photo of the girl in her coffin.

172. A mother and daughter in the illegal shantytown of Nueva Esperanza, near Bogotá, 1999. That very day, the daughter had been chased home from school by neighborhood boys with knives, one of whom was only eight years old. The mother asked me: "What can I do when she goes to school tomorrow?" I had no answer.
173. A shoe factory owner and his wife in their home in Bogotá, 1999. Thieves cut a hole through the roof at night and took all machines and stock. The factory was under armed guard at that time.
174. Poster for a missing boy of eleven years, Candelaria district of Bogotá, 1999.
175. The latest two posters for missing people at the airport, Bogotá, 1999.
176. Four posters for missing people, poor people's clinic in Ciudad Bolívar, Bogotá, 1999.
177. Flowers and a banner for "Chucho" Bejarano, gunned down in his own classroom by a person who wore no mask. Nobody saw anything, of course. About this murder, my driver said, "My wife, she cry. He was a really good guy. Everybody cry. He was working hard for peace..." When I asked him if he remembered the dead man's name he replied, "Oh, I forget. What the hell. Too many people getting assassinated all the time..." Bogotá, 1999.
- 178-83. Rally to protest the assassination of "Chucho" Bejarano, Bogotá, 1999. The "UN" signs refer to the National University where he taught, not to the United Nations.
184. Paramilitary of the AUC, the Autodefense Union of Colombia. Displaying the trademark machete with which the AUC likes to dismember its victims alive, he hides his face in his shirt since this photo-interview was conducted without the permission of his leader, Carlos Castaño. Antioquia Province, 2000.
185. One of the paramilitary's colleagues (same time and place).
186. Boy entrepreneur in front of a funeral parlor on the edge of the extremely dangerous Cartucho district of Bogotá, 1999. There are many funeral parlors in the Cartucho. The police dared not enter this place without the permission of its drug lord "king," Ernesto Calderon. I saw them fawning on him in the police sta-

- tion. The career of the boy in this photo was to "protect" cars parked at the city morgue. Refuse to pay him, and something was likely to happen to one's car.
187. Two villagers pointing to a death site in a meadow overlooking the high town of Gutierrez (several hours east of Bogotá). It was here that just last month (this was in 1999) FARC guerrillas had incinerated an encampment of government troops; only two soldiers survived. On an earlier occasion FARC had destroyed the town's post office. This field was a very dangerous place since the guerrillas could see us here from the mountains and the timorous men in the police station were far away. We ran a high risk of getting kidnapped when we came here. For a long time I did not think that taking this photo had been worth the peril into which I'd placed my interpreter, the two guides and myself. But look at the grief in the old man's face. This is the face of Colombia. If we gaze at it long enough and try to feel what that man feels, maybe one of us will find the courage to save a life.
 188. A billboard in Cúcuta, 1999: Policeman as angel. Unfortunately, the police are as afraid as everybody else. In the district office across the street from this billboard I passed on the wishes of the inhabitants of a nearby town called Campo Dos: Please rebuild our destroyed police station and send police to protect us from the violence. The acting commander refused, explaining that too many police had already been killed there.
 189. Policeman at demonstration, Bogotá, 1999.
 190. Two policemen, one machine-pistol and Jesus in an isolated substation in the shantytown Ciudad Bolívar above central Bogotá, 1999. These saving angels were actually quite timorous, and I pitied them.
 191. Line of policemen and riots shields—a very common sight in Bogotá. 1999.
 192. This call to denounce perpetrators of violence will not be obeyed very often, since naming names is so dangerous in Colombia. The sign was erected by the paramilitary group Special Services (Convivir). Antioquia Province, 2000.
 193. A solitary policeman guards the perimeter of a Red

Cross encampment for rural refugees displayed by factional violence. Bogotá, 1999.

- 194a. In Gutierrez (see p.187), an out-of-uniform police recruit obligingly takes me to the cemetery and points out where the latest crop of FARC guerrillas has been planted in unmarked graves—a special horror in a Catholic country.
- 194b. Ruins of the police station at Campo Dos, 1999. (See p. 188.) When this structure got blown up, two policemen lost their lives and thirteen others were kidnapped. Note the AUC graffiti.
- 195a. More graffiti in Campo Dos. Here we see evidence of the factional violence which kept bleeding that unfortunate village: "Get out, FARC, ELN, EPL! ACCU is here!" The ACCU was closely affiliated with the AUC.
- 195b. Carrying a burden past bulletpocked wall in Campo Dos, 1999.
196. The mother in Ciudad del Tunal (p. 171) stands before the bloodstain where her daughter died (lower right). Trying to say something nice to her (what can one say?), I told her that the girl looked pretty in the open casket, and the mother replied, "When the bullet left her mouth, it knocked all her teeth out."







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8:00 p.m.

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EXTRAVIADO



AUTISTA. EDAD 11 AÑOS

Nombre: DANIEL FABIAN LOPEZ MORENO

Desarrecio Domingo 22 Años

PARQUE NACIONAL.

TELEFONOS: 776 3594 - 5630069

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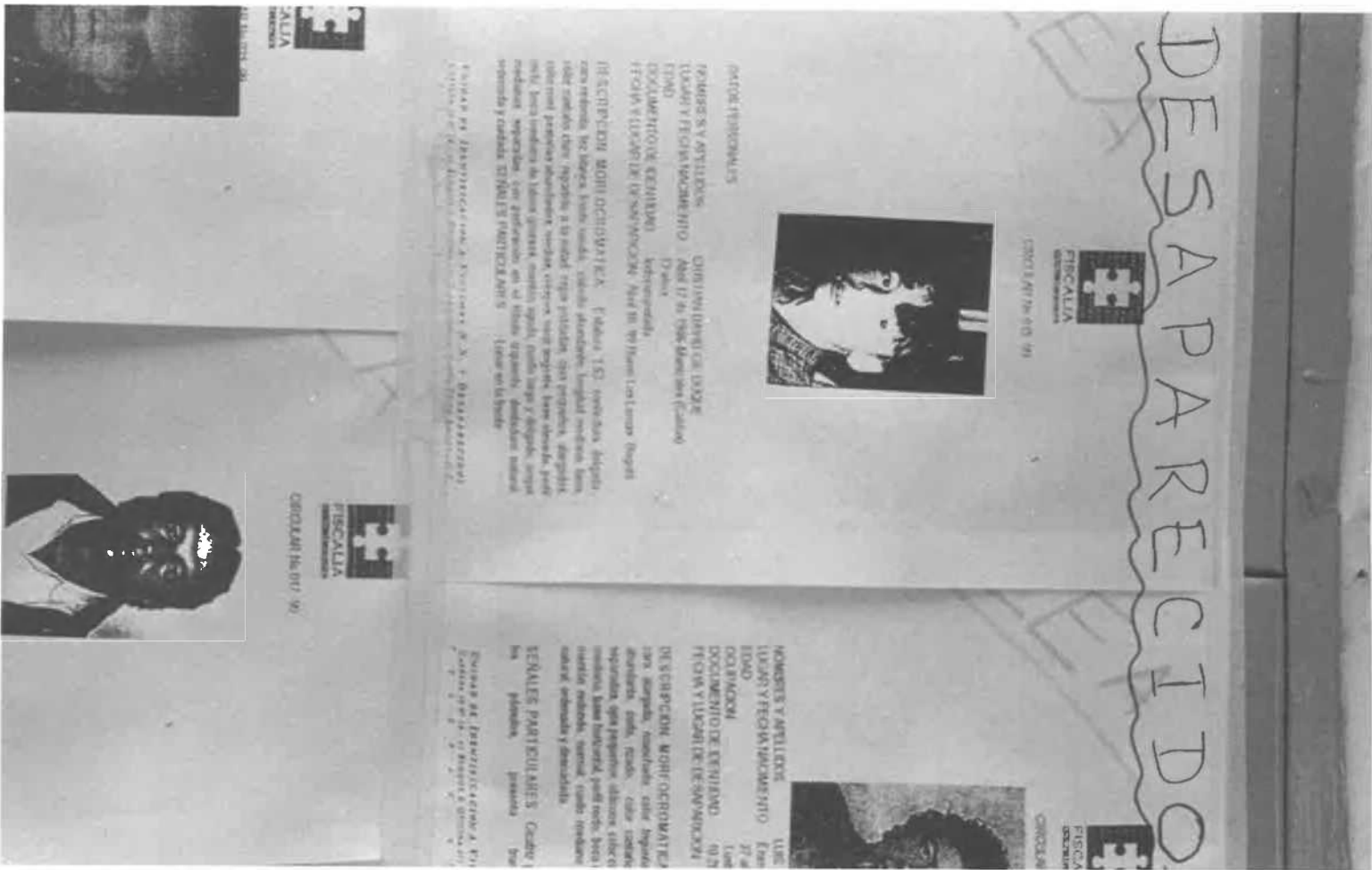
Los artistas e intelectuales interesados en participar en la FIESTA CARIBOSTOLEN CAJALAMA, e inscribir sus propuestas al Instituto Cultural Leon Tobón. La presente convocatoria está dirigida especialmente en la localidad de Cajalama, en literatura, artes plásticas, música, danza, cómica, y actividades contemporáneas.

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 Estatura 1.85 Edad: 30 años
 Color TROQUERO
 Ojos CAFE
 Cabello NEGRO
 Señales Vista: ramales, amovible, partision, habuero.
 Zapatos: color: tucar en la manga izquierda y tatuaje en el
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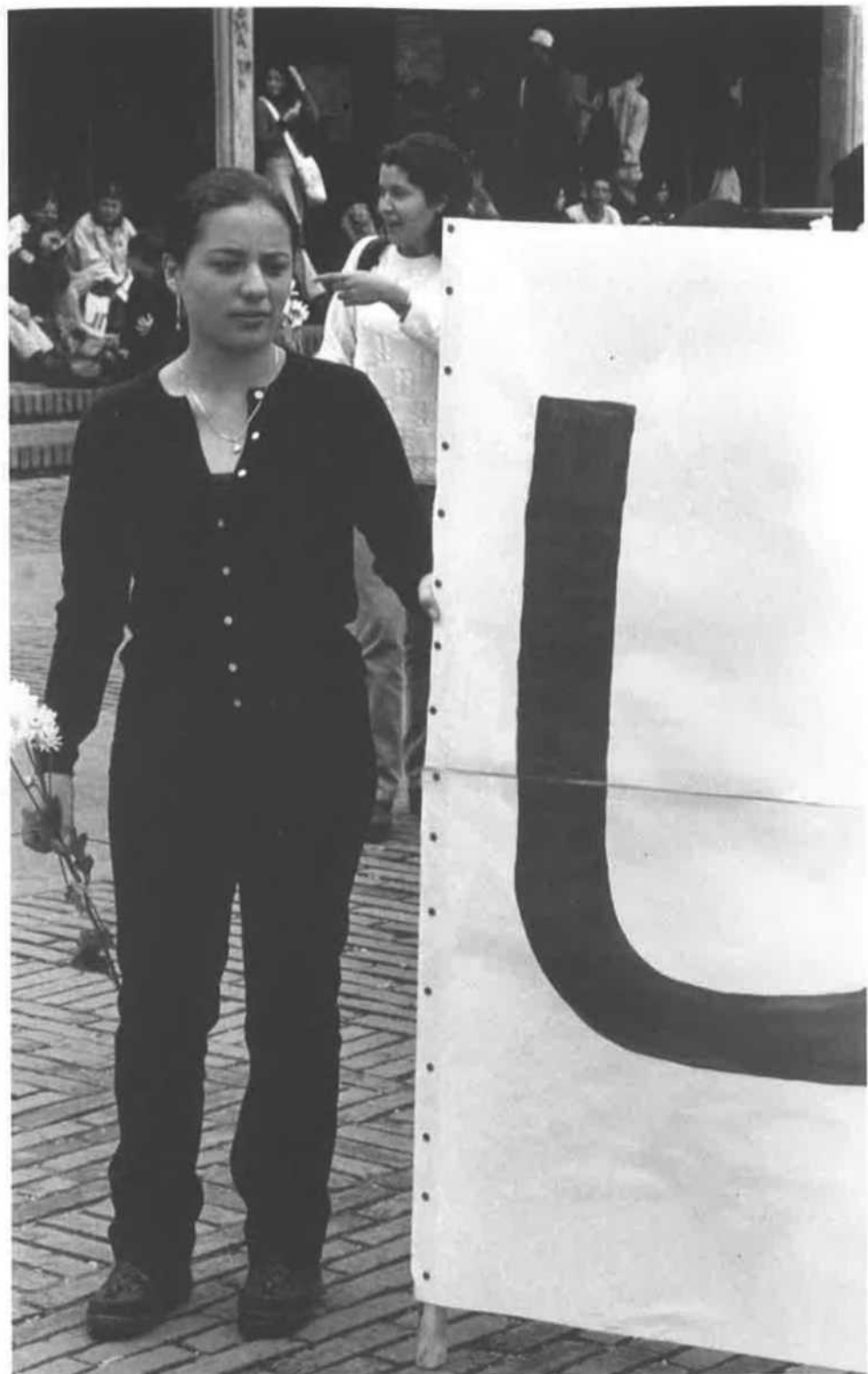




WEARNS AND GREY, WEARNS AND TEAK























**"No me horroriza
el terrorismo de los malos.
Me aterroriza
la indiferencia de los buenos"**

Martin Luther King

No guarde silencio



¡ DENUNCIE !



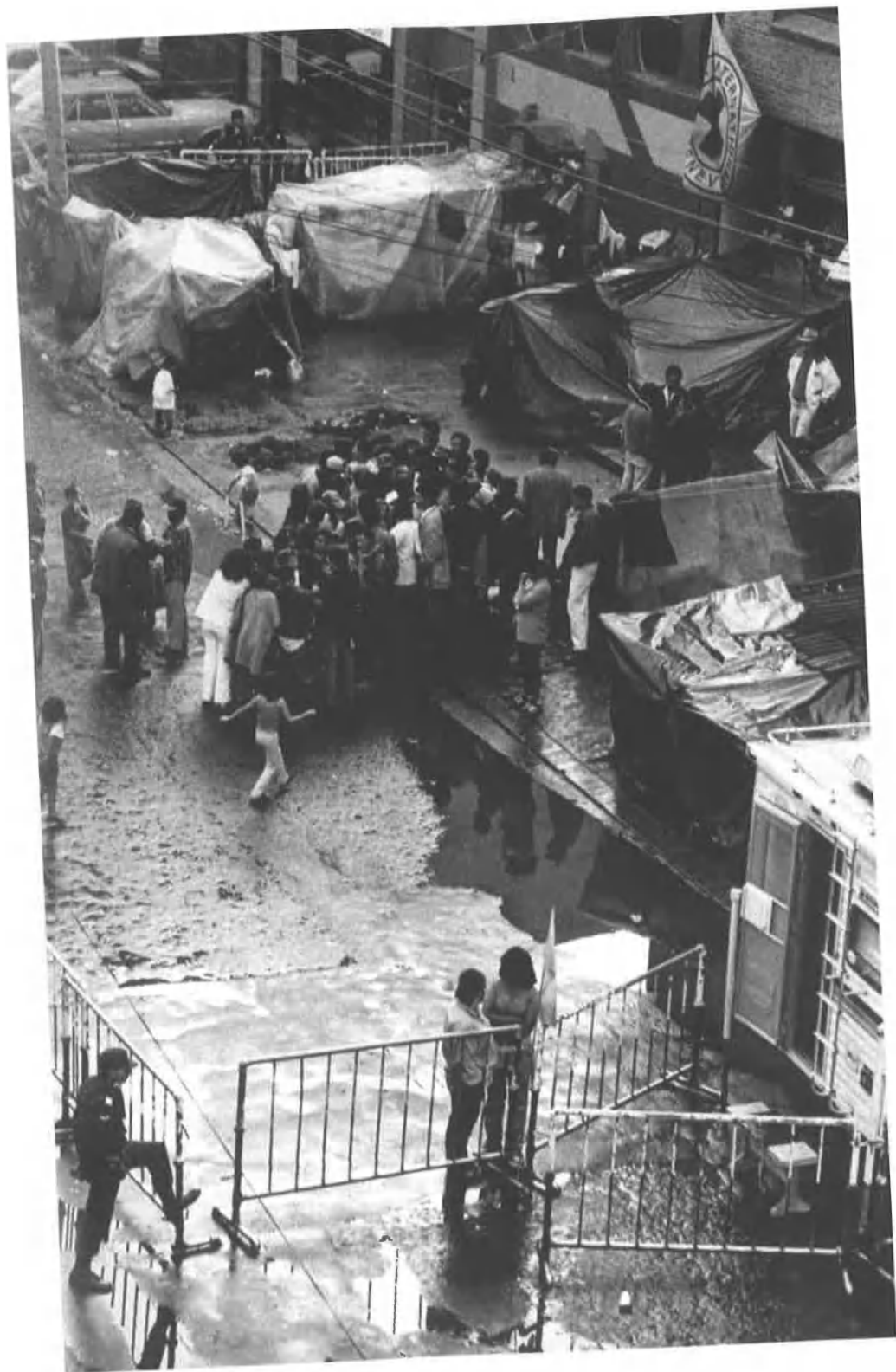
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CHAPTER 3

WHERE DO
MY RIGHTS END?

The urgent consideration of the public safety may undoubtedly authorise the violation of every possible law. How far that or any other consideration may operate to dissolve the natural obligations of humanity and justice, is a doctrine of which I still desire to remain ignorant.

EDWARD GIBBON, CA. 1776¹

FOUR MURDERED CHILDREN

What else could I do? —There's the bedrock justification for violent self-defense, and occasionally it even rings true. But Gandhi didn't think so. (Of course, Indian custom protected his wife from random violation by prohibiting her from going out alone.) I made a choice; Gandhi made a choice. And there are four choices² that the self *in extremis*, regardless of its actual *capability*, retains the conditional right to make:

JUSTIFIED CHOICES OF THE SELF³

1. Whether or not to violently defend itself against violence;

2. Whether or not to violently defend someone else from violence.^{4,5}
3. Whether or not to destroy itself.
4. Whether or not to help a weaker self destroy itself, to save it from a worse fate.

CONDITIONS:

1. No attachment to non-violent creeds. (Nonviolence condition.)
2. No allegiance to collectivity or authority which might prohibit the self from removing itself from "the line of fire." (Allegiance condition.)

CAVEAT TO (1) AND (2): *So-called involuntary attachments are not binding. Voluntary attachments may likewise be withdrawn at any time.* In short, both conditions may be overridden—at which point one returns to the state of nature. [First draft. This caveat will be modified somewhat in another chapter.]⁶

EXAMPLES: By the rights of the self one may justifiably refuse to fight a war, or one may renounce nonviolence in order to defend oneself, or one may violently rebel against authority provided that one's cause is just, etc., etc. Of course there may well be dire consequences to the decider.

3. An accurate understanding of circumstances and consequences. This is why we wouldn't allow a small child to destroy himself by drinking household poisons, or to carry a loaded pistol for self-defense.⁷

These are my axioms, my starting-points, and as such cannot and will not be proved. Agree with them, or not. Evaluate what follows accordingly. I make no claim that they are the self's only rights.⁸ I do assert that they are the rights most germane to this study of violence.

Of the four conditions, the second is the heaviest, applying—or made to apply (in violation of the caveat)—to army deserters, arrest-resisters, plotters of palace coups, and so many more state-of-nature types that although we'll rarely refer to this condition in such a simple form from now on, we'll not be done with it for the rest of this book: —If I deserted, then my allegiance to authority wasn't voluntary. — Oh, yes it was, replies authority; haven't you enjoyed all the benefits of citizenship until now? You used my roads and bridges, didn't you? That means you signed on my dotted line, which now gives me license to execute you for treason.

The allegiance condition thus hovers like a winter fog over this entire inquiry. I see no way to begin, however, without imagining, as do classical physicists with their inventions of perfect vacuums, frictionless planes and the like, a self "in isolation"—like Thoreau in his ramblings around Walden Pond—or the Asian woman in the park at night, calling her dog, wandering into ever lonelier places beneath the

winter fog. The dog does not hear. A car glares yellowly upon her. The car follows her, passes, makes a sudden U-turn, stops. The door opens, and three men get out. Nobody will help her.

A MOTHER'S SOVEREIGNTY

FIRST MURDER: I read recently about an activist who was tortured in a political prison by being forced to watch her child being tortured in front of her. Authority explained, no doubt in tones of odious rationality, that even in this secret empire of glaring lights and capricious but inescapable physical agony, predestination did not entirely apply—for look! Behind a pane of glass she saw a struggling little figure. Perhaps they opened a vent, so that she'd hear its cries; almost certainly they arranged for it to see *her* there (ashen-faced, supported in two policemen's arms), in order to confirm that mutual attachment which can be so ingeniously utilized in games whose object receives that bitter gift called free will: If she did not betray her comrades (authority said), on her child would now fall the torments she knew so well. Which loyalty would the desperate woman then betray? She kept silent, and watched her child die screaming.⁹

No one will ever know how she actually chose. We know only that she did *not* choose to save her child—a choice, indeed, which might well have been spurious; after she'd talked, mother and child might both have been dispatched. Here were her possible courses of action:

1. Speak, and hopefully preserve her child.¹⁰
2. Refuse to speak, and thereby protect others.
3. Refuse to participate in authority's scheme (asserting, in effect, that if they murdered her child it was all their doing).¹¹
4. Vacillate; make no decision.

(A fervent Gandhian might have made a fifth choice, adhering to the master's almost inhuman standard, whose slogan reads: "Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household... If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides?... The larger their family, the farther they are from Universal Love."¹² A mother's Gandhian act: Lovingly invite them to do their worst to oneself and one's child.)

Only the first act would have revealed the woman's true moral calculus—a valuable lesson for moral medal-pinner and stone-casters. All three other non-Gandhian possibilities must produce the same primary result—silence—and the same secondary result—a dead child. But to the protagonist herself, the exact reason she closed her lips might have mattered a good deal. Did she allow her child to die for some

arguably good reason, or did she simply allow it to die? If she did have a reason, then she, like the Warsaw ghetto mother who suffocated her crying baby so that the Nazis would not discover the people in her bunker (in which case the baby would have died in any case), was a true heroine.¹³ Had she chosen to save her child at the expense of her comrades, she would also be a heroine to me. Either way, I'd bow down to her because she made a choice in an intolerable situation. (By extension, this license to choose either alternative may also apply to certain issues of animal rights.)¹⁴ Necessity gave her two alternatives each of which might have destroyed her. Plato describes the greatest folly of all as being "that of a man who hates, not loves, what his judgment pronounces to be noble or good, while he loves and enjoys what he judges vile and wicked."¹⁵ The mother's torturers sought to force that folly on her, to transform what she loved and enjoyed, her child, into a vile implement of traitorousness. They sought to make evil and dishonor inevitable. Let's hope that the mother did not turn away, that she did not make her decision by default.

ANOTHER MOTHER'S SOVEREIGNTY

SECOND MURDER: In wartime in ancient China, a poet met a woman in a meadow heaped with human bones. The woman was starving. She'd left her baby to die, and was walking away weeping. She said to the poet: "I know not where I myself will die. I cannot keep us both alive." The poet, who probably also could do nothing for either of them, galloped away. "Such words I could not bear to hear."¹⁶ He was no hero, she no heroine; they took their natural rights (which Robespierre calls "the sacred duty imposed by nature on all living beings").¹⁷ I can brand neither one of them wrong.

THE CONFESSION OF BUKHARIN

However forlorn and bitter the soul, however hellish the violence of material reality, such moments, by presenting alternatives—even if both horns of the dilemma are unspeakable—command us to be ethically human in the highest, extremist sense. Who would not willingly forego such hideous "opportunities"? But it matters not what we will. Choice, like all of life, comprises not only action but reaction. No one escapes it. The absolute monarch and the criminal innocent or guilty en route to the electric chair must each decide who and how he'll be in his remaining moments of life—struggling or serene; righteous, forgiving or even penitent; selfish or other-ish. Thus Nikolai Bukharin, a vacillating, less than admirable fellow-traveller along the Stalinist road, and now one of the chief defendants in Stalin's show trials,¹⁸ compelled, like the first mother we read about, by threats against his child,¹⁹ and probably by torture,²⁰ to denounce himself, transforms his plea to the court into defiance no less noble for its heartbreaking obliqueness:

I admit that I am responsible both politically and legally for the defeatist orientation, ... although I affirm that personally I did not hold this position... I further consider myself responsible both politically and legally for wrecking activities, though I personally do not remember having given directions about wrecking activities.²¹

He will be shot—and so will all his fellow defendants, whether they groveled, recanted, or not. He possesses no power over his fate. But (within the stifflingly narrow limits of terror, and the partially overlapping boundaries of the allegiance condition)²² he can still act.

But when? If your existence is as justified as mine, then mine must be as justified as yours—but no more.²³ Do I injure my own goodness (commonly called my “humanity”) in refusing to sacrifice myself for you? —Possibly, but the only practical remedy in some cases—namely, forcing me to sacrifice myself for you—is equally unjust. Hence the first right of the self, self-defense (of whatever kind: in Bukharin’s case only moral self-defense offers any practical hope, the biological kind having been ruled out, despite authority’s lying oath: “Conduct yourself well in the trial—I promise you they will not shoot you”),²⁴ becomes almost tautologically unarguable. Bukharin will not conduct himself well, and we admire him for it.

Even if, like Bukharin, our faith, careers, experiences, habits compel us to grant some legitimacy to the authority now bent on pulverizing us, self-defense takes moral precedence over civic obediences, other factors being equal. (Authority shouts: They never are!) Just as in the American constitution all rights not explicitly ceded to federal power remain claimed by the states, so even under the allegiance condition any right of authority to demand my destruction for its good must be understood as explicitly localized, and elsewhere voided by my own superior right.

Consider again the right of a government to draft someone for military service. We have seen how an immediate tug-of-war develops between the right of the officer to order him into almost certain death in a battle and the enlisted man’s right to survive. Which side is correct depends on whether the judge is Hobbes or Tolstoy. But only the extremist authoritarian would assert that the same officer could in peacetime order the man to march over the edge of a precipice.²⁵ And, in fact, since authority desires to harness our rationality to its ends, it must accordingly reason us into obedience, which in turn implies that we can reason ourselves out of it. Saint Thomas Aquinas’s view is representative. [*See next page.*]



Bukharin (1936)

AQUINAS'S MORAL CALCULUS (*before* A.D. 1256)

What is a Man's Virtue?

The good of a man...

1. As a man: "Consists in the perfection of his reason in the cognition of truth and in the regulation of his inferior appetites according to the rule of reason, for a man is man by his rationality."
2. As a citizen of earth: "Lies in his being ordered to the good of all within a commonwealth."
3. As a citizen of heaven: "Cannot be acquired by his by his own natural powers" and hence must come from grace. (Plato would claim that it could come from sincere meditation, discourse and study.)

These three types of virtue do not necessarily agree.

SOURCE: AQUINAS, PP. 96-97 "ON THE VIRTUES IN GENERAL."

A rational person will be an obedient citizen—but only if authority is itself rational and does not infringe his heavenly citizenship. Hence Gandhi: "A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. Only then does the right accrue to him of civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances."²⁶ Hence also the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany: "The dignity of man shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority."²⁷ In both of these cases, a strong residue of self-sovereignty thus remains irreducible even by government's most violent acids of coercion.

THE MORAL CALCULUS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION/CHRISTIAN SOCIAL UNION GROUP IN THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG (1977): "The Classical Freedoms"

1. Life, freedom and safety of the person.
2. Effective legal protection against arbitrary measures by the State.
3. Freedom of opinion.
4. Freedom of conscience and religion.
5. The right to marriage, family life and the education of one's children.
6. Equal treatment and protection from national discrimination.
7. Freedom of movement and emigration.

"Violations of these rights are unlawful encroachments upon the individual's innermost freedom and strike deeply at human dignity."

SOURCE: CDU/CSU, P. 24.

Even that worshipper of discipline Moltke the Elder relaxes the allegiance condition far enough to grant the right of a soldier to live off the country—that is, to pillage—if he is not properly fed by his own army: “He not only *can but must* take from the resources of the land what is necessary for his existence.”²⁸ —No matter that Moltke, who, gaunt, rigid and piercing-eyed, wears authority’s eight-pointed star below his collar, indulges this necessity only because it accords with his war aims—an ill-fed soldier cannot fight as well as a nourished one, no matter what compulsion presses upon him. On the other hand, the necessity of self-preservation which the deserter pleads will never be allowed. —The fact remains that under extreme circumstances Moltke will tolerate deviation²⁹ from “behavior appropriate for parade.” “Willful deviations from the established arrangement may in no case be tolerated, for the disintegration of discipline spreads like a virus.”³⁰ The commanding officer lets them off the leash; they break down the peasants’ doors. In such a case, responsibility will be laid not at the hungry soldiers’ doors, but at the threshold of the Supreme Command itself, where quite possibly the generals have just sat down to a sumptuous roast.



Moltke the Elder

As for Gandhi, his nonviolent soldiers follow him not by compulsion, but by faith.³¹ Each satyagrahi “must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time,”³² it is true; but should his heart be unwilling, he may depart the cause in peace.

THE REPUBLIC, OR SYSTEMATIZED JUSTICE

In Plato’s time, the time of the Peloponnesian War,³³ the hoplite soldiers formed shield-walls whose every member needed to keep his place for the good of all. Discipline ostensibly maintained itself as much by faith and solidarity as by compulsion; but the goal was not the Gandhian one of benefiting all by dying smiling deaths of violence, but the more customary Moltkeian one, rather, of self-preservation and civic enlargement by means of victory. Gandhi believed that everyone possesses a moral faculty; he fervently prayed that wrongdoers might improve theirs, but he’d force nothing. Plato legislated differently, because, assuming that most souls are ignorant of the Good, he preferred to apply the allegiance condition *unconditionally* wherever possible. In his ideal army, “no man, and no woman” (for he allowed female soldiers) should

be ever suffered to live without an officer set over them, and no soul of man to learn the trick of doing one single thing of its own sole motion, in play or in earnest, but, in peace as in war, to live ever with the commander in sight... in a word, to teach

one's soul the habit of never so much as thinking to do one single act apart from one's fellows... Anarchy—the absence of the commander—is what we should expel root and branch from the lives of all mankind.³⁴

What if the officers fail to look after the soldiers? Plato's answer seems to be: That will never happen. —And indeed, were it somehow feasible to bring his republic into being all at once, most everyone would fulfill the tasks of his assigned position, either out of obedience, loyalty and compulsion (among the lower orders), reverence to the showy dictates of honor³⁵ (in the middle orders) or knowledge, which is virtue (in the master class). —As for me, I think that Plato refutes himself; because the system which he demands to oversee human goodness can only operate if its pawns already possess that goodness.³⁶ But however flawed it is, Plato's conception of the self in society remains well worth musing on, because while his proposals may sometimes offer only limited plausibility, his darkly skeptical evaluation of the self in isolation is based on all too realistic premises.

Plato requests that we look into the justice of the self by examining first the justice of the commonwealth, thus calling on us to assume that the state is composed of the same elements, in the same proportion, as the individual, the only difference being that in the former all is magnified (hence, he says, easier to see and to begin his inquiry with). From this premise, he neatly proves that since any just state must demonstrate order, restraint and the separation of powers, a just individual should do the same—and, ideally, in the same way. Indeed, who could deny that a perfectly just individual and a perfectly just community of whatever kind must either have the same goals, or else be able to harmoniously marry their differences? The allegiance condition would either be as voluntary as love or as innate as breathing. Between the self and the group we'd see no war. Plato, architect and worshiper of consonance, visualizes glowing Forms: perfect essences of everything, whose divine light—if we could only see it always—would bathe each moral act in the pleasures of unchanging logic: What's good for one is good for all.

PLATO'S MORAL CALCULUS (*ca.* 350 B.C.)

How sovereign is the individual?

All things in proportion. In practical life, where no Philosopher King can be found, authority must be shared between the ruler and his magistrates. Autocracy destroys "national feeling," but "an unqualified and absolute freedom from all authority is far worse thing than submission to a magistrate with limited powers." The moral decisions of a Gandhi—or of any other soul untrained in his particular school—would in Plato's estimation be very hit-or-miss—although he would still want one to make those decisions, provided that they were not in conflict with the laws of his repub-

lic. Were his system ever to come into being, the self-doubting contemplation of which he is so fond would certainly be illegal.

1. "The wellborn have a title to rule the worse-born," parents to rule their children, elders to rule the younger, masters to rule slaves, the stronger to rule the weaker, the lucky to rule the unlucky, and "the supreme claim": the wise to rule the ignorant.

However,

2. "A community should be at once free, sane, and at amity with itself."

How can these two things be justly accomplished?

- 3 By requiring both rulers and ruled to obey the laws.

SOURCE: LAWS, III.690A-C, 691C-692C, 693B, 697C-698B, IV.715D-E.

Rarely self-interested and never mendacious, Plato becomes incontrovertible when he argues that there is such a thing as justice, that some people are juster than others and most people feel little inclination to seek out what justice is, that some form of authority is inevitable (hence the allegiance condition; and even if allegiance is conditional, from a practical point of view the self can only transfer it to another sovereign object, not withdraw and then withhold it forever), and that the individuals most qualified to exercise authority are the justest. Alas, not everyone agrees that justice is what Plato says it is; nor can any of Plato's regulations (or any others I can imagine) prevent individuals from violently oppressing one another.

The early Platonic dialogues offer us the gently subversive inspiration of Socrates, whose life ends with a nobly challenging act of satyagraha: he submits himself (in a spirit of witty defiance, it would seem) to the law, provoking a death-sentence which he might have expected and which even at the end he could have escaped through exile. (He will not: he prefers to honor the law.) But Plato, though he continues to employ to the end the so-called Socratic method, gradually transforms his Socrates (now that the original is dead) from an ironic and passionate arguer, almost a nihilist, a freewheeling apostle of selfhood's freedom, into a lecturer, nay, a hectorer of his inquirers, the mouthpiece of a system. (Christians made the same thing out of their Christ.) Plato feels that moral actors *may* be correct in what they do, but since morality is such a tricky business it is better to have it legislated. The Platonic conception, in its reliance upon equal proportionality between the leaders and the led, becomes troubled by those who don't know their place—and that place is determined by philosophic laws at which the majority who are not law-makers would be ill-advised to carp. Hence the rights of any self to express itself, educate itself, reproduce and even hear music of its choosing—much less to launch a revolution³⁷—have been carefully circumscribed by class and, again, by constituted law. (Plato was a man of his times. H. G. Wells writes that any modern sci-

entist in ancient Greece "would have been in constant danger of a prosecution for impiety. The democracy of Athens would have tolerated Darwin as little as the democracy of Tennessee.")³⁸

In his *Laws* (whose Socrates is now simply called "an Athenian"), we look in vain for acknowledgment of the predicament of this world's Bukharins and necessity-trapped mothers. The magistrates will lead everyone toward apprehending the unity of courage, purity, rectitude and wisdom.³⁹ They being wiser than the rest, Gandhi's opposition politics won't be needed. How could there arise any benign or utilitarian issue from granting the self permission to create justice and virtue in its own proportions, when those proportions follow unvarying rational-mystical principles? "Fear," Plato explains, "was cast out by confidence in supposed knowledge, and the loss of it gave birth to impudence. For to be unconcerned for the judgment of one's betters in the assurance which comes of a reckless excess of liberty is nothing in the world but reprehensible impudence."⁴⁰ ("The present era is liquidating itself," wrote his half-brother Adolf Hitler. "It introduces universal suffrage, shoots off its mouth about equal rights, but finds no basis for them.")⁴¹ Gandhi and Bukharin, if they are wise enough, will join the ruling class in its benignity, and guard the constitution.

ANOTHER MOTHER'S SOVEREIGNTY

Hence in Plato's ideal city-state, the right to physical self-defense, as with other rights, may formally apply to any full citizen, but the right to determine when and how to employ it will be limited to the privileged Guardian class and the Philosopher-King at their head. Masters and parents being natural leaders, the slave may not kill the master, nor the child the parent, *even in self-defense*. "The law's command will be that he must endure the worst rather than commit such a crime."⁴² In effect, Plato is asserting (as enfranchised Greeks and Romans⁴³ generally would) that there exist prohibited persons, upon whom laying violent hands must in every case result in impiety. In the classical world, such assertions might literally be graven in stone:

EXCERPTS FROM THE TWELVE TABLES: TABLE IV

(Rome, 451-49 B.C.)⁴⁴

1. "A notably deformed child shall be killed immediately."
- 2a. "To a father . . . shall be given over a son the power of life and death."

In Cicero's day, Roman schoolchildren were set to memorizing the Twelve Tables.

Plato, then, was not reasoning in some abhorrent moral vacuum—a fact that increases our obligation to consider his proposals fairly. —Well, what can be said? —I respect his end—the consecration of ties of social obligation⁴⁵—while rejecting his means, which fetters the self unjustly.

THIRD MURDER: In a photograph, we see the naked corpse of a four-year-old girl whose legs kink outwards to the knee and then in again, forming a diamond shape like a frog's. Legs and arms resemble bird-bones. The face has been turned sideways on the coroner's sheet; or maybe she died that way. The eyes are closed, the mouth slightly open. She weighed fourteen pounds at death. "Fatal starvation at this age is rare," notes the forensic pathologist, "and can be explained only by a combination of failure to feed the child at home and forcibly restraining her to get food *outside her home* from neighbors."⁴⁶ If there be such a phenomenon as social impiety, the parents committed it; and had this child been lucky enough to be succored by a brother or sister old enough to resist them, by violence if need be, I fail to see the wrongness of any such action. Was her case simply unimaginable to Plato? —Not at all. —Because for him not all selves are *a priori* equally worthy, unless proven otherwise by their deeds, he sees infanticide quite differently than we do:

The offspring of the good, I suppose, they will take to the pen or crèche . . . but the offspring of the inferior, and any of those of the other sort who are born defective, they will properly dispose of in secret, so that no one will know what has become of them.

That is the condition, he said, of preserving the purity of the guardians' breed.⁴⁷

We would condemn the slow murder of that four-year-old girl not only because it was cruel, but because it was infanticide. Presumably Plato would also condemn its cruelty; he might then go on to condemn it (depending on the class of her parents) for being infanticide *for no good reason*.

If we overlook the radical divide between Plato and ourselves regarding what percentage of the population ought to be ethically enfranchised (for Plato, only a few; for us, all who have not transgressed against our relatively mild social contract), a serious difference still remains: for us, the enfranchised self may do whatever it likes, so long as it does not directly hurt the state, or another member of it;⁴⁸ for Plato, the self is, in addition, positively enjoined to do only what will benefit and improve the state. I am past the maximum age for sanctioned baby-making in the state, and I wish to form a liaison? The state allows it—but I must destroy any offspring without a fuss. If I refuse to give my child over to be strangled, I'll become guilty of treason—not against the huddle of my Jewish neighbors in our deep cellar already filled with smoke from German flamethrowers, but against some infinitely broader conception of collectivity: the abstraction of my republic, to which I am obligated to present only perfect offspring (perfection's precondition, a youthful parent, having been legally codified). —Do you feel for the bereaved? Plato feels for the state.⁴⁹

SELF-SOVEREIGNTY AND CHOICE

My argument against Plato so far has been one of restless self-assertion: I declare that I am sovereign over myself because I want to be; I refuse to be otherwise. There were times when I would rather die than be told I must do one thing and not the other. And if I feel so strongly about my own autonomy, how can I trample down the choices of others, except in the extreme cases (described in this book) when those cause unjustified suffering? It is, perhaps, the latent narcissism of my attitude which most deeply offends Hobbes when he runs shoutingly to Plato and Moltke's side:

I observe the Diseases of a Common-wealth, that proceed from the poyson of seditious doctrines; whereof one is, That every private man is judge of Good and Evill actions.⁵⁰

For this moral philosopher, we enter into an irrevocable covenant with authority in our beginnings (or else our ancestors have done it for us); having done so, we lose our right to determine what is just. This doctrine, so appealing to tyrants, leaves us with no means of evaluating the behavior of the Sovereign (be that a king or a state).⁵¹ Perhaps it is only because I was raised in easy circumstances (the United States of America; twentieth century; white; middle-class) that I have the luxury of rejecting Hobbes's position and deciding for myself, thus: *That every private man is judge of Good and Evill actions, not already and otherwise judged by the state which I have chosen by my citizenship to support.* But there is already a very simple justification for refusing to be bound by received philosophies: They do not agree.⁵²

More and more it seems to me that out of all the possible actions in the world, only a few are categorically evil. The majority we must permit others to perform if they wish, looking on in not unsympathetic silence. I propose, therefore, that a worthwhile ethical procedure for a citizen is:

1. To follow his own inner logic in order to postulate laws of conduct which seem to him good;
2. To follow those laws if they correspond to local norms, and reconsider them if they violate those norms; but
3. Above all, to choose the right regardless of local authority or custom, and then act accordingly.⁵³

This comes close to Trotsky's definition of revolutionary superiority (which is also a good *modus operandi* for journalists): "a complete and ingrained independence of official public opinion at all times and under all circumstances."⁵⁴ Joan of Arc had that, too. She could say: "I would rather die than do what I know to be sin."⁵⁵ She did die for her opinions, and so did Trotsky.

THE MACHIAVELLIAN CAVEAT

My position is based on the optimistic postulate that the self, if left to its own devices, will usually choose the good. And Plato from his crystalline heights of elitism agrees—only, he adds that what we *think* to be the good (such as present pleasure) may not be so. Hence, crime and evil are the result of misapprehension. —What about that starved four-year-old child, whose corpse resembled that of a little quail or sparrow? —Well, her mother evidently mistook sadism or convenience for the Good, that's all—it happens all the time!... Machiavelli insists that precisely because it happens all the time, the self cannot simultaneously protect its interests and be good, for (call this the Machiavellian Caveat):

how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live, that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done, sooner effects his ruin than his preservation; for a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil.³⁶

In other words, never turn the other cheek or they'll take your head off: the ascription of any significant amount of moral sovereignty to the self becomes as poisonous a gift as the tortured mother's ostensible freedom to save her child. Machiavelli was himself tortured when his city lay under the rule of the Medici. He confessed to no spurious treason, but, like a certain friend of mine who was also tortured, his release failed to prevent him from turning bitter. Unlike Plato, Machiavelli never seeks in his writings to tell us how to live, only how to achieve. (The tortured mother, too, whether she betrayed her child or her comrades, must have felt that "how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live.") Bird-faced, with a tight, narrow mouth, he sought to save his city by pragmatic means against powerful, ruthless enemies. Plato began with what ought to be, but never told us how to get there; Machiavelli begins and almost always remains with what is; although in certain lines of his infamous essay *The Prince* one senses a wistful craving to dwell amidst the luxuries of goodness. Like Lenin, however, he had to be a pragmatist, a military politician in wartime, a cautious preparer and insurer in peacetime; and, like the Marquis de Sade, he received a destiny of disappointment and disenfranchisement, and accordingly hammered out aphorisms of monstrous anger. If the Machiavellian Caveat is true, then authoritarian coercion—or any kind of violence—becomes just another natural law, like gravity—nothing to rail at, no matter how one may be feeling deep in his scarred heart. By all means, treasure your noble end, but keep it secret. Just means to that end you'll often find irrelevant; certainly others won't use them on you! By the Machiavellian Caveat,



Machiavelli

Bukharin should have conducted himself more obsequiously at his trial; he might have lived (although we know he wouldn't); his wife and child could have fared better, and—who knows?—such cunning might have rewarded him with a new opportunity to strike for his political aims. (And the mother who starved her four-year-old to death? We have no reason to think that Machiavelli was ever writing any advice to her. He wouldn't have instructed her to hide the body. She would have figured in his thinking only as an illustration of the weary, selfish, foolish wickedness of humankind.)

By contrast, remember that crucial axiom in Gandhi's moral calculus: "One must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results." (We don't know whether Plato would have agreed, or simply sidestepped the entire issue of praxis.) We already know that practically speaking the application of Gandhian satyagraha is quite limited. This in no way discredits satyagraha as an ethical choice. Gandhi's reply to Machiavelli, then, would be that there is nothing wrong—and a great deal right—about being destroyed by one's evil fellow beings, that voluntary self-sacrifice⁵⁷ will benefit the self morally; and, if sufficient fortitude, intelligence, compassion and integrity are marshaled, then many other selves may be improved both materially and morally. —Which view is correct, then? —Why, both Gandhi's and Machiavelli's—but not to the same person at the same time. —Returning to the example of the mother forced to watch her child being tortured, we can fault her neither for following Machiavelli by making lying declarations to the torturer, in order to save both her child and her comrades, nor for being a Gandhian and prayerfully offering herself for torture, too. What is her end? If it is purity, or martyrdom, then the means is obvious. If it is the preservation of the one she loves above all—a goal which, like self-preservation, is not at all ignoble; indeed, it's at least minimally righteous—then the means of Machiavelli looms. As long as the danger to her child (or her Party) stands imminent, she has kept within bounds. It is when violent deeds become proactive or wanton that the limits of the rights of the self are reached.⁵⁸

THE IK, OR UNSYSTEMATIZED INJUSTICE

Behold such a case: The anthropologist Colin Turnbull spent two years—unhappy ones, by the sound of them—among a tribe called the Ik, who lived (I use the past tense, for I am not sure whether they still exist) in the mountains where Kenya and Uganda meet the Sudan. The government considered his report on them "extreme," and I must concur, for in one of the concluding chapters he writes, "I am hopeful that their isolation will remain as complete as in the past, until they die out completely."⁵⁹ Rather strong words for an objective social scientist! But Turnbull insists:

The surface looked bad enough, the hunger could be seen and the trickery perceived, and the political games were well enough known, but one had to live among the Ik

and see them day in and day out and watch them defecating on each other's doorsteps, and taking food out of each other's mouths, and vomiting so as to finish what belonged to the starving, to begin to know what had happened to them.⁶⁰

Which is the state of nature—precolonial Tahiti, whose naked easy grace gave Rousseau his stereotype of the noble savage, or the land of the Ik? Or could it be both? Do these antipodes represent merely the old dichotomy of heaven and earth, theory and practice, Plato and Machiavelli? Unless we can employ some minimal degree of precision in discussing people's actual capacity for good, it will scarcely be practical to draw up any moral calculus. We'll therefore want to give at least passing attention to the state of nature and the social contract. To Hobbes, the state of nature equals the state of war; and such comprised the state of the Ik. During his sojourn in their steep, dry land,⁶¹ Turnbull met a people who, having lost both love and conscience, existed only as social atoms. Shocked, repulsed, beleaguered, at first he did what little he could to help the weakest victims of malice and indifference. His efforts inevitably proved futile, and the Ik got a good laugh, for they scrupulously obeyed the Machiavellian Caveat in almost everything. Husbands stole from wives, and vice versa. Mothers laughed when their babies crawled into hearth-flames. They more or less discarded their children when the latter became three years old—high time by then to make their own way, or die. (By comparison, the American parents who starved their daughter to death seem almost merciful; she was four; she got an extra year.)

FOURTH MURDER: Perhaps the saddest tale Turnbull tells is of a weak little girl named Adupa, whom other children loved to torment by literally snatching the food from her mouth. Weakened by hunger, she dared to return to her parents' house, but they owned neither the ability nor the inclination to feed her, so they walled her up until she starved to death, then dumped her rotten carcass.⁶²

What can we say, aside from exclaiming in horror, or, like Machiavelli, half-cynically theorizing and describing in order to get distance, or once again attacking Plato's absurd laws of self-defense, or indulging in the game of searching for a cause—as if any cause could justify such cruelty?⁶³—First of all, Adupa's death reminds us once more, like Bukharin's trial and the tortured mother's nightmarish, half-involuntary voyeurism, that while every self, such as Adupa, has the right to live—in other words, the child would not have been immoral had she gained her subsistence by whatever means necessary—one has no guarantee that the exercise of a right will be successful or uncontested. In short, the word "right" is but an exemplary fiction. —Secondly, while Adupa's story might seem to prove the Hobbesian thesis that any social contract, even the most despotic, is better than this state of "natural right," later on in this book we'll meet an eerie parallel, to it but of the most anti-Hobbesian nature: namely, Stalin's collectivization of the Ukraine, which starved millions. Parents ate their children, and children were trained to spy on

their parents from watchtowers in the cornfields, the picking of a single ear of corn being punishable by imprisonment or worse.⁶⁴ (Did this constitute a social contract? —By Stalin's, Hobbes's and almost everybody else's definition, yes. By the same gap in logic which always takes my breath away, law and government of any kind—even if the dispossessed are self-professedly conspiring to overthrow it—implies consent!) Nature and despotism, anarchy and absolutism, are thus capable of accomplishing the same evil result. Gazing into these twin abysses, who wouldn't second Plato's plea for civic temperance? For me to exercise my four justified choices of the self as I see fit, and for you, Bukharin and my other neighbors simultaneously to employ theirs, we must have a just social contract.

HUDDLING AGAINST MONSTERS

Very well. Enact the contract. Well, then, what is our taste? What is the highest political good? What is a good government?

Let us imagine our collective beginnings as Locke, Hobbes and even Gibbon⁶⁵ did: scared, murderous brutes hunching somewhere out of the rain, afraid of the brutes across the river, afraid most of all of one another. Probably history never began that way,⁶⁶ probably we dwelled already in ape-bands before we were men, but let it be. What does their fear teach them? I suppose they've lived hiding from the archetypally monstrous bandits in the legend of Theseus, the untrammelled ones who wrenched their victims' limbs apart by tying them to upswinging pine-tops, or kicked them over cliffs as they were washing their murderers' feet, or cut them to fit spiked bedsteads. "That age produced a sort of men in force of hand ... excelling the ordinary rate," says Plutarch, "making use, however, of these gifts of nature to no good or profitable purpose for mankind," since justice "in no way concerned those who were strong enough to win for themselves."⁶⁷ (Machiavelli knows about that; he remembers how Florence's conquerors endungeoned him and racked him.) Well, do we have a quorum? Not everyone is here, but I suppose that not everyone will be coming. Some prefer to rob and rape; others merely want to be Ik; a few, too weak and terrorized to come above ground, continue on in the safe course of dying alone. But most of us are here. Among today's delegates I even see some who yesterday were bandits. They've realized that when they get old, other bandits will get them. I see also the bandits' neighbors, weary of tolerating rapes.⁶⁸ I see many a lonely, gregarious human being, hoping to get a friend or a spouse.⁶⁹ I see the holders of credos, each with his own message: to the medieval Christians, for instance, the state of nature is a state of wounded imperfection; only by gathering together in communities of doctrinal purity may they hope to stop being or serving Plutarch's bandits. I see sly fence-jumpers and crowd-followers, to say nothing of slyer crowd-pleasers, hoping to legalize their banditry: I see the ancient Athenian

tyrant, Peristratus, who will wound himself and claim that enemies did it; the people grant him a bodyguard of club-bearers, which seizes the Acropolis.⁷⁰ Against his son the procedure of formal ostracism will be invented.⁷¹ Here gather the right-wing and left-wing murderers of present-day Colombia.⁷² I see Stalin, who figures prominently in this book; he's going to order that his rival, Kirov, be secretly murdered; then he'll blame "wreckers" for it and set the most murderous species of martial law to work. Moltke is there, ready to secure the enemy side of the river for us, provided that we render him due obedience during the course of the campaign. His aphorism: "Our diplomats plunge us forever into misfortune; our generals always save us."⁷³ Machiavelli longs to ford the river beside him. I see the apathetic, the mercurial, the evil and the weak; maybe there are some good people, too—isn't everyone good by his own lights? I see Lincoln, who will try sincerely to keep all his promises, even if he shouldn't have made them. Gandhi's telling everyone that society ought to be organized on the basis of love, not fear; were I a Gandhian, this allegory would be very different. I see Robespierre, whose credo of a utopian state of nature, catalyzed by violence, will contribute to "bring about the grosser disappointments of which the first French Revolution was fertile."⁷⁴ I see Julius Caesar, who, more ambitiously urgent than Moltke or Machiavelli, raging at being shut out of supremacy, will try to win favor by conquering the people across the river, and then, that purpose accomplished, cross back again, his army now directed at our capital. (Of his like, Robespierre speaks in a draft of a clause to the new French constitution: "Kings, aristocrats and tyrants, whoever they be, are slaves in rebellion against the sovereign of the earth, which is the human race, and against the legislator of the universe which is nature.")⁷⁵ Most of all I see families. Homer says: "They dwell in hollow caves on the crests of the high hills, and each one utters the law to his children and his wives, and they reckon not of one another."⁷⁶ Plato says that each such clan comprises "one flock, like so many birds," and that each flock is "under patriarchal control, the most justifiable of all types of royalty."⁷⁷ Robespierre's "sovereign of the earth" is unknown to them, and no threat to them—yet. In their private hollows, one must assume, must have come to some necessary accommodation with authority, personified in the father or the elder brother;⁷⁸ now they must widen it, to block the bandits out. Leaders, followers, and in-betweeners, there they squat, about to join together now—fearing, hating, coveting and lusting—and hoping. Lincoln hopes; so do Gandhi and Trotsky; even Stalin hopes—if only for himself. Whether fear or hope saved them, in either case, what they've learned is this presupposition of the Golden Rule: Just as each is, so others are. We all bleed; we all avoid pain. "Respect for man is the supreme law of Humanity," says Bakunin;⁷⁹ that maxim follows, indeed, from the acknowledgment of otherness, but it has not been voted on yet, much less ratified. Still, these people have set out toward it; maybe they will get there someday. That is why although their hands twitch and sometimes clench when they gaze upon the objects of their ugly passions, they close upon

air, since by agreement spears were left outside the commons. That was the first step. They do not yet concern themselves with inheritance, river-traffic and the care of orphans. They understand only this much: *Since I myself cannot dominate all, nor can anyone else, better for me to be a part of that all, so that no one can dominate me.* Robespierre means just this when he so earnestly insists that "the interest of the weak is justice. It is for them that humane and impartial laws are a necessary safeguard."⁸⁰ The dictum is nonetheless true, for all that Robespierre himself forgot it. We can all be numbered among the weak. Indeed, we have our interest. This is government. This is pragmatic humankind. Time to forge the allegiance condition—and, if possible, to consecrate it, which is why the Swiss constitution begins: "In the Name of All-Powerful God!"⁸¹

The latecomers have finished creeping out of the bushes now, having hidden their treasures in cavelike canyons thickly ferned and glistening with snakes and newts where others can't see; they pretend to possess nothing more than what they show to one another on this open field of trust, kin greeting new kin with hand-clasps and shy smiles, women sharing food, children playing together. They're afraid. Rousseau tries to reassure them by saying: "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the General Will; and in return we receive every member as an individual part of the whole."⁸² They don't quite believe him, because behind him walks Robespierre, insisting that he embodies the General Will and knows who the traitors are. They fear that the General Will may impose sudden taxes, confiscating their most precious things, prowling ever in those canyons until it's found every last cache. Spreading their hands wide, gazing into everyone's eyes, they swear most solemnly that they have nothing. The General Will gesticulates ingratiatingly and swears with equal mendacity that that isn't a problem. Plato insists that "a society in which neither riches nor poverty is a member," by which he means the Flood's surviving remnant, or a group living essentially in the state we now imagine, "regularly produces sterling characters, as it has no place for violence and wrong, nor yet for rivalry and envy."⁸³

That was the beginning, their pact to be one family. Gandhi prayed and fasted to keep it so. He failed; mass lovingkindness perishes; but maybe violence, wrong, rivalry and envy can be sublimated into emulation. Hence this Spartan definition of the best government: "The one in which the largest number of citizens are willing to compete with each other in excellence and without civil discord."⁸⁴ But a child stole another child's pretty rock, as he would have done before people came together. A woman liked somebody's else's husband. I ask you, Plato: Who is too rich or too poor for that to happen? And you, Spartans: Tell me how she can leave one man for another without civil discord? —A family feared, hence hated, another family's God. A man kept pretty cattle, and he knew that other men wanted him to die so that they could get them. Meanwhile, Julius Caesar's bodyguard was growing ominously large. It was time for government. Unfortunately, it is always time for government.

ON THE PAROCHIALISM OF CONSTITUTIONS

That being so, what kind of government would I choose? "The good is what pleases the good," runs patrician Cicero's convenient tautology, which means simply: My tastes define good; my power imposes it. Not being one of the good, I reject this. — Dismayed by that contest between two anti-statesmen the Roman Civil War, he tried again: "The ideal statesman will *aim at happiness* for the citizens of the state to give them material security, copious wealth, wide-reaching distinction and unvarnished honour."⁸⁵ A not unappealing presentation, even if liberty remains distinctly absent, and the sources and distribution channels for Cicero's subsidiary goods are not spelled out. (Security, wealth, distinction and honor! Presumably, they derive from military force, employed as needed against unfortunate non-citizens.) Aiming at collective happiness I like. For it cannot be the task of a government to make its people happy, that being impossible⁸⁶—how could it make the Marquis de Sade happy, save by making his prostitute-victims unhappy? Furthermore, were such a task practical, I'd prefer to unhappily remain myself, rather than becoming a happy addict of whatever opiates of the masses my Viceroy has selected. We may, however, legitimately ask our government to provide us with the preconditions without which happiness would be difficult. President Lincoln put the case with brilliant succinctness:

The legitimate object of government, is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, at all, or can not, so well do, for themselves—in their separate, and individual capacities.

In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere.⁸⁷

Hence, for instance, no harmfully arbitrary restrictions on a child's right to self-defense against infanticide. (No matter that the slaveholding states believed that they could do as well for themselves, and that Lincoln should not have interfered! Lincoln dealt a near-mortal blow to states' rights in the USA⁸⁸ —In this book we shall be examining both doctrines and actions: rarely are they consistent.) No gratuitous curtailment of the sovereign self's four violent rights: self-defense, other-defense, self-destruction and euthanasia.

The foremost good which a government can offer along Lincoln's lines is security from physical harm—a self-evident prerequisite for most freedom,⁸⁹ although we saw how Bukharin's fettered doom but brightened his magnificence. What is security? What is harm? As government grows, its definitions of both of these multiply. The ancient Athenians had their constitutionally appointed magistrates who made sure that *heterae* didn't overcharge for extramarital delights and that dung-collectors dumped their loads more than ten stadia from the city wall⁹⁰—equally worthy precautions, to be sure. My own authorities have passed a law likewise intended for my

good, requiring that I wear a seatbelt whenever I ride in the front seat of an automobile—a fact once seized upon by a certain militant, pistol-packing Serb in Beograd during the Yugoslavian Civil War, who chuckled that it proved my unfreedom. He was right, if irrelevantly so.

To the extent compatible with security, whose actual or supposed exigencies will doubtless be resented, a good government must guarantee whatever freedoms remain. Which ones will those be? —As usual, no one agrees; it depends as much on accident as on local norms. One classicist, for instance, the estimable Vernant (who in the healthily Machiavellian fashion of most scholars expresses detached interest rather than disillusionment), wrote that the ideal of authority in a “gardener” society such as ancient China’s was informed by analogy with nature to create a series of laws and precepts requiring little civic intervention, laws and directives coming down from heaven like rain; while a “herdsman” society such as ancient Greece’s embodied guidance, direction, coercion.⁹¹ And what was Vernant’s own ideal? No matter: government’s expression is arbitrary.

Presented in this way, government does not sound especially attractive. It is not. How could it be, when it led to the Napoleonic Wars, the tyranny of Nero, the Ukrainian famine? But without it, we have the famine of the Ik.

FROM THE FIRST EMBRACE TO THE FIRST LAWS

Our first assembly draws to an end. Soon we must hunt again, sleep again. Some of us live far from here; we may not come back. What shall we do? Why, *enact* the peace⁹²—for, as Robespierre insisted, one fine safeguard against both tyranny-famine and anarchy-famine is a just code of laws. (He himself, anxiously rushing to establish perpetual justice, developed a habit of altering laws, and so became a tyrant.) While law may be arbitrary, no law *must be* still more so. By all means, then, weave a common law.

BEYOND LAW LIES DARKNESS

The first advantage of the social contract, then, is security. The second is coordination.⁹³ The legitimate object of government is to do for me what I cannot as well do for myself. The object of my living will be to do for *you* what you cannot do so well for yourself—and likewise yours for me. I thus relinquish a measure not only of my self-sovereignty, but also of my self-sufficiency. Once I stop feeding myself, I will need you to feed me.

Some revolutionaries might say that a government ought to change people, to mold them into higher, better souls. There is, alas, little indication that a government can do this—indeed, the fates of Joan of Arc, Socrates, Trotsky and Christ are but a few examples of government’s great success in cherishing higher souls. But

there is no reason why we cannot aim for Bakunin's goal, namely "*to organize society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should, at birth, find (1) almost equal means for the development of his or her various faculties and (2) the full utilization of his or her work.*"⁹⁴ This is, in effect, the best combination of the state of nature and the state of society. The rights of the self balance the rights of the group; individuals are protected from the arbitrary forces which might prevent them from "developing their faculties," and their labor will not be wasted. Bakunin's first clause is quite in the spirit of Lincoln's formulation, if possibly more proactive; the second is more utopian.⁹⁵ I endorse the ideal most enthusiastically. But how will it happen? Who will plan it out and then persuade us or else force it through? In the weary words of a concentration camp survivor:

Anne Frank wrote that in spite of everything she never lost her faith in fundamental human kindness. That's fine, but the question is: When will the human race be organized—and who will organize it?—so that kindness and not cruelty can be realized?

He has no answer to that, and neither do I. Therefore, I fear to go beyond Lincoln's definition. The best government is that which does only what I need done and can't do.

APPREHENSIONS, NOSTALGIAS, REGRETS

Some of us, already fearing the erosion of sovereign powers, press to retain arbitrariness each in his own image. They agree, perhaps, on my four sovereign rights: self-defense, defense of another, self-destruction, loving destruction of others—but it might well be that some cunning patriarchs prefer to reduce sovereignty only to the molecular level of the family, not condescending all the way to the lonely atoms that comprise it: Doesn't the father have the inalienable right to slay his children? *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife... Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.*⁹⁷—Abraham did what he did unwillingly, in the service of an arbitrary God; and what if that arbitrariness hadn't provided for a happy ending? If God hadn't revoked Himself, Isaac would have been slain after all; Plato and the Twelve Tablets of Rome wouldn't have exclaimed against that. Or what if we decide, as Hitler did, that we're all good comrades, to be sure, but Jews aren't human? No one can be trusted completely; therefore, no matter how much law we have, it's never enough. Thus for the sake of a common peace, the spearman proposes to ban arrows at the next gathering, while the archer moves to prohibit spears. The weaponless ones, who bear mere knives, see the evil of both courses. Who can please all of them? Certain families, hating the new laws, go away, like that anonymous forerunner of the French revolutionists, who in an essay both secret and posthumous (for, the law

grown now tall and swift, he fears he could never run fast and far enough) denounces the king's arbitrary punishments, and crosses out his signature on the social contract by insisting that *a man can never really judge another man*, "because there are not and never can be any rights of jurisdiction over him."⁹⁸ King-lovers deny this, asserting with dreadful plausibility that "kings will be tyrants from policy when their subjects are rebels from principle."⁹⁹ They call for "the old Feudal and chivalrous spirit of *Faalty*,"¹⁰⁰ whose personalized love renders treason unnecessary, hence repression unthinkable. But kings get assassinated just the same, and oppress their subjects just the same! One lesson of Julius Caesar's rule is that the utmost loving clemency will not chivalrize treason away!¹⁰¹ And authority's eternal slaughter of the innocent is as certain as the rising and setting of the sun. —No rights of jurisdiction, then! None! Don't give an inch! Defend the state of nature! But if this is truly so, then we had better all rush back to our burrows in the bushes; because those words are the maxim not only of anarchists, rioters, saints and noble hermits, but also of those bandits we met before, colleagues of Procrustes with his terrible spiked bedstead.

Law itself must necessarily be Procrustian. That is why Hitler hates it. At the end of 1927, extolling the "law of arbitrariness," he tells his Party comrades that "life must not be bogged down in ink; organic evolution must not be rendered impossible."¹⁰² That miscellaneous freedoms must be subordinate, at a minimum, to public and private safety is shown by the fact that few would consider it reasonable to allow the sovereign self to send bombs through the mail in order to murder people. The Unabomber disagrees, writing in his sensational and anonymous manifesto this paen to the state of nature: "in order to avoid serious psychological problems, a human being needs goals whose attainment requires effort, and he must have a reasonable rate of success in attaining these goals."¹⁰³ I believe him to be correct, up to a point. The social contract's main justification, however, is that in the state of nature, no success can be guaranteed. I quote from Patrick Breen's diary entry for March 26, 1847, which carries us back among the Ik:

Hungry times in camp, plenty hides but the folks will not eat them we eat with a tolerable good appetite... Mrs. Murphy said here yesterday that [she] thought she would Commence on Milt. and eat him... The Donnors [Donners] told the California folks that they [would] commence to eat the dead people 4 days ago, if they did not succeed that day or next in finding their cattle then under ten or twelve feet of snow.¹⁰⁴

That winter, Patrick Breen, Mrs. Murphy and the Donners had learned that some people interpreted the self's right to defense against hunger as justifying murder-cannibalism. The weak lay starving at the unstable mercies of the strong.

CODIFICATION

So they make laws, to measure and limit their violence: "Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, . . . then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee."¹⁰⁵ At first, common law is simple custom. Law multiplies, develops teeth and claws; then the magistrates write it down. In the old Icelandic records we read that at the commencement of one twelfth-century lawspeaker's tenure, "a new law was passed that the laws should be written out in a book at Halfithi Masson's farm during the following winter. . . . They were to put into the laws all the new provisions that seemed to them better than the old laws."¹⁰⁶ Now custom has been reified on vellum, as in the temples of classical Greece it was carven into wood, and upon Mount Sinai during the exodus of the Israelites it was embodied in "tables of stone, written with the finger of God."¹⁰⁷ Millennia later, the West German government will employ in its argument against East German human rights violations the "usual sense" of "a rule of law adopted by the supreme body representative of the people and published in an official gazette which is accessible to the public."¹⁰⁸

This development can only be called progressive. We find a nineteenth-century scholar of jurisprudence praising the Twelve Tablets of Rome,¹⁰⁹ because even though they constituted "merely an enunciation in words of the existing customs of the Roman people," their formal codification now offered some degree of protection against abuses perpetrated by the elite.¹¹⁰ That is why the schoolchildren of Ciceronian times were set to memorizing them, a law undiffused among the people being no law, as is a law unenforced.

The reason that law-codes help safeguard the people from "abuses" is twofold: not only limitation, but consistency. Kant's argument for the death penalty, which concerns itself with fairness (and which is punctuated by bailiffs and under-sheriffs instead of commas) thus takes codification as its starting point:

In the last Scottish rebellion there were various participators in it—such as Balmerino and others—who believed that in taking part in the rebellion they were only discharging their duty to the house of Stuart; but there were also others who were animated only by private motives and interests. Now, suppose that the judgement of the supreme court regarding them had been this: that every man should have the liberty to choose between the punishment of death or penal servitude for life. In view of such an alternative, I say that the man of honour would choose death, and the knave would choose servitude. . . . The former is, without gainsaying, less guilty than the other; and they can only be proportionately punished by death being inflicted equally upon them both; yet to the one it is a mild punishment when his nobler temperament is taken into account, whereas it is a hard punishment to the other in view of his baser temperament. But, on the other hand, were

they all equally condemned to penal servitude for life, the honourable man would be too severely punished, while the other, on account of his baseness of nature, would be too mildly punished. . . the best equalizer of punishment and crime in the form of public justice is death.¹¹¹

For Kant, as for so many others, the victim of a crime is the social balance itself—a not unreasonable position as far as it goes (especially in reference to the subject of deliberate terror, whose ongoing victims are not the people it kills—corpses cannot be terrified anymore—but the ones who learn of their repression). The allegiance condition is inescapable for this philosopher. Kant's prescription to restore the symmetry upset by the crime is "an eye for an eye." This is logical and elegant, if perhaps deficient in charity.¹¹²

"Where the law is overruled or obsolete, I see destruction hanging over the community; where it is sovereign over the authorities and they its humble servants, I discern the presence of salvation." —Thus Plato.¹¹³ Centuries later, as the Roman empire began to decay, the laws became dead letters easily erased by expediency, and failing civic bonds began to resemble the Hobbesian state of nature—or Robespierre's Paris. Here is how Procopius describes sixth-century Constantinople:

And in no law or contract was there left any effective power resting on the security of the existing order, but everything was turned to a reign of increasing violence and confusion, and the Government resembled a tyranny, yet not a tyranny that had become established, but one rather that was changing every day and constantly beginning again. And the decisions of the magistrates seemed like those of terrified men whose minds were enslaved through fear of a single man.¹¹⁴

The Twelve Tables, and the myriad statutes which flowed from and superseded them, had least marked for the Romans a point of reference: they *were* the social contract. Herein consisted our duties to each other, and our rights against each other. Moreover, into one of the tablets was explicitly carved the rule that *all penalties could be appealed*.¹¹⁵ Law need not be merciless.

WHY PLATO WAS RIGHT

Those who chafe at law, longing like Rousseau for the state of nature, need not be so miserable: The state of nature, like Tolstoy's kingdom of heaven, still lies within us. Procrustes and his fellow bandits live among us, craving to subdue and to hurt. What restrains them? —Law. —I remember Operation Welcome Home, that worthily patriotic successor to Operation Desert Storm, which was our first war against Iraq. No need to make the point that our victory over that country partook not of the moral code of sovereign peers, but of authority's obfuscations: Americans

didn't even know where Iraq was or why we were fighting, and they didn't care because the war was easy. The social contract created that war, and the festival of self-congratulation which I was now seeing on that afternoon in Manhattan. Procrustes wore a uniform; he'd been himself Procrusteanized. Never mind. I will not describe the Patriot missiles in their chariots that made the streets rumble; let me begin instead with the first people I saw when I emerged from the subway hole: three lean young men, striding through the crowd in black T-shirts that said FUCK IRAQ. At an intersection, surrounded by police barricades, half a dozen protesters had come to offer themselves in defense of honor, class and creed, and I cannot say I liked them at first, because they were led in their chant by a man who raised and lowered his arms like a conductor, beating time to make them cry: "What's to *celebrate*? Two *hun*-dred *thou*-sand dead!" because I have always distrusted tricky vanguardist organizers and slogancers, even though in this essay I am trying to be one. —"At least it's not *us* dead," a bystander said. An earnest lady among the protesters burned to reply, but one of the men in black T-shirts yelled: "Aw, shut up!" The street was covered with beer bottles and rainbow disks of confetti because our soldiers had come home with (as the bystander had truly pointed out) hardly any of *them* dead, so it had been a victory. But the social contract of this time and place allowed for a moderate amount of disagreement. Armed with signs, the protesters therefore raised a plastic machine gun on a pole. They lifted a skeleton to their shoulders with the sign NO MONEY FOR DEATH. But the men in black T-shirts had now been joined by dozens wearing Operation Desert Storm T-shirts who began to shout: "USA! USA! USA! USA!" and women of the leggy cheerleader type sipped beers and Cokes and waved flags with their men, crying passionately: "USA! USA! USA! USA!" and then the crowd started pounding things rhythmically against the pavement and there were so many of them that I could scarcely see the protesters anymore. Now Procrustes had begun to feel his old urge to torture the weak. How many protesters were there? Hardly a handful. The crowd was shouting at them: "Scumbags! Scumbags! Scumbags! Scumbags!" and some children, waving flags with their parents, giggled, "Blow 'em away!"

I remember the girl who in self-defense of bloodline rushed up to the police barricades, slammed her hands onto her hips, threw her head back and yelled: "Don't tell me you're protesting! Just go home!" I suppose she'd been worried about her father, brother or boyfriend over in the Gulf. The protesters had refused to respect his peril.

The mob swarmed closer, yelling: "USA! USA! USA! USA! *Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!*" I saw one of the protesters, a grey-haired woman, begin once again most wearily to resurrect her skeleton, and the lines of resignation and perhaps of fear deepened on her forehead. (I would have been afraid, had I been she.) "USA! USA! USA! USA!" the thugs shouted, shooting fists at her, snapping flags in a whirlwind, not quite reaching her with the poles. A fat man in business suit smiled and clapped.

Now the crowd began shouting in two cadences like an auto horn: "*Assholes! Assholes! Assholes!*" through which police whistles sounded faintly. The state of nature was breaking out. My fellow citizens swarmed with flags and plastic bags; now again the stabbing fingers and righteously shaking flags illuminated their chant: "*USA! USA! USA! USA!*" A girl in a flag shirt waved a flag, smiling vaguely; the crowd seethed through the confetti. Two girls were screaming at the protesters in an almost slaving rage; one of them cried: "My grandfather's a pilot! What the fuck are you doing over here?" to a woman who had nothing to do with the protesters and had not said anything to anyone but who looked Middle Eastern; the two girls were so furious at her that they clapped hands over each other's mouths so that each could denounce her in more splendid isolation. Behind the barricades, a protester, tall, pale, liquid-eyed, tried to say something, but they shouted him down.

"This is what I call stupid," a lady said to me. "It's over. All those protesters want is commotion." She had a point, but who was causing the commotion?

"Open it up," a policeman boomed. "We have an injured person." —Behind the barricades, a greyhaired hippie held a sign high, unafraid, *IMPEACH WAR CRIMINALS*, and I agreed with the lady who said it was useless but I admired him even as the crowd began shouting: "*GO HOME! GO HOME! GO HOME! GO HOME!*" and someone smashed a bottle on the sidewalk. Young men, crewcut, tattooed, stripped to the waist, were shoving at the barricades when an old black soldier became my hero by saying to them: "I fought, too. I'm a Vietnam vet. I fought for them that has a right to speak! I don't give a fuck what they think, they got a right to say it! And those police, they just stood there and watched them throw that bottle. That's how come that man was hurt. He was just tryin' to speak. He just wanted to speak, that's all."¹⁶

I wish I could say that the crowd desisted from its threats, but by then there was a new chant underway to mock the protesters: "*MORE BLOOD FOR OIL! MORE BLOOD FOR OIL!*" and everyone was laughing toothily and three men in snow-white uniforms slipped by, aloof, and they were yelling: "*USA! USA! USA! USA!*" and the way they yelled it was like an obscenity. Behind the police barricades, a protester woman tried to say something. "Fuck you, slut!" they shouted. The expressionless policemen in that tunnel of sound, standing between the protesters and the rest of the world, they were now enrolled among the ones I felt sorry for. It could not have been easy. They were law. They preserved the social contract against the mob. They prevented the riot.

I saw an old lady in the crowd who tried to rouse her brothers' and sisters' shame; at once the flag-wavers turned on her: —"Go home, lady! Shut up!" —She opened her mouth, and a boy hit her over the head with his flag: "You're on the wrong side, you slime!" She had a flag, too; she started to raise it; the other flags clashed upon it, and it was lost... On the corner, two men in suits and ties watched, and one said to the other: "Lookit that queer over there! Someone oughtta smash his

face!" —Flags snapped in the wind of toothy smiles. The victors were having fun. Rather than being outraged by the protesters, they seemed happy that they were there, to give them something to hate. (That might have been the secondary cause of riotlessness.) The bold ones rushed against the barricades again, and the police warned them mildly. White-faced but resolute, the protesters now set fire to their effigy in what had clearly been intended to be the climax of their ceremony, then inconspicuously departed. I heard them say: "Let's stick together..."

The police put out the fire and everyone cheered. The barricades went down. The crowd rushed in. They grabbed the plastic machine gun and raised it aloft, shouting: "We won!" —The charred effigy lay, half choked by confetti, and some people stomped on it. A man shouted: "Yeah, they burned the bastards!" Thanks to law, and excluding one injured man, it had only been in fun. And the men in suits and ties chuckled to each other: "I wouldn't have missed this for the world!"¹¹⁷

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

I myself happen to agree with the old black soldier. No one can convince me of my obligation to perpetually obey a social contract to which I never explicitly consented. Authority is ever ingenious in coming up with legalistic definitions of voluntarism: When we first left our caves and huddled together against monsters, we unanimously agreed to chain ourselves together and throw away the key! And then, many epochs later, I was born into this situation, benefitted from it and by receiving benefit gave my consent even though I wasn't of an age to understand what consent meant. This logic is precisely what is denied in prosecutions of statutory rape. Never mind. Let's say I agree—for now. I'm resigned to my government's attack on Iraq in my name; I'm resigned because I can't do anything about it. But I will never give up my right to speak out against it. If I'm not allowed even that much, then I've not signed a social contract, I've become a moral slave. By all means, weave a common law; but that law must never rise above debate. To the rights of the self in extremis, its rights when directly confronted with violence, I assert, as many better people have done before me, that *the self retains the inalienable right to express itself as it chooses, on any topic that it chooses, the right to empathize with friend or foe (shall we call that treason?), to assent and to deny, to offend, to express its conscience and to express no conscience, to be offensive, vulgar, vicious and even evil in the object and manner of its expression, at any and all times, with the sole caveat that direct incitement to violence is action, not speech, and may be considered illegitimate to the extent that the violence it incites is illegitimate.*¹¹⁸ I say it again: If we don't grant the self this paltry right, then our social contract is nothing more than hypocritical or naked coercion. The logical consequences: We must allow hate speech and pornography, including violent pornography; we must allow dupes, thugs, pimps and traitors to have their say.

Freedom of speech will rarely be mentioned explicitly in *Rising Up and Rising*

Down, the two exceptions being in the chapters on defense of creed¹¹⁹ and defense of gender.¹²⁰ But it very obviously underlies this book.

INTERNATIONAL LAW

On the international plane, social contracts resemble those of the old Icelandic "Thing," for they possess, with occasional paltry United Nations exceptions, no overarching means of enforcement. But even so, no matter how deeply and widely rent by war they may be, they flow back into a sort of smoothness, like lake-water which dampens its ripples after swallowing up a stone. If you break the Geneva Convention, then I may break it, too, if I need to do so to restore you to obedience, after which I am bound by it again.¹²¹ Good *Realpolitikers* would accuse me of wishful thinking in this: here, for instance, is why Louis XIV, who, having complained to his ambassador of Spanish treachery, goes on most threateningly:

in all justice, my word should bind me no more than theirs did them, but with this difference in my favor, that they had been the first to fail in their obligations, for which they were to blame, while I on the other hand should be fully justified, both before God and in my own conscience, which would not reproach me on that score, should I do no more than follow the example set me by the Spaniards.¹²²

But sooner or later, relations between France and Spain must become normalized: after all, enmities elsewhere will sooner or later require it, if nothing else. This is why Louis's contemporary, the justly famed Dutch diplomat Grotius, insisted that war is the breaking of a contract, but not a full rupture of the social contract of duty and righteousness whose laws "are of perpetual validity and suited to all times."¹²³

BUREAUCRATIZATION

Plato equates law and justice. But the Machiavellian Caveat asserts that unjust men will make unjust laws. Sometimes just men do the same. And of course one's own time always remains stubbornly imperfect. Tacitus, who lived five hundred years before Procopius, was already disenchanted with Rome. He wrote that soon after the introduction of the Twelve Tables (on which he gazed back fondly), most legislative acts had already become "forcible creations of class-warfare, designed to grant unconstitutional powers, or banish other leading citizens, or fulfill some other deplorable purpose."¹²⁴ (The class war between the patrician citizens and the plebs might have been more worthy of his notice, but never mind.) How far away we've fallen from Plato's ideal! And yet we need not believe, as Tacitus does, that every evil or unfortunate enactment was conceived by the busy malice of men. After the legislators of the first social contract returned home to their caves, a new class of

enforcers remained in the open field, drafting and executing statutes concerning cattle-rustlers and husband-stealers. If you like, suppose, as Plato does, that they were the justest of citizens. Even so, to the very extent that they fulfilled their function, law lost its popular character. They became a clique, a class representing their own interests, which frequently won out, relations between governors and governed being inherently unequal. This why Bakunin and his ilk almost utterly reject authority,¹²⁵ crying: "Collective liberty and prosperity exist, only so far as they represent the sum of individual liberties and prosperities."¹²⁶

Doubtless the patriarchal despotism of society's constituent families has afforded many strongmen an ingenious justification for a social contract of compulsion; doubtless might makes right in some cases—but the law of entropy, expressed in human terms as fortune, might alone suffice to exalt some, lower others—to say nothing of the laws of sociology. Doubtless, too, many citizens want to break the law. If they didn't, what need for laws? Tocqueville demands to know: "If ... you do not succeed in connecting the notion of rights with that of personal interest, which is the only immutable point in the human heart, what means will you have of governing the world except by fear?"¹²⁷ Law needs fear. Law needs many grinning teeth. Who wants to eat the lawbreaker? Some folks are born to it.

We find the anarchist Murray Bookchin—the veriest foe of authority and hierarchy, hence our limiting case (unless we go to the extremist end of individualism's continuum, to state-of-nature Sade)—admitting that even during egalitarianism's heyday in Spain on the eve of the civil war there, "charismatic leaders at all levels of the organization came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner." "Bureaucratic" is the adjective which Trotsky and the Spartacists¹²⁸ used to describe what was wrong about Stalinism (and it was Stalin, of course, who sabotaged the anarchist loyalists whenever he could during the Spanish Civil War). Bookchin evidently uses it in the same ominous sense. He continues wryly: "Nor is the syndicalist structure itself immune to bureaucratic deformations. It was not very difficult for an elaborate network of committees," which urgent expedencies called into being, to by very subtle, seemingly inevitable, decent and logical steps, "assume all the features of a centralized organization and circumvent the wishes of the workers' assemblies at the base."¹²⁹ (Another parable: During the reign of the Aztec king Itzcoatl, the commoners fear those menacing neighbors, the Tepanecs. The Aztecs have scarcely begun their drive toward empire; the lower classes, always worst-armed in battle, calculate that a victory over the Tepanecs would hardly benefit them, while a defeat might decimate them. But King Itzcoatl wants his war. His version of the social contract approaches that of the Spartan king Archidamus, who tells us that "the man who wants to rule many men must fight many."¹³⁰ And Itzcoatl drives a bargain: Should the cause be lost, then the masses can slay the nobility and eat them. Should it be won, the masses must be drudges.¹³¹ Such seemingly voluntary origins of servitude easily bedazzle the believers with their mythicity, while exploitation continues.)

Is there a solution? Bookchin can advise only vigilance, and the avoidance of “violence, competitive daring, and mindless aggressiveness, not to speak of an equally mindless worship of activism and ‘strong characters.’”¹³² Once again, it sounds to me as if he is reacting against Stalinism, which, like ancient Sparta,¹³³ fostered a culture of “socialist emulation,” of extremism, of directed struggle, of cadres, shockworkers, militarism, compliance. And, to be sure, it also describes most revolutionary or even merely political organizations—indeed, most organizations.

Fortunately, the group’s degree of egalitarianism will be “intuitively determinable by the behavior patterns that develop between comrades.”¹³⁴ Why don’t I feel any wiser?

“The existence of justice is thus absolutely incompatible with arbitrary mandates and illegal imprisonment,” runs that anonymous eighteenth-century essay against *lettres de cachet*. “If one were to negate this principle, it would be necessary . . . to prove that all laws . . . are a useless nonsense of senseless, unreal words, that everything can and should be ordered by a despot’s will, on the ground that this method is most just, being most simple and rapid.”¹³⁵ This is exactly what Ivan Karamazov argues in Dostoyevsky’s most famous novel, and what the Marquis de Sade, endungedoned year after year, proves after his own fashion.¹³⁶ One of Sade’s bitterest maxims, which we find in the infamous *Juliette*, is that “it’s the multitude of laws that is responsible for this multitude of crimes.” Quite true—before law, crime was but chaos. The anonymous essay continues: “No one doubts that an arbitrary power which would be equitable and beneficent after its fashion, which could order all and move all by itself alone, would be the most convenient and salutary of governments, but God alone could exercise such powers.”¹³⁷ Certainly Sade’s mother-in-law could not (it was her word which imprisoned him); nor yet Robespierre when his authority dawned; nor the Thermidorians who guillotined him, nor Napoleon afterward—under all of whom Sade continued to be locked away . . .

REPRESSION

Government is now in force. My intuition of comradely behavior patterns didn’t save me from it. As all risers-up and risers-down will agree, *government is repression*. Hence Mao Zedong’s recital of the twin purposes of that oxymoron, a “people’s democratic dictatorship:”¹³⁸

- (a) to keep down and suppress the reactionaries, which is not so different from punishing rock-stealers and worshipers of the wrong god; and
- (b) to guard the collectivity against external aggression, which is no different at all from posting sentries to watch our enemies across the river.

These are the unpleasant details gently alluded to by Lincoln ("to do for a community whatever they need to have done, but can not do for themselves"). What we thus delegate to government, to lesser or greater degrees, is the power to shed blood, which implies the power to monitor and restrict. And so many victims have bled over the ages that horrified reformers, crusaders and revolutionaries frequently oppose to the one-sided myth of government's consensual origins the equally biased counter-myth of original despotism. Clarence Darrow, for instance, writes that "the beginnings of the state¹³⁹ can be traced back to the early history of the human race when the strongest savage seized the largest club and with this weapon enforced his rule upon the other members of the tribe."¹⁴⁰ The notion of Marx and Engels is similar: for them, those handshakes on the open plain of trust were but a trick played by the man with the most cattle—and spears—to subordinate the rest.¹⁴¹

That paradigm has certainly been followed on occasion. But to say that it has always been is to ruthlessly overgeneralize. In the ancient Korean kingdom of Puyo, for instance, a king might be executed if his subjects suffered a poor harvest—proof that divine right is sometimes accompanied by celestial accountability. The fact remains: government sheds the blood of the governed. This is what Cicero means when he writes these tortured words to Atticus: "I am conquered. For the rest I cannot bear to look at Caesar's doings. I never expected to see them, nor the man himself who robs me not only of my friends, but of myself."¹⁴²

DUE PROCESS FOR JOAN OF ARC

And so government has insidiously developed from the free association of equals to the despotism of Procrustes and his fellow bandits, who've now amalgamated themselves into an irresistible army offering to each trembling atom of self-sovereignty no terms other than unconditional surrender. (Montesquieu's summation: "As soon as man enters into a state of society he loses the sense of his weakness; equality ceases, and then commences the state of war.")¹⁴³ To the self remains only the quixotic powers of Bukharin in his extremity. We've returned to our starting point. Joan of Arc, far more eloquent, ardent and uncompromised than Bukharin, now finds herself before the bar. Her show trial will be as much a show trial—and certainly as much of a political necessity to authority—as any of Stalin's inventions. Innocent of the indictments preferred against her, she publicly signs a confession which she cannot read, and for which another confession will be substituted. The actual charge for which she will be burned to death—wearing a man's clothing—breaks no law. Magnificently, almost superhumanly defiant, the virgin (for she's not yet been molested by her guards) answers one of her interrogators thus:

On that which is asked of me, I will abide by the Church Militant provided it does not command anything impossible to do, and what I call impossible is that I should

revoke the deeds I have done and said and what I have declared concerning the visions and apparitions sent to me by God; I shall not revoke them for anything whatsoever.¹⁴⁴

This affirmation of the rights of the self her judges absolutely reject. They would reduce her to another lonely atom, which through intimidation and collaboration can be brought within their orbit, combined with other atoms and made into a stable, useful molecule. *She will not*. State authority stands the enemy of self-sovereignty, and we who meditate on her case must accept that the anarchist Bakunin's gloomy formulation, however hasty and overgeneralized, cannot (like the flames which will burn the Maid to death before an interested crowd; her last words will be anguished screams of "Jesus, Jesus!") forever be avoided:

It is evident that all the so-called general interests of society supposedly represented by the State, which in reality are only the general and permanent negation of the positive interests of the regions, communes, associations, and a vast number of individuals subordinated to the State, constitute an abstraction, a fiction, a falsehood, and that the State is like a vast slaughterhouse and an enormous cemetery, where under the shadow and the pretext of this abstraction all the best aspirations, all the living forces of a country, are sanctimoniously *immolated and interred*.¹⁴⁵

MY SERVANT, MY EXECUTIONER

No doubt Plato, Trotsky, and all authority's other moral mathematicians will require that throats be cut only with the best possible motives—that is, they'll shed the blood only of the ungovernable, who've been threatening their fellow governed or menacing the governors. And good motives grow still better. In the Book of Matthew we read that Christ said: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority among them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant."¹⁴⁶ After the French Revolution, many a mass leader presented himself as the people's servant: the chief executive was but the loyalest drudge and slave. (King Itzcoatl would never have said so.) Yes, here's the highest good of government—if government's conception of good deeds corresponds with mine. My slave taxes me for my own good. He protects my soul from bad books, sends my father to the guillotine for crimes against me of which I was unaware.¹⁴⁷

CHAPTER 4

WHERE DO MY RIGHTS BEGIN?

Your good and my good, perhaps they are different, and either forced good or forced evil will make a people cry with pain. Does the ore admire the flame which transforms it?

PRINCE FEISAL, 1917¹

HOW TO ERASE SIGNATURES

What can I do about it? —We heard Hobbes insisting that since my great-grandfather once agreed to form a commonwealth, I thereby agreed and will always agree to every new act of government; hence “no Law can be Unjust;”² but I cannot remember giving my consent to anything so sweeping, and if Hobbes did it, I beg him to bind only himself, not me, nor my comrades who are likewise discontented; like Ivan Karamazov, who found himself dissatisfied with an order of divine providence under which any child on this earth might be tortured, we must be able to announce that we reject our entrance ticket;³ like the pseudonymous commanders of an insurgent group in Mexico, we must be able to say whenever and to whomever we will: “Our objectives are for the people, *with the people, and against*

the government. We are ready for anything."⁴ By the Machiavellian Caveat, mostly we are not. "No government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people," says Gandhi, but he then adds the bitterly necessary qualification, "voluntary or forced."⁵ Force may partake of outright violence, craft or mutual obfuscation. Possessing all little power in their popular assemblies,⁶ the Roman plebians, for instance, knew not how to reject the whole ticket, although by means of riots an ill-omened corner of it might be torn away, and they could shout demands at gladiatorial shows. When were they the sovereign people, whose demands comprised sacred commands, and when were they but a mob? Well, of course, authority decided that...⁷

OSTRACISM, OUTLAWRY, EXPULSION

To the extent that the oppression of government is personalized (as was most power⁸ in classical times), we may choose, rather than tearing up the contract, to delete from it our oppressor's name. Replacing one Nazi with another accomplishes little for anti-Nazis; but Julius Caesar cannot be replaced. (Thus his assassins' moral calculus. They were correct. But, rather than replace him, his successor tyrants emulated him.) In ancient Athens, the enfranchised could expel a citizen from the social contract, send him back into the bushes and across the river for a period of ten years⁹—if and only if more than six thousand of the like-minded inscribed his name into a pottery shard.¹⁰ In almost every case, they applied ostracism to men suspected of tyrannical ambitions, which is to say men who wanted to take government into their own hands—not to say that tyranny had the invariably evil and ignoble connotation it does now,¹¹ for some Greek tyrants remitted debts in an effort to win over the masses; and the oligarchs who ruled in between tyrannies stood not much closer to mass democracy than did the anti-people's government of those Mexican insurgents who were "ready for anything"; practically speaking, the oligarchies approached a weak sort of tyranny; but every now and then there appeared some citizen who outshone the others: was he Lincoln, Gandhi, Caesar or Procrustes? One can almost see the archons tallying the broken pieces in that fenced and barricaded agora, the crowd waiting to see who would be exiled—and, of course, the schemers and demagogues passing out shards on which their proposed victim's name was already conveniently painted. We read: "Themistokles, son of Neokles, out with him!" "Of all the cursed leaders, this ostrakon says that Xanthippos the son of Arriphron does the most evil." "Kallixenos the traitor."¹² Was it fair? In the words of one ancient commentator, "Virtually all of the most accomplished men were ostracized: Aristeides, Kimon, Themistokles, Thoukydides, Alkibiades."¹³

LONELINESS

Fifteen centuries later, the Old Norse could impose at their law-assembly the sentence of greater or lesser outlawry upon a deviant, which stripped him of any right to protection in his homeland for a specified time,¹⁴ but it was up to aggrieved individuals, not any "government," to enforce that sentence with hatchet-edge were he caught creeping prematurely back from his exile. (In old Rome, we find Caesar's uncle Gaius Marius, himself bloody, outlawed by a bloody dictator, hiding in a darkened house, into which the magistrates send an assassin; Marius scares the man off; runs, pursued by horsemen; lurks near the sea, "covering himself up in leaves."¹⁵ This is now his life.) Hence one bitter verse runs: "The unwise man weens that all who laugh with him, like him, too; but then he finds, when to the Thing he comes, few spokesmen to speed his cause."¹⁶ He finds, in other words, that both the obligations and the benefits of being governed have been stripped from him. Furthermore, he finds himself consequently arrayed against an immeasurably more potent superorganism—his former companions, coordinated by government. He and government now stand on the same equal footing on which he once stood in relation to every other atom in those days when all lived separately among the bushes: *Anything that I want to do to you, I am free to do—if I can.* He retains his four rights of self-defense, other-defense, self-destruction and euthanasia; he's free to kill government—and government is free to kill him. Government being the stronger, that mutual freedom will in all likelihood prove not only useless to the fugitive, but lethal. To the sheep still in the fold he's now an alien predator, a wolf's-head (the Norse term for an outlaw). Who will feel for him? Not the Romans, who pitied only the free men who chose to fight as gladiators, not the criminals and prisoners of war who were forced to. "Not to be able to see the blood of a criminal being shed was moral weakness."¹⁷

THE OUTLAW OWNS NO CITIZENSHIP

Looking in upon the Roman Senate in 63 B.C., we find Cicero declaiming against the intriguer Catiline, who will prove but a mercurial pawn of blind fate, his uprising causeless, selfish, doomed. About Cicero himself, however, this book finds much more to say.¹⁸ For now, call him a rustic parvenu, whose brilliance and growing political experience can never make amends for his lack of pure blue blood. Now that he's been elevated by fortune, good works and pretty streams of words to the exalted position of consul, and accordingly grown as silly with vanity as he is desperate to use his one year's grant of power to polish his reputation, he wants quite simply to be great. All his life, I fear, he'll feel the need to prove himself—which at the moment he can best do by crushing Catiline—an ideal now more alluring than ever, for the following reason: just the other day, some of Catiline's henchmen

approached Cicero's gate in an attempt—less successful than cautious—to assassinate him. (Doubtless the grudge cuts both ways: Catiline had lost the consular election to Cicero.) The Catalinarians stand ready to murder other key citizens, set fire to Rome (there being no communications in the modern sense to be paralyzed) and then seize power—an unjust design, indeed a positively evil one. Cicero can thus throw upon himself the fine causes of defense of authority, defense of homeland and his own self-defense. So far, so good. I ask him this: Did Catiline commit a crime? So it seems. Then why not assess him the legal penalty, following all due process? The *Lex Sempronica* prohibits the slaying of Roman citizens except under special circumstances authorized by the Assembly. But Cicero, supported by most of the other anxious senators, asserts that “a man who is a public enemy cannot possibly be regarded as a citizen at all.”¹⁹

(Hobbes again: “All Punishments of Innocent subjects, be they great or little, are against the Law of Nature... But the Infliction of what evill soever, on an Innocent man, that is not a Subject, if it be for the benefit of the Common-wealth, and without violation of any former Covenant, is not breach of the Law of Nature. For all men that are not Subjects, are either Enemies, or else they have ceased from being so, by some precedent convenience.”²⁰ —Does it even matter, then, that Catiline isn't innocent?)

The Senate declares a state of emergency, gratifying Cicero by placing into his hands all the powers of martial law. Catiline has fled to Fiesole and launched his uprising at the head of ten thousand men; but in Rome, five of his lieutenants have been arrested. On this December day, the weather perhaps smoky and grey as it often is in that city in winter, the Senate meets (ironically, in Concordia's temple) to consider what to do. Around them stands a guard of knights. Julius Caesar in his customary unnerving mildness argues against the Ciceronian position, which has almost already prevailed. Give them life imprisonment, he says, not death. If you fear their resurgence, decree that sentence in full irreversibility. Now the Senate wavers, afraid to appear as tyrants, executioners, violators of the social contract: Caesar carries not just conviction (his kindness impresses even Cicero), but expediency. The sullen crowds outside might sympathize with the Catalinarians, hoping that a new regime will mean more free grain. But the half-brother of Caesar's mistress, Marcus Cato, who will be known all his life for marvelous, bitter, sometimes ludicrous inflexibility, denounces the Senate's cowardice, Caesar's suspect refusal to clean house. Insisting that tradition and firmness demand the deterrent penalty, he swings the vote back around to death. “Exemplary punishment...” writes Christian Meier, “was customary at times of internal emergency and always had the desired effect.”²¹ The Ciceronian view was thus never one of isolated extremism; we cannot fault him alone for now employing his martial powers to rush the five men directly to the strangler. In a sense, they've *had* due process. But why does Cicero do the deed so hastily? That same year, defending a murder case, he'd proclaimed: “The

person of every Roman citizen must remain inviolate."²² Prone to panic, impulsiveness and vacillation, he dares not to outwait the law-courts, for, being a lawyer himself, he knows that what triumphs there may not be justice but a superiority of money, friends and thugs. After two millennia the facts of the Catalinarian conspiracy have blurred; maybe Cicero was right, but pronouncements of outlawry cannot but be dangerous to order itself. *That social contract is unjust which can be unilaterally abrogated by the more powerful party.*

(Example of such an abrogation: a 1944 Nazi document begins its long, almost all-embracing definition of the excluded thus: "A community alien is ... anyone who by his personality and way of life, and in particular through unusual deficiencies in understanding and character, shows himself unable to satisfy the minimal demands of the racial community.")²³

This is why Plato makes a special point of forbidding outlawry for any reason,²⁴—When Jefferson drew up his "Bill for Proportioning Crimes and Punishments," he followed Plato in drawing upon the notion (now well embedded in common law) that the contract-breaker be accorded a specific penalty in keeping with the gravity of the offense. Thus for the acts of rape, polygamy and sodomy, at that time widely considered equally injurious both to society and to God, Jefferson proposed not death (as he did for the more serious crimes of treason and murder), but castration for the man and nose-piercing for the woman,²⁵ after which the felons would be "entitled to [their fellow citizens'] protection from all greater pain"²⁶—in other words, they would reenter the social commonwealth, being once again responsible to and cared for by it.

But here stands Cicero the lawyer, approving the Roman punishment for parricide—namely, to be drowned in a sack containing a monkey, a cock, a dog and a viper—because it

cut the culprit off and shut him out of the entire sphere of nature... They die without the earth coming into contact with their bones. They are tossed about by the sea without its cleansing waters ever reaching them. And, at the end, when they are cast up on the shore, even the rocks do not support their dead bodies to give them rest.²⁷

So it fits that Cicero himself died a sort of outlaw, liquidated by Mark Antony,²⁸ with the treacherous connivance of Cicero's supposed ally Octavian. (It's good to know that he met his murderers without cowardice.) In those last years, Cicero considered himself a conservator of the Republic which he saw destroyed by Caesar.²⁹ In his last hour, that is what he was. Against Antony he'd eloquently defended "freedom" in the end, mourning the death of the old oligarchy. He'd saved the Republic from Catiline, he'd always insisted. Tirelessly he proclaimed his own importance. His orations were strained and one-sided, but no more so than those of any number of other advocates in his time and ours. Trying to gain his point, he'd bring in any

number of postulates, principles and precedents—and the next time he spoke, he might introduce opposing ones in another cause. Caesar himself enjoyed Cicero the rhetorician—no matter that Cicero the politician opposed him. So we ought not to deduce that Cicero had a fixed position on the expediency of outlawry. But, like most of us, he proved expedient in his personal and political acts. He failed to think himself into the shoes of those citizens whose destruction he so fluently urged. After all, he'd never end up a traitor like them! —His biography suffices to remind us why the social contract ought not to be too quickly or unilaterally abrogated.

From the executioners Antony received the old man's head and hands, which he caused to be nailed up on the wall of the Senate.

Robespierre got similarly expelled from the common right. Sentence of outlawry having already been pronounced, they took no pains to filter him through any judicial slaughter-chute, but merely identified him, detained him (or, as the Nazis would have said, "kept him on ice"), mocked him and then carted him off to the guillotine. "The criminal is always the man we do not know or the man we hate—the man we see through the bitterness of our hearts."³⁰ What could be a better definition of an outlaw? Society will not know him; society hates him. In Cicero's case, the procedure took scant moments (the soldiers approached; he waited to receive them; they decapitated him); in Robespierre's, a night and half a day. Cast out of the polity, thrust back into the state of nature in the midst of a great nation of *citoyens*, he who'd robbed so many of recourse had no more recourse than an animal when the executioner Sanson cut his head off. So easy, this solution—as frictionless as the down-slide of that great axehead in its greased tracks! It befitted, for Robespierre's notion of the social contract ran thus: "The function of government is to direct the moral and physical forces of the nation."³¹ Scarce indication here of any sovereign rights for the governed—nor does he let us know exactly towards what end they ought to be "directed." Do they have any say, or are they all outlaws, too? "Society affords protection only to peaceful citizens," he'd trumpeted; "*in the Republic there are no citizens other than Republicans.*" His conclusion: "To good citizens revolutionary government owes the full protection of the State; to the enemies of the people it owes only death."³²

In short, the prospect of being blotted out of the social contract is terrifying, whether the government be good or bad, because even a bad government offers more protection than none—unless, of course, it constitutes utter despotism, and one finds oneself in the situation of a Jew in the Nazi-occupied Ukraine, which is to say an outlaw, struggling by night to crawl away from the bloody pit.

SUICIDE

An acquaintance of mine who was very high-strung and often talked about his enemies suffered politico-academic reverses and blew his head off.³³ I remember visiting him one hot summer night when everything smelled like fresh trees and it was too humid to sleep, so we sat drinking mineral water at the kitchen table and he was telling me about some Greek and Sanskrit texts which he was reading in the original. He hadn't been forced to withdraw from the university yet. He went and got the books, and as soon as I saw the Sanskrit characters so mysterious to me I began to feel that he knew some secret that I didn't, and if I only paid enough attention I would learn it, something maybe as important as eternal life or the philosopher's stone—a feeling that I often get alone on a summer night reading and thinking in one of those insomniac times when the silence and sleep of others brings answers closer; I drink iced tea and work things out until dawn. That night J.G. seemed to me to be already arrived at apodictic understanding, probably less on account of his own being—although he was very intelligent, possibly even brilliant—than as a result of the night itself, that time of omens, and although I can't remember much he told me (it happened more than a decade ago now), I do remember how our concentration increased by the moment, as in those evenings before a New York thunderstorm when the air is so heavy that your face is covered with oily sweat no matter how often you bathe or mop it, a wind finally comes, wet and cool, and flashes as you begin to surrender to something. I later understood that all the while, J.G. was negotiating his surrender, preparing to give himself to something which at that night hovered yet faint and directionless; but I didn't see him for a year after that. Although the first roll of thunder was audible to me then, when at the party, newly severed from the university, he kept talking about those enemies of his—although, in other words, rain had begun to fall on his mind so heavily as to sound like wind, I didn't do anything because we were not close and anyhow you never know and he was proud and what would or could I have done? Now I think I would have invited him to come stay with me for awhile, and I would have stayed up late with him and talked about Sanskrit—but probably I wouldn't have; I owned troubles, too. So the lightning went off inside his skull, charging that darkness with slate-blue light for an instant until everything became dark again; then again that surge, shocking and horrible light between darkneses, like the gaze of the Gorgon's head—what color was it really? Not slate-blue, not dead white, not blinding grey; it was always the same color but it was indescribable ... and so one of those flashes, the last one, was the flash when the bullet breached the cranial vault and for that one quarter-second his dying brain lay exposed to the light of the world as it had never done from womb-time to skull-time to now, and never would after now from tomb-time to dust-time; that was the light of the terrible answer he'd learned, or

taught himself. I am sorry that he is dead. But I believe that he had the right to do what he did. One's self is one's own.³⁴ The enemy of an unhappy self is that self. The self is within its rights to destroy itself, whether to flee itself or (as perhaps in J.G.'s case) to escape an unbearable social contract. He'd been falsely accused of sexual harassment.

THE MORAL CALCULUS OF A SUICIDAL CHEMIST

"The question of suicide and selfishness to close friends and relatives is one that I can't answer or even give an opinion on. It is obvious, however, that I have pondered it and decided I would hurt them less dead than alive."

SOURCE: ETKIND, P. 81.

ASSERTION AND CONTROL

Plotinus, whose philosophy lay strangely close to Buddhism at times, rejected suicide on the ground that it was an action of the passions. "If everyone is to hold in the other world a standing determined by the state in which he quitted this, there must be no withdrawal as long as there is any hope of progress."³⁵ And yet we can admire someone who offers himself up to certain or almost certain extinction for the sake of a cause, as did that earnest gadfly Jose Rizal when he returned to the Philippines, a nation then emiserated by the abuses of Spanish rule which he had satirized in *No Me Tangere*. He was executed, as he perhaps expected. In 1892, four years before facing the firing squad, he'd written in a letter "to the Filipinos" that "I prefer to face death and give my life joyfully in order to free so many innocents [from] such unjust persecution."³⁶ This decision was thus also an act of the passions—or at least of the affections. If one can consider noble what Rizal did, and not what J.G. did, it must not be the passions themselves which we condemn, but their particular object or attachment. Why should we call a bankrupt who blows his brains out a coward, and a conscript who exposes himself on the battlefield to overwhelming enemy fire a hero? Because the first death is chosen and the second compelled? One might equally well say that he who bowed to compulsion was the coward—a thought highly offensive to patriotism and soldierdom; better not to think the word "coward" about either, since only J.G. himself, and the soldier *his* separate self, saw their own respective flashes of skull-lightning. From his sufferings in the Kolyma labor camps, Varlam Shalamov concluded that "a person could consider himself a human being as long as he felt totally prepared to kill himself, to interfere in his own biography. It was this awareness that gave me the will to live. I checked myself—frequently—and felt I had the strength to die, and thus remained alive."³⁷ Later he decided that such comfort was illusory, since when the threshold was crossed his resolve might well fail. Fortunately, this is an unfounded objection.

The virtue of suicide is control. No one knows the future. If one feels control over one's life in the present, why, then—one has control in the present, no matter what happens later. I reiterate: If the self has any rights at all, those must include the basic right to continue, to constitute itself over time, to will itself—hence the corresponding right to unwill itself, or, as in the case of a soldier-volunteer or a Gandhian martyr, to offer itself to be unwilling. The point is that to be justified, suicide must be an act of assertion. In medieval Japan, “the grand style, rather archaic and exaggerated, was to take one's entrails in both hands and give them a vigorous throw in the enemy's direction.”³⁸ What could be a more emphatic statement of will than that? No right has any meaning if it be to make but one choice—precisely the situation which one finds both laughable and pitiful in totalitarian countries, when the forcibly assembled people are assigned the right to vote for a single candidate on a single ticket.³⁹ Another non-voter is the woman whose photo shows her hanging with her swollen face canted backward, a patterned housecoat belt wound tightly over her eyes and mouth, a towel around her head mimicking the turban of an Oriental harem girl (she was white), then a window-sash cord wrapped tightly around her waist and up in what the forensic write-up described as “a figure-eight pattern” around her engorged breasts, then down to press through her underpants between the lips of her vulva. This is a “sex hanging,” an autoerotic accident.⁴⁰ We can say that her death was no more meaningless than it would have been from the breast cancer which murdered the woman I loved. Indeed, at least in a sense the hanged woman participated in her own death, and it is quite possible that she died enviously, that is, feeling extreme pleasure. —Unfortunate, to be sure, if it was an accident. Whether her act should be defined as carelessness or suicide, call it, like the declaration of some new African nation's independence, sovereign self-determination.

But it was all chance, you might object—mere stupidity, like a traffic accident! Well, where does chance end and will begin? Let's call sister to her the young woman who, gamepiece of a sister fate, happened to be born in Hiroshima at the wrong time—that is to say, after the atom-bomb, and so played, perceived, learned, loved and was loved, grew up and one day fell ill, and discovered despite her doctor's well-intentioned efforts that she had leukemia—in those days almost invariably fatal. Did she use the sash of her *obi* or did she find a rope?⁴¹ (Another example of cultural relativism: the largely Anglo-American Hemlock Society in its suicide manual remarks that “people who have hanged themselves have often done so as an act of revenge against someone else, for the shock of finding a garroted person is one of the worse experiences that could be inflicted by one human being upon another.”)⁴² There she hangs, black in the face. “Whenever I hear such stories,” writes the novelist Kenzaburo Oe, “I feel we are fortunate that ours is not a Christian country. I feel an almost complete relief that a dogmatic Christian sense of guilt did not prevent the girl from taking her own life.”⁴³ Had she been an eighteenth-century Prussian, the town executioner would have buried her dishonorably beneath the gallows.⁴⁴

BELLY-ENDS, DAGGER-MEANS

Because it does not directly or necessarily harm anyone other than its perpetrator, the suicide's blood runs into a boundless sea of messages, signs, themes and motives: cowardice, hatred, vengeance, release, coercion, kindness, reconciliation, even self-expression. This act of violence truly cannot be comprehended without a context. Even if we limit ourselves to but a single incarnation (if such be not too frivolous a word to be applied to death) of suicide—namely, the famous self-disembowelments of the Japanese historical chronicles and legends—we can gather an almost inexhaustible harvest of causes from the melancholy vineyards of others' scholarship:

TRADITIONAL REASONS TO COMMIT SEPPUKU (Medieval Japan)⁴⁵

hara o warra banasu [literally "to open one's stomach and speak"]: to speak sincerely

1. To prevent being captured in battle.
2. To make amends or express apology.
3. To assume responsibility.
4. To add emphasis to advice to a superior.
5. To correct a disciple.
6. To criticize a superior or an enemy; to express hatred. By the legal code of 1536, the person thus criticized in a suicide note would be punished.
7. To follow one's lord in death.⁴⁶ Prohibited in 645 and again in 1633, but still followed as late as 1912. Arguably followed by Mishima in 1970.
8. To follow one's husband in death. Usually a wife would not cut her belly open, but rather slit her jugular vein or drowned herself. Never legally prohibited.
9. To become a guardian spirit by dying inside the foundation of one's lord's new building.
10. To receive a warrior's capital punishment. The property of such a one would not be lost to his family.
11. To retain one's honor when accused—guilty or not.

THE UTILITY OF SUICIDE

Thus one code; thus some of honor's fashions. As for suicide which has an explicitly political motivation (which, of course, might include many of the species of self-evisceration listed above), we may fairly appraise through the lens of a moral calcu-



Japanese who committed suicide at Tarawa

lus not just its context but (turning away from the Gandhian code)⁴⁷ its effects. *Does it accomplish results?* Did Thich Quang Duc, the South Vietnamese monk who in 1963, following an ancient tradition permitted to the enlightened, poured gasoline on himself and struck fire, thereby decrease the persecution of the Buddhist clergy? We read that on that very day, his government remitted the siege of a celebrated pagoda, allowed Buddhist flags to be flown and even promised punishment for those good Catholics who (probably on its orders) had massacred Buddhists in Hue. Perhaps the corrupt president felt, as Caesar surely did upon learning of Cato's suicide, an angry, bitter awe at the dead man's resolution, at his now unpunishable withdrawal from and denunciation of a rotten social contract. The monk's superior, the Venerable Giac Duc, "believed then and I believe now that Thich Quang Duc was a Boddhisatva [enlightened one]."⁴⁸ As might have been expected, the government reneged on its guarantees, so after Thich Quang Duc's funeral (attended by a million), a Buddhist nun burned herself.⁴⁹ However temporary the relief which these suicides purchased for the persecuted, they surely succeeded in mobilizing and radicalizing people by laying bare the government's policy of deceit and atrocity. The Iroquois, who carefully studied and practiced the art of torture, concluded that a death by burning may well be unsurpassed in physical pain—although of course they stretched it out on their victims much longer. By voluntarily taking upon themselves such agony, the Vietnamese fire-suicides in effect accused the regime of laying torments upon others. Their moral and political effect was incalculable. As strategy and as moral choice, they were brilliantly justifiable.

Seven decades earlier, when the Russian inmate M. F. Vetrova preceded Thich Quang Duc along the same fiery path in order to protest the conditions of her imprisonment, a direct result was an improvement in the lives of other female prisoners. Indeed, several unwell women obtained the supreme blessing of an early

release—among them Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife-to-be;⁵⁰ for authority, under Tsardom both more "chivalrous" and more susceptible to public opinion than it would be under Lenindom, now felt compelled to preclude the potential embarrassment of having a second woman die in custody during the interval (doubtless calculated by political bureaucrats) in which Vetrova remained in everyone's memory. Her goal must therefore be counted as accomplished; and her means harmed only the proud and desperate militant whose life belonged to herself to destroy. As is usual in such cases, the dry opacity and brevity of our source documents prevent us from following Vetrova down the long dark corridor of her moral calculus; at best we can see her indistinct silhouette through the cell window before, as in J.G.'s case, a flash of light illuminates her only in order to draw her once and for all into that darkness unknowable to any of us until we go there. Thus we'll never be able to determine to what extent Vetrova's suicide comprised, like Thich Quang Duc's, an ascetic, perhaps even devotional act of public protest, and to what extent it was simply a personal escape. Arguably, most self-violence directs itself toward precisely this end. A beautifully multivariate graph of twentieth-century Japanese suicides (represented as a ratio between self-homicides and other sorts of deaths) resembles a kinked and fraying bundle of cords. Each strand of cord indicates a year. The axes plot age versus frequency of suicide. Between ages ten and twenty-five all the cords rise to peaks. In the year 1950, and even more so in 1960, those peaks were stunningly steep and high for persons in their mid-twenties, with an equally sharp decline for those survivors who rejoined the main body of the cords in the early thirties.⁵¹ What could have made all those young people kill themselves? —For both men and women of all ages, out of the various possible states of marital relationship, marriage was by far the safest. For men, divorce and widowhood were the most dangerous, whereas for women everything seemed less clear-cut. For people of both sexes aged twenty to twenty-nine, however, a single pillar of suicidal risk loomed immensely over the others: continued singleness.⁵² Surely suicide comprised in many cases an escape from the despair of that lonely state. —In 1975-80, the Japanese men most likely to kill themselves were jobless.⁵³ For many of them, suicide was surely an escape. —In the 1970s and 80s, youth's suicide peak practically amounted to a low plateau which stretched on and on through self-killers' low-and mid-thirties, bottoming out at around age forty, where life's halfway mark perhaps projects an aura of absurdity upon suicidal calculations—better to die early, or late. (But in the year 1975, suicide's rise commenced shortly before the thirty-fifth birthday—who knows why?) After one's fortieth birthday, the general trend was upward; 1987 produced a strange spike in people's early fifties; suicides for that year then declined until past age sixty, whereupon they began to reascend and suddenly steepened to catch up with all the aging Japanese of other times who'd rushed pell-mell to do themselves to death—very probably, I'd say, a reflection of the loneliness and decline that curses most people's final years. By and large (which is to say, leaving



Suicide of Nazi official and his family (April 1945)

out 1975 and 1987), one finds no valley of life-satisfaction after age forty; the suicide ratios shoot up at an inexorable fifty or sixty-degree angle, overtowered by the immense rise of 1950; and so it goes until the population reaches its eighties and dies, their fraying, upsloping strands of life then breaking off in mid-air.⁵⁴

DEFIANCE, LOYALTY AND ESCAPE

Undeniably there are times when (again, as perhaps for J.G.) suicide offers the only way to freedom.⁵⁵ The grimly inspirational tale of Masada tells of one of those times. After a long siege, the Romans now stood on the verge of capturing that desert fortress, whose Jewish defenders, knowing full well that their destiny on the morrow would be slavery at best, ended their lives. "Judge not, lest ye be judged." At Masada, three souls chose not to die; and we ought not judge them, either.⁵⁶

The end of World War II was another such time. In a hideous photograph by Margaret Bourke-White, we see a desk table with its black telephone, a calendar open to the thirteenth, stamps, pens, an ashtray, papers, all in disarray; and then we see like a dark shadow the track where an elbow has swept the dust away. We see the elbow, and the man attached to it, or the back of him, at any rate. His almost bald skull lies at an angle at the edge of the desk—a wonder he hasn't fallen off. His

slumped and folded body clings; perhaps the elbow helps—that and rigor mortis. Across the room, in a corner of a leather armchair, lies a young girl, her pale face oriented ceiling ward, her eyes and mouth not quite closed, arms folded across her chest, the long, pale fingers of the left hand open and dangling; she is wearing some kind of official armband, and her slip is showing. In a chair lies another body, perhaps her mother or sister; the face dangles backward over the arm of the chair, so that one can't make out much of it. The caption reads: "The suicide of a minor Nazi official and his family in Leipzig, April 1945."⁵⁷ (Around the same time, Magda



Seppuku

Goebbels, preparing to poison her six children, writes in a last letter from Hitler's bunker: "The world to come after the Fuehrer and National Socialism will not be worth living in, and that is why I have taken the children along with me. They are too good for the sort of life to come after us."⁵⁸ In atom-bombed, surrendered Japan, numbers of officials were preparing to follow the same path; occasionally their wives adhered to the old code, and followed them in death, but it was hardly the rule for them to kill their children. The Goebbels family chose to flee;

the Japanese, to die responsibly, as it were, at their posts. But before the armistice, as we'll soon see, all too many followed the Goebbelsian paradigm.) What ought we say? Seneca already said it: "Caesar's troops beset the city gates, yet Cato has a way of escape; with one single hand he will open a wide path to freedom."⁵⁹ I am sure that this is what J.G. thought. A Caesarian officer will claim that although the local people "hated [Cato] for the side he took," they still gave him a funeral in recognition of his immense courage⁶⁰—for Caesar would have saved him, not tortured him; and after he first cut his belly open, the doctor would have saved him, too; but he ripped the stitches open with his fingernails, and died as stubbornly as he had lived.⁶¹

Cato had ever so many brothers and sisters. Vetrova might have been one—or not. Here's another, a twenty-two-year-old kamikaze who left behind this haiku too unsubtle for us to worry that the meaning vanished in translation:

Like cherry blossoms
in the spring
let us fall
so pure and radiant.⁶²

We would be foolish to believe unreservedly in the sincerity of his sentiment; for the failing empire of which he was a subject had in 1944, broken by Allied air and naval power, set out deliberately to fabricate for utilitarian ends the Catonian suicides of human air-bombs and human torpedoes. (Cato had fabricated himself.)

And yet the testimonies of surviving kamikazes asserts that on the chosen day they were proud to die—no matter that Vice-Admiral Onishi had asked them; Onishi would also kill himself, and by the prestigiously agonizing method of disembowelment. They died honored by the military social structures which had formed them, and some of them expected to become minor gods. “Was it really necessary to go so far?” wondered the Emperor after he was told of the first kamikazes. “Well, it was a noble deed.”⁶³ *Suicide is right whenever it is not coerced.* To the extent that we can peel away from their self-sovereign purposes the velvety fabric of odious persuasion (their squadron leader called upon them to die or not, one by one—how many of them were brave enough *not* to volunteer?),⁶⁴ likewise the evil political ends which suffused them but which they’d never created, we can, I think, honor these men. Five thousand of them died thus.⁶⁵

As for the Nazi functionary, he probably did evil with both pathbreaking hands; certainly he participated in it. Cato, we said, died in order to proclaim and defy. The kamikaze died likewise to proclaim, and also to strike a war-blow. The Nazi family, like the families at Masada, might also have died to proclaim, but one assumes that the father died in order to flee. He must have known that he faced arrest and internment, possibly worse.

Based on my presuppositions about the rights of the self, my moral calculus advocates that *suicide is permissible whenever uncoerced.*⁶⁶

EUTHANASIA

And the two female corpses beside him? Did *he* coerce them or, like Magda Goebbels, did they volunteer? What did they believe the Allies would do to them? We don’t know. In Japan we do know. “Japanese soldiers gave us women hand grenades and told us to die with them if the time came,” recalls a survivor. “They also gave us cyanide ... with the admonition, ‘It would not be good for a Japanese woman to get raped.’”⁶⁷ —In Gibbon’s voluminous pages we can find mention of a Roman matron who violently saved her chastity from the Emperor Maxentius;⁶⁸ somehow this act of self-will, or perhaps even self-help, fails to repulse me as does authority’s “helping” its subjects to do the same. A few months before Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war, the American enemy formed a beachhead on Takashiki Island. Self-defense of creed, homeland, honor and, above all, of itself impelled authority to gather together the Japanese civilian population for mass suicide. The euphemism: “crushing of jewels.” One searches in vain for any remnant of whatever justification the kamikazes possessed. Such meaningless, useless, coerced public death inspires only pity and horror. Might it be that if we’d seen Masada’s final night, we would have felt the same?⁶⁹ Did everybody sign the social contract? If so, what were its clauses? Did I kill my mother because she and I both preferred

death to tomorrow's changes, or because authority compelled me to? "When we raised our hands against the mother who bore us, we wailed in our grief. I remember that. In the end we must have used stones. To the head. We took care of Mother that way. Then my brother and I turned against our younger brother and younger sister. Hell engulfed us there."⁷⁰ In the battle of Tarawa, only a hundred prisoners were captured out of 4,700 Japanese defenders.⁷¹

Yes, we might compare Tarawa with Masada. But here's a more apt equation: The Athenians besiege the Persian-installed governor of Eion. The governor will defend his honor to the death—fair enough, but why can't he stop at his own death? "When all supplies were consumed," reports Herodotus, "he made a huge pile of timber, set it on fire, and then, cutting the throats of his children, wife, concubines, and servants, flung their bodies into the flames," then threw his treasures into the river and burned himself up. "For this behavior his name is still mentioned in Persia with respect, and it is right that it should be,"⁷² but I wonder how his doomed dependents felt about it. Did he wonder? Well, they were his property, as Isaac was Abraham's; the governor could do as he liked.

A woman decides to leave an abusive marriage. According to the later testimony of a homicide detective, he responds by loading his gun, "telling his wife she had ruined his life 'and he was going to kill himself and the two boys, and she was going to have to watch'"—which indeed she did, helplessly, uselessly screaming.⁷³ The husband's assertion thus never even pretends to be euthanasia; it's only revenge-killing.⁷⁴ Unlike a Masadan father, or even a propaganda-deluded Nazi or Japanese father, the husband will not by killing his six-year-old and his four-year-old save them from any situation which might arguably be worse for them than death. "She was going to have to watch." That declaration of triumphant malice could have come right out of one of Sade's novels. Alongside his case, set that of the young mother who prepared a birthday party for her seven-year-old twins, wrapped presents, invited other children, then drowned the boys in the bathtub, canceled the invitations due to "illness," unwrapped the presents and turned herself in.⁷⁵ What was she thinking? Had the entire course of events been planned, or did an invincible dybbuk-impulse seize her after she'd issued the invitations? Here talk of justice or injustice would not be extraordinarily relevant; the only judgment we should pronounce is: "acute psychosis."

LOVING KINDNESS

Sometimes, however, the justice of euthanasia becomes not just possible or probable, but shiningly certain—an act of kindness. Lawrence of Arabia, later to figure in this book in a far worse light,⁷⁶ tells the tale of his servant Farraj.⁷⁷ It is 1918. Mortally wounded by a Turkish bullet, Farraj lies helpless. To lift him causes him to scream with agony. Lawrence's band is but sixteen, and fifty Turks are approaching.

We could not leave him where he was, to the Turks, because we had seen them burn alive our hapless wounded. For this reason we were all agreed, before action, to finish off one another, if badly hurt: but I had never realized it might fall to me to kill Farraj.

I knelt down beside him, holding my pistol near the ground by his head, so that he should not see my purpose; but he must have guessed it, for he opened his eyes and clutched me with his harsh, scaly hand...⁷⁸

Anyone who believes that what Lawrence did to help this man he cared for was wrong is a hypocrite, a dogmatist or just plain unrealistic. *Families or comrades may legitimately coerce the deaths of dependents to spare them from loneliness, death by torture, or dishonor sufficient to compel future suicide.*⁷⁹

Likewise, when the Yugoslav Partisans were desperately seeking to break out of German encirclement in the Sutjetska in 1943, they could not take the seriously injured with them. The enemy killed everyone they found. They were, for the most part, too busy to torture; but that doesn't imply that to die at their hands wouldn't have been worse than perishing, as did Farraj, at the hands of those who loved them. (In the same war, a Japanese army doctor volunteered to shoot any of his comrades who considered themselves too weak to retreat from the Allies. "This I consider 'sacred murder,'" recalled an eyewitness.)⁸⁰ And so one badly injured Partisan woman begged her husband to kill her; he did, in her sleep. "It was then also that a father fulfilled the same request by his daughter," Milovan Djilas tells us. "I knew that father, too. He survived the war, withered and somber, and his friends regarded him as a living saint."⁸¹ So do I.

2.
CONTINUUM OF SUICIDE
AND EUTHANASIA

A. Plato

"The man whose violence frustrates the decree of destiny by self-slaughter ... thus gives unrighteous sentence against himself from mere poltroonery and unmanly cowardice... the graves of such ... must be solitary; they must have no companions whatsoever in the tomb. Further, they must be buried ignominiously in waste and nameless spots on the boundaries between the twelve districts, and the tomb shall be marked by neither headstone nor name."⁸²

B. Taika era edict, Japan (A.D. 645)

"Normally, when a man dies, certain people follow him into death by hanging themselves; or else people are forced to follow him by being strangled... These old customs must now, without exception, come to an end. Whoever shall violate this present decree by engaging in forbidden practices, the punishment shall fall upon his whole house."⁸³

C. Criminal code of New York State [Sec. 125.25b] (late twentieth century)

"A person is guilty of murder in the second degree when: ... the defendant's conduct consisted of causing or aiding, without the use of duress or deception, another person to commit suicide."⁸⁴

D. My late grandmother's doctor

"That's the coward's way out." (She suffered from Parkinson's disease for thirty years, and died of cancer.)

E. Gnostic Scriptures (The Sentences of Sextus)

Sentence 321: "Do not become guilty of your own death. Do not be angry at him who will take you out of the body and kill you."⁸⁵

F. Gandhi

"In the place where we stand there are millions of micro-

organisms ... who are hurt by our presence there... Should we commit suicide? Even that is no solution... as long as the spirit is attached to the flesh, on every destruction of the body it weaves for itself another. The body will cease to be only when we give up all attachment to it."⁸⁶

G. Montesquieu (1748)

"It is evident that the civil laws of some countries may have reasons for branding suicide with infamy; but in England it cannot be punished without punishing the effects of madness."⁸⁷

H. Socrates (quoted by Plato), in his condemned cell

"We must not put an end to ourselves until God sends some compulsion like the one which we are facing now,"⁸⁸ because "the gods are our keepers."

I. Socrates (quoted by Plato), refusing to escape his execution

"You did not have equality of rights with your father ... to enable you to retaliate... Do you not realize that you are even more bound to respect and placate the anger of your country than your father's anger? That if you cannot persuade your country you must do whatever it orders, and patiently submit to any punishment that it imposes...?"⁸⁹

J. John Brown, refusing to try to escape his execution

"I think I cannot now better serve the cause I love so much than to die for it; and in my death I may do more than in my life."⁹⁰

K. The Argentine anarchist Paulino Scarfó, refusing to try to escape his execution

"An anarchist never asks for clemency."⁹¹

L. Cleomenes the Spartan, who later killed himself

"The man who despairs ... is defeated by his own feebleness. For a death that is self-inflicted ought not to be an escape from action, but an action in its own right, since it is despicable that men should live, and die, just for themselves."⁹²

M. General Henning von Tresckow, anti-Nazi, before killing himself (1944)

"The moral worth of a man only begins at the point where he is willing to sacrifice his life for his convictions."⁹³

N. The Japanese Imperial Parliament, voting almost unanimously to retain the custom of *seppuku* (1869)

"We ought to maintain a custom which fosters a sense of shame in the military caste and in the existence of which doubtless consists the superiority of Japan over other countries."⁹⁴

O. Kato Kiyomasa, fifteenth-century Japanese warrior

"Those who are born into warrior houses must devote themselves to the way of handling swords and meeting death."⁹⁵

P. John Steinbeck, to his doctor

"Then there is the signal for the curtain. I think, since the end is the same, that the chief protagonist should have the right to judge his exit, if he can, taking into consideration his survivors who are, after all, the only ones who matter."⁹⁶

Q. Jean Humphry, terminal breast cancer patient, to her husband, the future founder of the Hemlock Society (1975)

"You won't question my right and you will give me the means to do it... It can't be otherwise, darling. I've got this bloody cancer and I simply can't fight it any longer."⁹⁷

R. General principles of the Hemlock Society (1980)

"HEMLOCK ... is tolerant of the right of people who are terminally ill to end their own lives in a planned manner. HEMLOCK does not encourage suicide for any primary emotional, traumatic, or financial reasons in the absence of terminal illness."⁹⁸

S. Thich Quang Duc, monk, to his disciples, before burning himself alive to protest the mistreatment of Buddhists in Vietnam (1963)

"Nothing lasts forever except compassion. The physical body is temporary; the spirit is eternal. There should be no tears."⁹⁹

T. General Anami, Japanese Minister of War (1945)

"Our country, protected by its gods,
Will not perish. Let my death be offered
To the emperor to expiate our great crime."¹⁰⁰

U. Artur Zygielbojm, member of the Polish National Council (1943)

"My friends in the Warsaw Ghetto died with weapons in their hands in the last heroic battle. It was not my destiny to die together with them but I belong with them, and in their mass graves. By my death I wish to make my final protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people."¹⁰¹

V. Eleazar son of Ananias, to his fellow defenders at Masada

"It will be easier to bear that our wives die unabused, our children without knowledge of slavery; after that let us do to each other an ungrudging kindness, preserving our freedom as a glorious windingsheet."¹⁰²

W. Yukio Mishima, who in 1970 committed *seppuku* after becoming a bodybuilder

"Specifically, I cherished a romantic impulse toward death, yet at the same time I required a strictly classical body as its vehicle... A powerful, tragic frame and sculpturesque muscles were indispensable in a romantically noble death."¹⁰³

X. Seneca, meditating on Cato, who had to pierce himself twice in order to die

"To seek death needs not so great a soul as to reseek it."¹⁰⁴

HOMICIDE, OR THE CASE OF BERNHARD GOETZ

If I am riding the subway and people attack me, do I have the right to defend myself by attacking them? In the case of the celebrated Mr. Goetz, the enemy attacked with a sharpened screwdriver (or perhaps with more than one). The enemy's legal representation contended that they did not attack at all. We may suppose that at the least they threatened, first by outnumbering, secondly by being black when Goetz was white (it's blind to deny that in our country if you are a lone person of one color, and several males of the other color approach you, anxiousness is understandable),¹⁰⁵ thirdly by showing him the sharpened screwdriver.

But let's play devil's advocate. In mass society the individual is outnumbered by strangers all the time; in and of itself, that's no cause for alarm. As for the legitimacy of fear of the other race, statistics insist that it possesses hardly any basis. In 1950, by and large, American blacks were murdered by blacks, and American whites by whites; at century's end that still held true.¹⁰⁶ Generally speaking, blacks were more likely than whites to be violently victimized.¹⁰⁷ And a screwdriver, of course, is only a screwdriver. Goetz (who will later admit to having made "racially offensive comments" back in 1980—his pathetic explanation: he was high on angel dust) may be too prone to believe in his looming victimization.

So much for the advocate. Returning to my notion of a Goetzian perspective, however, one could point out that at this time, arrests for aggravated assault made up seven out of every ten violent crime arrests,¹⁰⁸ and that the racial crossover rate of aggravated assailants was neither well-known nor to the point, because these four men now accosting Goetz were menacing and so were their screwdrivers. How can we be certain of this? Because if we know that they had screwdrivers, they must have been showing them—that is, brandishing them—an inherently menacing activity, which renders all statistics irrelevant. Of "the rather typical young slayer," one researcher concluded that such murderers "kill as easily as children in their play, and they are not more concerned about their own death than most children are."¹⁰⁹ It is a pity that FBI crime statistics do not, like their Japanese counterparts, break down robbery motives into "life appropriation" and "play appropriation"¹¹⁰—that is, into gaining money for necessity or for pleasure. To the victim, I suppose, it scarcely matters: the criminal who seeks a life appropriation may be more desperately determined, while the play appropriationist is probably more callous, thrill-seeking, sadistic. Someone in Goetz's place could very logically say that inability or refusal to reason renders such holdup men far more dangerous than the idealized criminals in some logician's exercise, with whom one can argue questions of utility. In other words, strategies of negotiation offer less prospect of ending the encounter than the three choices of Gandhianism, surrender or outright violence. Moreover, he who sur-

renders becomes by no means immune to a parting stab or bullet, *especially* when irrationality is posited. As for Gandhianism, praiseworthy as it is, that way remains no one's obligation. Hence—perhaps—violence.

To these circumstances, which combine to form a reasonable calculus of threat and response, we must add two more, the first subjective, as it were, the second neutral. The subjective circumstance is that Goetz had been attacked before, which increased his *sense* of danger. Some people might argue that his prior victimization gave Goetz *experience*, and taught him that it was legitimate (justified) as well as wise to carry the concealed gun which now waited for the screwdriver boys. Perhaps it even gives him entitlement. Doesn't the social contract owe him protection from imminent harm? Others might say with equal justice that it biased his judgment, increasing his sense of menace to an unwarranted degree by it—in other words, that (as for my friend J.G., who killed himself) it may explain what he did, but not excuse it. Newspaper accounts, which of course quote Goetz's extremist statements and take them out of context, portray him as sarcastic, bitter, tactless, cynical and self-righteous. All of these characterizations may well be completely accurate. Of course they have debatable bearing on what happened to him, and what he actually did, in the subway.

Pose the analogous issue of self-defense against witchcraft, which in mid-twentieth century Africa "was sometimes considered not only non-culpable but justifiable."¹¹¹ Do you believe it possible to murder people by witchcraft? Suppose that you don't. But grant that some self-defenders sincerely do. If, say, a Nyoro person comports himself as a witch, knowing perfectly well the social norms against witches, and comporting himself thus for purposes of intimidation and extortion, and if another Nyoro, feeling thus intimidated to peril of death, kills him, one must, as we are told that the British judges did, consider the matter leniently, if indeed we do not entirely exonerate the self-defender. This does not imply that we ought to honor the witch-slayer's justification under any circumstances, but it does mean that, as in Goetz's case, an individual might be justified in reacting violently to a sincere expectation of imminent harm, provided that at least some other people who were sane and shared his cultural assumptions might have done the same.¹¹² Frankly, since I do it myself, I cannot fault someone for carrying a weapon solely in the interest of self-protection, particularly if that person has had reason to lament the absence of self-protection in a previous instance.¹¹³ In any event, at the moment Goetz is still only carrying the gun; he has not yet used it. Let us wait for a moment. —The neutral circumstance is that, just as with nuclear missiles, the response time available to act against an armed enemy is much less than needful. Most people prove unprepared for defense against a punch or a kick. A knife (or sharpened screwdriver) is somewhat more lethal than either of those; worse still is a hidden gun such as so many street criminals routinely wear; your death may come instantaneously through your enemy's coat pocket, or his car window, or your open doorway once you've

answered his knock. Many American police undergo a simulation course in which they are confronted with the need to speedily shoot or not shoot in various situations. Is the young boy holding a plastic squirt gun Uzi look-alike or is he about to kill me with a real Uzi? I tell a man to put up his hands and he puts a hand in his pocket. Does he have a gun in there or is he deaf and scratching his balls? Is the robbery suspect who refuses to raise both hands on command concealing a shotgun? At the very last minute, he obeys. "If I had seen the glint of metal from the can of beer he was concealing, I would have been convinced he had a gun," the officer recalls. "He will probably never know how close I came to pulling the trigger."¹¹⁴ The point is that there is no way to know in time. Police sometimes guess wrong; how much more so a person without training! —I call this a neutral circumstance because just as Goetz must decide in a split second whether the young men surrounding him have anything else hidden to shoot or stab him with, so they must make the same gamble when they approach him—a gamble which I am happy to say that they lost.

They expected Goetz to obey the law. Goetz says that if he had obeyed the law he would now be dead. As old Grotius had to admit before hedging in military violence with his well-meaning eternal laws of decency, "Judgments are efficacious against those who feel that they are too weak to resist; against those who are equally strong, or think that they are, wars are undertaken."¹¹⁵ The screwdriver boys felt strong and cocky, we assume. It would be war, then. Should we in fact assume that? Self-defensive violence may thus by the requirements of the social contract involve a strange guessing-game regarding an assailant's plans, which may in their own right reflect the assailant's best assumptions about the defender's behavior.¹¹⁶ One passage in the Babylonian Talmud transports us through this hall of mirrors into the chamber of judgment:

What is the reason for the [permission to kill the] burglar? No man controls himself when his money is at stake, and since he [the burglar] knows that he [the owner] will oppose him, he thinks: If he resists me I shall kill him, therefore the Torah says: If a man has come to kill you, anticipate him by killing him!¹¹⁷

If we were on a jury, we'd be instructed to consign the following datum to irrelevance, but it may in fact help us judge Goetz's degree of justification in feeling menaced by the four screwdriver boys: Two of them, Troy Canty and James Ramseur, will later go to prison for other violent crimes—Canty for robbery, Ramseur for rape.

Now, what did Goetz actually do? No one will ever know. Probably Goetz himself doesn't know anymore; it's been talked over too much. —Permit me to describe the subway. Call it 1987, my first year in Manhattan (in 1997 the subway seemed much cleaner and safer.) Goetz's day was December 22, 1984, but let's choose a bright summer afternoon—surely one of the safer if not necessarily more agreeable

times to ride the subway. I stand waiting to cross the street to the subway entrance because a cab has just bumped into a cyclist who happens to be a skinhead, and the skinhead stops very calmly and gets off his bike and peers through the windshield to make sure what he undoubtedly suspected all along, that the cab driver is black, and then he shouts: "We're going to *fry* you, you nigger dickhead!" and begins pounding on the trunk lid until it pops open and then he snaps the windshield wiper off and gets on his bicycle and rides away. Does it even matter after awhile who hates whom for what reason? My Serbian friend Vineta once told me: "I read a psychological study of your killers. Did you know that most of them originate in England? Maybe it started with Jack the Ripper. I'm not surprised at all. The rest of them are either Poles or Arabs. And of course you have a lot of that Mexican stuff. Otherwise it would be a really OK country. The problem with your country is, Bill Clinton originates in England. Roosevelt was Dutch." That was how she was, an intelligent girl, sincere, but sometimes even when she meant well by telling me that my country could be OK, it didn't come out



*Homicide victim: Mme.
Langlois, France*

right. I remember the time that she and I were breathing in fresh air in Beograd,¹¹⁸ and we passed a gypsy boy who couldn't have been more than four, sitting in a doorway, clasping an accordion bigger than he was; and Vineta said: "Look, how sweet! You know, actually, our gypsies are kind of a national treasure. They're like your Negroes. They can sing and dance, although they're dirty and stinky, and we love them." And in Kenya, blacks told me I stank because I was white; and in one Japanese hot springs the men didn't want me to enter the water until they'd finished; in Somalia the members of Mr. Aidid's subclan hated the members of Mr. Mahdi's subclan, and so it goes. Maybe that is why this New York taxi driver, old and tired, sits vacant in the face of the skinhead's abuse. The skinhead moves on and then the driver moves on as other cars permit, his trunk lid still open, caught just behind the skinhead: they screen each other out. That is up above in the sunny world, on that same street where a friend of mine, a young mother, was walking by not long ago when someone from a car threw a bottle between her and her little daughter for no reason and it was only by a miracle that the baby wasn't injured by shattering glass. Yes, the sunny world. I admit that this sketch necessarily exaggerates the violence of New York. I lived there for three years and never got mugged, although once the doorman caught someone coming in with a gun. My friend James got stabbed for no reason in Hell's Kitchen, a block from where one of my sisters lived (she got burglarized); and my editor's boyfriend got stabbed, and her assistant got threatened with a knife in the lobby of her apartment building where the mail-

boxes were; but Manhattan is very crowded; and most of my friends there have not been hurt by other people. Should we enter that fact for or against Mr. Goetz? Did lightning strike him twice, or did he just claim that it had? Now it is time to pass the panhandling mother rattling her change-cup while the child sits dully on her lap, drenched with sweat, time to go down into the stink and the swelter, past a pair of lounging cops pointing over the barrier, nightsticks poking out from their hips, guns hot and ready. Everyone in line for tokens is sweating and looking down at the stained floor whose hardness makes the soles of the feet ache, and once I go through the turnstile at Grand Central it is hotter than ever. I hear the wail of the trains below. Here it is quite dark among the people who are waiting. Mainly they are blacks and Hispanics and Asians, because race and economic class coincide often enough to satisfy racists. I see another mother and child trying to get quarters, a pretty black schoolgirl shouting as she struts hand on hip, an old man without shoes asleep in a blanket. For no reason, a tall black youth who wears his cap backwards shoves the schoolgirl silently, brutally, with ice in his eyes, and she does not scream but runs away. A guitarist strums on, hoping for money to fall into his upturned hat; the girl's humiliation does not concern him. Anyhow, humiliation is not violence. A white man is coming home from work, and the youth says: "*Fuck* you, whitey! I'm gonna beat your ass!" —And the man, afraid, feeble, humiliated, rushes down another turning of darkness, having no recourse save in pretending not to hear.¹¹⁹ That is in the limbo before the platforms. How often do I witness disturbing things when I take the subway? In truth, only once a week or so. But I think now of the man I met coming out of a hotel near Times Square with bloody bandages oozing around his ears; I want to tell you about him. He'd lived in New York for ten years and fate had hardly scratched him. In the middle of the afternoon, he went to Madison Square Garden, and two men with knives robbed him. He never argued. He didn't try to negotiate. Following instructions, he gave them his wallet, and then they slashed his ears. I hate these two men. I can see myself too clearly in the bloody-bandaged man's place. I am not Gandhi. I am violent, vindictive; I want them to be terrorized and hurt in their turn, by someone like Goetz. But seeing that actually happen to them, I'd stop it if I could.

At any rate, the proposition that on the subway a person is usually safe, like the axiom that women commit relatively few acts of aggression, can be shown to be irrelevant by what logicians call "an existence proof." The tale of the bloody-bandaged man proves it. Goetz need not dispute the statistical fact that on any given day the probability of his needing to pack a loaded gun is low. He can simply point out that the probability exists.

Now I'll go down where it is lit brightly again, brightly enough for every smear of grime on the cement to start out at me like a bruise, and I see a rat moving in the black trackbed, and against the pillars men are waiting. Nothing sinister in that—I am waiting, too. It is dreary and dark here, but not dangerous—not statis-

tically. The people who turned into statistics I've rarely met. I watch for my train, read, or talk with a friend, and every once in awhile somebody yells or somebody intimidates someone, and I ignore it because one never knows the whole story and what am I supposed to do and, besides, it didn't happen to me.¹²⁰ At night the crowds thin out, but waiting men are still there. Night is the time for guns.¹²¹ A Roman jurist claimed that "the very word for theft is itself derived from a Latin word meaning 'black,' because it is committed secretly, in the dark and most often in the night,"¹²² but even now someone has been known to get stabbed in a subway car for no reason, and it was only a few months before I wrote this that the young Utah tourist got stabbed so that his murderers would have enough money to go to a dance. (Shall we call them play appropriationists?) —The train comes down the tunnel, steady and massive, rupturing the darkness into ugly shards. I can see people clinging to poles within. It stops; the doors open; I get in. A man in bug-eyed sunglasses sits facing me, maybe staring into my eyes, maybe not, and on either side of me are sweaty bodies which I must not turn to look at, because I might irritate someone who will be enraged at me, so I gaze at the posters with skulls and heroin addicts and crack and AIDS and death, and my ride is uneventful. Night is when I sometimes take a loaded gun in my pack. Can you blame me? Consider the following advice in a magazine:

When you rent a car, get one with air conditioning. Keep all the windows closed and all the doors locked. Do not pick up hitchhikers and do not stop to help someone who appears to be in distress. The worst thing you can do is get out of your car. If you are approached, step on the gas pedal and flee.¹²³

This is the message that American citizens get, over and over. We're helpless; we'd better isolate ourselves and avoid each other. At least sometimes, Mr. Goetz's solution must be preferable. They say that when the screwdriver boys came closer and closer, he pulled out the gun, shot them, shot them again as they were down. He went beyond immediate self-defense, the boys' attorney charged—but did Goetz know that? At a "Kid Town Hall Meeting" in Sacramento, one of the panel members, the father of little Polly Klaas, who was abducted from her home and murdered, advised other children: "Unfortunately, you pretty much can't trust adults you don't know. I wish I didn't have to say that, but that's the way the world is."¹²⁴ —"If you are approached, step on the gas pedal and flee." —And in the subway, do what? Was Goetz obliged to be Gandhi—or to give the screwdriver boys his money, and then maybe suffer the fate of the bloody-bandaged man—or worse?

So he fires four times. One of his four assailants, Darrell Cabey, is wounded. Goetz approaches Cabey. Cabey's lawyer will claim that he now says: "You don't look too bad, here's another." Now for the fifth shot, paralyzing Cabey, who will also be brain-impaired for the rest of his life.

Goetz does not ride the subway much after that. Legal fees nearly bankrupt him; and he serves prison time for carrying an unlicensed firearm.

What does the law say? The grand jury dismisses any charge of attempted murder, but indicts him for unlicensed weapons possession. Cabey's attorneys sue Goetz for fifty million dollars in civil court. Meanwhile the next grand jury, retaining the illegal weapons charge, restores the old accusation of attempted murder and adds a



Homicide victim: Madame Daly, France

count of reckless endangerment. The judge quashes the murder charge, which the state Supreme Court revives once again. The jury finds him not guilty of murder, guilty of the unlicensed pistol indictment. The first sentence: six months in jail, five years' probation. The appeals court says that six months wasn't enough; illegal weapons possession requires a one-year sentence. Back to the

state Supreme Court, which gives him the full year behind bars, plus a five thousand dollar fine. Justice has been so slow that the imprisoned Goetz will now become eligible for parole in fifty-one days—denied. He spends two hundred and fifty days in prison and gets released. Is he free? No, now it's time for his civil suit. The trial lasts twelve days. Ronald Kuby, lawyer for the paralyzed Cabey, describes Goetz as "a racist who overreacted." The press with its usual sensationalism and hypocrisy rushes to tell us that "Goetz did not show much remorse when he testified for the first time about the shooting. He acknowledged he had thought about using his keys to gouge out the eyes of one of the wounded youths." Is this sadism, or is this prudent preparation for further self-defense, should he be out of bullets? Moreover, since he thought about it and didn't do it, how relevant to the facts is it? "And he was asked about his remark that Cabey's mother should have had an abortion, and that the shooting 'could be looked on' as a public service. 'I was trying to get as many of them as I could,' he also said."¹²⁵ The jury finds Goetz guilty. He must pay \$43 million to Cabey—which is to say, ten percent of his wages will be garnished for ten years, and then that will be that. Preferring to file for bankruptcy rather than to appeal, Goetz remarks, not without a certain excusable bitterness in his grandiosity, that to continue to fight would make New York "the laughingstock of the world."¹²⁶

Even the Guardian Angels, those messiahs of feeling good about our streets,¹²⁷ offer these "safety tips":

2. Be suspicious of anyone approaching you.
10. Avoid large groups hanging out together. Duck into a store.¹²⁸

No decent person would say that what Goetz did was desirable. And, depend-

ing on the facts (which we don't really know, for one jury released him and another condemned him), he might even have been culpable, evil, criminal. I'd judge him thus: first four shots justifiable, fifth shot unjustifiable.¹²⁹ (What if he'd fired only the justifiable shots, then gone to jail on a gun charge? I'd be inclined to denounce that particular social contract.) By all means, let authority do what it can to prevent such confrontations in the first place—and in the year that I now revise this chapter (1997), authority has: crime has plummeted throughout New York City. The New York solution was to set its police to citing people for any and all offenses: graffiti-ing, loitering, panhandling, vandalism and the like, which the mayor claimed were the thin end of a wedge of crime and violence. Certainly other solutions offer themselves. One U.N. study, whose conclusions I do not find incredible, decided that a single dollar spent to prevent crime by educating "children in need" would save five dollars later in welfare and policing costs.¹³⁰ Should this in fact be true, why not hand our social engineers the keys to the city? Undeniably it is valuable for anybody who implements public policy or shapes the social landscape to bear in mind the power of his particular discipline to control violence.

But such admonitions as the U.N.'s alone display two inadequacies, the first being the moral one that nowhere are the perpetrators of bad deeds given the opportunity and responsibility to become conscious of their actions; rather, the invisible hand most graciously regulates them down the proper corridors of their rat-maze. Not good enough. Like the advice of the Guardian Angels or of the magazine, the U.N. dicta are an attempt to manipulate circumstances and groups to produce a utilitarian result, as if the soul of the aggressor were an indecent and unreachable irrelevance. I myself want to look into the evildoer's eyes, and I want to compel him to gaze into his own eyes, to see his image and judge it; he owes his victims that.—Goetz did this when he fired his gun. As I keep saying, what if the strategies of the beneficent curtailers of guns and beer don't work, and then I meet that evildoer?¹³¹—I often don't fear for myself. Sometimes, like Goetz, I do; while sometimes the thought of seeing the idiotic thugs of death terrorizing, hurting, raping, killing someone helpless and innocent, while I have to watch and do nothing, that's the thought that makes me sometimes carry my gun.¹³² I remember a retarded girl who visited me; she'd never been to New York, and it was New Year's Eve. She wanted to ride the subway and go to a party. She was drunk, she'd pissed in her pants, and she wandered up to strangers and kissed their babies. It was night. Some passengers were drunk and unpredictable. I sat anxious and alert and miserable, unable to control my friend, unwilling to desert her. Nobody hurt her; nobody even shouted. If they'd shoved her away or punched her, I would have hugged her and led her back to the seat in silence. If they'd come at her with sharpened screwdrivers or worse, I'd have showed them my gun and pulled her off at the next stop. If they'd followed, I'd have tried to bring her safely to the light. That being impossible, I know I wouldn't have stood by in silence.

3.

CONTINUUM OF VIOLENT
INDIVIDUAL SELF-DEFENSE

A. Buddha

"If a man foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love... the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me; the fragrance of goodness always comes to me, and the harmful air of evil goes to him."¹³³

B. Shigehira the Heike

"I have done nothing but fight here and there, my mind devoted to the evil desire of killing others only to save my own life. I have been utterly blind to Buddhahood."¹³⁴

C. Jesus Christ

"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."¹³⁵

D. Tom Mauser, father of a high school student killed in the
Columbine High School massacre of 1999

"We believe that if Jesus were here on earth physically at this moment, He could care less about the 'right' to own an assault weapon. He wouldn't be packing heat and He wouldn't be carrying an NRA card."¹³⁶

E. Plato

"In this sole case, when a man's life is in danger from his parents, no law will permit slaying, not even in self-defense—the slaying of the father or mother to whom his very being is due."¹³⁷

"He that slays a thief entering the house by night with intent of robbery shall be guiltless; he that in his own defense slays a footpad shall be guiltless. He that offers hurtful violence to a free woman or boy may be slain without fear of the law by the object of his violent rape, or by father, brother, or son of such party."¹³⁸

F. Code of Justinian (533 A.D.)

"Those who do damage because they cannot otherwise defend themselves are blameless; for all laws and all legal systems allow one to use force to defend oneself against violence."¹³⁹

G. The Qur'-An

"And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors. And kill them wherever you find them... But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."¹⁴⁰

H. Curtis Sliwa, founder of the Guardian Angels.

"We have no weapons, no bulletproof vests, nothing but a beret and what the average person has. But if a Guardian Angels patrol has been involved into a high crime, and we are being confronted physically, ... most likely [the criminals] will get violent; they will carry out a show of force. Then you use pain compliance to the person, with the armlocks, the leglocks. They think they're knocking on the Pearly Gates. They think they're dying. And all the Angels are organized to get that person down."¹⁴¹

I. Malcolm X

"I am not against using violence in self-defense. I don't even call it violence when it's self-defense; I call it intelligence."¹⁴²

J. Agesilaus, Spartan king (400-360 B.C.)

"Another time he watched a mouse being pulled from its hole by a small boy. When the mouse turned round, bit the hand of its captor and escaped, he pointed this out to those present and said: 'When the tiniest creature defends itself like this against aggressors, what ought men to do, do you reckon?'"¹⁴³

K. Li'l Monster [Kody], L.A. gang member

"If you slap me, I'm gonna hit you with my closed fist. If you stab me, I'm gonna shoot you. An eye for an eye doesn't exist—it's one-up."¹⁴⁴

L. Unnamed violent criminal (twentieth century).

"If something is worth fighting about, then it's worth killing somebody over. If you get into a fight with anybody, try to kill

them. I don't care who it is—a man or a woman—pick up a stick, board, rock, brick or anything, and hit them in the head with it."¹⁴⁵

M. Decal for sale at a California gun show (1996)

"BURGLARS & THIEVES: If You Insist On Robbing This House You Will Welcome Death During Torture."

REVOLUTION

Others may, for good or bad reason, expel me from the social contract. I myself may, for equally good or bad reason, withdraw myself—temporarily, like Goetz, who after using his gun submitted to judgment, or permanently, like the suicidal chemist. Or I may choose to remake the social contract. A king or a committee, it matters not: those judges, legislators and executors which my neighbors and I once set over us remain in some fundamental moral sense, however absolute their power may be, our mere representatives; if there is any justice in this world, we ought to be able to remove them, violently if need be, should they ill use us beyond our endurance.¹⁴⁶ *They*, it too often seems, deny it. (The Romans, for instance, justified slavery on the grounds of a mythic social contract between the warring groups which later became master and slave: the victors gave life to the vanquished; the vanquished gave their freedom into the hands of the victors—forever.¹⁴⁷ Long after they were gone, Louis XV's preceptor said baldly that "men are all born subjects: and paternal authority, which accustoms them to obedience, at the same time teaches them to have but one head."¹⁴⁸ He was the one whose definition of the purpose of government was: "the welfare and preservation of the state."¹⁴⁹ This formula chills me. There is nothing of Lincoln's benignity in it. There is no place for me.) That is why that fiery and tragical anarchist Bakunin calls the social contract

an unworthy hoax! For it assumes that while I was in a state of not being able to will, to think, to speak, I bound myself and all my descendants—only by virtue of having let myself be victimized without raising any protest—into perpetual slavery.¹⁵⁰

This is just my point. For a social contract to be just, the people who are bound by it ought to be able to feel themselves, if not its executors, at least its originators and beneficiaries. Hence Gibbon's aphorism that freedom fades "when the legislative power is nominated by the executive"¹⁵¹ rather than by the subjects (and objects) of the laws. But the other horn of the dilemma is that executive power is needed to enforce equality upon the legislature's members.¹⁵² While the social contract is no fair agreement if we will never be permitted to revoke it,¹⁵³ on the other hand, should it be too easily revocable, it scarcely differs from Hobbes's natural "State of Warre"—that is, no contract at all. In 1790 we find Edmund Burke writing with vehement eloquence and alarm that the state ought to be *consecrated, sanctified*, because the social contract "ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee," but rather a "partnership in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations," it becomes a contract between the living,

the dead and the unborn, which we, mere links in the chain, have no *right* to break!¹⁵⁴ An ironclad contract, and we cannot rebel against Stalin; no contract, and we cannot protect Adupa.¹⁵⁵

If such is the case, let the revolution begin.¹⁵⁶

When the contract must be broken, however, we should insist that the voiding of some provisions does not allow the whole thing to be scrapped. Even if an entire regime and its associated priesthood, legal system, school curricula and the like are to be (in Pol Pot's lovely word) "smashed," an *implicit* social contract resumes at the cessation of violence.¹⁵⁷ I propose that this contract be based on the recognition of the four rights of the self listed above. My right to violent self-defense remains inalienable in any case of need, and during the revolution I may *justly* (if I feel the necessity) throttle your corresponding right—and you—but once my clique or mass movement has achieved its object, and I my safety, I am obliged to restore you to your rights. If I do not, this simply means that our violent struggle is not and cannot yet be concluded, since neither you nor anyone else will alienate your right to fight for life.

All this is merely another way of saying that having once entered into a social contract of any kind, we return to the state of nature only temporarily. —Why ought we to assume this? —For the same reason that we entered into a social contract in the first place. The Unabomber is wrong: the state of nature is not invariably preferable. If I deny to you the rights I expect for myself, how can I have any hope of getting those rights for myself?—"In reality," writes another moral philosopher, "right is no more than a covenant established or accepted by men to avoid mutual harm."¹⁵⁸ True enough. That right comprises the social contract.

CHAPTER 5

WHERE DO YOUR
RIGHTS BEGIN?

Do as you would be done by.

THE GOLDEN RULE¹

In a letter of commentary on my moral calculus, the anthropologist Bruce Trigger, a kind and intelligent man who has helped me very much with my projects over the years, objects to the caveat to the allegiance condition,² which as you may remember runs: *Involuntary attachments are not binding. Voluntary attachments may be withdrawn at any time.* In short, both conditions may be overridden—at which point one returns to the state of nature. “If you tacitly agree to how society works,” writes Trigger, “I don’t think you have a moral right to change your position at will. If a Dane or Dutch person accepted Jews as fellow citizens before the Nazis arrived he/she didn’t have a moral right to decide that what happened to Jews was none of his business after. In this sense I regard some voluntary attachments as binding.”³

I guess what I would say to this is that the Jewish Danes who suddenly found themselves excluded from the social order would be totally justified in rising up against an authority which the Nazis had rendered illegitimate. I am fairly certain that I would do the little I could to aid their just struggle. Perhaps I would sacri-

fice my life. However, I would not condemn someone who refused to take part on the basis of a prior moral obligation: for instance, one of the mothers we have been discussing, one of the good ones who cared about the child who needed her, and refrained from taking undue risks for fear that the child would be left orphaned. When we were talking about the four murdered children I quoted this maxim of Gandhi's: "Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household. . . ." I agree and I disagree. A child is an attachment, but we do not always set out to form attachments; just as often, they come to us. *The Golden Rule becomes more valid than ever in reference to one's dependents.*⁵

Five variations of the Golden Rule, some justified, some not, are given in the moral calculus.⁶ These will be discussed in the next chapter, "Means and Ends."⁷ In the meantime, let me briefly answer the question *What is my social contract with others?* or more fundamentally *What are my obligations to others?*

To anticipate a little, here are some of the principles which this book will seek to establish:

Violent defense of honor is justified *when honor is altruistic*—that is, when honor demands the deliverance of a third party from imminent violence.⁸ Violent defense of class is justified *when it is truly defense against the exactions, impoverishments, oppressions and humiliations imposed by other classes*—not proactive self-defense.⁹ Violent defense of earth is justified *when needed to avert a provably imminent ecological catastrophe.*¹⁰ In all of these cases, the violent severance of one's attachment to the given social order may be necessary, for the sake of others or for one's own sake—in other words, for the sake of a common cause. In many chapters of this book I will be raising the question: Does the cause lie open to all?

The foundation of this book is the Golden Rule. Anything which furthers that principle—for instance, empathy—will usually be treated as a good (in the chapter on defense of authority I will find myself forced to criticize Trotsky for rejecting "empathetic bridges").¹¹ In fact, the Golden Rule remains so fundamental that it may be easy to lose sight of it.

I reiterate that *involuntary attachments are not binding. Voluntary attachments may be withdrawn at any time.* Authority may be legitimate—that is, it may operate with the consent of the governed¹²—or it may not be. Either way, authority must respect the Golden Rule to the same extent as any other moral entity, perhaps even more since authority enjoys the supreme power to inflict violence. Should it fail to do so, why then, *involuntary attachments are not binding*, and the more involuntary they are, the more likely it is that the authority which insists on them approaches illegitimacy. *Voluntary attachments may be withdrawn at any time.*

Nonetheless, our caveat to the allegiance condition requires an addition. Here is the wording in full:

CAVEAT: Involuntary attachments are not binding. Voluntary attachments may likewise be withdrawn at any time. In short, both conditions may be overridden—at which point one returns almost to the state of nature, with one exception: The Golden Rule should always be respected.

And to this I think it best to add a reiteration of one of the final sentences in the last chapter: Even if an entire regime should be smashed, an *implicit* social contract resumes at the cessation of violence.¹³



CHAPTER 6
MEANS AND ENDS

I do not deny that among an infinite number of acts of violence and folly, some good may have been done. They who destroy every thing certainly will remove some grievance. They who make everything new, have a chance that they may establish some thing beneficial.

BURKE, 1790¹

Here you have the morality of the rightists: they say, let us find an explanation for needless cruelty; we must be humanists, and laws must be obeyed. But this morality is not revolutionary; it does not advance the cause.

MOLOTOV, 1976²

The previous chapters might be entitled "Weapons and the Citizen." In that case, much of the remainder of this book ought to be called "Weapons and the Revolutionary." We shall not, however, neglect the soldier, the prosecutor or the armed racist, all of whom justify whatever violence they commit by going beyond the rights of the self to invoke the rights of the group to which they actually or hypothetically belong. Identity is always sweet, and likewise the smoke of

identity's sacrifices: every Moloch owns graciously accepting nostrils. For any cause in the name of which you wish to slaughter me, you can find your happy justification—although straightforward souls forego such trash to save time. One might say that the more highly regulated a society (or a person), the more possibilities of breaking laws, hence the more guilt, hence the more need for justifications. But never mind. They lie like pebbles upon the beaches of cunning, ready to be scooped up by the fistful. First comes your justification. Afterwards you may remand me to the secular arm.

COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

My argument so far is the less than original one (most often disputed on religious or legalistic grounds—disputed, in short, according to stone-carved moral codes) that it is the right of the self to defend itself, or not defend itself, or even end itself, as it sees fit; that the self is, in short, the basic indissoluble element of autonomy; that whoever attacks another unprovoked imperils those rights, and, therefore, in the course of being repelled, may forfeit them on his own account, should circumstances require it.³ —“Good thing this won't be read by social insects,” responds one reader. “Even so, it's possible to think, ‘How American!’ or whatever.”⁴ And most likely my formulations, if they are ever seen, will bring smiles now and a century from now, such being the lot of universalist pretences. Well, our sketch of the individual's rights is completed. And now let us go to that beach of pretty pebbles, and ask: What else constitutes self-defense? —The immensity of this inquiry is so daunting that I can only begin to hint at it by raising various cases. For instance, is self-defense for me the same as self-defense for my nation or clan? Evidently not. Suppose that as a revolutionary I act violently or non-violently to break laws with which I disagree (Trotsky once wrote that disobeying a law should be considered no more and no less important than missing a train). The consequence may well be that the nation of which I was once a part will invoke self-defense to hunt me down and kill me. And the government which pays my killers, is it a “legitimate” government or a mere “regime”? Who decides that? Even if it is but the latter, isn't a regime a collection of selves each with the right of self-defense? Does my breaking “their” law harm them individually? If not, how could I be harming them collectively? Are Marxists and anarchists reasonable in calling for self-defense based on class? (“All means are justified in the war of humanity against its enemies. Indeed, the more repugnant the means, the stronger the test of one's nobility and devotion. All great revolutionists have proved that.”)⁵ How justified is violent defense of honor? What about “ecodefense”? We can bedazzle ourselves with such questions as long as we like (and in this half of the book we shall look at all of them). Naturally, we shall not answer any one of them as well as we should: each issue deserves a life's work. The tale of Joan of Arc, for instance, by partaking of so many categories at once—

national self-defense, self-defense of authority, of creed, of honor, proactive self-defense—reminds us how problematic it is to fit real life into even one's best constructed pigeonholes: "You, Englishmen, who have no right in this Kingdom of France," she writes on a sheet tied to an arrow and shot out of besieged Orleans, "the King of Heaven orders and commands you through me, Joan the Maid, that you quit your fortresses and return into your own country, or if not I shall make you such *babay* that the memory of it will be perpetual."⁶ How would you categorize that? And when we turn from the historical illustrations of this book's first half to our actual case studies, our dipperfuls of water from the murky well of experience, we'll rediscover the same difficulty, that within any given Joan (who's already distorted by our vision) lie dissolved and commingled her Kingdom of France, her King of Heaven, and all the other multitudinous treasures which she, in defending her own being, must also defend. This is one of the main reasons that great literature possesses the power to fascinate: it presents a whole person, offering him up on an introspective platter like a sort of omelette of mixed motives. This I hope to do in the case studies, whenever portraiture is appropriate. But first we must begin by defining the questions themselves. Answering them requires sincere induction, which must in turn be preceded by description. Let us then construct a pretty little natural history of mass violence, of rising up and burning and purifying in the name of the greatest good.

AN ANARCHIST COMEDY

And now we have arrived at the central matter of this book, the metaphor which revolutionaries, conquerors, patriots and other violent movers so often use. Ethics is the evaluation of justifications. Justifications are the links between ends and means.⁷ "Everything is moral which assists the triumph of revolution," wrote Sergey Nechaev in his infamous "Catechism of the Revolutionist"⁸ (that cold intellectual mask over an enraged face); if this assertion is true, then no justifications are required for any action, and we cannot judge any other person except on the basis of his stated ends (will this murder assist the triumph of my revolution or not?)—which actually leaves Nechaev in a bind, because if incumbency, calmly oppressing and massacring, states that it does so, like Nechaev, to "benefit the people," then how can revolutionary activism denounce it? Let us therefore grant our authority as human beings, as citizens, to judge each others' means, even when those means do not directly affect the rights of our sovereign private selves.

A means no one can be sure of in advance, because it belongs to praxis, to implementation, to the interaction between strategy and an unpredictable world. Maybe that nonviolent rally which you wish to lead will turn violent when the police start shooting your picketers down. Weaponless yourself, you must acknowledge the responsibility. (Gandhi had to do this; so did Martin Luther King.) "Behold, I shall

raise up evil against you out of your own house."⁹ Or perhaps your assassination attempt will fail, and you'll be treated as a nonviolent lunatic with a toy gun instead of as a murderer-martyr. Say it succeeds, and your victim's successor carries on the old policies. (After all, not so many assassinations achieve their ultimate political object.)¹⁰ Then it has *not* succeeded. Perhaps, worst of all, you'll kill the wrong people, as did the anarchist Severino Di Giovanni—repeatedly. Two of his apologists shruggingly explain:

when the violent act, decided by a militant or group of militants, is carried out with opportune analysis and guarantee; when its political opportunity has been considered and is carried out with the maximum possibility of comprehension by the mass; and the militant or group are really part of the armed minority of the exploited; then if the action causes an "accident" and someone dies during the course of it, we cannot condemn the action and the comrades who carried it out.¹¹

The three conditions proposed by the apologists are thus, translated into our terms: careful consideration of ends, determination of the practicality of means and membership in the revolutionary elite (this last *ad hominem* postulate let us bury without a funeral).¹² Now it becomes apparent that this formula is really a genteel form of Nechaev's, its cruel arrogance dressed up in pseudo-utilitarian rationalism, like some army's murderous pikes whose poles have been segmented with repeated crosshatched or floral designs: rather than asserting we have the right to commit premeditated murder in pursuit of a perfect end, it claims that we may commit any number of manslaughters. In 1920, the fanatical Communist John Reed tells Emma Goldman that shooting five hundred people was nothing, just a "stupid blunder on the part of overzealous Chekists."¹³ Di Giovanni's actions can equally be well classified as mere escapades, errors, not wickedness. In 1927 he commits his first known homicide, a double one, by means of his trademark suitcase bomb activated by a marriage of acids. What could be the most worthy target for an anarchist at the time? Why, of course—an American bank! But neither the nineteen-year-old clerk who had just finished planning her honeymoon nor the itinerant vendor have ever exploited anyone. Better to deny these globs of flesh—into the grave with them! Twenty-three other souls are wounded. Inspired (so it would seem) rather than remorseful, Di Giovanni proceeds to the Bank of Boston, planting another suitcase which fortunately fails to explode; if it had, it might have done the same sort of work.

A year later, impelled by his justified hatred of Mussolini, he and his accomplice Romano enter the Italian consulate. In this case I might have been willing to accept the label of "opportune analysis and guarantee," but because the two anarchists cannot bring their suitcase within range of Consul Campini, they resort to incompetence's cowardly expediency, opportunism, and set it down by the service desk. Nine dead, thirty-four injured. Fire, blood, rubble, broken glass.¹⁴ Once again, Di

Giovanni accomplished nothing, except the writing of his murky message in other people's blood. Mussolini, whose evil of course incomparably surpasses Di Giovanni's (his moral calculus: "I need several thousand dead to be able to take my place at the peace table"),¹⁵ will not be stopped from giving Italy two decades of fascism. Di Giovanni will have been long dead by then—strapped to a prison chair by the government and executed. As for Argentina, that nation will avoid declaring war on the Axis until March 27, 1945, a mere five weeks before Germany's surrender. Forty-odd top Nazis will find hospitable refuge in Argentina after the war.¹⁶ With regard to Italian fascism, then, Di Giovanni's ends are as germane and justified as his means are vain and atrocious. His own conclusion: Time for more fire and blood. But when he leaves a suitcase at the pharmacy owned by the chairman of the Fascist subcommittee of Boca, a curious child disarms the mechanism, so that only frightening flames burst out. Di Giovanni, one begins to see, is organizationally as well as ethically deficient. Another child, chasing a pet rabbit, inadvertently discovers his headquarters, which the killer, of course, has booby-trapped. But—now the tale begins to seem almost a comedy—we now find proof not only of poor organization, but also of slovenly craftsmanship: the boy opens the door, the bomb goes off—but, once again, without accomplishing more than attracting the police. I would like to believe that were it not for the meager documentation available to me on Di Giovanni I'd find at the least a statement of sorrow, confusion, regret—but if, as the cliché runs, actions speak louder than words, then we need not admit despair in trying to reconstruct his state of mind; for later that same year he plants a bomb on a merchant vessel in support of a dockworkers' strike... A traitor calls the police, who flood the bilge area, so that one more time his mechanized mayhem fails. That bomb would have killed many people. Di Giovanni writes to his fifteen-year-old mistress, with a sort of intoxicated incoherence: "Do I perhaps do evil? But is that my guide? In evil lies the highest affirmation of life."¹⁷ This is aesthetics, not politics. Aesthetics may easily justify suicide, even double suicide—but never murder. Not long after that letter, amidst public demands for the release from detention of the anarchist Radowitsky, a young Argentine finds on the sidewalk a suitcase which feels strangely warm. His last words to an onrushing policeman: "Look what I have here!" Then flames, thunder and broken windows. The policeman is lucky enough to survive, though seriously wounded; he was not as close to the suitcase as its discoverer.¹⁸ In this instance Di Giovanni had planned to blow up the cathedral, but, as usual, accomplished something entirely different (if random murder be an accomplishment).

"A MEAN BETWEEN EXCESS AND DEFECT"

The means, then, one reads about *afterwards*, in history books and newspapers.¹⁹ We call it a result, and no one can ever apodictically know a result beforehand. But the

end, one would hope, remains constant, whether or not it is ever achieved.²⁰ Indeed, an inconstant end is a sure sign of deceitful or outright evil expediency, as when Di Giovanni switches from Italian fascists to dock workers, or Julius Caesar leaves a Roman garrison in Egypt to prop up his new puppets, Cleopatra and her cipher of a brother, with this alleged justification: "He thought it important for the prestige of our empire and for the common good, if the rulers were to remain loyal, that they should have the protection of our forces, while if they proved ungrateful, these same forces could constrain them."²¹ Caesar's end, then, *cannot* have been "the common good." Call it what it really is: the good of Rome. We can see it then; we can judge it. —"In evil lies the highest affirmation of life." —Not for me. —Fix the end; lock it; raise it; present it; preserve it. If it is truly good, be faithful to it. It hovers in the sky like the dreams of most religions. It offers itself, seeing and seen: the prospect of improvement, of amelioration or of complete remaking (depending on one's temperament)—of reform, of revolution, of salvation, of security, of coming out of the cave and into the light, of rising up into the empyrean to marry the ideal forever (or at least until the next ideal comes along), of merging with the Good.²² One guerrilla poet in a Catholic country even wrote of *resurrecting* the peasant masses from their grave of poverty.²³ This was the same as their "rising up as one."²⁴ The stone is rolled from the tomb! We who look in upon the inspired ones gather courage at last, enter the grave and, like Christ's disciples, "saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that He must *rise* from the dead."²⁵ Verily now, the revolutionary does arise, stands on tiptoe, reaches toward the end; he longs to embrace it. He craves to fly up into that oneness. The fact that he may not be able to do so does not defile his longing. If he is revolutionary enough, he will never give up. "To life one should give the exquisite elevation of the rebellion of arms and the mind," Di Giovanni had written in his typically turgid style.²⁶ Elevation, now—what's that but a rising up?

Go back to the commencement of his career, when after the Americans execute his fellow anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti he begins to set off his bombs in Buenos Aires. The first, directed against that city's Washington monument, sends up what is later described as a pillar of flame. The second does considerable damage within a four-block radius of a Ford dealership. Di Giovanni has not killed anyone yet, but, as we know, he will—oh, he will. We have not the space to list all the man's victims. In his underground magazine *Culmine* he offers—my God, what could be more literal than this?—a drawing of a man carrying on his back and shoulders, Atlas-style, an immense bomb whose fuse burns ominously. The hero is ascending a mountain at whose summit Di Giovanni has printed the word UTOPIA.²⁷ Our ends fly overhead like the red banners of Marxist-Leninist clichés. Speaking of "those great and beautiful things," Bakunin, the power of whose yearning must be respected, since on account of it he spent years of his life in detention, fiercely declaims:



Executed Paris Commune insurgents (1871)

Let it be known to you that our love for them is so strong that we are heartily sick and tired of seeing them everlastingly suspended in your Heaven—which ravished them from earth—as symbols and never-realized promises. We are not content any more with the fiction of those beautiful things; we want them in reality.²⁸

This courageous, angry, impractical man, in his person an embodiment of the anarchist stereotype with his wild beard and moustache, his fluffy sideburns and his wide sad eyes, could have had beautiful things as his class defined them, but he burned his bridges to the nobility, rejected God for being a slave-master, praised Satan for being “the first rebel, the first freethinker, and the emancipator of worlds.”²⁹ Bakunin rose up in Dresden in 1849 (Richard Wagner knew him and rebelled beside him), joined the First International and was expelled by Marx’s faction of authoritarians. He called them “impotent, ridiculous, cruel, oppressive, exploiting, maleficent.”³⁰ Maybe they were some of these, but not impotent; for they won and Bakunin lost. What did he accomplish? He fought; he suffered. He kept the beautiful things before his eyes. “When the people *rise*,” demanded Robespierre of his Jacobins, “should they not have an object worthy of themselves?”³¹

And Di Giovanni? In spite of his vacillations, he perceived a worthy object, too. Perhaps that fact was the very source of his wicked errors. The great bomb, the

mountain called "utopia," the targets and objectives of his bombings themselves, all bespeak a farsighted (in the ophthalmologist's sense), almost poetic vision. He saw the mountain, but not the people who unknowingly blocked his way.

A woman in Stalinist times wrote in her diary:

The nausea rises to my throat when I hear how calmly people can say it: He was shot, someone else was shot, shot, shot. The word is always in the air, it resonates through the air. People pronounce the words perfectly calmly, as though they were saying, "He went to the theater." I think that the real meaning of the word doesn't reach our consciousness—all we hear is the sound. We don't have a mental image of those people actually dying under the bullets.³²

Di Giovanni's mental image was only of the mountaintop.

Martin Luther in the Heidelberg Theses of 1518 had warned that too vivid an apprehension of the beautiful things would give a moral actor confidence—which by Lutheran definition must be unwarranted—in his own moral capacity. "The works of men are all the more deadly when they are done without fear," he wrote, "and with pure and evil assurance." (A modern restatement: "When it comes to revolutionaries, trust only the sad ones. The enthusiastic ones are the oppressors of tomorrow.")³³ —From this proposition, which was already pessimistic enough, Luther, frowning and pale in his black Augustinian habit, derived one still gloomier: "It is certain that a man must completely despair of himself to become fit to obtain the grace of Christ."³⁴ —Then how can that man be a revolutionary? Luther's answer: He can't. And I suppose that it was for just this reason that Luther turned upon the peasant rebels who invoked his name as justification. His views are accurately summed up by the title of his broadsheet of 1525, *Against the Murdering and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*. The murdering peasants lost, and were murdered by state authority. No beautiful things for them—at least not in this life! After all, said Luther, how could there be a Christian rebellion when hardly any of us were decent Christians? This is the opposite pole from Di Giovanni's freewheeling ruthlessness, and to me it is just as unsatisfactory.

I'll take the middle road, then. In the thirteenth century, Saint Thomas Aquinas said:

evil ... in human operations³⁵ lies in someone exceeding the measure of reason, or falling short of it ... moral virtue consists in a mean between excess and defect—excess, defect, and mean being understood in relationship to the rule of reason.³⁶

A little manual I own which rather sketchily describes how to attack airfields, blow up trains, kill sentries and occupy cities says: "Our example must be of a nature that leaves no person unconvinced of the sincerity of our goal. That goal is a

society of freedom and a world of true liberty."³⁷ Fair enough—not to Luther, but to us. Di Giovanni could have said that, and so could Gandhi. Violence with the noblest end may or may not be wrong; violence without an end can never be justified. Of Di Giovanni's ends we have said that they waver. Strike at the Americans, strike at the Italians—well, in his system both nations are oppressors, and he is arguably right.³⁸ He shotguns the face of a police inspector who employs torture, and I might be persuaded to applaud him.³⁹ But now he gets embroiled in factional fights with other leftists who call him a Fascist agent. Defense of the oppressed gives way to defense of honor. The director of the periodical *La Protesta*, under whose auspices the charge had been published, receives three lead pills in the heart—good medicine for that organ's disease of counterrevolutionary obstructionism. Di Giovanni has become a Nechaevian: he kills as he pleases, and since only he is allowed to define righteousness, why, then, he must always be right.⁴⁰

RISING UP AND RISING DOWN

Rising up, rising down! History shambles on! What are we left with? A few half-shattered Greek stelae; Trotsky's eyeglasses; Gandhi's native-spun cloth; Cortes's gamepieces of solid gold (extorted from their original owner, Montezuma); a little heap of orange peels left on the table by the late Robespierre; John Brown's lengthily underlined letters; Lenin's bottles of invisible ink;⁴¹ one of Di Giovanni's suitcases, with an iron cylinder of gelnignite and two glass tubes of acid inside; the Constitution of the Ku Klux Klan; a bruised ear (Napoleon pinched it with loving condescension)... And dead bodies, of course. (They sing about John Brown's body.) Memoirs,



Lenin

manifestoes, civil codes, trial proceedings, photographs, statues, weapons now aestheticized by that selfsame history—the sword of Frederick the Great, and God knows what else. Then dust blows out of fresh open graves, and the orange peels go grey, sink, wither, rot away. Sooner or later, every murder becomes quaint. Charlemagne hanged four and a half thousand “rebels” in a single day, but he has achieved a storybook benevolence. And that's only natural: historiography begins before the orange has even been sucked; the peeler believes in the “great and beautiful things,” or wants to believe; easy for us to believe likewise, since dust reduces truth and counterfeit to the same greyness—*caveat emptor*. But ends remain fresh, and means remain explicable. Rising up and rising down! And whom shall I save, and who is my enemy, and who is my neighbor?

“We *rose up* in arms,” wrote the leader of the Zapatista Army of National

Liberation in 1995. "This is how we pulled away the veil of falsehood and hypocrisy which covered our soil."⁴² If the metaphor is not merely mixed, then we must see (as the guerrilla poet in the Catholic country did) earth-encrusted wretches, buried alive, panting, digging themselves out, throwing aside—what? the oppressor's flags, draped over their tortured graves?—leaping to their feet; they can breathe again! They gaze upwards at Bakunin's "great and beautiful things," raise their machine-guns to heaven; then, like the People's Uprising Committees hopefully imagined by the North Vietnamese,⁴³ they begin to march, trampling underfoot that veil, that untrue flag of misbegotten authority. The revolutionary whom the Zapatistas drew on—namely, Emilio Zapata himself—had written back in 1915 that "if I *rose up* in arms, it was not to protect bandits or cover abuses, but to give full guarantees to the pueblos, protecting them against any chief or armed force that violates their rights."⁴⁴ He saw the beautiful things, but showed his peasant origins by being mistrustful of speech, especially flowery speech. Why rise up into the sky like Bakunin? For him, it was sufficient to help his friends and neighbors clamber out of the dirty pit of debt to stand on firm ground and be farmers.

"The waves of the folkish movement will continue to flow through the German land," wrote Alfred Rosenberg, not yet suspecting that the atrocities for which folkishness will be partially responsible would get him hanged. "And if we turn our attention to other countries we see that everywhere organic forces are *rising up* against the same deceit which surrounds us."⁴⁵ Deep underground, the grave of freedom is not just veiled but roofed with rock, but the magma of violent praxis will overboil, erupt, dissolve everything. There is perhaps a sexual connotation as well in Rosenberg's description; let it be; rising up is ecstasy. It is also contagious. In Moscow in 1905, the munitions workers say to the soldiers, "As soon as you *rise*, we'll *rise*, too; we'll open up the arsenal for you."⁴⁶

The Zapatistas and the Nazis both had ends and means. Possibly both experienced the same feelings in the course of their risings. Power entered them; they acted. Later on there would be time enough for the world in its dusty superciliousness to weigh upon their orange peels. All uprisers sink back into the grave at last. "The Torah holds, 'If someone comes to kill you, *rise up* and kill him first.'⁴⁷ Here peace is slumber; homicide, the means, is wakefulness, and the end is to resume one's sleep.

Explaining how the law that kills, the secular arm, the executioner's law, can only grate to bits our flesh, not our spirits, Martin Luther utters these words of stern comfort: "As the grave in which Christ lay after that he was *risen again* was void and empty ...; so when I believe in Christ, I *rise again* with him, and die to my grave, that is to say, to the law which held me captive: so that now the law is void, and I am escaped out of my prison and grave, that is to say, the law. Wherefore the law hath no right to accuse me, or to hold me any longer, for *I am risen again*."⁴⁸ This stirring, almost heartbreaking echo of Christ⁴⁹ could almost be the credo of any rev-

olutionary or titanic actor, like one of the "extraordinary men" to whom after solitary confinement and a mock execution Dostoyevsky was finally compelled to renounce his allegiance. "The law hath no right to accuse me." Luther means this only in the sense that no matter what crimes I have committed, after I have rendered satisfaction, my mangled, tortured corpse thrown down into the grave, I am, if in life I believed in the Good, no longer accursed; nobody can hurt me anymore. It was Luther's misfortune during the peasant rebellions to see these words taken literally, instead of as the arcana he meant them to be. He turned upon the desperate uprisers who had believed, and he would not stand with them or solace them; they were rebels who dared to rob authority. But what if *I* still believed? What if I believed that the law had no right to accuse me even in this life, that not only my soul, but my very body, like Christ's, was exempt? What if to my way of thinking I had committed no crime?—"Our nation shall *rise* against the enslavement of Europe by National Socialism in a new, true burst of freedom and honor," wrote Hans Scholl of the White Rose group.⁵⁰ He was saying to Hitler, "Your law hath no right to accuse me." He and his sister got executed for their pains, the latter hobbling up to the guillotine in crutches, her leg broken by torture. Those who condemned the Scholls doubtless used the term as Cortes did when, leading his wavering *conquistadores* onward, he'd warned: "It would clearly be wrong to take a single step backwards, for if these people we leave behind in peace were to see us retreat, the very stones would *rise up* against us."⁵¹ He knew whereof he spoke. Everybody knew. Against the Spartans, their slaves "the helots *rose up*—until Kimon heard their supplication and saved them," slaughtering the helots' leaders and returning the survivors to their miserable bondage.⁵² One summary of the old Athenian constitution explains that "when ... the many were enslaved to the few, the people *rose (up)* against the notables."⁵³ It was in this same sense that we must interpret a much older homicide: We read in the Book of Genesis how Cain said to Abel, whose offering to God had been accepted, "Let us go out to the field." "And when they were in the field, Cain *rose up* against his brother Abel and slew him."⁵⁴ Cain's revolution was one of envy and bitterness; but for his pains he did not succeed to his brother's honors; he got only fugitive-hood, and a mark upon his forehead. As for Cortes, he succeeded in crushing the Aztec empire. When a Spaniard named Alonso de Zorita came to Mexico a few decades later, he found the native hierarchy in a shambles, and wrote: "No harmony remains among the Indians of New Spain because the commoners have lost all feeling of shame as concerns their lords and principales, because they have *risen up* against their lords and lost the respect they once had for them."⁵⁵ Risers-up and lords alike, what did they win from the Spaniards? Poverty at best; otherwise, a mark similar to Cain's—the mark of slavery, literally branded on their foreheads.

Cicero cries to the judges of a man on trial for parricide: "Bid this man who is your suppliant ... to *rise up*, at long last, from the ground where he is lying."⁵⁶ This rising up has not the slightest revolutionary tinge, being predicated merely on the

judges' compassion (which is to say their supposed justice), but it is kin to other risings-up in this important respect: We are upright animals. When we rise up, when we stand up, we come into our own; we come into our rightful and natural inheritance—which is exactly the sense in which both the Zapatistas and “the Cambodian people *rose up*. They themselves toppled the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary executioners totally, established a government truly of the people, their sole legitimate representative.”⁵⁷ This is almost untrue. The Pol Pot regime was destroyed by Vietnamese military intervention—granted, with some Cambodian assistance.⁵⁸ The government then established was not representative at all, but a hated foreign imposition. As described, however, the process certainly sounds majestic. It almost always does. That is why thousands and hundreds of thousands more have risen up over the millennia. When are they right?

JUDGING “CORRECTNESS” AD HOMINEM

This is the militant's way, the extremist's and the sadist's. It was, at times, Di Giovanni's. It was Nechaev's. The formulation is: *The fact that you say X makes it wrong. The fact that I say it makes it right.* Put this way, of course, it sounds absurd. But it was a founding principle of the Third Reich—and of the Soviet Union, too, as we see from:

LENIN'S MORAL CALCULUS (1913)

“People have always been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the *interest* of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises.”

SOURCE: LENIN, VOL. 1, P. 48 [ARTICLE ON K. MARX].

In other words, your promise remains irrelevant to me—and likewise mine to you, but if my uprising triumphs, you'll be uprooted anyway from the earth your class sought to bury me in.

Setting Lenin aside, let us agree here and now that while the interest of a class or another group may determine the utterance of some ethical formulation, the formulation itself is not glorified or tarnished thereby. Whether Christ or Hitler says it, it is what it is.

JUDGING “CORRECTNESS” BY RESULT

Begin anew, then, with the almost as expedient gauge of *success*, which we heard Gandhi categorically reject.⁵⁹ Vengeance is mine, says the patriot whom we rise up

against, and too often he has the means to obtain it seamlessly. It behooves us, then, in planning actions intended to increase our control over our lives, to determine whether in the long run we'll be rising up, and gaining self-sovereignty, or whether in fact what goes up will only come down the harder.⁶⁰ The American Revolution was a rising up (to some—certainly not to Indians, who abstained or participated on either side); the abortive head-rollings in central Europe in 1848 were risings down, since after they failed, authority tightened the screws. The concept, in short, is vulgarly simple, which means that it might be useful. A patient revolutionary might well disagree with given applications of the concept, arguing, for instance, that 1848 led to better things such as 1870 and 1905, which led to 1917, whereas I would tend to think about the crushed and ruined lives of 1849, but who could deny that some strategies build a movement while others destroy it? When the Burmese Communist Party followed the line of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1966-68, their ends might or might not have been praiseworthy but they severely damaged their power base: most if not all of the leaders and cadres put to death by their own comrades died quite simply for nothing—which constitutes a rising down if anything does.

I remember that May night in 1980 when, after the police had rushed out of the Seabrook nuclear plant's gates and beaten people, a long tense hush ensued, broken finally by the bullhorns of police calling on the committed to "DISPERSE. LET'S GO. CLEAR THE GATE." There was a silence, and so the police bullhorn said: "CLEAR THE GATE. LET'S GO. CLEAR THE GATE PROPERTY OR YOU'LL BE ARRESTED." Then the protesters began to get up, and the bullhorn said: "C'MON, EVERYBODY DISPERSE." The two leaders of my supposedly leaderless affinity group, Tom and Rob, now rose. Tom returned a poncho which he had borrowed against MACE-infused firehoses and helped fold up the plastic sheeting which other protesters had placed over their heads. Rob just stood there. Tom said: "Man, I really want to stay here. I want to—" to which Rob wearily replied, "Yeah, but like the thing to do is to hit this place tomorrow with a..." and Tom dully asked himself: "How did they just get rid of us like this? How did they, how did they just tell us to go and just swatted us away like that?" —Rob answered: "We didn't have enough people to do anything. This whole action is just like fucking doomed. America is saying we can all die in a meltdown, in a fireball and that's it. Right now they have us where they want us. There's nothing we can do."⁶¹

Rob was right. A violent or nonviolent rush upon the gate would have been literally beaten back; and the only other method of staying in the game, the Gandhian one of staying put, might have clogged New Hampshire's courts somewhat, at a price of inconvenience, intimidation, a financial burden and perhaps further physical harm, but...

"There may be avoidable suffering," runs Gandhi's moral calculus. "These things are preferable to national emasculation." And I agree. But even if, as Rob and

Tom believed, and as I myself tend to believe even now, nuclear power was a wrong and dangerous course which the American plutocracy had no right to impose upon its citizens, national emasculation would have been achieved in any case. How can I be certain of this? Of course I can't; would-have-beens remain eternally unverifiable, but the antinuclear protesters at Seabrook possessed neither the will nor the popular support to rise up; and when they locked eyes with the National Guardsmen, they knew it. —“One must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results,” says Gandhi. Yes, but what if the end is laudable, but not essential? The ambiguously harmful “incident” at Three Mile Island (many of the frogs downwind of there are mutants now, I've read) and the unambiguous disaster at Chernobyl, which might in the end claim twenty thousand casualties, still lay in the future, and it is to Tom and Rob's credit that they could imagine them, and imagine worse. They will not figure much in this book about violence; and in the unlikely event that they ever see it, I would like them to know that my admiration for them has grown over the years. At the time I thought them needlessly abrasive and defiant, which they were; more actuated by ego than they pretended, which they also were, but that now seems to me forgivable, even harmless in this context. Like Gandhi, they could have chosen to be “comfortable.” Instead, they took risks in the interests of a higher good. And they harmed nobody (except financially) in the service of that good. The industrial apocalypse from which they sought to save their country still hadn't occurred when I wrote this book, but maybe it would someday; still and all, on the rare occasions when I meet people now who were antinuclear activists then, I always ask them why they're not still antinuclear activists, and their answers come down either to being busy and tired or else to the call of another cause. Back in 1980, would these people have been willing to bring America to, say, economic ruin in order to end nuclear power? Would they have been willing to remain in prison forever? I don't believe so. Their attachment (I use this word deliberately) to the end wasn't as fanatical as Gandhi's. Therefore, results were essential to justify the anticipated sacrifices. Those results looking ever more unlikely, it was time to cut one's losses, avoid a rising down, fold up the tarpaulins and go back to our tents, case closed.

From this pragmatic standpoint, a guaranteed rising up requires merely sublime dedication, a perfect cause, ideal weapons, a complete organization and omnipotence. Since I have been unable to find any of those things today, there come to me only the following second-rate considerations:—To start with, we ought never to expect to see our purpose accomplished generally, and should be gratified with the success of small tactics in limited areas. Radical environmentalists, for instance, will not stop the mass extinctions of species by themselves. (It is precisely because this is so obvious that I've rarely met an activist who understood it.) Therefore, as in fascist and communist groups, we must have a division of labor in our organization between the propagandists, to keep the main goal in mind (for instance, “a safe nat-

ural environment"), and tacticians, who compromise the integrity of that goal sufficiently to accomplish snippets of it. This analysis may rouse antipathy because of resonances with the above-named parties, which ruthlessly sacrificed people to strategies because historical preconditions X, Y and Z for the goal had not yet been filled; and so those groups corrupted the goal entirely, becoming secular successes and spiritual failures, which must also be considered risings down. I can see no way to guard against this entirely, but one thing occurs to me: that such groups as lose (or never begin with) decency seem to have what American conservatives call an "ideology"—that is, a model into which the entire social order can be stuffed and stolen away.⁶² I propose to steal a mere few dinner plates, for my aims are modest; I'm a mere reformist. You who want to clean out the patriots' entire banquet set, with all the food in the refrigerator besides, should take care. You'll cook the rhubarb wrong, as meanwhile the bare-stripped patriots come after you. Your gorge will rise, and you'll be risen down.

Carry out your program, please, not your ideology. People have improved conditions in sweatshops, temporarily and in finite localities, but no one has ever "reorganized the means of production" with happy results, because it is difficult to know when to declare victory. It is precisely this difficulty which leads Trotsky to try to scuttle away from moral judgment altogether:

Do the consequences of a revolution justify in general the sacrifice it involves? The question is teleological and therefore fruitless. It would be as well to ask in the face of the difficulties and griefs of personal existence: Is it worth while to be born?⁶³

It is "as well" to ask both questions.

Kill people if you have to, but do it practically, for practical reasons. That approach has worked for your oppressors, and it can work for you. Above all, kill only in self-defense. (Ah, but what is self-defense?)

Rising up requires saintlike extremism in one direction, and neutrality or prostitution in others. It might be necessary to betray the goal in small ways—in which case betrayal is the greater decency, as long as the war is limited:—limited war has limited liability, the price for which is limited reward.

JUDGING "CORRECTNESS" BY GOODNESS

But ends must come before means, so before concerning yourself with expediency, with practical success, read the gauge of *justice*. The killer customarily has his reasons, as I've said. So does the victim. When John Brown's son Watson lay captured and dying, a pro-slavery South Carolinian asked him why he had participated in the raid on Harpers Ferry. —"Duty, sir," said Watson. The South Carolinian turned upon him and cried: "Is it then your idea of duty to shoot men down upon their own

hearth-stones for defending their rights?"⁶⁴ Both men would doubtless have justified their respective positions, if they'd been pushed, on the basis of self-defense. Watson could invoke self-defense of race through the Golden Rule (in other words, though he was not black, he was giving assistance to blacks in the defense of their human rights). The South Carolinian could invoke the basic right of any self to defend person and property (which latter category to his mind included the slaves he'd paid for).

Were you and I to dwell within the same social-moral order (the South Carolinian probably thought that he and Watson did; they shared the same nation, president and constitution; Watson thought they didn't, given their disagreement about slavery), and were I to choose to engage in violence against you,⁶⁵ my justifications would be, in decreasing order of fairness:

REASONS TO DO HARM

1. What you've done. (You physically attacked me.)
2. What you are: allegiance. (You wear the uniform of the enemy army.)
3. What you haven't done. (You evince neutrality toward my behavior when I need your help.)
4. Whom you associate with. (Your best friend is in category 1.)
5. What you might do. (You could conceivably end up in categories 1, 2, 3 or 4.)
6. What you are: biological, religious or ideological identity. (You are a Jew, and I hate Jews.) What you have. (You are rich and I am not, so I'll rob and kill you.)
7. The fact that you are. (You exist, and any victim will do.)

By these criteria, whatever acts of self-defense the South Carolinian might have committed would have been more justifiable than Watson Brown's actions, because the former's excuse for violence was of the first rank: Watson had attacked him and his. As for Watson himself, had he injured the South Carolinian in any way he could only have appealed to a justification of the second rank: the South Carolinian had not threatened him personally, but he was a slaveholder, a member of the oppressor class. Again, through the Golden Rule Watson could have, should have and did put himself in the place of one of the South Carolinian's slaves, but now we approach a moral paradox akin to Zeno's of the hare and the tortoise: the South Carolinian's slaves were not likely *at that moment* in any great physical danger; the injury which had been done them must now have been a customary ache, so by this way of looking at things there was in the matter of their liberation no immediacy comparable to the urgency felt by the South Carolinian regarding this unprecedented threat. A government of constitutional law which has delegated to itself the right to use force will temporarily relinquish that right, as we have seen, only to a citizen in extremity. Harpers Ferry was being raided; it would not have done for the householders to wait for the matter to be taken up in the law courts. John Brown's party was clear-

ly the aggressor. But Watson could have replied (had he not been weak and probably delirious with septic shock) that it would never have done for him to go to the law courts, either. No judge in Harpers Ferry was going to free the South Carolinian's slaves on Watson Brown's say-so.

Thus, comparing the means and ends of these two principals invokes the cliché about apples and oranges. The South Carolinian, like most citizens, was defending ordinary self-interest justified by civil custom and state law, with the blessing of the Constitution of the United States as then written and interpreted. Recently, being called again for jury service, I was instructed by the judge that whether or not I liked the law (and there were many laws which he personally disliked) I was required as a citizen to follow the law. Could I do that? I could; but at Harper's Ferry, slavery was the law. —It was Watson's conviction that such a law, legally and even democratically arrived at (according to the standards of the time) by the white adult males of the United States, was wrong. I admire Watson, who acted bravely and unselfishly. To him, the South Carolinian's ends were unjustified, which automatically contaminated the means (since we have agreed that violent means without ends are unethical, it certainly follows that means, even nonviolent ones, in the service of unethical ends cannot be approved). Or, to put it more concretely, Watson saw nothing defensible about slavery; and so the South Carolinian's self-defense hardly impressed him. To the South Carolinian, Watson's ends were, at the very least, offensive, although it is possible that if the raid on Harper's Ferry had never happened and the two men had struck up a friendly tavern debate somewhere on neutral ground, the South Carolinian, whose views we know only superficially, might even have allowed that slavery was, in the abstract, a bad thing—who knows?—but certainly Watson's means for expressing his difference were unlawful, despicable, wolfish, murderous.

The gloomy conclusion begins to appear that whenever violence defines my relationship to you, I must be an apple and you an orange, and only dust upon our peeled carcasses can make us one; that because the stakes can be so high (literally, life and death), violent confrontations tend to be predicated on *insoluble disagreement*. In the Socratic dialogues, a brash soul utters some proposition; the other, gently and sadistically wise, by cunning stages gets him to disavow it because (as suddenly becomes clear when the brash one's illogic has been completely dissected away) it contradicts a presupposition which both parties share. But beyond and before logic stands the vessel in which logic is contained—the *living identity* of one's intelligence. Socrates can win over Euthyphro because the only consequences to the latter will be a slight humiliation, a change of philosophical position and perhaps (but only perhaps, human nature being what it is) a change of behavior derived from that position. But Watson Brown and the South Carolinian were armed not only with mutually exclusive righteousness, but also with guns. To lose the argument, as Watson did, was a serious matter: Watson died. (As Carlyle would have said, the rights of

man were vanquished by the might of man.) Violence and counter-violence allow (though, as Gandhi and Joan of Arc proved, they do not require) both sides to invoke our first principle of the rights of the self, the preservation of the living vessel; and even if these rights are identically expressed—especially then!—they remain irreconcilable.

Imagine that Socrates and Euthyphro have both agreed on the truth of an axiom—say, Euthyphro's "piety is what is pleasing to the gods." Fair enough; concord is restored. But imagine two soldiers in hand-to-hand combat, each acting upon the selfsame credo:

1. My motherland must be defended.⁶⁶ [*Moral*]
2. If I refuse to follow orders, I will be executed.⁶⁷ [*Expedient*]
3. I have the right and the duty to defend my own life.⁶⁸ [*Moral and expedient*]

These propositions, none of them anything but passive, which is to say unaggressive, bring the two enemies, through circumstances not of either's making, into a horrible *de facto* agreement: Each must try to kill the other.

This is why ethics, however universal it may be in principle, so often becomes subjective in practical application, because the very same means, in the service of the very same end, may well produce different and even opposing results. One of these soldiers will live; one will die. One regime gains the victory, one the bondage. We agreed to measure moral "correctness" by two yardsticks, the first of which was Hitler's favorite, namely, results. From the point of view of the South Carolinian, and states' rights advocates generally, the War Between the States was a definite rising-down, because through it not only was the South bled and impoverished, but it lost the very right which it had seceded to defend, and had defended against the Browns: the right to own slaves. For President Lincoln, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, the war was hardly a rising up, either, since he didn't want it, had acquiesced in the maintenance (though not the extension) of slavery and aimed only at restoring the status quo where military and political necessity permitted. For federalists it was a definite rising-up: these days, what Washington says, more often than not, goes. To the Browns, of course, the result of the Civil War, had they lived to see it, would have occasioned hosannahs—and it would have made them proud to know that their Harpers Ferry raid, by exacerbating the friction between North and South, helped bring about secession and hence war. Yes, a rising up it was indeed, whose effects are still with us even after the crumbling of everybody's orange peels...

And by the second yardstick, that of goodness? The historian who called it "the fanatical and meaningless John Brown raid"⁶⁹ was wrong. Fanatical, yes; meaningless, no. It simply had different meanings to the various participants. Morally it was *perhaps* a rising up, although we could not really decide that without researching who was harmed on which side at Harpers Ferry, and how and why they were

harmed, and how the whole thing began. (We will do just that in a later chapter.) Beginning is often the hardest part. The South Carolinian would probably begin with the cold night moment when old John Brown said to his twenty-one commandos: "Men, get on your arms; we will proceed to the ferry." Watson might choose to begin with the year 1619, when a Dutch ship landed the first black slave in America. This choice might affect the final judgment just a hair. —Some commonplaces which could be offered are: the South Carolinian was right to defend himself, and wrong to defend slavery. Watson Brown was right (and brave) to attack slavery, and not necessarily right to attack anybody in particular. The problem with formulations like this, and books like this, is that after reading them we are not any better off *practically* than we were before. But it is better—far better!—to fail to act or judge, than, overstimulated by dogmatism, to behave irredeemably. Hence the First Law of Violent Action: *The inertia of the situation into which we inject ourselves must always be given the benefit of the doubt*—a fancy way of saying, "Look before you leap." (A corollary to this law is that no moral calculus should be too readily applicable.) We should not deduce from this that Watson was wrong—or that he wasn't. It does mean that if we ever find ourselves in Watson's place, we had better be awfully certain that we are right, and that we can foresee the likely consequences, both of our success and of our failure. Here is one of the places where I part company with the Unabomber, who, driven by passionate despair, utters this Hitler-echoing cry: "It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences."⁷⁰

THE CALCULUS OF FANATICISM

The reason that the Unabomber is wrong, and that John and Watson Brown *might* have been wrong, is that sweeping, unilateral violent action fails to respect the attachments of others. Gandhi and Buddha, as we have seen, warned their seekers that the life-and-death road could not be followed very far by anybody who held onto family, wealth or anything but the goal. Curtis Sliwa of the Guardian Angels⁷¹ and the terrorist Nechaev, whom I've already quoted, said much the same thing. The Browns had gone through with it; they were ready to die. But it does not follow that because for my own convictions I have put my right to defense in the keeping of providence, I may do the same with your right. Here the Golden Rule requires amendment.⁷² *Do unto others, not only as you would be done by, but also as they would be done by. In the case of any variance, do the more generous thing.* (Call this the Empath's Golden Rule.) Needless to say, this maxim is even more impractical than the Golden Rule itself. When the prosecutor asks for the death penalty, he may say to himself: "If I had murdered all these people, I would deserve to die," but, unless he is masochistic, arrogant or self-deceiving, he will not say, "If I had done that, I would *want* to die." Nor do we expect otherwise from him (Gandhians and their like excepted), because by himself violating the Golden Rule the convicted criminal has

prevented us from trusting him not to violate it again. And (it is important to state) the criminal has *deliberately* violated it. The fanatical revolutionary, on the other hand, does not pretend that all the people whom he wishes to harm have in fact knowingly and maliciously broken what he considers to be a universal law of justice and decency. Disregarding my ranking of reasons to do harm, the revolutionary gazes upon me without empathy, and shoots me, because what I am is to him no feebler grounds for condemning me than what I've done.

The terrorist's Golden Rule: *Do as you need to.*⁷³ Who cares about the rest? In his brilliant novel *Runaway Horses*, Yukio Mishima, whose description of the fanatical sensibility deserves credence on account of the terrorist theater of Mishima's own end, paints an assassin's portrait of the victim, the brush-strokes simultaneously delineating defense of race, homeland, creed:

The evil of Kurahara was that of an intellect that had no ties with blood nor with native soil. In any case, *though Isao knew nothing of Kurahara the man*, Kurahara's evil was vividly clear to him...⁷⁴ And one clouded stream that never ran dry was that choked with the scum of humanism, the poison spewed out by ... the factory of Western European ideals. The pollution from that factory degraded the exalted fervor to kill.⁷⁵

We cannot say on such evidence alone that Kurahara's killer is wrong, because a passage like this, ominous though it may be, does not give us sufficient information to decide whether Kurahara has in fact committed deeds deserving death. But if no further ascriptions appear, if no further logic is developed, then the assassin is as fanatical as Di Giovanni ascending Mount Utopia. Why? Because the murderer does not have enough information, either, and still he goes ahead.⁷⁶

A LUTHERAN TYPOLOGY

What information ought he to possess? What data do most moral agents go by? Here we would do well to adopt an approximation of the schema laid out by Martin Luther in one of his sermons, *circa* 1519:⁷⁷

THE TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

VS.

THE TWO KINDS OF SIN

PASSIVE

1. Alien righteousness
*Bestowed by God through grace,
baptism and perhaps faith.*
"THE BRIDEGROOM."

vs.

1. Original sin
*Transmitted from Adam
and Eve. We are born with this.*

+

+

ACTIVE

2. Proper righteousness

vs.

2. Personal sin

Achieved by us through self-hate,
neighbor-love, fear of God and
perhaps faith.

Committed by us through
desire, self-indulgence, etc.

"THE BRIDE."

As I have implied by the lefthand "plus" sign, Luther employs the metaphor of marriage to describe the union of the two kinds of righteousness. Alien righteousness, being received from the Divine, is, according to the epoch's usage, the bridegroom, Christ generally being portrayed as the potent active principle, and the soul being receptive, subordinate, feminine. The soul's acquired or active righteousness, then, what the soul actually *does* to be good, receives the bride's label. The "marriage," in effect, is the union of the soul with God, or absolute goodness.

If we turn to the two right-hand quantities, we may draw a similar equation, although Luther does not. Received sin may be equivalently joined to the sins which the soul commits. The "marriage" of the two represents the sum evil of an individual, or, if we like, the extent of one's divorce from God and righteousness.

One need not be a religious believer to appreciate the simple utility of these two dichotomies and two marriages as a general representation of moral judgment. In effect, in calculating another human being's rightness or worthiness, we rightly or wrongly take into account both what he does and what he is, thusly:⁷⁸

THE TWO KINDS OF JUSTICE

vs.

THE TWO KINDS OF INJUSTICE

1. Received goodness

vs.

1. Received evil

*You are what I consider good.**You are what I consider evil.*

+

+

2. Active goodness

vs.

2. Active evil

*You do what I consider good.**You do what I consider evil.*

This simple form of analysis has the advantage of clarifying the interpretations and motives of moral agents, of dispassionately laying them out for us to judge and compare. Here are ten hypothetical uncoverings of the moral calculi of actors who play a role in this book. [See following pages.]

CALCULUS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:
HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES FOR HISTORICAL JUDGES
How should this person before me be treated? Why do I think so?

MORAL AGENT ^A	PERSON JUDGED	RECEIVED GOODNESS	RECEIVED EVIL	ACTIVE GOODNESS	ACTIVE EVIL	JUDGEMENT
1. Martin Luther	A Christian.	God's grace.	Original sin.	Follows the law, helps the poor, etc. All irrelevant.	None known.	Be his friend and servant; refrain from judging him.
2. Martin Luther	A Jew.	Little or none.	Original sin.	Follows the law, helps the poor, etc. All irrelevant.	Denies Christ's divinity.	Needs conversion through nonviolent persuasion.
3. Adolf Eichmann	A German Jew.	None.	Jewish origin.	World War I veteran.	None proven, but must be assumed based on received evil.	Extermination delayed, due to past services to state.
4. V.I. Lenin (pre-1917)	A Russian Jewish Communist, former landowner.	None.	None.	Is now a militant comrade.	Until recently, believed in a different "line" for the achievement of Communism, the common goal.	Work with him enthusiastically.
5. V.I. Lenin (pre-1917)	A Russian Jewish Communist, former landowner.	None.	None.	Has been a militant comrade.	Now believes in a different strategic "line."	Energetically denounce him, and if necessary break political and personal relations.

MORAL AGENT	PERSON JUDGED	RECEIVED GOODNESS	RECEIVED EVIL	ACTIVE GOODNESS	ACTIVE EVIL	JUDGEMENT
6. V.I. Lenin (post-1917)	A Russian Jewish Communist, former landowner.	None.	None.	Has been a militant comrade.	Now believes in a different strategic "line."	Imprison or shoot him.
7. J.V. Stalin (1930)	A Russian Jewish worker, former landowner.	None.	Aristocratic origin.	None possible.	Must be assumed.	"Repress" through punitive labor, imprisonment or shooting.
8. J.V. Stalin (1950)	A Russian Jewish Communist, former landowner.	None.	Aristocratic and Jewish origin. ^B	None possible.	Must be assumed.	"Repress" through punitive labor, imprisonment or shooting.
9. M. Gandhi	A member of the Untouchable caste.	A fellow creature.	None.	None known.	Committed murder and theft.	Bring him home, let him steal, forgive him, offer him love and, if he desires it, instruction.
10. John Brown	A black American slave.	A fellow creature; one of the meek and downtrodden who "shall inherit the earth."	Original sin.	None known.	None known.	Liberate him, if necessary by doing violence to his master.

^A Of course this table does not mean to imply that a given moral agent would necessarily act as shown in every instance of a given case; only that it would have been in character for him to act in that way.

^B Mandel quotes data to indicate that by 1939, when the first of the two waves of Stalinist anti-Semitism was about to strike (the second involved the so-called "doctors' plot" of 1950-52), "40 percent of the heads of Jewish families were [Soviet] functionaries, against only 17.2 percent of the average Soviet heads of families. These facts made Soviet Jews, in Stalin's eyes, an easy scapegoat for the masses' hatred of the buracracy" (p. 155, n.22).

THE CALCULUS OF FANATICISM (CONTINUED)

If we were to subject the decision-making of Mishima's protagonist to the same procedure, we would uncover something like this:

MORAL AGENT:	Isao the terrorist.
PERSON JUDGED:	Kurahara, financier.
RECEIVED GOODNESS:	Unknown.
RECEIVED EVIL:	Soullessness, cosmopolitanism. (We could, if we chose, put this under "active evil," but Isao is the metaphysical sort.)
ACTIVE GOODNESS:	Unknown; irrelevant.
ACTIVE EVIL:	Degradation of Japan's traditional soul.
JUDGMENT:	Put Kurahara to death.

THE CALCULUS OF SELFISHNESS

Most of us expediently rig our own moral calculuses in such a way that our actions become automatically justified in accordance with our own urgencies.⁷⁹ I remember a man I once met who robbed warehouses. He explained that no violence was used, that the companies who took the loss were rich—no, he didn't hurt anybody! The fanatic merely increases the momentum of this tendency. A cab driver I hired in Manila assured me that the New People's Army, a violent insurgent group with both Maoist and Islamic branches, "never hurt anyone"—yes, he used the same phrase!—"They only abuse the manipulators," he said. In a slum near Intramuros I'd just met a woman named Rosana, who lived without electricity on the second floor of a filthy tenement; she was so uneducated that although she loved the memory of the great martyr-patriot Rizal she didn't recognize *No Me Tangere*, his most famous book, an explication of which is compulsory for graduation in many if not most Filipino high schools. The NPA had killed two of her uncles, who came from like circumstances. I think once again of Di Giovanni's bank-clerk victims: How could they be "manipulators" in any structural sense? An "abuser," then, is anyone whose moral calculus I disagree with—and so (I admit) is a fanatic. The Vietnamese author Duong Thu Huong, one of three survivors of a forty-member Communist Youth Brigade which fought for North Vietnam, has a character cry out in one of her anguished novels that that great end of mass revolution, "the people," is but a flickering abstraction:

You see, the people, they do exist from time to time, but they're only a shadow. When they [the regime's vanguardists] need rice, the people are the buffalo that pulls the plough. When they need soldiers, they ... put guns in the people's

hands... when it comes time for the banquets, they put the people on an altar, and feed them incense and ashes. But the real food, that's always for them.⁸⁰

When the "they" who claim to exercise power for "the people" become distinctly materially or politically superior to them, then something is wrong with end or means, and we can speak of a rising down. When we begin to discuss the justifications of defense of authority, defense of the revolution, defense of the homeland and judicial retribution, we'll see over and over again that one of the central aspects of each case is the legitimacy of the authority which issues the order of violence—that is to say, the commonality of purpose and feeling between the leaders and the led. It is by no means the only factor (or this book would be much shorter), but it stands perpetually relevant. For whom are we rising up? Do they agree with us?⁸¹

"Hoping that a feeling of the magnitude of the interests at stake; & of your own obligation to make personal sacrifice for the good of mankind & the glory of the Most High God, whose guidance in this matter we hope you will earnestly seek," wrote John Brown in an insurgency recruitment letter, "we subscribe ourselves Your friends; & co-labourers in the cause of humanity."⁸² But who is humanity here—the slaves or the slave-owners? It cannot be both. In this book we'll see many such definitional ambiguities.

"It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences." Remember the First Law of Violent Action: *The inertia of the situation into which we inject ourselves must always be given the benefit of the doubt.* Accordingly, incumbency is innocent until proven guilty. Show us the proof first. Show us how and why the system cannot be saved.

"THE FIRST DUTY OF A REVOLUTIONARY"

My own aim in beginning this book was to create a simple and practical moral calculus which would make it clear when it was acceptable to kill, how many could be killed and so forth—coldblooded enough, you will say, but life cannot evade death. Have you ever shot a cow in the head, slit her throat, cut her hooves off, skinned her, gutted her and quartered her so that you and others can eat? Have you ever been the doctor who must decide which one of ten patients gets the life-support machine? Surely it is better to have a rational and consistent means of doing these things than to do them trying not to think of what one is doing. —Suppose, then, that the calculus can prove that one ought never to kill. —Well and good. We are surely better off for seeing it proved.

So I began to write some notes to myself, called "Rising Up and Rising Down." Textbooks of insurgency and counter-insurgency presented ever so many of the beloved "scenarios" for various general cases, which in my grim state of mind seemed as if written on water in letters of ominous phosphorescence.

I wanted to find a base point below which we couldn't go—the "floor" of evil. I could then note that at least the fall could not be bottomless. I might hit it and die from the distance but at least I wouldn't fall forever. It was a way of seeking control. It was like seeing those two men come sauntering closer on that foggy dark



Pro-gun poster

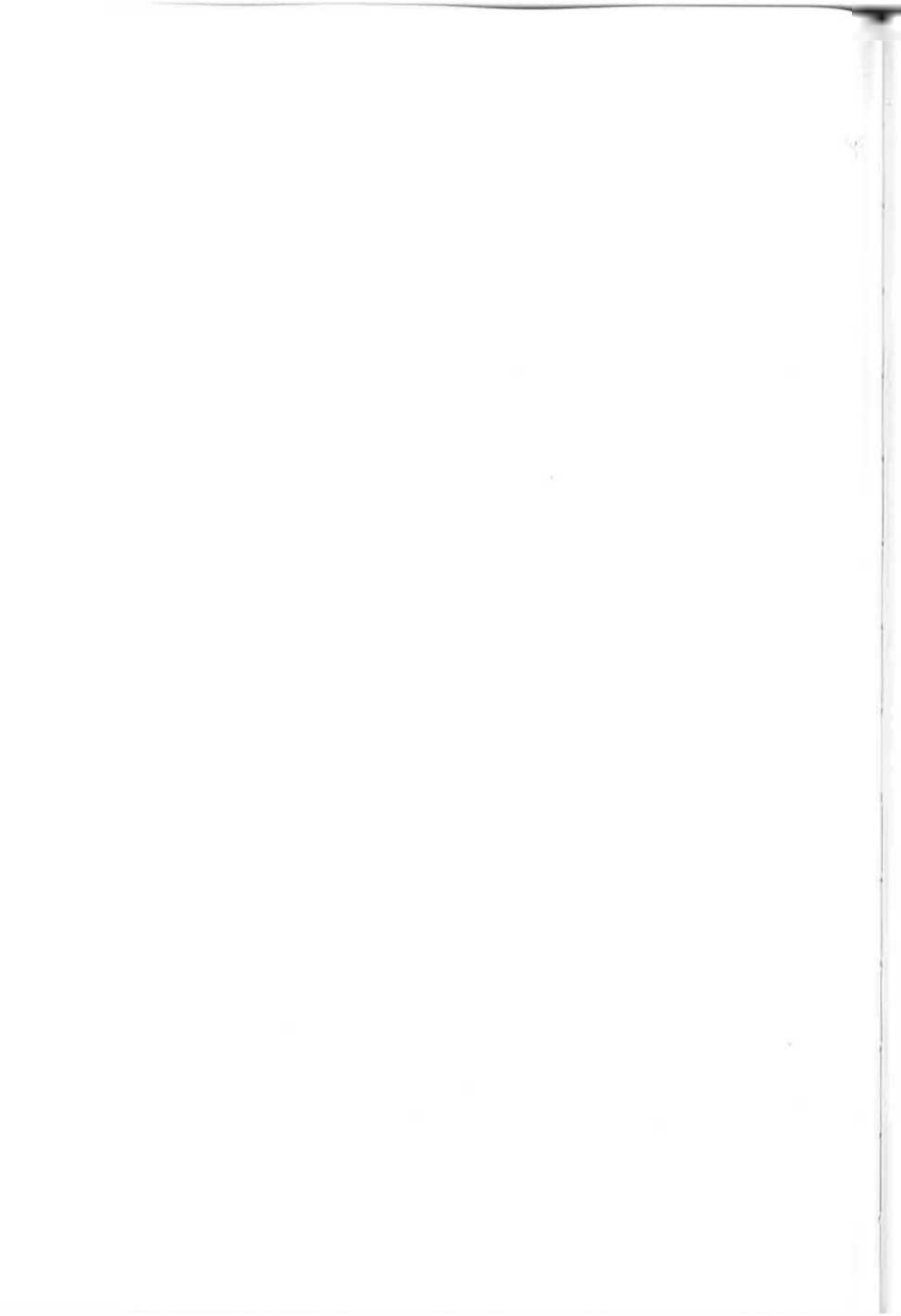
night when I was with the Asian woman walking her dog, and the men came closer and because my gun was in my pocket I had the power to draw lines. (To quote Trotsky again: "To understand the causal sequence of events and to find somewhere in the sequence one's own place—that is the first duty of a revolutionary.")⁸³ If they began to threaten her (or me) I could remain calm. If they began to inflict injury or if they menaced us with death, then I could shoot, so that I'd have at least a chance. But I did not have control over the political atmosphere I had to breathe, and neither did most people. I wanted to be able to say: *No, this is wrong, and I will not put up with it. If you force me to the wall I will defend myself.* I had not yet gazed left and right along the dizzyingly strange and unhappy continua of this book: What is self-defense? Ask whom you like, and you'll get the answer you like.

The more fundamental flaw in my thinking when I began, which I was too inexperienced to see, but which I'm sad to say I've seen in many another soul's moral calculus since, was a lack of decency and compassion. The Unabomber's treatise exemplifies this perfectly. When I first began to read it, I experienced what the cliché calls "the shock of recognition," because his obsessions were mine: the poisonous nature of uncontrolled technology and the shrinking freedom of the individual. But I am not accordingly inclined to go out and kill somebody. The Unabomber was. "One has to balance the struggle and death against the loss of freedom and dignity," he said, which was true; it was his way of resolving the balance that I didn't care for: "To many of us, freedom and dignity are more important than a long life or the avoidance of pain. Besides, we all have to die some time, and it may be better to die fighting for survival, or for a cause, than to live a long but empty and purposeless life."⁸⁴ Good, as far as it went, but it did not go far enough because he'd left out the one kind of suffering that was highly relevant since most under his control—namely, that of his victims and their families. All he thought about were himself and his hypothetical fellow-travellers. He was as selfish as Hitler. He'd lost himself. I respect life much more now—the lives of others and of myself. I try not to be deluded by the calculus of fanaticism, by ad hominem irrelevances, by uncontrolled means or by ends capricious or all-devouring. There are so many ways to go wrong! As Carlyle put it so well in his history of the French Revolution:

What a man kens he cans. But the beginning of a man's doom is, that vision be withdrawn from him; that he see not the reality, but a false spectrum on the reality;

and following that, step darkly, with more or less velocity, downwards to the utter Dark; to Ruin, which is the great Sea of Darkness, wither all falsehoods, winding or direct, continually flow!⁸⁵

NOTES



THREE MEDITATIONS ON DEATH

¹ Medical Examiner's Office, City and County of San Francisco, *Digest of Rules and Regulations* [pamphlet], June 1996.

² Huxley.

³ Medical Examiner's Office, City and County of San Francisco, annual report, July 1, 1994—June 30, 1995, pp. 9, 36.

⁴ Stylists frown upon the passive construction. But I fail to see what could be more appropriate for dead bodies.

⁵ For this information on ante- and post-mortem contusions I have, as so often, relied on Adelson, this time on pp. 382-86.

⁶ Fresh death or old death, it was not my death, and I shrugged it off. In the catacombs they were so anonymous, with such clean carapaces, that it seemed they'd all died "naturally." At the medical examiner's office, some had died accidentally or strangely, a few had ended themselves, like that old man who'd hanged himself with the electric cord, and every now and then the odd murder case was wheeled in. Looking into the hanged man's stare, I'd felt a little creepy. But to protect me from it, Dr. Stephens had established the doors marked NO ADMITTANCE and POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE. As I sit here now, trying to refine these sentences, the only dead thing I can see is a spider glued to my windowpane by its withered web. For the most part I see cars in motion on the wide road, glorious trees, people walking down the sidewalk. The doughnut stand where a juvenile homicide occurred a couple of years ago now glows with sugar and life. I remain as yet in the land of the living, and will not believe in my death.

⁷ I went there twice, and the second was more horrifying than the first. (See "The Skulls on the Shelves," below)

⁸ For a description of this place, see "The Back of My Head," in my book *The Atlas* (p. 5).

⁹ Fanon found these psychosomatic symptoms in Algeria, and mentions that they were very common "in the Soviet Union among the besieged populations of towns, notably in Stalingrad" (pp. 290-93).

¹⁰ For one of Fanon's patients, an Algerian who survived a mass execution conducted by the French because "there's been too much talk about this village; destroy it," the Angel of Death wore everyone's face: "You all want to kill me but you should set about it differently. I'll kill you all as soon as look at you, big ones and little ones, women, children, dogs, donkeys" (op. cit., pp. 259-61).

¹¹ Martin Luther King insisted in his funeral oration for victims of the Birmingham bombing that "history has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive. The innocent blood of these little girls may well serve as the redemptive force that will bring new light to this dark city" (King, *Testament of Hope*, p. 221; "Eulogy for the Martyred Children," September 1963). As for me, I don't believe that such redemption occurs very often. For the context of this quotation, see below, where it is repeated, "Defense of Race."

INTRODUCTION: THE DAYS OF THE NIBLUNGS

¹ Lady Hyegyong, p. 336.

² Alliluyeva, p. 30.

³ Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 4.

⁴ H. G. Wells writes in his *Outline of History* (vol. 1, p. 286) that "the last twenty-three centuries of history are like the efforts of some impulsive, hasty immortal to think clearly and live rightly. Blunder follows blunder; promising beginnings end in grotesque disappointments; streams of living water are poisoned by the cup that conveys them to the thirsty lips of mankind. But the hope of men rises again after every disaster..."

⁵ Kropotkin, *Ethics*, pp. 17-18.

⁶ "Whatever my own practice may be," he writes in *Walden*, "I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized" (pp. 494-95, "Higher Laws"). I myself believe that we have stopped eating one another only under tem-

porary compulsion.

⁷ In the last half-century alone, consider German atrocities in Europe, Japanese atrocities in China, Korea and the Philippines, U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, and North Vietnamese counter-atrocities, genocide in East Timor, Pol Pot's war against his countrymen in Cambodia, taken later to Vietnam, Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan, then the civil wars of Bosnia and Rwanda. "Is there more justice in the world today?" asks a Ukrainian survivor of World War II. "There is only more cynicism and more sacrifices. It is like a bottomless pit: stupid politicians keep on demanding them, and they are ready even to turn the whole world into a Babī Yar, so long as they can remain in power" (Kuznetsov, p. 217).

⁸ There are still reports of human sacrifice in the Andes. Tierney has written a recent book on the subject (op. cit.).

⁹ James Henley Thornwell, address to the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America, 1861; in Adler et al, vol. 2, p. 378.

¹⁰ Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 20.

¹¹ Bataille argues unconvincingly that violence has "declined" since the days of Sade and the Gilles de Rais. "True, the wars of the twentieth century gave the impression of an increase of unleashed fury. But however immense the horror may have been, this furious violence was measured: it was an ignominy perfected through discipline!" (pp. 142-43). I am more inclined to the view of George Ryley Scott: "Cruelty is inherent in mankind. Some of us believe in moral progress because at the moment a small section of society is succeeding in preventing, to a considerable extent, overt cruel acts on the part of the majority" (op. cit., p. 11).

¹² Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 22.

¹³ Lewes, p. 65.

¹⁴ "You have no idea how terrible it is to hear screaming all day like that," a young Frenchwoman told Fanon (p. 276). Her father interrogated Algerians. "Sometimes I used to wonder how it was that a human being was able to bear hearing those screams of pain—quite apart from the actual torture." At the end of the previous century, Tolstoy wrote: "There has not been a time when terrible

things of this kind have not taken place, which we in reading about them cannot understand" (*Writings on Civil Disobedience*, pp. 262-65; "Nikolai Palkin").

¹⁵ Edward Peters, p. 5.

¹⁶ Judith M. Brown, p. 194.

¹⁷ The inductive approach is often quarreled with. George Henry Lewes (p. 29) believed that Rousseau's error was to examine society abstractly as he saw it in his own mind, not to study and categorize what existed in front of him, as a botanist does a plant. Heidegger, on the other hand, argued that the whole mystery of Being with all its ontological categories could be "uncovered" only from within. Who was right? Both, of course. Some of Lewes's own categories seem brittle after the lapse of a mere century and a half; but without them there would truly be, as he implies, only a monstrous subjectivity. Heidegger's project is so grandly abstract that the labor required on the part of the reader to decipher its patterns prevents one from easily "uncovering" flaws; but from a psychological point of view it can certainly be said that Heidegger's idea of the self as "thrown" and existentially guilt-wracked is as non-universal as the confidently place-centered self of the medieval Catholic. In *Rising Up and Rising Down*, the inductive approach from subjectivity and the inductive approach from data-collecting will both be employed.

¹⁸ Gen. 6: 11-12. God's solution, the Great Flood, like the activities of an insect exterminator, might have removed any number of vermin, but this morning's newspaper reminds me that the achievement was temporary.

¹⁹ Daly and Wilson, *Homicide*; quoted in Mann, p. 37.

²⁰ *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, p. 62.

²¹ "Let us again remember that 'fundamental' does not mean 'traditional,'" writes the Indian psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar in a study of communal riots in his homeland. "As in other parts of the non-Western world, revivalism or fundamentalism in India, be it Hindu or Muslim, is an attempt to reformulate the project of modernity" (p. 184).

²² Moltke, p. 22 ("War and Peace," ca. 1880).

²³ Morris, p. 149.

²⁴ Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 581.

²⁵ Clausewitz, p. 108.

²⁶ Robespierre, p. 312.

²⁷ This category includes Muslims of course, Christians, and also Jews—as is not only kind but fair and correct, given the family relations between the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah.

²⁸ In Somalia during the civil war there I won the trust of my two (male) interpreters by refusing to visit the maternity ward of a hospital. "Correct!" my new friends said to me glowingly. "To see that place would have been shameful!"

²⁹ Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, vol. 1, p. 76. Italics in original.

³⁰ Ministry of Health and Welfare (*Japan*), *Vital Statistics*, pp. 226-27 (table 5.16, rubric no. E115), trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden.

³¹ FBI, p. 13.

³² Musil, p. 505.

³³ Merleau-Ponty, p. xv.

³⁴ An example of such a successful society might be the Puritans, who shared origins and beliefs, and who had the Indians to hate.

³⁵ And I had better add (for every underpinning of this book is an application or misapplication of the obvious) that even if we could somehow eliminate physical violence, we would not have begun to address the psychic violence which even people who love each other employ to isolate and humiliate, to cause lonely crying nights.

³⁶ One historian, for whom the case is perhaps too simple, writes in respect to Caesar and his gladiatorial extravaganza that "the Roman people—or certain elements in it—took pleasure in this atrocious spectacle, just as other peoples, at other periods, have taken pleasure in public executions or sex and crime" (Meier, p. 148).

³⁷ The Senate, fearing him, prohibited the use of so great a number (Suetonius, vol. 1, p. 15; "The Deified Julius," I.X).

³⁸ Metropolitan Museum, p. 122 (plate 92).

³⁹ *Historia Augusta*, quoted in Wiedemann, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Wiedemann, loc. cit.; no citation given.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 45-46.

⁴² Prudentius, quoted in Wiedemann, p. 152.

⁴³ Trotsky, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁴ Spitz and Fisher, p. 470.

⁴⁵ Adelson, p. 661.

⁴⁶ The *Sacramento Bee*, final edition, November 8, 1996, "Metro" section, p. B1, "Woman assaulted in downtown parking garage elevator."

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. B6 ("Twist, arrests in murder-for-hire plot").

⁴⁸ In 1960, Philadelphia blacks used edged weapons such as knives in 39 percent of the homicides they committed. Striking accounted for 22 percent, and firearms for 33 percent. Meanwhile, the Nyoro tribe in Africa employed edged weapons (spears and axes in addition to knives) 62 percent of the time, striking weapons (in their case, sticks), 12 percent of the time, arson and strangling each 9 percent of the time and firearms only 3 percent of the time, at least in part because firearms were only rarely available in Africa to nonwhites (Paul Bohannon, "Patterns of Homicide Among Tribal Societies in Africa," in Wolfgang, p. 227, table 9).

⁴⁹ For example, one mid-twentieth-century study comparing executed English murderers with murderers in Africa found that the English murder-objects were frequently mistresses or girlfriends, and that English murderers often committed homicide in the course of other crime. In Africa this was simply not true (Paul Bohannon, "Patterns of Homicide Among Tribal Societies in Africa," in Wolfgang, p. 236).

⁵⁰ Op. cit. (Bohannon in Wolfgang), p. 223.

⁵¹ Judicial Affairs General Research Institute (*Japan*), p. 247, chart, trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden. Who then is the murderer? It's almost as if this most violent of crimes becomes most uncategorizable.

⁵² FBI, p. 19 (Table 2.12: "Murder Circumstance by Relationship, 1995"). And the total number of homicides considered in this tabulation was only twenty thousand; data was lacking on the other ten percent of homicides committed that year.

⁵³ Manfred Gutmacher, "The Normal and the Sociopathic Murderer," in Wolfgang, p. 126.

⁵⁴ Berkman, p. 368. A smattering of French data suggests a similar phenomenon: collective violence (or, if you prefer, risings-up, riots

or whatever) were at rock-bottom during World Wars I and II—although not, of course, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, thanks to the Paris Commune (Charles Tilly, "The Chaos of the Living City," in Hirsch and Perry, p. 120; figure 14: "Number of Disturbances Per Year in France, 1832-1958").

⁵⁵ Royal Commission, p. 319.

⁵⁶ UNICRI, p. 48 (Van Dijk and Mayhew).

⁵⁷ Beard, p. xvii. Plato goes farther, and argues that growing citizens should participate in military games dangerous enough to kill a few of them off every now and then, in order to develop courage (*Laws*, VIII.830e-831b, pp. 1396-97).

⁵⁸ Watching him I was reminded that to aestheticize weapons is natural, if by natural we mean that it "comes naturally" to children. I gave him a World War II gas mask, and his pleasure in it was of the same kind as mine in my Rajasthani daggers. Several years afterward, while in Bangkok's National Museum I saw on display a gun from King Mongkut's reign, dark-wooded throughout, the stock beautifully checkered, a lovely floral inlay of gold on its "serpent," and I envied the King's open pride in his weapons (why shouldn't everything be aestheticized?); it seemed a shame to me to live in an age in which weapons must so often be unornamented and locked away.

⁵⁹ Kitson, p. 96.

⁶⁰ A fuller account of these photographs is given in the second of my chapters on ex-Yugoslavia, below.

⁶¹ See "The Skulls on the Shelves," below.

⁶² Milton Bracker, "A finish to tyranny as horrible as ever visited on a tyrant", in *The New York Times*, April 30, 1945; quoted in Snyder and Morris, p. 687.

⁶³ Easy to say. And yet even after forming this harsh judgment, I myself, having succeeded in obtaining from a Thai police general the photograph of a slain Khmer Rouge guerrilla (image taken January 20, 1996, purchased by me slightly over a month later), was ecstatic. The photo was graphic, but it was true. Although I had not personally laid eyes on the dead body, I had no doubt that he was really K.R., because I knew what a K.R. uni-

form looked like and because when other Thais in that city saw the photo, they exclaimed in instant knowing horror: "Khmer Rouge!" (There were no such cross-checks available with the photographs of beaten men.) So I felt that I had scored a coup. After two months of difficulty, boredom and frustration, I was getting somewhere. And for an hour or more, the boy's bright blood and agonized face did not sadden me; it only turned my stomach. It was easy, too easy, for my convenience to disbar from consideration the fact that here was a human being who had died in pain.

⁶⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag*, vol. 1, p. x. Italics in original.

⁶⁵ John Glad, foreword to Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*, p. xv.

⁶⁶ Amnesty International, *Political Killings by Governments* (Amnesty International, 1983), p. 24; quoted in Brown and Merrill, p. 54.

⁶⁷ David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 168. Chandler, a respected historian and a former U.S. Foreign Service officer, notes that his figures exclude deaths from Democratic Kampuchea's war with Vietnam, and that most of the deaths in his tally occurred from "malnutrition, overwork, and untreated or wrongly diagnosed diseases," deaths by execution comprising 100,000+, or 10 percent of the total.

⁶⁸ "A group of Cambodian jurists," p. 12. This is the figure cited without qualification in the histrionic *State of War and Peace Atlas* (Dan Smith, p. 78).

⁶⁹ Nor is this an isolated instance of our inability to be decent census-keepers of death. Estimates on the number of people put to death during the French Revolution range from 16,600 to over 100,000, depending on whether not the slaughter of the Vendéens is counted. For another example, see the table of casualty figures in the "Summary of Ethnic Relations in Yugoslavia During World War II" (Annex F).

⁷⁰ Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 4, *The Hinge of Fate*, p. 582. Roosevelt was speaking of the Soviets.

⁷¹ Shalamov, p. 282 ("Lend-Lease").

⁷² Or, for that matter, did North Korea suffer

more per capita casualties in the Korean War than the USSR did in World War II? One scholar of the former conflict concludes only that they might well have (Cumings, p. 214).

⁷⁵ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Buchenwald, like Kolyma, crawled before it could walk, being hampered by immature procedures of economic exploitation. In fact at Buchenwald not every labor category had an individually measurable quota, and much of the labor was make-work sadism (e.g.; having Jews build walls which they were required to knock down the following day). But progress must be credited. The S.S. eventually succeeded in garnering an average profit of 1630 marks per inmate, based on a lifespan of nine months, and including such death bonuses as extraction of the inmate's dental gold. Cf. Kogon, p. 282. Kogon was a survivor of Buchenwald, and his account naturally focuses upon that camp, although he makes generalizations about the entire Nazi camp system. If what he says is correct, then it was less "efficient" than the Gulag "in most of the camps the nature of the work made [a fixed output quota] impossible, and output remained at an irreducible minimum" (p. 97).

⁷⁷ Solzhenitsyn's assessment: "One chance in 100,000 of success" (*Gulag*, vol. 3, p. 96).

⁷⁸ From *the Straits Times* (Singapore), March 1, 1995, page 22.

⁷⁹ "The 'unfounded' rate, or percentage of complaints determined through investigation to be false, is higher for forcible rape than for any other Index crime. In 1995, 8 percent of forcible rape complaints were 'unfounded,' while the average for all Index crimes was 2 percent" (FBI, p. 24).

⁸⁰ And I never asked him what the woman herself had done in the beginning. "Research has demonstrated that many so called 'victims' [of rape] are, in fact, seducers and aggressors," one study concludes (LeRoy G. Schultz, "The Violated: A Proposal to Compensate Victims of Violent Crime" [1965], in Hudson and Galaway, p. 139).

⁸¹ From *The Star: The People's Paper* (Sarawak, Malaysia), March 3, 1995 (no. 9054), page 13.

⁸² This conclusion corresponds with that of a U.N. study: "...in countries which might be

seen as more permissive in their attitudes toward sexuality, women are sensitive to offensive sexual behavior but seem less inclined to label it as criminal." —United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), p. 23 (Jan J.M. van Dijk and Patricia Mayhew, "Criminal Victimization in the Industrialised World..."). In other words, more permissive societies are—well, more permissive. (Cf. also UNICRI, p. 64 [Ugljesa Zvekic and Anna Alvazzi del Frate, "Victimisation in the Developing World..."].)

⁸³ "When a weak France finds herself face to face with a powerful Russia, I no longer believe a word of what I used to believe when a powerful France faced a weak Soviet Union." —Malraux, *Anti-Memoirs*, p. 103.

⁸⁴ Luther, p. 393 ("Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed").

⁸⁵ The terror-theorist Karl Heinzen reasoned from exactly this starting point, although some of his conclusions are rather different from mine: "It seems that what is decisive in the way history judges a murder is the motive. History does not appear to condemn murder itself." —Laqueur, p. 57 ("Murder," 1849).

⁸⁶ *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁷ *The Science of Right*, trans. W. Hastie, in Kant, p. 446. See the chapters on retaliation and punishment, below.

⁸⁸ See below, "Suicide."

⁸⁹ I say "more equally," not "equally," because if, for instance, the molester knew one of these women, and knew that she wanted to be sensationally killed, the case would take on a different character: context always applies.

⁹⁰ For a descriptive portrait of Hess on trial, see below, "Moral Yellowness."

⁹¹ *General Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. W. Hastie, in Kant, p. 394.

⁹² Assuming that they are truly obligated. Kant does qualify himself to the verge of outright self-contradiction, for he denounces certain "forbidden means" whose employment in war would render their users unfit to be citizens; among these he lists the appointment of poisoners, assassins and snipers (p. 454). In fact, he states emphatically: "But whoever has committed murder, must die" (p. 447, italics in original). The implication,

for Eichmann, is not clear. We're left wondering who actually committed the murders—Eichmann, his superiors, his subordinate gasmen and triggermen or all of the above? Moreover, if the follower of orders is in fact divorced from the consequences of those orders, as we have just heard Kant claim, then the state as embodied in its sovereign command must be liable for them (by the concept of the *modus imputationis ponens*) which surely is no good, either, for how can someone justly follow orders from an entity unfit to give them? For that matter, it is a mystery to me how anyone can rightfully follow *any* orders which destroy his aptitude to be a member of the state—i.e. a citizen, or someone who can be ordered. Such contradictions come about, in my opinion, because Kant wants to make us believe that there is only one right, best way to establish certain contracts (such as states). Thus, he seeks to demonstrate logically that only monogamous marriage is right, since people can only give up rights to their own selves on a reciprocal basis, and a polygamous husband is giving up but a part of himself while each of his wives has offered all of herself to him (p. 419). Muslims do not happen to reason this way, and their logic follows just as naturally from their own premise as Kant's does from his. We must allow into our analysis a considerable degree of moral relativism (Jacob Dickinson recommends that I use the phrase "context-sensitive moral absolutism"—personal communication, 1996) if we are to be at all realistic. Hence my statement about social mediums and institutional uniforms.

⁹¹ See my portrait of Wilhelm Keitel in the chapter "Compulsion, Loyalty and Fear."

⁹² And not just for the apologist, but for the perpetrator himself. "The trick used by Himmler...consisted in turning those instincts [of pity] around, [s]o that instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people! the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!" (Eichmann, p. 106).

⁹³ Winter, p. 109.

⁹⁴ He is also known for his statement: "German towns are burning; I am happy" (quoted in Werth, p. 965). Trotsky similarly equated objectivity with hypocrisy. See below, "On the Aesthetics of Weapons."

⁹⁵ In addition, since it leaves no room for moral argument, it can be invoked equally well by their opponents. Here is one of Ehrenburg's arch-enemies, Goering, shouting that the Jews had better not have the nerve to request police protection: "I thank my Maker that I do not know what objective is. I am subjective" (quoted in Fest, p. 117).

⁹⁶ Rizal, *The Revolution*, p. 238. The English of this translation leaves somewhat to be desired, and I have occasionally altered the wording in my citations from it. The person speaking is Rizal's the-ends-justify-the-means protagonist, Simoun.

⁹⁷ Geoffrey Parker, p. 128.

⁹⁸ "Don't you find it easier to lend assent or even support to an ultimatum that is well put even if backed by force? (Remember Dad.)"—Jacob Dickinson, personal communication (1996).

⁹⁹ Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ I said that gathering the data is not the same as interpreting it; but, as we see, even the gathering is hardly without logical and ethical difficulties. When I wrote the chapter on Apache suicides, for instance, I found that the Apache tribe had recently adopted a new and stringent set of guidelines for outside research, which they'd made over from the Hopi. These rules were fair and reasonable from the Apache point of view, but I did not like them. They required me either to censor myself or to be a sneak. I refused to follow them. So I did most of my work off the reservation. The data inevitably suffered, but at least it was mine, to do with what I thought best. As for ideological self-censorship, this is usually the disease of familiarity, of authorized biographies, of socialist realists everywhere. If we allow ourselves to become constrained by it, the choice becomes: Narrow, shallow or narrow and shallow?

¹⁰¹ "In general *the degree of responsibility increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own hands.*"—Judgment against Eichmann, quoted in

Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 247 (her italics). But I read in the newspaper this morning about a mother who, raped and beaten by her husband, persuaded her son to kill him. The mother got twenty-six years to life; the son got eighty years.

¹⁰² See below, "The Old Man."

¹⁰³ Why not? As Samir Amin sneeringly remarked, "Political science wavers between journalism and formalism" (op. cit., p. 10).

¹⁰⁴ Nagel, p. 13 fn.

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps my calculus is not much fuzzier than anyone else's. Consider the infinite malleability of the Biblical "Thou shalt not kill."

¹⁰⁶ For example, not knowing Japanese, I have been forced in my occasional discussions of the *Tale of the Heike* to rely on an English translation of the text, and for context on some English-language secondary sources. I thus remain not only at an immense cultural remove from the milieu of the *Tale*, but also at a semantic remove. It would be all too easy for me to swallow some interpretative fad whose bias might not be as transparent to me as, say, Prescott's in his nineteenth-century English-language history of the Mexican Conquest.

¹⁰⁷ Which is a more dangerous sign—when secondary sources all disagree, or when they all agree?

¹⁰⁸ Again Prescott's leaning in this regard comes to mind (see below, "Defense of Ground"). One could equally well cite Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius, Carlyle. This is the reason why Trigger in his brilliant *Children of Atlaentsic* presents the weirdly unfolding relations between Europeans and natives in seventeenth-century Canada as a chess game to whose sometimes contradictory political, economic and cultural rules all individuals of all sides were to varying degrees subject. With Trigger one might lump the Marxist historians such as Trotsky, the sociologists such as William Sheridan Allen, etcetera.

¹⁰⁹ See below, this chapter, p. 41.

¹¹⁰ Eli Horowitz writes about the Caesar section of my "Defense of War Aims" chapter: "The length of the story (98 pages) is out of proportion to the rest... The true narrative of this chapter is the search for valid ethical bound-

aries in war. Essentially, I do not feel that the final hundred pages are primarily directed toward this, and as a result, the Caesar section, in its present form, distracts from the chapter and the book." You may well agree, in which case it may please you to know that an abridgement of *Rising Up and Rising Down* will be available.

¹¹¹ Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, pp. 3-4.

¹¹² See below, "Defense of Race and Culture"; see also the moral calculus, 5.2.D.4 ("The Whale-Hunter's Maxim").

¹¹³ *My Life*, p. 344.

¹¹⁴ Moral calculus, 5.2.G.2.

¹¹⁵ Moral calculus, 5.2.I.3.

¹¹⁶ Moral calculus, 5.2.J.4

¹¹⁷ See below, "Defense of Homeland."

¹¹⁸ In particular, I wish that the cerebral eloquence of Thucydides had been enriched by more descriptions.

¹¹⁹ Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, p. 58.

ON THE AESTHETICS OF WEAPONS

¹ *Bannerman Catalogue*, p. 3 ("Blowing Our Own Horn").

² Hoffman, p. 189.

³ As I read over *Rising Up and Rising Down*, I think I understand how some intellectuals can become terrorists. I am not one myself. I do not believe in their moral calculus and never really did: one suffering human being is one too many for me. But this is the danger of all weapons, whether their edges are as thick as Iroquois war-clubs or as thin as political ideas: that the beauty and rightness of their form makes one want to employ them whether it is proper or not. I remember my friend "Greenglass," who for years has photographed nude pubescent and prepubescent girls on French beaches. (He's mentioned in this chapter a little farther on.) After the Cold War, the F.B.I., unable to be idle, decided to destroy people like him. Greenglass had done nothing wrong. But the weapon had to be used.

⁴ As for the anti-patriots, as dangerous as patriots, who think only of firepower and bombsmanship, how nice it would be for

them and for us if their next assassination could be committed, say, with that ivory-handled Thai knife whose blade is a black sine-wave, or, better still among all the swords and knives like reaping-hooks that I've seen, that magnificent claw with a handle like an antler; one jaw is an ebony hook, the other a sharp scythe incised with floral designs ...

⁵ Trigger, pp. 70-75, 95, 145-46. The Iroquoian tribes of Canada included in the seventeenth century the Five Nations of the Iroquois (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Mohawk and Oneida), the Huron Confederacy they warred with (the Attigneenongnahac, Arendarhonon, Attignawantan and Tahaontaenrat), the Susquehannock, Neutrals, Eries and others who shared common language-roots and agricultural and settlement practices. The torture methods of the Iroquoians particularly included cutting, beating and burning.

⁶ A Swiss criminologist found that more than ninety-five percent of all crime novels deal with that most violent crime, murder (Reiwald, cited by Manfred Guttmacher, in Wolfgang, p. 114). An arresting explanation why was given in 1957 when Pierre Boulle's novel *Bridge Over the River Kwai* was made into a movie. The producer insisted that the ending be changed, that instead of merely being damaged, as in the book, the famous bridge had to be dramatically exploded, because the audience would have waited "for more than two hours ... in the hope and expectation" of the blast, as they explained to the unhappy novelist. Otherwise "they would feel frustrated" (Ian Watt, p. 27). In 1997, a mass market magazine reviews the latest computer game: "Even without a 3D accelerator card, ... the effect of shooting through translucent glass is beautiful. But don't worry, there's still plenty of violence (the game has been banned in Germany). Your arsenal of weapons includes a chain-gun with spinning Gatling barrels... Slay bells ring..." (*Newsweek*, December 22, 1997, p. 10; "Cyberscope" sec., "Games: Quake II Rocks On"). This is American; this is sickening; this is human nature.

⁷ *The Tale of the Heike*, vol. 1, p. 107 (book 2,

ch. VI, "The Admonition"). Although this text embellishes real events, it follows known history closely enough for me to treat it as a work of history in this book.

⁸ And those unfortunate enough to live in war zones, while they might be even more prone to admire weapons, as some do, will also of course tranquilize themselves with peace. I remember one Sarajevo bar "protected" by irregulars, where bad music still played and they still had booze, the girls were laughing and it was packed. The waitress rushed about, the tray of empty glasses held tight against her tits. In the midafternoon that bar seemed only fashionably dark because it was crowded and because the neon sign still worked (perhaps there was a generator for that) although the toilet didn't. Cognac in glasses caught the neon. A fighter from America who had already gotten two bullets in the leg and shrapnel in the nose sat making eyes at the girls. The other soldiers were doing the same. Their dark baseball caps and dark bulletproof vests seemed almost fashionable; they marched the women's shoes and the borders of their jackets. The guns were there, just there; they weren't interesting to anybody. We sat drinking cognac, not wanting to finish our business because just outside the high courtyard some people had no water to drink and because it was necessary to run across the street on account of snipers. We all heard machine-gun fire and pretended that we didn't.

⁹ Hence this dedication in Jerry Rubin's *Do It!* (1970): "To Nancy, Dope, Color TV and Violent Revolution!... READ THIS BOOK STONED!" (Rubin, p. 4).

¹⁰ Held, p. 132.

¹¹ It will be discussed further below, in "Defense of Gender."

¹² Tillion, p. 68. She goes on to describe this person in more revolting detail on p. 69.

¹³ Personal communication from several gang members. The city of Long Beach's police department, gang violence suppression detail, lists the following all-female gangs in its "Index of Long Beach Street Gangs" (rev. 11-08-95): the Insane Angel clique of the black Insane Crip gang, which has been responsible for thirty-one homicides since 1990, the black

New Yorkettes O/G, the Hispanic gang Duke Girls, the Hispanic gang Primas and the Chicas clique of the Westside Longos, which is the second largest Latino gang in Long Beach. All of these organizations are, however, listed as inactive or defunct. But two of the Cambodian gangs I encountered when I was in Long Beach (see "The Last Generation") were not on this gang index at all. It is safe to say that there are probably some new all-female gangs as yet unknown to the Long Beach authorities. A "Gang Fact Sheet" provided by the same source lists 140,000 males and 10,000 females in Los Angeles County as of April 1995. The F.B.I. (op. cit., p. 215) reports that between 1991 and 1995, total number of juvenile males arrested increased by 16.4percent; the increase for juvenile females was 32.7percent.

¹⁴ Herodotus, Book Four, p. 338.

¹⁵ Underhill (p. 136) calls it "a dramatic entertainment for the women who were the chief actors... The Creek and Iroquois women, reputed to be the fiercest torturers, acted simply out of vindictive fury against the slayers of their menfolk." She believes that there was "nothing religious about it," but Trigger, who is an expert on the subject, writes otherwise. Nor does he give the women the primary role; they did, however, participate very actively (op. cit., p. 74). Iroquoian and Creek women were not unique. Rountree (p. 84) describes how the Powhatan Indians of Virginia flayed, dismembered and disembowelled their captives with sharp mussel-shells. The executioners were "the town's women or ... a man appointed for the job."

¹⁶ Trigger, p. 73.

¹⁷ Adelson, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁹ Held actually displays a photograph of the oral or rectal pear, remarking that the vaginal device is larger.

²⁰ Back cover of Lecker's *Deadly Brew*. The real motive-driver of such books is given by Kurt Saxon in vol. two of his *Poor Man's James Bond*: "As world civilizations decline and the presently powerful and affluent are reduced to beggary [sic] and helplessness, the owners

of these volumes holding a veritable storehouse of both industrial and military power will survive to form dynasties" (p. 2).

²¹ Which I never met with when writing the chapter on voodoo.

²² These are rarely meant to be fired. In function, therefore, they are similar to the ornamental daggers described below—particularly in the case of an officer's sidearm, which its owner carries mainly to invest himself with authority. The other kind of such guns is the limited edition sort which collectors prize. The weapon-ness of these guns thus gets cancelled out, as it were; presentation guns might as well be commemorative stamps or rare silver dollars.

²³ The explosion over Nagasaki was artfully aestheticized by the journalist William L. Laurence as "a thousand Old Faithful geysers rolled into one," in the *New York Times*, August 9, 1945 ("A Giant Pillar of Purple Fire: Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki Told by Flight Member, quoted in Samuel Hynes et al, vol. 2, p. 771). The bomb itself Laurence also aestheticized, neither artfully nor subtly: "It is a thing of beauty to behold, this 'gadget.' In its design went millions of man-hours of what is without doubt the most concentrated intellectual effort in history" (p. 763). This sentence might as well be socialist realism.

²⁴ See Nowicki and Ramsey.

²⁵ Anonymous, *The King's Mirror*, part XXXVII, p. 216. Jacob Dickinson remarks: "I'm sure this artful statement is echoed in many contemporary publications" (note to author, 1996).

²⁶ I have seen a specimen of a seventeenth-century jade-handled Khanjar reproduced in my *Encyclopedia of Arms and Weapons* (Tarassuk and Blair, p. 274); the shape and style is the same.

²⁷ Written in 1991.

²⁸ Blomberg, p. 58.

²⁹ If this principle applied to the Ghurka knife then only I would be required to cut myself with one of the lesser vampire-blades; a guest would be under no such obligation; indeed, I would probably never show the knife to any guest, or write this essay, but keep the knife secret in my house, feeding on me.

³⁰ Blomberg, p. 61.

³¹ Stewart, *Earth Abides*, p. 8.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 315.

³³ Vollmann, *Seven Dreams VI: The Rifles*, pp. 321-22.

³⁴ One study of machine guns describes how, even though those weapons depersonalized and rendered meaningless any attempts at individual courage during World War I (see below, "Defense of Honor"), still, as a result of the media glamorization of gangsterism in the 1920s and '30s, "the machine gun has now become personalised, itself the means by which men desperately try to make their mark on a world in which they feel increasingly powerless. In the fantasy world at least technology is turned against itself" (Ellis, p. 164).

³⁵ Thanks to the "assault weapons" bill of 1996, were I to lose this magazine I could replace it only with a ten-shot substitute. This is ludicrous. Even a one-shot magazine could be used for murder. It is not the magazine capacity of my fellow citizens which worries me, but their moral and cranial capacity.

³⁶ It would be delightful to have an orchestra made up of guns and selected target objects. The percussion instruments would be the guns themselves, graduated from the lively handclap of a twenty-two to the majestic three-fifty-seven. Heavy-gauge metal at various angles would be the ricocheting cymbals. Shattering bottles of selected depths and thicknesses could form arpeggios—a possibility by no means to be dismissed, for one of my mentors, Dr. John E. Mawby, once chose lumps of basalt whose sizes and masses permitted them to be tapped to play "How Dry I Am." It might be feasible also to set up wide-mouthed jars just beneath the muzzles of guns, so that the wave of air passing across them at the moment of firing would make them sing like wind instruments. This leaves only the strings. My proposal here is to have a loom erected, closely and tightly strung with piano wire. As the speeding bullets parted these strings, they would twang with the best.

³⁷ And, perhaps, less intimidation value. One of the reasons that Japanese samurai rejected firearms for two centuries was that swords

were more charged as symbols of authority, like the Rajasthani daggers earlier described; they were more "aesthetic." (There were other more important and less savory reasons, including unhappiness that a gun could make a farmer the equal of a nobleman in war.) Cf. Perrin; cf. also Keegan, *History of Warfare*, pp. 44-45. Perrin's conclusion is that "progress ... is something that we can guide, and direct, and even stop" (p. 92). Unfortunately, I cannot agree. The Japanese had to take up guns again once Commodore Perry showed up pointing his artillery-barrels at them.

³⁸ CCI Blazer non-reloadable bullets have been what I generally use for 9 millimeter, although now (1996) some ranges have begun to forbid them. The shells are made of aluminum; the lead projectiles wear colored coatings.

³⁹ Thoreau, p. 492 (*Walden*, "Higher Laws").

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

⁴¹ A man who served in the U.S. Special Forces in Vietnam told me that "we" used similar devices, though more finished in construction, their manufacturer being supposedly located in Florida.

⁴² That is, the cartridge. Technically speaking, the bullet is merely the piece of lead which will explode *out of* the cartridge.

ON THE MORALITY OF WEAPONS

¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, excerpted in Chaliand, p. 415.

² *The Sacramento Bee Final*, Saturday, April 12, 1997, p. B1, "Metro" section (Emily Bazar, "Cops find arsenal in home: More than 60 guns, bomb-making items").

³ Chuck Taylor, p. 9.

⁴ *Voices Zapatistas*, September 1996, p. 4 (Peter Brown, "Encuentro Report").

⁵ "Widespread gun ownership has not been found to reduce the likelihood of fatal events committed with other means," the United Nations reminds us. "Thus, people do not turn to knives and other potentially lethal instruments less often when more guns are available, but more guns usually means more victims of

suicide and homicide" (UNICRI, p. 301 [Martin Killias, "Gun Ownership, Suicide and Homicide: An International Perspective"]).

⁶ The imperial edict of 1588 required all commoners to turn in their swords, ostensibly to be melted down for a Buddha's statue (Blomberg, p. 144). The prohibition endured, with declining effectiveness, to be sure—into the twentieth century.

⁷ Quoted in Mandel, p. 101.

⁸ Quoted in Tuck, p. 215.

⁹ John R. Salter, Jr., "Social Justice Community Organizing and the Necessity for Protective Firearms," in Tonso, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Athenaion Politeia*, 4; in G.R. Stanton, pp. 30-31. Indeed, it has been said about ancient Greece that the army was the popular assembly armed, and the city was a dwelling-place of warriors (Vernant, p. 37). Sparta of course went even farther than her sisters in this direction (Sage, p. xvii).

¹¹ M.L. Brown, p. 274.

¹² Borovik, p. 57.

¹³ For a detailed discussion of which weapons are best for which "difficulties" (according to a thoroughly survivalist point of view), see Duncan Long's *The Survival Armory*.

¹⁴ Rick Miller, "Tactics: Beware—Of A Slasher! Expect the worst—train for it—be prepared!" in *Combat Handguns*, vol. 16, no. 5, February 1995, p. 83. The same source claims that between 600,000 and 1 million crimes are prevented every year (presumably in the U.S. alone), "simply because the intended victim was armed!" (loc. cit.).

¹⁵ UNICRI, p. 260 (Wesley G. Skogan, "Reactions to Crime in Cross-National Perspective").

¹⁶ FBI, p. 22. In that year there were 383 justifiable homicides by police and 268 by private citizens. The total number of murders for that year was 21,597 (FBI, pp. 22, 13). Total justifiable homicides expressed as a proportion of all homicides justifiable or not were thus only 3%—but that makes them no less significant to the 651 persons whose lives or legal authority were thus protected.

¹⁷ Judicial Affairs General Research Institute [Japan], p. 247, Table III-5; trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden.

¹⁸ FBI, p. 22 (Tables 2.16, 2.17).

¹⁹ The FBI does not class justifiable homicides together with other homicides, so for the sake of better comparison with the Japanese data I have done this (20,043 reported homicides + 383 justifiable police homicides + 268 justifiable citizen homicides = 20,694)

²⁰ This is why the data in the table above could be read in either of two very different ways: 1. Private possession of weapons ought to be prohibited because they are so rarely used in justified killings. or 2. Private possession of weapons saved 22,000 lives in these two countries in 1995, and self-defenders' mere display of weapons might have prevented any number of other homicides justified and unjustified.

²¹ From the Auto-Ordnance Corporation; reproduced in Ellis, p. 151.

²² From *The Sacramento Bee Final*, Monday, July 10, 1995, page A8. A 1970 FBI statistic stated that 65% of all homicides were committed with handguns, and 13% more with rifles and shotguns (Adelson, p. 5). Homicides in Cuyahoga County, Ohio from 1951 to 1971 (3052 cases) displayed the following pattern: firearms 67%, blunt violence 11%, edged and pointed weapons 18%, strangulation 2%, other 2% (Adelson, p. 189). This is a representative breakdown, for in 1995, of all the homicides committed in the U.S., 63.2% were committed with firearms, 10.4% by blunt violence (which the FBI subdivides between body weapons, such as fists and feet, and non-body weapons such as hammers), edged and pointed weapons 12.7%, strangulation and asphyxiation 1.9%, other 6.8% (FBI, p. 18). The proportionate role of firearms in slayings is thus fairly constant—and high. This having been said, however, it is worth reminding ourselves that homicides comprise a fairly low percentage of all violent crime—only 1%, for instance, in the high-crime year of 1995 (FBI, p. 11). "The proportion of violent crimes committed with firearms has remained relatively constant in recent years," says the same source, giving a figure of 30-31% from 1991 to 1995 (loc. cit.), which, despite the FBI's insistence that firearms use in violent crimes

is now at its highest level ever in the twenty-year period studied (p. 274), is actually quite comparable to 1950s figures.

²³ Caesar, *The Civil War*, p. 226 (Afr. War, 27).

²⁴ The United Nations's International Crime Victim Survey concluded—surprise!—that “the extent of victimisation by crime in many countries has reached a level which the public finds unacceptable” (UNICRI, van Dijk and Zvekic, “General Report,” p. 379). It has always been unacceptable, and always will be.

²⁵ That is one reason why the Militia of Montana, described in “Off the Grid,” below, are looked upon as extremists—and one reason why they *are* extremists.

²⁶ Klasner, p. 111.

²⁷ Procopius, pp. 81-83 (vi.15).

²⁸ A U.N. study concluded that “a high presence of guns does not go along with less [sic] non-gun events. Thus, there is no indication that people will, in the absence of guns, turn to knives or other lethal instruments” (UNICRI, pp. 300-301; Martin Killias, “Gun Ownership, Suicide and Homicide: An International Perspective”). The study, however, proves no such thing. Higher gun ownership rates may indeed be correlated with higher homicide rates on a country-by-country basis, as was found here; what would be necessary to prove anything, however, would be to measure homicide rates in each country before and after “gun prohibition.”

²⁹ Judicial Affairs General Research Institute [Japan], p. 247, Table III-5; trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden.

³⁰ FBI, p. 18 (Table 2.10: “Murder Victims, Types of Weapons Used, 1991-1995”), real numbers converted to percentages by me.

³¹ Wolfgang, p. 15 (“A Sociological Analysis of Criminal Homicides”).

³² Dean E. Murphy, “Bat is weapon of choice in Poland,” from *The Los Angeles Times*, repr. in *The Plain Dealer* [Cleveland], Sunday, June 15, 1997, “International” sec., p. 4-A.

³³ There is no magic answer. Suppose, for instance, that our military-industrial complex invented a consumer self-defense device which would do the following when activated: (a) sound an alarm and/or notify police; (b) instantaneously paralyze its target for a

period of, say, half an hour *while keeping him conscious* (c) generously spray the user with indelible ink. —This toy would undoubtedly be used for violence by brutes who did not care if they were caught.

³⁴ Churchill, vol. 1, p. 93.

³⁵ One study found that 70% of the blacks who carried concealed weapons in St. Louis in 1962 “stated that they did so because they anticipated an attack on themselves from others in their neighborhood” (LeRoy G. Schultz, “The Violated: A Proposal to Compensate Victims of Violent Crime” (1965), in Hudson and Galaway, p. 132, fn. 173).

³⁶ For the moral calculus of this group, and an assessment of how well it accomplished its ends through its chosen means, see below, “Defense of Earth.”

³⁷ One woman from the A.G. called LUNA (Lesbians United for Non-Nuclear Action) received injuries to her vertebrae requiring hospitalization. And, of course, the fact remains that we did not accomplish much. The plant did become increasingly expensive, and we delayed the day it went on line, but it did go on line. Practically speaking, as far as our end was concerned, we had little security, marginal autonomy, and no power.

³⁸ Vollmann, *The Song of Heaven* (unpublished), pp. 7, 9. One is reminded of the “non-violent rocks” thrown by people in the fringes of Martin Luther King’s movement. See below, “Defense of Race.”

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ “Feare of oppression, dispoeth a man to anticipate, or to seek ayd by society: for there is no other way by which a man can secure his life and liberty.”—Hobbes, p. 163.

⁴¹ Thucydides, p. 300.

⁴² According to the F.B.I.’s Uniform Crime Reports, which were based on police records, violent crime was on the rise in my country (a 64.3% increase from 1974 to 1992). According to the Justice Department’s polls of households, the National Crime Victimization Surveys, most crime was actually declining (a 2.7% decrease in the same period). —Cheryl Russell, “True Crime,” in *American Demographics*, August 1995, p. 24. —Whether it was getting better or worse, I

didn't feel safe. A soldier can still get killed on the very last day of a war—no matter to *him* that the statistics are against that. "Moreover," admits the article, "the worst crime does appear to be on the rise."

⁴³ Cicero, p. 222; speech in defense of Titus Annius Milo, 53 B.C.

⁴⁴ I was, in effect, being attacked through my love for her and my sense of honor; it was much more painful not to have protected this person I cared for than to be personally threatened with bottles. English propaganda-scribblers called upon such feelings when, seeking to arouse the country against Napoleon's projected invasion, they sounded the tocsin of mass rapine: "To gratify their furious passions is not however their chief object in these atrocities. Their principal delight is to shock the feelings of fathers and brothers, and husbands! Will you, my Countrymen, while you can draw a trigger, or handle a pike, suffer your daughters, your sisters, and wives, to fall into the power of such monsters?" —Proctor Patterson Jones, p. 84 (English broadside, *ca.* 1804).

⁴⁵ FBI, p. 99 (Table 6: "Index of Crime, Metropolitan Statistical Area"). What I call "homicides" are listed under "murder and non-negligent manslaughter."

⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁷ To those who despise guns, such an assertion may well sound as "creepy" as it did to my next-door neighbors. A study of murderers in Saint Elizabeths Hospital between July 1, 1925 and July 1, 1951 concluded: "Shooting was the most popular method of causing death, possibly for a number of deeply buried psychological reasons, but more likely because it is simple, easy, and frequently accomplished by a weapon purchased in advance, often for protection in response to insane delusions" (Bernard A. Cruvant and Francis N. Waldrop, "The Murderer in the Mental Institution," in Wolfgang, p. 158).

⁴⁸ The Old Norse *Poetic Edda* advises: "From his weapons away no one should ever stir one step on the field; for no one knows when need might have on a sudden a man of his sword" ("Havamal: The Sayings of Hár," p. 20, no. 38).

⁴⁹ Malraux, *The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*, pp. 153-186.

⁵⁰ "There is something of Tolstoy about these pages," remarks his biographer, Lacouture (*André Malraux*, p. 301).

⁵¹ See above, "Catacomb-Thoughts."

⁵² Fotion, p. 28.

⁵³ Prentiss, pp. 679-680. The numbers (2) and (3) were left out in the original text, there being only empty space into which some printer evidently forgot to slot them.

⁵⁴ See below, "Means and Ends."

⁵⁵ Fotion, pp. 75-79.

⁵⁶ Fotion, pp. 44-47.

⁵⁷ Naturally this is more true for isolated cases of murder than for genocide campaigns.

⁵⁸ LeRoy L. Lamborn, "Toward a Victim Orientation in Criminal Theory" (1968), in Hudson and Galaway, pp. 169-71.

⁵⁹ Interview with author.

⁶⁰ An analogous case would be that of overfishing. If everybody overfishes, we are all hurting ourselves and each other, but unless I can be certain that everyone else will stop *and* that I can support myself otherwise, it is in my interest to keep overfishing. See "Defense of Earth," below.

⁶¹ And might not care.

⁶² Klasner, pp. 207-08.

⁶³ Buffetaut, p. 43 ("Une mitrailleuse Saint-Etienne en position aux Epargnes").

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45 ("Une fosse commune aux Epargnes").

⁶⁵ Lifton and Markusen, p. 63 (*italics in original*).

⁶⁶ For the other part, see "On the Aesthetics of Weapons," above.

⁶⁷ Laqueur, p. 31 (*Juan de Mariana, The King and the Education of the King*, n.d.).

⁶⁸ With a little stretching, Hobbes might be taken to read that it was not in the least immoral; for he notes that "when the Sovereign Power ceaseth, Crime also ceaseth; for where there is no such Power, there is no protection to be had from the Law; and therefore every one may protect himself by his own power: for no man... can be supposed to give away the Right of preserving his own body; for the safety whereof all Sovereignty was ordained" (*op. cit.*, p. 337).

⁶⁹ Hallie, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Vollmann, *The Song of Heaven*, p. 4.

⁷¹ Hallie, p. 8.

⁷² It was in opposition to this latter class, and against the general mode of thinking of my first chapter, that Trotsky was quick to place his master: "'The Soviet of People's Commisaries?' Lenin picks it up. 'That's splendid, smells terribly of revolution!' Lenin was not much inclined toward the aesthetics of revolution, or toward relishing its 'romantic quality.' But all the more deeply did he feel the revolution as a whole, and all the more unmistakably did he define its 'smell.'" —*My Life*, p. 338. —Nor, by all accounts, was Lenin a sadist, although his work is stained by bloodthirsty expressions. The fact that he did not fall into either group failed to prevent him from ordering atrocities such as the murder of the Romanoff family without trial. What would he have made of Gandhi? The third edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, which is shot through with a more mellow appreciation of the world than its predecessor, concludes that "Gandhi's position corresponded to the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie" and that Gandhi "idealized patriarchal relations" (vol. 6, p. 82). Gandhism itself (p. 83) is denounced for its ethos of placing means ahead of ends.

⁷³ What do I mean by humanity? The willingness to limit violence. See the rules of thumb at the end of this book.

⁷⁴ Gandhi, pp. 348-49 ("The Jews," *Harijan*, 26-11-38).

⁷⁵ "The events of 1939-45 suggest that such [nonviolent] resistance can indeed have an effect, but that it often operates best in conjunction with armed resistance movements."—Dear and Foot, p. 946, "Resistance" [article by Adam Roberts]. Even Gandhi was at times willing to admit this in private.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Brown, p. 348. (*Harjan*, 4 May 1940).

⁷⁷ See the analysis of Martin Luther King's "dramatization," in "Self-Defense of Race and Culture," below.

⁷⁸ One Punjabi eyewitness who devotes his memoir's heartbreaking final pages to the expulsions, panic-flights and massacres

accompanying the partition wastes hardly any space on Gandhi himself, although his liking for "the simple, small man from Kathiawar" comes through. "Gandhi rechristened India Bharat Mata [Mother India], a name that evoked nostalgic memories, and associated with Gao Mata, the mother cow. If this struck a chord in the Hindu mind, the Muslims soon responded to the Khilafat call, in support of the deposed Khalifa of Turkey, and the name of Madar-i-Hind, mother India" (Tandon, p. 121). It was all so hopeless. Even when they called their country exactly the same thing, Muslims and Hindus had to use different words once they became politicized. After partition, Tandon's relatives, who were Hindu, lost their homes in the Punjab forever. No wonder that in after years the memory of Gandhi did not make a larger impression.

⁷⁹ Reproduced in Brown, p. 258

⁸⁰ Brown, p. 246.

⁸¹ One of his standard phrases for the "vanquished." Cf., e.g., *Mein Kampf*, p. 669.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 171.

⁸³ One critic of Martin Luther King's strategy, who believed that in the end King was not able to go far enough, wrote in relation to the status of black Americans that "non-violent appeals to conscience are futile because in all probability the society has no conscience" (Berger and Neuhaus, p. 125).

⁸⁴ Brown, loc. cit.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Brown, pp. 316-17 (press statement, 5 September 1939).

⁸⁶ Gandhi, pp. 111, 113, 115, 381.

⁸⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also ..." (Matthew 5:38-39). Clarence Darrow, in his well-meaning essay whose title, *Resist Not Evil*, is derived from just these words, insists that "when casual violence results it is not the weakest or the most defenceless who are the victims of the casual violence of individuals. Even the boy at school scorns to war upon a weaker mate" (p. 173). This was never my experience; not does it seem to have been the experience of the

raped, the robbed, or (though some homicides are victim-precipitated) the murdered. The predator seeks out his prey not for sport, but for the efficient consummation of his sadistic or expedient object.

⁸⁸ In other words, he subscribed to point # 5 of Gandhi's moral calculus.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Lever, p. 396.

⁹⁰ "It's endorsed by many, including [my son's] karate teacher." —Jacob Dickinson, letter to author, 1996.

⁹¹ Chanoff and Doan, p. 100 (testimony of Trinh Duc, village chief).

⁹² Tuck, pp. 15-16.

⁹³ Machiavelli, p. 21. This is very consistent with our position thus far. If weapons offer security, autonomy and power, then weaponlessness must produce imperilment, humiliation and impotence.

⁹⁴ "It worries me that 'turn the other cheek' is so easily dismissed... Didn't Jesus know his neighborhood? Was it more benign than yours?... But I think you're right. Still, I wonder if it's because of some weakness on my part." —Dickinson to author, 1996.

⁹⁵ "It is only necessary to remember," said Tolstoy to his admirer and friend, "that the Government, however strong and cruel it may be, can never prevent the real, spiritual life of man, which alone is of importance" (Goldenweizer, p. 131). —But if one's spiritual life is stunted, as mine was and is, as so many people's is, then cruelty can at the very least weaken and damage it.

⁹⁶ Buddha would pity my attachment to the Asian woman, and advise me to remove the cause of my anxiety and possible grief by severing all attachments; at the same time, he would hold me blameless for violently defending her should I choose to, arguing that the aggressor had brought all consequences upon himself. See Carus, pp. 208, 148.

⁹⁷ Laqueur, p. 68 ("Catechism of the Revolutionist," 1869).

⁹⁸ Cheryl Russell, *American Demographics* article, p. 24.

⁹⁹ For the record, I'd like to live in an America in which I could leave my door unlocked all the time; in which I could walk wherever I wanted at night; in which we all took each

other on faith; in which there were fewer people and more trees, a wild America like Canada; an America in which I could believe what the President said; in which women's bodies were their own business; in which electrical power consumption diminished every year, in which automobiles were banned from our cities and televisions and chain stores were banned everywhere; in which knowingly failing to help a stranger in an emergency would be punished by death, in which people collected experiences instead of things; in which everyone died at home, not in a hospital, in which everything was sexual and nothing was pornographic, in which beautiful words were second in importance only to beautiful deeds and beautiful souls, in which we all made use of what we already had.

¹⁰⁰ Freud recounts the tale of a man whose obsessional neurosis required him to spend "his days in contriving evidence of an alibi, in case he should be accused of any murder that might have been committed in the city" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 245). This man was afraid of murdering, and I was afraid of being murdered, and yet there was a strangely intimate relationship between us. We were both in thrall to violence.

¹⁰¹ Diaz, p. 280. The incarcerated Dwight Abbot (op. cit., p. 81), tells a similar tale.

¹⁰² See Introduction, above.

¹⁰³ *Discourses*, Book IV, in Lucretius/Epicurus, p. 232.

¹⁰⁴ Ragnar Benson, pp. ix-x.

¹⁰⁵ Bradley J. Steiner, "Defensive Combat: Myths and Misconceptions About Self-Defense: Part IV," in *Handguns*, vol. 8, no. 8 (August 1994), p. 88.

¹⁰⁶ Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee, Shan State National Congress, p. 16. See below, "But What Are We to Do?"

¹⁰⁷ Second Amendment (Bailyn, vol. 2, p. 954; Appendix).

¹⁰⁸ *Constitution fédérale de la Confédération suisse*, p. 27 (Chapter I, Article 41, no. 2; my trans.).

¹⁰⁹ UNICRI, p. 302 (Martin Killias, "Gun Ownership, Suicide and Homicide: An International Perspective").

¹¹⁰ Letter to author, 14 August 1994, p. 1, answer no. 4.

¹¹¹ Interviewed by author. Monsignor Albert is profiled in "Dey Bring Dem Bloodstain Up Here," where the above quotation appears in context.

¹¹² Tolstoy, *Writings on Civil Disobedience*, p. 299 (from "The Kingdom of God").

¹¹³ Chandler, Kiernan and Boua.

¹¹⁴ Laqueur, p. 262 ("Terrorism—A Balance Sheet").

WHERE DO MY RIGHTS END?

¹ Gibbon, vol. 1, p. 429.

² Listed in increasing order of controversy.

³ Moral calculus, 5.1.1-3, 5.1.18 generally, and specifically 5.1.2, where the caveat to the allegiance condition appears in its final, modified form. In the chapter on defense of animals, below, we will provisionally add the following to our moral calculus (5.1.a): *Violence is justified in legitimate defense of nonhuman beings against unjustified imminent physical harm.* "Unjustified" possesses no consensualized definition in the nonhuman context.

⁴ Hobbes disagrees, insisting that the second liberty I list has been alienated by the social contract: "In the making of a Commonwealth, every man giveth away the right of defending another; but not of defending himself" (p. 353; II.28).

⁵ A subsidiary case with which we need not detain ourselves very long is the right to defend one's property or not. This also appears in the moral calculus, 5.1.2, with the following caveats, which are self-evident, I hope: 1. Proportionality must be maintained (see M.C. 5.2.F). The right to life supersedes the right to property. (Examples: Others may exercise their right to self-preservation by confiscating excess property if they are in dire need. [See M.C. 5.2.B and 6.2.B.] A householder is not entitled to shoot a fleeing burglar in the back.) Legitimate authority (see M.C. 5.2.C.1) may confiscate excess property in the interest of the social contract (taxes, the Muslim *zakat* tithe, etc.).

⁶ See the brief chapter below, "Where Do Your Rights Begin?"

⁷ In practice, this condition resolves into self-sovereignty, respect for proportionality and respect for discrimination. See the moral calculus, 5.1.2.A-B.

⁸ For instance, in the chapters on defense of creed and gender, we will be forced to give passing mention to the right of freedom of speech. See below, "Where Do My Rights End?"

⁹ "As for torture," says Malraux, "I never underwent it, but I witnessed it. But there was something more—the attempt to force human beings to despise themselves. That is what I call hell." —*Anti-Memoirs*, p. 503. Torturing the child in front of the mother was even worse—an attempt not only to make two human beings despise themselves, but also each other: the desperate child, uncomprehending in his agony why his mother didn't save him, the mother perhaps enraged by her terrible guilt at the child's screams.

¹⁰ Danilo Kis's brilliant short story, "A Tomb for Boris Davidovich," which places an imprisoned Old Bolshevik in a similar situation—every day he doesn't confess to imaginary crimes, the Cheka will shoot another innocent victim in his sight—impresses on our attention, in addition to the obvious moral aspects of the choice which I have attempted to summarize, the psycho-political point that for the Old Bolshevik, whose career and reputation had been absolutely sterling, "the perfection of his biography would be destroyed, his life work (his life) destroyed by these final pages" (op. cit., p. 94). The same principle must operate on most non-revolutionaries. No one is perfect; to the extent that we do good and are good, we must derive some egocentric satisfaction (how else could we have been socialized to do good?). When such unspeakable pressure is placed upon the moral actor, some of his impulsion toward giving in must derive from his defense of inner honor (see below, "Defense of Honor"), masked as guilt.

¹¹ An analogy: the U.S. government's refusal to negotiate with terrorists over hostages. Sartre's protagonist in the short story "The Wall" defies participation in a different way: by giving authority what he believes to be

false information. Or suppose that the mother threw herself at the torturers, shouting and clawing. Most likely she'd soon be dead. I'd feel pity for her; I might express disrespect for the practicality of her act (as Plato would for her rationality); but since I myself demand the opportunity to do as I think best when my existence and dearest interests face obliteration, then surely I ought to stand back and let her do as she thinks best in her own crisis—especially since I wasn't there. For more discussion of this issue, which sometimes gets cast as "victim-perpetrated homicides," see below, "Defense of Race and Culture."

¹² Gandhi, p. 43 ("Brachmacharya or Chastity," from *Yeravda Mandir*).

¹³ For the Jewish calculus as to when an innocent individual can be sacrificed to violent compulsion for the sake of the group, see below, "Loyalty, Compulsion and Fear."

¹⁴ See the moral calculus of the Animal Liberation Front activist "Virginia," below, "Defense of Animals."

¹⁵ Plato, *Laws*, p. 1284 (III.689a).

¹⁶ Stephen Owen, p. 252 (Wang Can [177-217 A.D.], "Seven Sorrows," I).

¹⁷ Article in Robespierre's newspaper *La Défenseur de la Constitution*, quoted in Jordan, p. 113.

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty offers as a trope for understanding these trials the situation of France after the defeat of 1940, which "laid bare the contingency of the foundations of legality and showed how one constructs a new legality" (p. 37). The legalists who stayed on in the French administration were now Nazi collaborators. They might well have believed that this was the end, that Hitler had won the war and hence their only duty was to serve France as best they could under the circumstances. Members of the Resistance thought otherwise, and in 1945 they executed many of the collaborators. Merleau-Ponty argues that even though the collaborators simply showed a difference of opinion, their execution was justified because their opinions had consequences *and because they chose the wrong side*. The correctness of the Resistance's position had never been in doubt; its actual wisdom

was proven by its victory. "Are we saying that the German occupation should have been met with an heroic refusal beyond all hope? Such a refusal, the decision not only to risk death but to die rather than live under foreign domination or fascism is, like suicide, an absolutely gratuitous act, which is beyond existence. [But] it loses its meaning when imposed externally and by government decision. What is meant by the condemnation of the collaborators' choice is that no actual situation in history is absolutely compelling ... and that every existential judgment is a value judgement" (*ibid.*, p. 39).

¹⁹ And his wife.

²⁰ In the revision of his authoritative account, Conquest somewhat hesitatingly retracts his earlier statement that Bukharin was not tortured (*The Great Terror*, p. 363).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 393-94.

²² As Hobbes points out, in a pure state of nature all acts are just. As authority repeatedly reminds us, any individual self-defense which imperils collective self-defense will be regarded as treason. Hence a Warsaw Ghetto mother who refused to accede to the destruction of her baby might be condemned by her comrades—but never by me, even were I one of them; even did I myself take the baby from her and put a pillow over its head—I would in that case merely constitute an immediate compulsion, for whose effects she could by no means be blamed. But the decision of the poet, and of the mothers tortured and starving, did not directly affect anyone but atomized individuals; nor did any of those choices bring upon the choosers the responsibility for having done harm.

²³ A point often made in good or bad faith by those who live in times of universal conscription (e.g. Bloch, p. 133). Authority puts it thus: If your neighbor must fight, then fairness demands that you fight also. Counter-authority argues: If authority is entitled to employ the violence of its citizens in battle for self-preservation, then I am likewise entitled to preserve myself by not battling.

²⁴ Conquest, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

²⁵ Which Hassan the Assassin once actually commanded one of his fanatics to do, simply

to demonstrate to a visitor the powers of absolute command which he enjoyed.

²⁶ Gandhi, p. 75 ("A Himalayan Miscalculation," in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*).

²⁷ Art. I; quoted in CDU/CSU, p. 9.

²⁸ Moltke, p. 24 ("War and Peace").

²⁹ Minimal deviation. Moltke will take punitive action, should the pillagers, overstepping necessity, begin to steal souvenirs, to kill the farmers for pleasure, to rape.

³⁰ Moltke, p. 177 ("Instructions for Large Unit Commanders"). In this man's epoch, little credence was given to the *expedient* benefits of initiative in battle; hence they got no moral window dressing. Resistance manuals written during World War II emphasize the strategic possibilities of the small group, usually armed with a light machine gun. In Moltke's time those strategic possibilities remained overshadowed by centuries of set-piece battles, formations and fixed positions. Guerrilla warfare itself has enjoyed varying degrees of popularity throughout history. In Spain, Wellington employed it successfully against Napoleon. Moltke had little faith in its possibilities, because the terrain he was used to fighting in was cow-fields. As a matter of fact, his troops spread out into skirmish-lines during the successful invasion of France in 1870; but we can point out the decentralized, multiple commands or sub-commands of guerrilladom only in the remotest metaphorical sense, for Moltke's army neither lurked, nor retreated from strength, nor attacked by surprise; above all, it was not a defending force, but an army of occupation; hence it hardly enjoyed the support of the local population! Moltke relied not on insurgency but on conquest. He quoted George Washington on the incompetence of the militia during the American Revolutionary War, omitting to note that the Americans, after all, *won*, thanks to what has been described as a *combination* of "a Regular striking force of well-trained troops and the efforts of a militia little more than an armed population in quality ... whose fire [the militia's] largely destroyed British power in America" (Wintringham and Blashford-

Snell, p. 128). But Moltke found little reason to take note. He'd succeeded against an insurgent population where the British failed. It is always a temptation to universalize the lessons of one's own experience; hence Moltke's remarks on the French volunteers of 1870 expressed an appropriately patrician attitude: "From a broad humanitarian viewpoint, one might desire only to see proof that the firm decision of an entire people makes its subjugation impossible, that a "people's" army suffices to protect the country. Of course our point of view is different" (op. cit., p. 31; "War and Peace"). Were the ouija board a more reliable means of communication, I would love to ask him if Cu Chi had changed his doctrine. See below, "Defense Against Traitors."

³¹ Gandhi, pp. 98-99 ("Discipline—Satyagrahi and Military," *Harijan*, 10-6-39).

³² *Ibid*, p. 88 ("Requisite Qualifications," *Harijan*, 25-3-39).

³³ As for laying waste the enemy, the most superficial browse through the pages of Thucydides will show that widespread practice not to have been, as in Moltke's time, a necessary sop to undisciplined expediency. Rather, it comprised institutionalized policy. There being no commissaries and poor roads, armies accomplished their war aims just as Sherman's troops would in the American Civil War more than twelve centuries later, simultaneously sustaining themselves and weakening their enemies. The notion of a prolonged occupation of enemy territory, or of "winning the hearts and minds" of the enemy's civilians, would have been alien and irrelevant to the atomized landscape of inward-looking and mutually suspicious *poleis* that was ancient Greece. Hence the soldiers would always be free to feed themselves at the enemy's expense, as they saw fit and as they could. See also Sage, pp. 55-58.

³⁴ *Laws*, p. 1489 (XII.942a-c).

³⁵ To speak more precisely, I have in mind inner and outer collective honor, and outer individual honor; perhaps also inner individual honor, by indoctrination. These terms are all defined in the chapter on defense of honor, below.

³⁶ Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* tells exactly this tale. Between Domitian and Commodus, says he, the citizen's lot was happy, because "the vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom" (Gibbon, vol. 1, p. 32). Then came absolute rulers who lacked wisdom, virtue or both. Decay began. I can certainly believe the ending of the tale, although I feel more skepticism about the beginning.

³⁷ Here he is only neglectfully disapproving, I would say, rather than categorically prohibitive, like Hobbes, who refuses to allow a revolution against the most despotic tyranny, on the grounds that this would legitimize revolution as a political strategy. We may profitably contrast him with Jefferson, who advises us to launch a revolution every ten years.

³⁸ Wells, vol. 1, p. 286.

³⁹ Plato, *Laws*, p. 1510 (XII.965d).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1294-95 (III.701a-b).

⁴¹ Hitler, p. 435.

⁴² *Laws*, p. 1429 (IX.869c). Hobbes (p. 352; II.28) also wants to convince us that parricide is more horrible than other kinds of murder, for a Platonic reason—"the Parent ought to have the honour of a Sovereign"—but then goes on to argue, in direct contradistinction to Plato's axiom on slaves and masters, that "to Robbe a poore man, is a greater Crime, than to robbe a rich man; because 'tis to the poore a more sensible dammage." His case is equally as plausible as Plato's—and, for just that reason, I would prefer to create my continuum of crime-horror myself, instead of letting the state do it.

⁴³ Infanticide retained its legality in Rome up through the first century B.C., provided, of course, that it was committed by the father, the *pater familias* (Carcopino, p. 77). As for parricide, "a single drop of that blood creates a stain which can never be washed out," insists Cicero. This lawyer-orator, however, more supple than doctrinaire, did at one point admit that while "people are under an obligation to pass over in silence the wrongs they have suffered from their parents," their forbearance is mandated "only up to ... the point at which [it] can still remain humanly

feasible" (*Murder Trials*, p. 130, defense of Aulus Cluentius Habitus). For the similarly ascribed Spartan view of infanticide, see the discussion of Lycurgus the lawgiver, below.

⁴⁴ _____, *Ancient Roman Statutes*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Not (I hasten to say) that I respect the particular tie of "obligation" of a slave to his master.

⁴⁶ Adelson, p. 657 (Figure X-26A). Italics in original.

⁴⁷ *Republic*, p. 699 (V.460c). To maintain society in its equal divisions, Plato more or less demands procreation on command. A woman is to marry between the ages of sixteen and twenty, a man between thirty and thirty-five. (There would have been a lot of lonely widows in Plato's utopia, although he did permit their relatives to marry them off again if they were young enough.) A man who remains unmarried after thirty-five will be punitively fined every year he remains single. A couple who have produced no children after ten years are to separate and try again with different spouses. In order to direct fertility to its needed end—children, not too many, not too few, with homogenous lines of descent, for the sake of those all-important inheritances—Plato bans homosexuality, promiscuity and concubinage—all of which measures of social engineering strangely parallel the intrusiveness of the "Behemoth State."—"The woman belongs deeply to the total life of the state," wrote the Nazi theoretician Rosenberg (Mosse, p. 40; "Emancipation from the Emancipation Movement," 1938). Fecund German mothers were awarded an honor cross equivalent to a combat decoration. A childless wife was considered inferior by strict Nazis. —For Plato, sexual control will be furthered by inducing a sense of shame about intercourse, and by keeping every citizen busy. On this latter point, the philosopher commits the same errors as his totalitarian successors. He expects his citizens to be first up and last to bed; housewives should wake their servant-maids, not the other way around; and magistrates should be in their offices long after dark, for the instructive terror of evildoers. "The purpose of rest is to release energies for a new struggle

and for the further march forward." (Mosse, p. 33; Hans Anderlahn, S.A. member, "National Socialism Has Restored the Family," 1937). And Castro mobilizes the people; he wants to "incorporate the entire working population into the working class" (*Fidel Castro Speaks*, p. 193; May Day speech, 1966). But there will be small material reward for this industry.

³⁸ Defined transgressions against subjects of foreign states would be violations of the protagonist state's law (as in international statutes against child pornography, for example).

³⁹ He would approve of the first two of our choices which the self is entitled to make: namely, self-defense and defense of others; but in place of the self, the only moral actor he'd allow would be the state. (After all, like any totalitarian, hasn't he proven them to be one and the same?) As for the third right, suicide, he would quite rightly consider it absurd and unnatural on a state's part. States are the most materialistic beings imaginable; they long to live.

⁴⁰ Hobbes, p. 365.

⁴¹ Except insofar as his authority accords with mainstream Christian doctrine, in which Hobbes expresses much interest.

⁴² Or, rather, most agree on certain tenets (such as the Golden Rule, which even Hobbes, who genially allows the commission of atrocities upon foreign nationals in time of war, accepts as universal) and not on others. We will point out these commonalities where possible.

⁴³ Moral calculus, 1.1.

⁴⁴ *My Life*, p. 210. Needless to say, Trotsky did not allow "the masses" to express that independence once he got into power. We will discuss him at length below.

⁴⁵ Joan of Arc, p. 37 (words of May 7, 1429).

⁴⁶ Machiavelli, p. 22.

⁴⁷ That is, in acceptance of the nonviolence condition.

⁴⁸ In other words, it is one thing to be Machiavellian to save myself or someone I love from imminent violence. It is quite another to be Machiavellian on general principles, and lure others to their destruction just because they might have wanted to do the same to me. It is only fair to note that

these limits must somewhat vary socially and culturally. In Madagascar I frequently encountered a self-protective politeness carried to the point of deceit. (See "The Jealous Ones," below.) People rarely expressed anger to one another's faces, which meant that the person smiling at me might well be hating me and wishing me harm. I learned for my own protection to lie as I was lied to. In Denmark, on the other hand, preemptive lying was unnecessary as a general rule. So I continued to operate according to my debased version of the Golden Rule: *Do as you are done by*, with the proviso that I would act better than that when it seemed safe to do so.

⁴⁹ Turnbull, p. 285. This disquieting book has been quoted by everybody from neoconservatives to radical environmentalists (e.g. Manes, pp. 39-40).

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 283. In her photograph (facing p. 129), we see the swollen-bellied child squinting at the anthropologist, her ribs all too visible as she stands in the place where her parents will kill her. Poorly composed, badly reproduced and further obscured by alienness, this image unfortunately tells us nothing.

⁵¹ His perceptions were only deepened by a brief followup study. When he returned, in a year of good crops, the Ik were no more helpful to one another than they had been before.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 132. One is ironically reminded of the anecdote in Matthew 13:46-50. Christ is preaching, and someone tells him that his mother and brothers hope to speak with him. "But he replied to the man who told him, 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?'"

⁵³ For instance, one might note that the Ik had been resettled out of their old nomadic life onto poor-quality land, and the forest they used to hunt in declared off limits as a nature preserve. The results: famine and social collapse.

⁵⁴ For extended discussion, see below, "Defense of Class."

⁵⁵ All civil governments are at first, the latter writes, "voluntary associations for mutual defense" (*op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 91). Plato, on the other hand, aphorizes that "the first stage in the creation of any society is surely conjugal conjunction and association" (*Laus*, p. 1311;

IV.721a). I would have liked to hear more about this. For me the most disappointing part of his *Republic* is when Glaucon and Socrates are first beginning to discuss what the ideal state will be, and Socrates says mildly that he's sure that the kind of people Glaucon would care about would be delighted to dwell in the forest living on rusk and whatnot, at which Glaucon humbly begs him to consider social animals instead. —If only they had come back to the forest people later! But they never did.

⁶⁶ After all, instead of presupposing a civilizing ascent out of miserable beastliness, we could trace an equally plausible scenario of degeneration from either from the demigod-like golden generation of Hesiod and Plato, or the noble savagery of Rousseau. Tacitus writes that "primitive man ... was naturally good. But when men ceased to be equal, egotism replaced fellow-feeling and decency succumbed to violence. The result was despotism" (p. 132). Nonetheless, as Maine has pointed out (p. 73), the Romans saw evidence of the state of nature in their own institutions.

Mahayana Buddhism posits an analogous but more extreme schematic: "an age of the flourishing of the Law, an age of the decline of the Law, and, finally, an age of the end of the Law, when the world would descend into darkness" (Varley, pp. 85-86, which sets a fitting context for Japan's gloomy warrior tales). In a sense, the point is moot—for after the degeneration, what next but the Hobbesian state of nature? Ultimately, the original cause of government matters not, except to illuminate the myth-maker's predisposition: what concerns us is how we interpret the actual and potential benefits of government as it stands. For some slighting remarks on the plausibility of the original social contract, directed equally to Locke and his enemy Hobbes, see Maine, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷ Plutarch, *Lives*, p. 40.

⁶⁸ Tacitus again, loc. cit.: "Some communities, ... either immediately or when autocratic government palled, preferred the rule of law."

⁶⁹ Montesquieu comes out against Hobbes on just this point, pointing out that mutual fear

most be balanced by "the very pleasure one animal feels at the approach of another of the same species," as well as by sexual inclinations (p. 2; I.2).

⁷⁰ _____ [attributed to Aristotle or one of his students], *The Athenian Constitution*, p. 56.

⁷¹ Harpocration, s.v. "Hipparchos"; in Fornara, p. 41, item no. 41a.

⁷² See below, the two Colombian case studies in the "South America" section.

⁷³ Quoted in Craig, p. 180.

⁷⁴ Maine, p. 75.

⁷⁵ Proposed Clause 4 to the constitution of 1793; quoted in Rudé, *Robespierre*, p. 108.

⁷⁶ *Odyssey*, 9.112; quoted in Plato, *Laws*, p. 1275 (III.680b). This prior distance between clans, so essential to our allegory, reminds me of the ecologist Garret Hardin's point that "the commons, if justifiable at all, is justifiable only under conditions of low-population density" (op. cit., p. 262). See below, "Defense of the Earth."

⁷⁷ Loc. cit. (680e). Thus too Rousseau, p. 8 ("The Social Contract"), for whom the justifiability of that royalty lies in the father's love for his children.

⁷⁸ Maine, pp. 104-ff. For a summation of the father's powers, which in Roman times included life and death over the other members of his family, see pp. 114-15.

⁷⁹ Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 57.

⁸⁰ Lewes, p. 239.

⁸¹ *Constitution fédérale de la Confédération suisse*, p. 7 (preliminary. declamation; my trans.).

⁸² Rousseau, pp. 18-19 ("The Social Contract").

⁸³ *Laws*, III.679c, p. 1274. Rousseau agrees on the grounds that "laws are always useful to those who possess and injurious to those who have nothing" (op. cit., p. 26).

⁸⁴ "Sayings of Spartans," in *Plutarch on Sparta*, p. 157 (Charillus).

⁸⁵ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, vol. 2, p. 131 (VIII.11). Italics mine.

⁸⁶ While it may be possible for you, reader, and for me myself to improve ourselves a little (most likely through introspection rather than through each other's help, although one never knows), no theory or plan which we can come up with is likely to improve anyone else. To do that, our measure would have to

be wise, and either irresistible or compulsory.

⁸⁷ Lincoln, vol. 1, p. 301 ("Fragments on Government," ca. 1854). The U.N.'s version is: "A social and political order must be established in which the individual is the means and the end; in other words, a society which does not base its values on its level of well-being but also on its capacity to create justice and human growth" (UNICRI, p. vii, address by Nicola Mancino, Minister of the Interior, Italy).

⁸⁸ See below, "Defense of Authority."

⁸⁹ Hobbes argues much the same, saying that we promulgate and agree to social contracts partly out of fear for what would happen if we didn't have them, and partly out of hope as to what we might gain by them. This is why the Randy Weaver case, discussed below in my case study of Bo Gritz ("Off the Grid," 1994), so deeply sickened and appalled me. The government had itself become an instrument of harm. This vast subject of legitimate and illegitimate power is touched upon in the chapter on self-defense of authority, below. For further discussion of the Ruby Ridge affair, see the chapter on punishment.

⁹⁰ _____ [attributed to Aristotle or one of his students], *The Athenian Constitution*, p. 96.

⁹¹ Vernant, p. 94.

⁹² Later on we will be considering law as it relates to the penalization and deterrence of violence. See "Deterrence, Retribution and Revenge," below, and "Punishment."

⁹³ Rousseau again: "What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to anything which tempts him and he is able to attain; what he gains is civil liberty and property in all that he possesses" (op. cit., p. 23; "The Social Contract").

⁹⁴ Bakunin (Maximoff), p. 156 (italics in original). Parenthetical numbering added by me.

⁹⁵ What does Bakunin mean, however, by full utilization? If we take him out of his anarchist context, it's not at all clear. Does the individual decide, in which case society may not be particularly productive, or does the government decide, in which case we may have concentration camps? Better, in my mind, to drop that part.

⁹⁶ Pahor, p. 152.

⁹⁷ Genesis 22.6, 10.

⁹⁸ _____, *Des lettres de cachet*, p. 80 (my trans.).

⁹⁹ Burke, p. 160.

¹⁰⁰ Loc. cit (italics in original).

¹⁰¹ For a portrait of Caesar, see below, "Defense of War Aims."

¹⁰² Krebs, p. 154.

¹⁰³ "FC," p. 33, para. 37 ("The Power Process"). He rejects the technological apparatus of the United States, which is certainly inimical to his kind of freedom: "By 'freedom' we mean the opportunity to go through the power process, with real goals, not the artificial goals of surrogate activities, and without interference, manipulation or supervision from anyone, especially from any large organization." ("FC," p. 30, para. 94; "The Nature of Freedom"). I don't deny that almost every day I lament all the things I had to give up in addition to my weapon-freedom: My privacy, the clean water which I once could drink directly from streams, the treasure I've earned, my ability to roam where I please, and, increasingly, my own safety. As for the Unabomber's main point, that the citizens of the developed countries have become dull, swaddled slaves of consumerism, it is absolutely right. The life of the average office worker, for instance, afflicts me with pity and horror. Unfortunately, the Unabomber leaves his definition of worthwhile goals unclear. As an artist, I consider the effort which I employ to write and paint as the most rewarding action of my life. When I contemplate the achievements of great teachers, doctors, activists and lawgivers, I feel grateful to government, without which the leisure and safety to perform them would never have occurred. Are these accomplishments based on "real goals" or not? And, yes, most of the people I know are sad and desperate; their surrogate activities have few charms for me; but I would have to say that the system which exploits them, deceives them and above all stupefies them is much, much better than no system at all.

¹⁰⁴ Stewart, *Ordeal by Hunger*, p. 334 (diary of Patrick Breen).

¹⁰⁵ Exodus 21.12-13.

¹⁰⁶ *Islendingabók*, ch. 10, quoted in Byock, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷ Exodus 31.18.

¹⁰⁸ CDU/CSU, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ 451-49 B.C.

¹¹⁰ Maine, p. 15.

¹¹¹ *The Science of Right*, in Kant, p. 447.

¹¹² Although not always. The son of the sanguinary insurrectionist John Brown was required to write an accounting of all his misdeeds, so that his father would be sure to punish him. On one occasion, after a third or so of his debt had been whipped away, his father stripped to the waist, knelt and commanded that his son whip him to pay off the rest. The son later recalled: "I was then too obtuse to perceive how Justice could be satisfied by inflicting penalty upon the back of the innocent instead of the guilty" (Oates, p. 24). We will examine this incident in more detail below, in the chapter on punishment.

¹¹³ *Laws*, IV.715d, pp. 1306-07.

¹¹⁴ Procopius, p. 87 (vii.31-32).

¹¹⁵ _____, *Ancient Roman Statutes*, p. 15 (fragment 5).

¹¹⁶ Moral calculus, 6.2.C.1: "When is violent defense of preexisting ("legitimate") authority unjustified? That is, when is it justified to rise up against it? ... Case 3: When authority has no "empathetic bridge" to the masses or the opposition." It is fortunate that this crowd of my peers was the governed, not the government.

¹¹⁷ "From infancy," writes Tolstoy, "by every possible means—class-books, church-services, sermons, speeches, books, papers, songs, poetry, monuments—the people is stupefied in one direction; and then either by force or by bribe, several thousands of the people are assembled, and when these, joined by the idlers always present at every sight, to the sound of cannon and music, and inflamed by the glitters and brilliance about them, will commence to shout out what others are shouting in front of them, we are told that this is the expression of the sentiment of the entire nation" (*Writings on Civil Disobedience*, p. 95, "On Patriotism").

¹¹⁸ Moral calculus, 5.1.8.

¹¹⁹ Below, "Defense of Creed."

¹²⁰ Below, "Defense of Gender."

¹²¹ If we care to be good Platonists and assume proportionality in lesser as in greater relationships, then we can draw a parallel for domestic authority: The breaking of the social contract by one party—say, a robber—does not in and of itself release another party, the citizen next door, from his obligations—but self-defense does, until the robber is subdued.

¹²² Lossky, p. 221 (Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics drawn from the very Words of the Holy Scriptures* [wr. 1679-1704, pub. 1709], sels).

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 164 (Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, 1625, sels.).

¹²⁴ Tacitus, p. 132.

¹²⁵ Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 35.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 58. Strangely enough, Bakunin goes even farther than Plato (whom, ironically, he despises precisely on the basis of his ideal state), insisting that any ethics founded upon the individual in isolation is egotistical and exploitationist. His objection to individual-centered ethics is partly religious; an atheist in the Russian revolutionary mold, he believes that the relationship between a person and his God (for which, however, one could easily substitute "a person and his Good") is so much harmful hocus-pocus. To him, the individual considered in no larger framework—that is, without reference to the allegiance condition—"is personified egoism, a being that is pre-eminently anti-social" (Bakunin [Maximoff], p. 122. Bakunin's assertion contains a drop of fairness—indeed, there would be little interest in any ethics that did not deal preeminently with human relations—but I insist on my right to the mastery of my own person. Ethics becomes merely the codified prescriptions of social technocrats if we fail to root it in freedom of choice, which is to say within the anguished and exalted windings of the solitary mind—and what mind is not solitary? No matter how adept we might be at belonging, or how adept society is at controlling, nourishing or even enslaving us, our perceptions remain different from those of the prisoner in the adjacent cell; our opinions and experiences vary, no matter how slightly; above all, when

he dies, we go on. Whatever I feel, I feel personally and inescapably; this is happening to me and none other. Again I remember from my childhood how the laughing boys used to hit me in the face. (In Plato's republic, I suppose, they would not have existed, although by the time he got around to writing the *Laus* he had to face up to assault and homicide.) The boys went on laughing, but I did not want to laugh. I was alone. When there is no help, then I alone have the opportunity (and the duty) of ameliorating my fate. I may or may not have physical capability, but I have freedom—moral freedom, at least, subject to the limits of my courage. —Oh, yes, I agree with Bakunin and all the others who remind us that we are only relatively free; we rebel against the law of gravity, for instance, at our peril. (He actually repudiates free will—a strange position which leads him into theoretical difficulties.)

¹²⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, p. 287.

¹²⁸ My favorite Spartacist slogan, referring to such nations as the Communist-so-just-barely-better-than-nothing USSR, was this one: "Defend bureaucratically deformed workers' states!" How could such stirring words fail to thrill any class patriot?

¹²⁹ Bookchin, p. 20.

¹³⁰ *Plutarch on Sparta*, p. 124 (Archidamus, no. 4).

¹³¹ Hassig, pp. 146-47.

¹³² Bookchin, p. 35.

¹³³ For a comparison between Stalinist Russia and Sparta, see below, "Defense of Class."

¹³⁴ Hassig, loc. cit.

¹³⁵ ———, *Des lettres de cachet*, p. 83 (my trans.).

¹³⁶ For a portrait of Sade, see below, "Punishment."

¹³⁷ ———, *Des lettres de cachet*, p. 84 (my trans.).

¹³⁸ Mao, *Selected Readings*, pp. 37-38.

¹³⁹ What is a state? One of Caesar's biographers argues, for instance, that the ancient Greeks and Romans lived in "free communities" rather than states (Meier, p. 197). In a widely comparative meditation such as this, a state simply refers to the prevailing social, hence inevitably political, association. Such definitions fail to have what my old teacher

Terry Eagleton used to call "cutting edge," but the operations in this book involve moral splitting, so in order to have anything to split we must employ conceptual lumping.

¹⁴⁰ Darrow, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ "The state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check" for the benefit of the most powerful class. —Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" (extract), in Toole and Schiffman, p. 25.

¹⁴² Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, vol. 2, p. 123 (VIII.8).

¹⁴³ Montesquieu, p. 2 (I.3).

¹⁴⁴ Pernoud, pp. 194-5.

¹⁴⁵ Bakunin (Maximoff), p. 107, Italics mine.

¹⁴⁶ Matt, 21:26-28.

¹⁴⁷ For further discussion of the social contract, see the Lincoln section of "Defense of Authority," below.

WHERE DO MY RIGHTS BEGIN?

¹ Lawrence, p. 102.

² Hobbes, p. 388 (II.30).

³ Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 254. The ticket which Ivan rejects, of course, is that of the ultimate sovereign, God.

⁴ EPR (People's Revolutionary Army) commanders "Oscar" and "Vicente," quoted in *Voces Zapatistas*, September 1996, p. 2 (editorial). Italics mine.

⁵ Gandhi, p. 157 ("Non-Co-operation Explained," *Young India*, 18-8-20).

⁶ Although they could elect tribunes. The infamous patrician P. Clodius used Caesar and Pompey's favor to be adopted by a plebeian in order to stand for tribune.

⁷ For this point I am indebted to Wiedemann, pp. 166-67.

⁸ One exception being the state's slaves and eunuchs who acted ostensibly in their masters' names, but in fact in their own faceless interest.

⁹ Later this was altered to five. In addition to ostracism, there were other Greek penalties at various times: selective disenfranchisement from civic functions and privileges, or out-

right outlawry, whose pronouncement formula ran: "Let him die with impunity" to whomever slew him (MacDowell, p. 74).

¹⁰ The six-thousand-vote minimum (raised from a minimum of two hundred) was one of the conditions for ostracism; the other was that the unfortunate one had to receive more votes than anyone else. In other words, only one person at a time could be ostracized (*Philikhoros*, [F. Jacoby] FG+H 328 F 30, in G.R. Stanton, p. 177). One description of the practice relates that the Athenians "took to removing anyone... who seemed too powerful: the first man unconnected with the tyranny to be ostracized was Xanthippus son of Acripion" (____ [attributed to Aristotle or one of his students], *The Athenian Constitution*, p. 65). For an account of how Themistocles, the hero of the great battle at Salamis, reinstated and manipulated the (by then half-forgotten) device of ostracism, see Plutarch, *Lives*, p. 161, and Green, pp. 48, 56-7.

¹¹ In *ca.* 700 BC, Hippias of Elis, who enlarges on this somewhat (in Fornara, p. 11, item no. 8) claims that "the tyrant derived his name from the Tyrrenians. For they became troublesome as pirates." Twenty-two centuries later, Zorita, that melancholy student of post-Conquest Mexico, offers a more contemporary definition of tyrants: "... they have usurped what is not theirs through inheritance. And because they fear that some day others will revolt against them and lay them low as they did their natural lords, they steal all they can as long as they remain in power; for when they fall, they will return to what they were at first" (op. cit., p. 121).

¹² Various ostraka; in Fornara, p. 42, item no. 41d.

¹³ Scholiast to Aristophanes, *Knights* 855 [425/4]; in Fornara, p. 42, item no. 41b.

¹⁴ The ostracized Greek comes back after ten years. The imprisoned American serves out his time, and then (theoretically, at least) gets restored to most of the privileges of citizenship. A Roman criminal, condemned to fight in the arena, may well, if he overcomes the other gladiator, or fights skillfully and gracefully, or merely survives for three to five years, be restored to his full civic existence by

the acclamation of the citizen-spectators (Wiedemann, pp. 92-3, 105, 120).

¹⁵ Appian, vol. III, p. 115 (*The Civil Wars*, I.VII.62). However, Sherwin-White tells us that "down to the age of Cicero *exilium* remained a voluntary act, and was only incidentally associated with the removal of political offenders from the state" (p. 35). No doubt Marius would have been surprised to learn this.

¹⁶ *Poetic Edda*, "Havamal: The Sayings of Hár," p. 18, no. 25. The same poem (no. 50) compares a friendless man to a fir tree alone in a field, which must soon die.

¹⁷ Wiedemann, p. 139. He wrote these words about the Romans. He could equally have been speaking about the Japanese, the Spartans, and many other warlike peoples. The early eighteenth-century *Hagakure*, which exemplifies the "way of the warrior," *bushido*, described how samurai sometimes practiced their art by training as executioners. "It gave me an extraordinary feeling," recalled one warrior. "To be disgusted at it is a sign of cowardice" (quoted in Pinguet, p. 132).

¹⁸ For further discussion of Cicero (and, among other things, of his role in the debate on Cataline), see the portrait of Julius Caesar below in "Defense of War Aims." The mistreatment of his murdered remains by Fulvia is mentioned in "Deterrence, Retribution and Revenge," below.

¹⁹ Cicero, *Selected Political Speeches*, p. 136, fourth speech against Lucius Sergius Catalina, 63 BC.

²⁰ Hobbes, pp. 359-60 (pt. II, ch. 28: "Of Punishments, and Rewards").

²¹ Meier, p. 170.

²² Cicero, *Murder Trials*, p. 273 (defense of Gaius Rabirius).

²³ Quoted in Evans, p. 709.

²⁴ Anyone flogged, imprisoned or put to death will be so treated as a *citizen*, a member of the polity (if that is any comfort.) In practical terms, this means that he can be assessed no more than a stipulated penalty, and that only after the law's slow, careful procedures of assessment and apportionment have been followed (*Laws*, IX.855c, p. 1416). While self-defense against an aggressor (whose aggression violated the social contract) might allow

justifiable homicide on the part either of a threatened individual or of the social contract itself as personified in its police agents, once the aggressor is rendered harmless, like the wounded Robespierre in captivity, standard social obligations toward him resume. No matter what atrocities he might have committed, he cannot be killed out of hand; nor will the laws kill him atrociously. (In Louis XIV's time, the punishment for a hideous crime comprised not merely death, but a hideous death.)

²⁵ Jefferson, p. 356, Sect. XIV.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

²⁷ Cicero, *Murder Trials*, pp. 65-66 (defense of Sextius Roscius).

²⁸ Who rightly blamed Cicero for the execution of his father in the crushing of the Catiline conspiracy.

²⁹ See below, "Defense of Homeland."

³⁰ Darrow, p. 151.

³¹ Lewes, p. 318.

³² Rudé, *Robespierre*, p. 166.

³³ I don't know, by the way, whose gun he used. A brief essay on the etiquette of gun suicides deserves to be written. In 1994 one gun club in Beverly Hills suffered the inconvenience of two suicides—and, worse yet—one homicide, all committed on the premises with rented guns. These cases deserve a letter of reprimand from Miss Manners.

³⁴ One can also make a utilitarian argument in favor of suicide, from the standpoint of the survivors. Suicide frequently varies inversely with homicide (Wolfgang, p. 5; "Criminal Homicide and the Subculture of Violence"). If the "hydraulic theory" that violence must come out in a new place if we block the old has any validity, then it may be that by allowing suicide we are actually preventing homicide. I have in fact met several people who after failed suicide attempts turned on others.

³⁵ Plotinus, p. 34.

³⁶ Quoted in the introduction to Rizal, p. 21.

³⁷ Shalamov, p. 456 ("The Life of Engineer Kipreev").

³⁸ Pinguet, p. 88.

³⁹ People who want to ban handguns because they give the possessor a passport to Heaven are just as mistaken as those who give a cer-

tain brand of ice cream poor marks for social responsibility because of its high fat content. I am sometimes criticized because I give winos bottles of Thunderbird or Night Train for Christmas. My indignant interlocutors tell me that I'm helping the winos to kill themselves. I may be, or I may not be. What is important for me is that I am giving the winos what they want and making them happy, rather than giving them what in my superior wisdom I claim they should want. I know a few so-called feminists who despise me for supporting prostitution. If those poor exploited women could meet these kind big sisters of theirs, they would scratch their eyes out. —There is no denying that handguns are sometimes misused, and that many, many suicides are the result of misjudgments. But in such cases we ought to say that X. was wrong to kill himself, not that society was wrong to let X. get a handgun.

⁴⁰ Abdullah Fatteh, M.D., etc., "Sex Hanging in a Female," from *The Handbook of Forensic Pathology*, 1973, repr. in Swezey, pp. 58-59.

⁴¹ Throughout the latter twentieth century, a plurality of suiciders of both sexes strangled themselves, with the use of poison gaining considerable ground between 1950 and 1960, then withering into the same proportional insignificance as gas (the Nobel prize winner Kawabata's method—he left a saucepan on the stove, so that his family could keep "face" by pretending that it had been an accident), drowning, jumping out of buildings, jumping in front of a train, or "other" (Ministry of Health and Welfare [Japan], *Population Trends*, p. 20, male and female facing bar graphs for 1950-87. Translation by Mrs. Keiko Golden). An age breakdown for the year 1987 is strangely similar, with strangulation increasing proportionately at every other means's expense, from 20.5% for females aged five to nineteen, to 70% for females seventy and older; for males the figures are 51.4% and 76.2% respectively. (Ministry of Health and Welfare [Japan], *Vital Statistics*, p. 213 (trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden) gives data from different years, broken down differently. Interpolation gives results consistent with those of

Population Trends, I am happy to say.) In this picture, however, the disappearing act is conducted not by poisoning, which we know occupied the tiniest niche in 1987, but jumping out of buildings, which I presume was the easiest for young people under parental restraint to manage, and then perhaps its convenience continued to be recommended proportionate to people's age-linked decline in mobility, until in people's seventies it was significantly under 5% (*Population Trends*, p. 21, male and female facing bar graphs for 1987; trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden).

⁴² Humphry, *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, p. 59.

⁴³ Oe, p. 84. This author also recounts the story of a girl who poisoned herself after her fiance succumbed to radiation sickness (pp. 151-153). He concludes: "She honored his death with the dignity of her own." One may argue that if justice can be defined in terms of limiting violence, then a permissive attitude to suicide may foster casual self-destruction, which would be unjust. This is arguable, but I'd prefer to privilege self-sovereignty over self-preservation. In any event, with the exception of a massive spike on the graph in the 1950s, Japanese suicide statistics do not consistently reflect a disproportionately high rate. In the mid-1960s, for instance, Japanese suicides per capita showed rough equivalence with French data (Pinguet, p. 15). The approximate equality with western suicide rates goes all the way back to 1882, when Japan first began recording such figures (ibid, p. 17). In 1994, a Japanese was (as I calculate) thirteen times more likely to kill himself than to die from a gastrointestinal infection, which is to say twenty-eight times more likely than getting murdered, four times more likely than falling victim to what my translator sweetly called "unexpected automatic suffocation," and four times *less* likely than dying of pneumonia or bronchitis. (Ministry of Health and Welfare [Japan], *Vital Statistics*, p. 213, pp. 226-27 (Table 5.16: "Death rates (per 100,000 population) by sex, age and causes of death (the 117 rubrics list: Japan, 1994, con."), with Japanese captions trans. by Mrs. Keiko Golden).

⁴⁴ Evans, p. 601. For brief a discussion of Buddhist views on suicide, cf. Blomberg, p.

204. Maruice Pinguet expresses truth and anger in equal measure when he writes: "It is a poor kind of justice which imagines that those who have had their reasons - or unreasons - for despairing of life will be damned for ever. If we must have a faith, let us have the faith of consolation in preference to the faith of terror" (op. cit., p. p. 115).

⁴⁵ Varley, pp. 65-66; Blomberg, pp. 72-78, 95, 141.

⁴⁶ This motivation, made so famous by Japanese drama, had its roots in what Pinguet calls "the age of the ancient tombs," when "clan chieftans did not like to lie alone in the cold ground; their pride demanded company. When a great man died his household was strangled . . ." (p. 61).

⁴⁷ See above, "Gandhi's Moral Calculus," item no. 5.

⁴⁸ Chanoff and Doan, p. 142 (testimony of the Venerable Giac Duc).

⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 143-44 (the Venerable Giac Duc).

⁵⁰ Vetrova, who'd lived and died in another prison entirely, could hardly have held Krupskaya's benefit in her mind when she immolated herself; but that doesn't matter; in direct if accidental consequence of her act, Krupskaya, who was always extremely useful to Lenin, found herself in a better position to assist the revolution than she had been in her cell.

⁵¹ Ministry of Health and Welfare [Japan], *Population Trends*, p. 17, facing graphs of suicide ratios by age, compared by sex. Translation by Mrs. Keiko Golden. The people whose self-endings became data points on this graph were all men. On the same page, the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare has given us a corresponding display for women. Here we see the same peaks for those two desperate years 1950 and 1960, and the same overall arrangement of strands, but the cohesion is tighter; the cords remain closer together, and—this is hardly insignificant—closer to zero. In 1987, for instance, the suicide ratio for men in their eighties was 88.6; for women of the same age, 64.1. In 1950, the two respective figures were 136.7 and 105.7 (loc. cit., the same data in tabular form. Translation by Mrs. Keiko Golden).

³² Ibid, p. 23, twin graphs labeled 6. Translation by Mrs. Keiko Golden.

³³ Ministry of Health and Welfare [Japan], *Population Trends*, p. 22 (graphs 6 and 7). Translation by Mrs. Keiko Golden.

³⁴ Ibid, 17, loc. cit.

³⁵ Suicide should be legalized, and assisted in certain circumstances: terminal illness, terminal unhappiness. Why should the world hinder people from leaving it? Maybe a lower age limit should be imposed on this assistance—say, age twenty or thirty, beyond which point most people act less impulsively. Maybe not. I can certainly imagine an eight-year-old suffering agonies from terminal cancer; why not end? I would recommend that counselors be made available for those who want them, in case some problems might have a less drastic solution than suicide—but the counselors should be *only* for those who want them. By and large, we are better off when others don't tell us what to do.

³⁶ Emanuel Rackman, an Israeli scholar, while he concedes that the mass self-murder at Masada was "heroic," reminds us that Talmudic law generally grants only three injunctions to suicide: escaping the commission of murder, of an unlawful sexual act, or of idolatry. Thus "it would be very difficult in halakhic terms to say that" the Jews at Masada "performed the *mitzvah* of dying... for the sanctity of God's name. It is a misreading of Jewish law to give primacy to martyrdom" ("Violence and the Value of Life," in Baron and Wise, p. 118). Noted, but it does not lessen my admiration for the defenders of Masada. One doomed rabbi in a Nazi concentration camp explained to his fellow inmates that it was now *mitzvah* for the Jews to preserve their lives, since the Nazis wanted to physically destroy them, whereas in the Middle Ages it had sometimes been *mitzvah* to commit suicide, since their enemies then sought to exterminate spiritually through baptism (p. 124). Masada is arguably kin to the latter case.

³⁷ Boot, p. 95.

³⁸ Letter to her son by another marriage, Harald Quandt, 28 April 1945; in Goebbels, p. 634. A trade-unionist who knew Goebbels

himself remarked that the suicide "lacked true tragic characteristics. The revolver shot from his gloved hand only ended a heroic role, not a heroic life" (Krebs, p. 205).

³⁹ Seneca, vol. 1, p. 13 ("On Providence, II.10).

⁴⁰ Caesar, *The Civil War*, p. 258 (Afr. War, 88).

⁴¹ "Except that the freedom to die had replaced the freedom to act," Pinguet reminds us (p. 7). After the first Caesar triumphed, and the Republic lay as dead as Cato, his successors became autocrats. "Already the death of the Stoic had ceased to be the glorious end of the master refusing to accept defeat, and had become the obscure suicide of a servant overcome by the unfairness of his lot..." (loc. cit.). But suicide is still acting, and if other freedoms vanish, the freedom to be or not to be must grow all the more valuable, as we noted in our discussion of Bukharin's forced confession (above, "Where Do My Rights End?").

⁴² Quoted in Erkind, p. 27.

⁴³ Quoted in Pinguet, p. 227.

⁴⁴ Loc. cit. Pinguet, a touch too admiring, calls their decision "entirely free" (p. 228).

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 229.

⁴⁶ Moral calculus, 5.1.2.

⁴⁷ Cook and Cook, p. 409 (testimony of Fukushima Yoshie, 2). There tended to be considerable preparation—i.e.; pressure—for these suicides. Japanese suicide torpedo pilot-candidates would get beaten up repeatedly until they were prepared to die just to prove their own toughness.

⁴⁸ Gibbon, vol. 1, p. 167.

⁴⁹ The more one meditates on Masada's end, the more the question of infanticide comes up. Did the parents do right or wrong, when they decided for their children? I have no certain answer to this, and I doubt that you do, either; but there seems extremely little likelihood that these orphans would have fared well after the fortress's fall.

⁵⁰ Cook and Cook, p. 365 (testimony of Kinjo Shigeaki).

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 264.

⁵² Herodotus, Book Seven, pp. 477-78. When the Caesarians won the Civil War in 46 B.C., the African King Juba attempted to do the same thing (Caesar, *The Civil War*, p. 259;

Afr. War, 91).

⁷³ *The Sacramento Bee*, October 18, 1996, p. A20 ("Dad calmly kills his sons, then self").

⁷⁴ Whose ethics will be discussed below in "Deterrence, Retribution and Revenge." When the suicider uses himself as an instrument to kill others, then we can fairly divide our judgment between the degree of his right to die and the degree of his right to kill. "Holy war is our path," wrote the terrorist Ayman R., who injured thirteen Jewish soldiers. "My death will be martyrdom. I will knock on the gates of paradise with the skulls of the sons of Zion" (quoted in Etkind, p. 30).

⁷⁵ Spitz and Fisher, p. 496.

⁷⁶ See below, "Deterrence, Retribution and Revenge," below.

⁷⁷ Whose real name was Othman.

⁷⁸ Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p. 496.

⁷⁹ Moral calculus, 5.1.2. Suicide coerced for reasons of creed will be considered below.

⁸⁰ Cook and Cook, p. 272 (testimony of Ogawa Masatsugu).

⁸¹ Djilas, *Wartime*, p. 283.

⁸² *Laws*, IX.873c-e, p. 1432.

⁸³ Quoted in Pinguet, p. 66.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Humphry, *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, p. 97 (list of state codes).

⁸⁵ Robinson, p. 505 (The Sentences of Sextus).

⁸⁶ Gandhi, p. 42 ("Ahimsa or Love," from *Yeravda madir*).

⁸⁷ Montesquieu, p. 106 (XIV.12).

⁸⁸ *Phaedo*, 62c, in Plato, p. 45.

⁸⁹ *Crito*, 50e-51b, in Plato, p. 36.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Du Bois, p. 268.

⁹¹ Bayer, p. 235.

⁹² Life of Cleomenes, in *Plutarch on Sparta*, p. 98.

⁹³ Remak, p. 161 (July 21, 1944).

⁹⁴ Quoted in Blomberg, p. 76.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Varley, p. 101.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Benson, p. 1030. The biographer adds (p. 1032): "He was serious enough to squirrel away pills, which he collected in a little box shaped like a pig." Steinbeck, however, died naturally.

⁹⁷ Humphry, *Jean's Way*, pp. 62, 109-110.

⁹⁸ Humphry, *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, p. v. (unnumbered).

⁹⁹ Chanoff and Doan, p. 143 (testimony of the Venerable Giac Duc).

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Pinguet, p. 237.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Kurzman, p. 333.

¹⁰² From Josephus; quoted in Baron and Wise, p. 339. For a brief fictionalized account of the event of Masada, see my story "The Hill of Gold" in *The Atlas*.

¹⁰³ Mishima, *Sun and Steel*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁴ Seneca, vol. 1, p. 13 (II.12).

¹⁰⁵ A study in 1948-52 concluded that "Negroes and males involved in homicide far exceed their proportions in the general population... Negro males in their early sixties kill as frequently as do white males in their early twenties" (Wolfgang, pp. 18-19). The finding at that was that 41.7 out of 10,000 black males committed criminal homicide, vs. 3.4 out of 10,000 white males.

¹⁰⁶ Wolfgang, p. 23 (94% racial correlation between murderer and murdered); FBI, p. 17. In 1995, 83% of white homicide victims were killed by whites and 14% by blacks. 93% of black victims were murdered by their own race, and 6% by whites (based on FBI, p. 17). The FBI preferred to round upward, and so their calculations sometimes differed from mine by one percentage point; p. 14).

¹⁰⁷ In 1991 the per capita robbery rate was 1.35% for black Americans and 0.44% for white (UNICRI, p. 680).

¹⁰⁸ FBI, p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Schilder, quoted in Wolfgang, p. 120. This assessment was written decades ago; but the many current newspaper accounts of senseless crimes convince me of its continued truth.

¹¹⁰ Judicial Affairs General Research Institute [Japan], p. 247, Table III-5; trans. Mrs. Keiko Golden.

¹¹¹ Paul Bohannon, "Patterns of Homicide Among Tribal Societies in Africa," in Wolfgang, p. 214.

¹¹² After all, the most important element in optimizing and legitimizing policework, says an Italian associate professor of forensic psychiatry, is "the *feeling* of security experienced by the citizens" (UNICRI, p. 389, italics mine). How much more subjective could we get?—And how well has that goal been achieved? 35% of all Italians surveyed in 1992 *felt* unsafe

after dark; almost 40% of them avoided certain places. The figures for the surveyed countries of Europe as a whole were 30.6% and 30.1%, respectively (ibid, p. 401). A General Commissioner of the Spanish Judicial Police writes: "There is no doubt that in most societies citizens feel... that they are unprotected or helpless" (ibid, p. 421). Such attitudes have an immense effect upon behavior. The Croatian gun-running "organizer" I quoted above in his story of how TV footage of "chopped-up bodies" stimulated demand for guns went on: "Then there was a truce between the Yugo [Serbo-Montenegrin] and the Croatian armies. And right then UNPROFOR [the United Nations Protection Force in ex-Yugoslavia] appeared. So people started to feel more safe"—meaning that demand fell. The organizer continued: "We Croats hadn't succeeded in taking over all the Yugo Army barracks, but the agreement stipulated that the Yugoslavs could leave. So the Yugo soldiers went back to Bosnia and left the barracks anyway. So that source of arms dried up, but some immigrants on all sides created funds for guns and smuggled guns in. Croatians in particular have a lot of money overseas" (interview with author, Zagreb, 1992).

¹¹³ In his essay on Jewish law, David M. Golden argues that the Goetz case "can be construed as a radical interpretation of Sanhedrin 72a," which reads: "If someone comes to kill you, rise up and kill him first." The issue is complicated, says Golden, by the fact that Goetz was carrying a pistol, which makes defense premeditated, a forbidden category under Jewish law. I disagree. Carrying a gun in such circumstances is a precaution, not a proof of intent to kill anyone. It is unclear that the screwdriver boys definitely meant to kill him; therefore "he would have been given Talmudic license to disable or injure them, not to kill them," but "perhaps Goetz did indeed fear that his life was in danger and exercised a right born of... self preservation that no legislation, Talmudic or otherwise, can effectively restrict" (Golden, p. 2).

¹¹⁴ Philip Campbell, "Police Stories: It Happened to Me," in *Guns and Weapons for Law Enforcement*, vol. 6, no. 6, November

1994, p. 78.

¹¹⁵ Lossky, p. 164.

¹¹⁶ It is unfair to hold the average individual to the same standard regarding the employment of force as a policeman or soldier. "If that young crook had come around the corner with the rifle in his hands he would probably be dead now, and I would be fighting guilt feelings for having killed a kid holding what would have turned out to be an empty gun," writes one citizen. "That I would have been legally justified in doing so, would be small consolation" (SWC, Florence, Oregon, "When Violence Comes: It Happened to Me!"; in *Combat Handguns*, vol. 16, no. 5, February 1995, p. 64). A terrified civilian has no idea of the maximum force needed to subdue the boys with the sharpened screwdrivers. If he shoots them all dead, it is nothing more than they asked for. —There does come to mind the recent case of the Japanese student who approached a man's house by mistake; I think it was on Halloween. The man told him to stop, but the boy didn't understand English. The man shot him dead. Is this justified? I don't know. Clearly the student was not morally at fault—and yet he made a mistake. I think the answer must lie in how threatening the shooter's environment was. If a person in that neighborhood had legitimate reason to believe that a stranger who approached his door and refused to halt on command might in fact harm him, then the shooter would have been justified. If not, not. Who decides what was "legitimate reason?" A jury of the shooter's peers. And, indeed, the man's peers held him harmless.

¹¹⁷ Epstein, p. 422 (Yoma, 85b). I am grateful to Golden for finding me this reference.

¹¹⁸ It is interesting to consider that both the Khmer Rouge and the UN helped solve the smog problem, the former by destroying, the latter simply by starving the internal combustion engine.

¹¹⁹ The convicted robber, rapist and murderer Dwight Abbot writes in an account of his childhood: "If a boy gave any sign of being in fear, he was tested immediately. Survival depended solely on how well he hid his normal feelings, his need to reach out, to feel

loved and cared for. At Paso [El Paso de Robles School of Boys], the worst mistake a kid could make was to show a sign of being normal. It remains the same to this day" (Abbot and Carter, p. 66).

¹²⁰ Perhaps (this is very tricky) it should be a crime for a group of able-bodied people not to come to the assistance of someone who is being physically assaulted. Solon is said to have "perceived that, although the city [of Athens] was often torn by internal strife, some of the citizens were content through sheer indifference to accept whatever result eventuated. He therefore enacted a law, directed at these people, that whoever in time of civil disturbance did not place his arms at the disposal of either faction should lose his civil rights and be deprived of any share in the state" (*Athenaion Politeia* 7-8, in G.R. Stanton, p. 70).

¹²¹ One study in Philadelphia during the 1950s found that criminal homicides and justifiable homicides by police were most likely to occur between 9:00 p.m. and 2:59 a.m. (Gerald D. Robin, "Justifiable Homicide by Police Officers," in Wolfgang, p. 92). A 1996 monograph on American murderesses concluded that "the mean time of the murder was 1:39 a.m." (Mann, p. 50). Night is the time to cloak violence generally. Herodotus tells us that the Spartans used to execute people then (Book Four, p. 319), and that practice is still followed in the U.S.A. The code of Solon excused homicide committed by a household-er against a night robber (Kathleen Freeman, p. 20). So did the Twelve Tables of ancient Roman law (_____, *Ancient Roman Statutes*, p. 11; Table VIII, statute 12). See also Justinian, p. 72; "Concerning the Lex Aquilia," Book 9, Title 2, clause 3 [Ulpian]; Exodus 22.2

¹²² Justinian, p. 103 ("Concerning Theft," Book 46, Title 2, clause 1 [Paul]).

¹²³ Art Evans, "Safety Tips for Photographers," in *Shutterbug*, June 1995 (vol. 24 no. 8, issue 297), p. 124.

¹²⁴ *The Sacramento Bee*, Friday, October 11, 1996, "Metro" sec., p. B3 (Judy Tachibana, "Forum explores ways to prevent kid abductions").

¹²⁵ Internet: <HTML> Court TV Casefiles,

Cabey v. Goetz (4/96)"Was Bernhard Goetz a racist or a helpless victim when he shot four teenagers on a New York City subway in December 1984?" Copyright 1996 by American Lawyer Media, L.P. All Rights Reserved."

¹²⁶ Internet: <HTML>The News-Times, National News, Dan Wheeler, "Hit With \$43 Million Verdict, Goetz To File For Bankruptcy," AP-DS-04-29-96 0538EDT, Copyright 1996 Associated Press. To the *New York Post* he remarks: "It's the perfect thing to follow the O.J. verdict. It's a dumb-and-dumber legal system that this country has now." (loc. cit.).

¹²⁷ They are profiled in the case study "You Gotta Be A Hundred Percent Right."

¹²⁸ *The New York Post*, January 23, 1990.

¹²⁹ According to the moral calculus, 5.1.7-7a.

¹³⁰ UNICRI, p. 195 (Irvin Walter, "Policy Implications: Related to National and International Surveys.") Walter finds that less than 1% of current crime expenditures in the U.S., England and Canada go toward crime prevention (p. 211).

¹³¹ For statistics linking gun ownership with homicide and suicide, cf. UNICRI, pp. 289-302 (Killias).

¹³² I propose that anyone who hasn't been convicted of a violent crime ought to be allowed to have a handgun (after passing a safety course and completing a mandatory waiting period during which the gun should be registered with state and federal authorities). A concealed carry permit ought to be granted to any citizen after ten years of gun ownership with no felonies or misdemeanors except for traffic convictions. Guns ought to be stored in locked containers whose reasonable theft-proofness has been certified by the state. The use of a gun in any crime whatsoever should be punished by death.

¹³³ Paul Carus, comp., *The Gospel of Buddha, Compiled from Ancient Records* (London: Studio Editions / Senate, 1995 repr. of 1915 illus. ed.), p. 167 (the Sermon on Abuse).

¹³⁴ *Tale of the Heike*, vol. 2, p. 594 (Book 10, ch. 3).

¹³⁵ Matthew 5:21-22, 44.

¹³⁶ Leaflet, "Reflections on the Columbine

killings—by a grieving father,” distributed at anti-NRA rally, 1999.

¹³⁷ *Laws*, IX.869c, p. 1429.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, IX.874c, p. 1433.

¹³⁹ Justinian, p. 96 (“Concerning the Lex Aquilia,” Book 9, Title 2, clause 45 [Paul]).

¹⁴⁰ II.2.190-192 (“The Cow,” pp. 80-82).

¹⁴¹ This statement of Sliwa’s is quoted in full and in context in the chapter profiling the Guardian Angels, below (“You Gotta Be a Hundred Percent Right”).

¹⁴² Malcolm X, speech of December 12, 1964; quoted in Marable, p. 13.

¹⁴³ *Plutarch on Sparta*, p. 110 (Agesilaus, no. 9).

¹⁴⁴ Léon Bing, *Do or Die* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 257.

¹⁴⁵ Athens, p. 50 (case 2).

¹⁴⁶ I am indebted to “Junius Brutus” (Duplessis Mornay) for this point. In his apologia for tyrannicide (*Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, 1579) he states that “seeing that the people choose and establish their kings, it follows that the whole body of the people is above the king” (Laqueur, p. 29).

¹⁴⁷ Maine, p. 135. Recall the Aztec parable of King Itzcoatl; its sense runs much the same.

¹⁴⁸ Lossky, pp. 342-43 (letter to Comte d’Estrades, French Ambassador in London, Fontainebleau, 16 September 1661).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 242.

¹⁵⁰ Bakunin (Maximoff), p. 136. See Rousseau, p. 12 (“The Social Contract”), for an identical claim about *arbitrary* government.

¹⁵¹ Gibbon, vol. 1, p. 25.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 195.

¹⁵³ Another way of putting this is: “Social life is a mutual social guarantee (otherwise it is merely brute force and oppression)” (Lidiya Ginzburg). What does authority, representative or not, guarantee us, if we in turn guarantee our subjection? Again, Lincoln’s answer seems to me the best one. Only an extreme anarchist position (technically speaking, the stance of an anarchocommunist, who is prepared to use mass terror, as opposed to the more conciliatory anarchosyndicalist who makes alliances as needed) would hold that the social contract is revocable by anybody at any time. If today I decided to return to a moral state of nature, and began robbing,

raping, and cannibalizing as my lusts pleased, the rights of my victims, who had not chosen to leave society, would have been violated; hence in protecting them, authority could in perfect conscience send out its armed detachments to invade my state of nature, destroy her troops and vanquish her capital, if necessary by means of a pike-thrust through my wicked heart.

¹⁵⁴ Burke, pp. 194-95.

¹⁵⁵ Turnbull, weary and bitter, would call this a hopeless, hence misguided goal.

¹⁵⁶ While it certainly is comforting that government, which has the might to “smash” me at any time, considers itself bound by its own rules, and that my nation’s Declaration of Independence confesses that governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed,” the fact nonetheless remains that should I not wish to be bound by those rules, I have no principled recourse. I could leave my own government’s dominions if I chose, or become the citizen of another nation; but what if no government suited me? There remain no unclaimed continents, not even Antarctica, and I have not the means to live upon the moon. This obstacle was less than insuperable to past groups such as the Puritans, who could make themselves as homogenous as they pleased by creating their own social contracts and excluding non-signatories, or signatories who didn’t suit them. Today’s separatists are viewed with equal suspicion and dislike, and they have fewer places to go. (See the profile of Bo Gritz’s “Christian covenant community,” Almost Heaven, in “Off the Grid,” below.) This is why I regretfully conclude that revolution, including violent revolution, may be a more necessary means for creating new social contracts than in the past. If I can no longer found my own ideal city in the New World, then I must conquer part of the New World and make it newer.

¹⁵⁷ Moral calculus, 5.1.2.

¹⁵⁸ Mayer, p. 123 (“Natural Rights: A Useful and Necessary Fiction”).

WHERE DO YOUR RIGHTS BEGIN?

¹ For variations on this, see the moral calculus, 1.2 [1-5].

² See above, "Where Do My Rights End?"

³ Trigger to author, 14 September 2002.

⁴ See above, "Where Do My Rights End?"

⁵ Moral calculus, 1.1.4.

⁶ Moral calculus, 1.2.1-5.

⁷ Below, p. 000.

⁸ Moral calculus, 5.2.A.1; "Defense of Honor."

⁹ Moral calculus, 5.2.B.1; "Defense of Class."

¹⁰ Moral calculus, 5.2.I.1; "Defense of Earth."

¹¹ Below, "Defense of Authority."

¹² For a more exact definition, see the moral calculus, 5.2.C.1.

¹³ Above, "Where Do My Rights Begin?"

MEANS AND ENDS

¹ Burke, pp. 374-75.

² Chuev, p. 376 ("What is Socialism?").

³ I should correct myself a little, and note that while natural rights philosophers would not have disputed this argument in past ages, they would have made very different assumptions about selves than we do. There were inferiors; there were natural slaves; it was only the highest class who had selves worth considering. These fat cats often, à la Marx, would have felt much more allegiance toward one another, and hence aggressed against each other much less, than we with our huge amorphous equalities.

⁴ Jacob Dickinson to author, 1996.

⁵ Berkman, pp. 58-59.

⁶ Pernoud, p. 87 (letter of May 5, 1429).

⁷ Moral calculus, 2.0. A counterpart formulation: In the dichotomy proposed by the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, after Imam Hosein, "life (existence) is idea (or ideology) and striving (jehaad...)" ("MOJAHED," p. 4).

⁸ Laqueur, p. 68.

⁹ 2 Samuel 12:11.

¹⁰ Havens et al find that the efficacy of assassination as an engine of social change tends to

be low, especially when the assassin acts alone, or when there exists efficient succession machinery (pp. 148-49).

¹¹ Bayer, pp. 16-17 (introduction).

¹² A hereditary noble might not scruple to invoke it: "This rape is justified because I, Baron X, have committed it, and a baron's acts may not be submitted for common judgment." A Stalinist collectivizer could say the same. Here we have the equivalent of a received good in the Lutheran schema.

¹³ Quoted in Tuck, p. 197.

¹⁴ Bayer, pp. 94-95.

¹⁵ Dear and Foot, p. 769 (article on Mussolini as war leader).

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 54 (article on Argentina).

¹⁷ Bayer, p. 123.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 131.

¹⁹ I am in good company here; the Unabomber agrees with me. "When revolutionaries or utopians set up a new kind of society, it never works out as planned."—"FC," p. 34, para. 108 ("Some Principles of History").

²⁰ Jacob Dickinson begs to disagree, writing (note to author, 1996): "Means are ends. Ends as static systems are illusory. The most we can aspire to is improved means ... that have fewer unnecessary or unintended side effects, for instance ... needless cruelty."

²¹ Caesar, *The Civil War*, p. 185 ("The Alexandrian War," 33).

²² Moral calculus, 2.0.

²³ Maranan, p. 129 ("A Memory of Nilo Valerio," by Luz Roja de Mayo).

²⁴ Ibid, p. 88.

²⁵ John 20:8-9.

²⁶ Bayer, p. 31.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 62.

²⁸ Bakunin (Maximoff), p. 66. This eloquent phrase is of itself a partial refutation of Bakunin's materialist stance (cf. *God and the State*, p. 48).

²⁹ Bakunin, *God and the State*, p. 10.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 55.

³¹ Rudé, *Robespierre*, p. 185.

³² Garros et al, p. 352 (diary of Lyubov Vasilievna Shaporina, entry for October 10, 1937).

³³ Berger and Neuhaus, p. 19.

³⁴ Luther, pp. 501-02 ("Theses for the

Heidelberg Disputation," nos. 8, 18).

³⁵ Excluding the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which come from grace, not from any rational means (op. cit., p. 113).

³⁶ Aquinas, p. 111 ("On the Virtues in General," Art. XIII; before 1256 A.D.).

³⁷ IRSM, p. 1.

³⁸ Di Giovanni, quick to conflate, would probably have insisted that both nations were *equally* the oppressors, and this I do not accept. The executions of Sacco and Vanzetti, however evil, weigh far less lightly in the scale than the myriad lethal "repressions" of Mussolini.

³⁹ Bayer believes that the attackers did not include Di Giovanni himself, but his accomplices. The police inspector, however, positively identified Di Giovanni (p. 157).

⁴⁰ The discussion of private versus public (normative) moral calculi is continued in the chapter on self-defense of creed, below.

⁴¹ His wife recalled: "He knew no handicrafts or skills, unless you count writing in invisible ink" (Nadezhda Krupskaya answers to questions put by the Institute of Brain in 1935," in *Lenin in Profile*, p. 409).

⁴² Insurgent Subcommander Marcos, Zapatista Army of National Liberation, open letter: "Words from the Underground to the People of the United States of America," printed in the *Sacramento News and Review*, November 22, 1995, p. 13 (italics mine).

⁴³ Chanoff and Doan, p. 178 (testimony of Xuan Vu).

⁴⁴ Quoted in Womack, p. 275 (letter to Soto y Gama).

⁴⁵ Alfred Rosenberg, *The Folkish Idea of State* (selections), in Lane and Rupp, p. 73 (italics mine).

⁴⁶ Trotsky, 1905, p. 236.

⁴⁷ Sanhedrin 72a and Maimonides, Law of Thefts 9:7-10.

⁴⁸ Luther, p. 119 (commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, 1531).

⁴⁹ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."—Luke 12:4.

⁵⁰ Remak, p. 172.

⁵¹ Díaz, p. 159.

⁵² Pausanias 3.11.8; in Fornara, p. 66, item no. 67b.

⁵³ _____ [attributed to Aristotle or one of his students], *The Athenian Constitution*, p. 46.

⁵⁴ Genesis 4:8.

⁵⁵ Zorita, p. 117.

⁵⁶ Cicero, *Murder Trials*, p. 252 (defense of Aulus Cluentius Habitus).

⁵⁷ "A group of Cambodian jurists," p. 214.

⁵⁸ Here is a typical account, based on this claim of an indigenous uprising. After the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975, the Cambodian Colonel Wan So Phath (see "The Skulls on the Shelves," below) became a prisoner, so he told me. In late 1977 he escaped into the forest. He rebuilt his forces. Then he fought his way to Vietnam. He begged aid of the government there. So, as he saw it, the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge represented not an invasion from Vietnam, but a liberation requested by the Cambodians, who had to defend themselves and also rehabilitate the country. (I would call this about as accurate as the Soviet Union's claim that Afghanistan requested her help in rising up against the evil imperialists.) In 1989, Colonel Wan So Phath begged the Vietnamese to withdraw, "since Cambodia was strong enough." I suspect that international pressure exercised more effect than Wan So Phath's request.

⁵⁹ See above, "On the Morality of Weapons," Gandhi's moral calculus, item 5.

⁶⁰ Of course "the long run" can be defined in any expedient way. A North American patriot might say that the Russian Revolution was a rising down of the masses, that from its origins onward it has only increased emiseration; whereas a Trotskyite patriot might say that it was a rising up, at least until the derailment of 1924. Some Soviet patriots maintain that that the sky is still the limit—just wait and see until we wither away! Let us define the long run, then, as the remainder of our lives, give or take a couple of decades; at the expiration of that time, will the people with whom we're concerned be better or worse off than if we had never acted? The timespan and the interpretation are still vague, but the yardstick, at least, is the most appropriate: our own. After we are gone, even if our successors carry out our policies (and how many really do?), their actions will have

to be different. The long run, then, is the amount of time we are given to build our pyramid—over a succession of long runs, after all, it will end up being as imposing as a carbuncle.

⁶¹ Vollmann, *The Song of Heaven*, p. 48.

⁶² "For you to associate any aspect of your proposal, good or bad, with 'human decency', is an absolute outrage on the notion of human decency." Thus one patriot who read this in 1982.

⁶³ Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 3, p. 348. Quoted again in "Defense of Authority," below.

⁶⁴ Oates, p. 302. The Harpers Ferry raid is discussed in "Defense of Race," below.

⁶⁵ I say "choose to" in order to exclude the several cases of violence by command, which will be considered later.

⁶⁶ This proposition is considered at length below, "Defense of Homeland."

⁶⁷ See the portraits of the Nazi automata Keitel and Ohlendorff, below, "Loyalty, Compulsion, and Fear."

⁶⁸ There may be a touch of egotism here.

⁶⁹ Randall, p. 89.

⁷⁰ "FC," p. 62, para. 179 ("The Future"). The trade unionist and Gauleiter Albert Krebs, who left a fairly objective account of the Nazi Party's years of doctrine-formation 1923-33, several times refers to Hitler's "basic rejection of all actions by the 'system' no matter how pure their objectives" (op. cit., p. 145).

⁷¹ See below, "You Gotta Be A Hundred Percent Right," vol. 6.

⁷² Five variations on the Golden Rule, some justified, some not, appear in the moral calculus, 1.2.

⁷³ Moral calculus, 1.2.5.

⁷⁴ Mishima, *Runaway Horses*, p. 228. Italics mine.

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 292-93.

⁷⁶ About a Muslim incarnation of this type a Hindu psychoanalyst writes: "The temptation to rip open the mullah's facade of a just man gripped by religious passion to reveal the workings of other, baser motives was overwhelming. Indeed, the speeches of most mullahs ... seem to be verily designed for a psychoanalytically inspired hatchet job"

(Kakar, p. 220).

⁷⁷ Luther, pp. 86-96 ("Two Kinds of Righteousness").

⁷⁸ We are, of course, seriously distorting Luther's conceptualization, not only by secularizing it, but also by emphasizing one's good works for the second kind of righteousness. Luther repeatedly insisted that active charity was unimportant, and only faith mattered. Nonetheless, he was a fervent believer in the importance of *effort*, be that only the effort of praying, of trying to reach toward God. One could, in the Lutheran schema, do something wrong, and be forgiven if the wrong were mistaken—and good done with evil intent cannot be good; this is why Luther did not assign more weight to a person's acts. My intent here is to broaden the calculus so that it can be used by those who do value good works (and Luther, one must note, was inconsistent to the extent that he was quick to attack the soul's bad works!). I suppose that a Lutheran could still make use of this way of looking at things by seeing faith as an active quantity, a good work in and of itself.

⁷⁹ For example, when I first began to think through this little matter of rising up and rising down, about a decade and a half ago, I was preoccupied with environmentalism. It seemed to me that if a self has the right to defend itself against someone with a gun, it ought to be able to defend itself against a corporation's toxins. This argument seemed to me just as direct and cogent as any which Locke, Marx and their ilk ever advanced in favor of tyrannicide; for he who deprives his entire people of health and life is brother to other oppressors. Of course things aren't that simple. We have no enthroned vampire, poisoning us out of malice; half the time we poison ourselves, and the rest of the time we're poisoned by the companies which our sluggish ignorance supports. They themselves poison us out of ignotance, indifference or cupidity—in short, as a means, not as an end. How does one defend oneself against them? "Peasant individualism is helpless before the new juggernaut of corporate power... isolation and self-reliance are formulas for weakness and self-destruction" (Morris Dickstein, introduction

to Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, p. ix). —What to do, then? Form your own juggernaut...

⁸⁰ Duong, p. 275.

⁸¹ "It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences." It is all very well and good that the revolutionary is willing to take the consequences. But what about all the ordinary people who aren't?

⁸² Undated later from "the committee," addressed to "Dear Sir," in the West Virginia State Archives, Boyd B. Stutler collection.

⁸³ Trotsky, *My Life*, p. xxxv.

⁸⁴ "FC," p. 57, para. 168 ("Human Suffering"). As Dostoyevsky remarked in *The Idiot*, "the friend of humanity with shaky principles is the devourer of humanity, to say nothing of his conceit, for, wound the vanity of any one of these numerous friends of humanity, and he's ready to set fire to the world out of petty revenge" (p. 364).

⁸⁵ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, vol. 2, pp. 263-64.