

French language and mean respectively bread, wrinkle and oven. It would then be absurd to say: 'Whatever else we may want to say about it the word "ride" is spelled R-I-D-E and hence satisfies the criteria for being a word meaning what you do on a bicycle, we must just accept this and then go on to consider the implications of the fact that we now see it to be a word in the French language'.

The kind of change that the consecration makes is represented by the change we have to make in our use of language when speaking of it; and, in fact, I think we can usefully say that in the Eucharist the bread and wine themselves become part of a new language. This has, of course, to be distinguished most carefully from the view that the bread and wine 'acquire a new significance'. Of course, food and drink shared together always have a significance, they form a means of communication; and of course food and drink shared in a sacred context will have a different and deeper significance—having to do with human communication in terms of the gods or the divine presence. Food and drink shared in re-enactment of the passover meal and still more of the sacrificial meal of the Last Supper will have an even deeper and more mysterious significance, but the doctrine of the Eucharist says more than this. It is not just that in these signs we reach the limits of our human language in expressing the divine; what we believe is that our signs are taken over and become the language of God himself. There is a dramatic change of perspective. Grace becomes no longer simply a matter of our being able to reach out towards God, we have in concrete form his reaching out towards his communication of himself to us, his incarnate Word.

But in these matters I would expect to find myself in agreement with G. Egner; in this article I have merely tried to show where and why I differ from him.

## **Those who Dare not See**

### **The tap-roots of violence**

by **Richard Murphy**

The journals give the quantities of wrong,  
Where the impatient massacre took place,  
How many and what sort it caused to die,  
But, O, what finite integers express  
The realm of malice where these facts belong?

W. H. AUDEN

Man is conceived in aggression: too often, he dies in it.

The sexual act may be enhanced by its manner, exalted by its

intent, transfigured by its context. But the instinct that impels to its performance is the aggressive instinct.

It is a primitive instinct, in the neutral sense that it strikes to the roots of our nature. In the past as in the present, it is often a necessary compulsion: the tribe of the timorous hunter was a hungry tribe.

Drives deeply rooted perpetually seek an outlet. But to find an outlet they must first be canalized. Therefore aggression seeks initially a focus, an object.

Now the world is full of objects; yet we direct aggression on our kind. It is on people rather than on things that we inflict violence. As the lover craves response from the beloved, so does the aggressor from his victim. The shattered window does not whimper; the smitten plane tree does not bleed. But the ravished woman whimpers. And the thrashing body bleeds. Thus does aggressiveness achieve its terrible catharsis.

Violence against the person is of two kinds, physical and psychic. The first is widely deplored: the second is hardly recognized as violence. Yet it is all but universal. Daily we inflict violence on one another. Hourly we crucify our fellows.

More than any known pestilence, violence is infectious. Aggression at a given centre widens like a ripple to the periphery. Why?

Two groups, let us say, are vocally or physically at issue. The reflex impulse of the onlooker is to identify with one side. Instantly there is created a 'we and they' dichotomy. 'We' are right; 'they' are wrong. 'We' are justified; 'they' are evil. 'It is intolerable that untruth or evil should prevail. We must resist it. We must fight.' And what we must fight is people.

In this way, and at this speed, does aggression find its focus. In this way is pre-empted the very possibility of an objective and dispassionate judgment on the issue. Before the brain can function the glands have moved.

But here, on the word 'identify', we must pause. The normal human child identifies continuously, first with the members of his family, later with wider groups. He lives at the centre of a whole complex of relationships. From their interplay he first learns the reciprocities of love. Through them there come to him the enrichment of the psyche and the education of the heart. And because at first he can love a few, he can later, by analogy, love all.

The process of identification, therefore, considered in itself, is wholesome, beneficent, and necessary. Yet it is full of peril. For like many attributes good in themselves, it is terribly vulnerable to perversion. That perversion begins when a man allows some secondary identity to transcend and usurp his primary identity as a human being. It is complete when he defines his neighbour in terms of some similar subsidiary attribute. Thus: 'I am white, he is a spade'; 'I am a Briton, he is a Kraut'; 'I am a democrat, he is a Commie'.

And suddenly the world is a waste of bickering tribes.

In this way, and at a stroke, a man is sundered from his fellows. In that single act of exclusive identification with a group he denies the principle that what men have in common is immeasurably more important than the adventitious attributes that distinguish them.

The moment we subordinate our primary identity as human beings to our secondary identity as members of a particular group, we fix a great gulf between us and all other men. The actions of the group are our actions. We are implicated; we are involved. But the actions of other groups are not ours. They are those of an alien breed, remote and unacknowledged. And they leave our consciences untouched. All wickedness is attributed to other groups, all virtue to our own.

It is commonly held that Hitler was a monster, and, in the analogical sense intended, he was. But let us not take the analogy for literal truth. It is the essential fact about Hitler, not that he was some shambling kraken roused from an age-long sleep, but that he was a man. The fact can be too easily obscured by group terminology. In the last resort it was not merely 'the Germans' nor even 'the Nazis' who were responsible for the enormities of Auschwitz and Treblinka. It was men. Before Hitler was 'one of them' he was one of us.

The breakdown in the awareness of our primary identity with each and every member of the human race arises in no small measure from the failure of the individual to admit into full consciousness his subliminal awareness of the dark obverse of our nature, what Jung called 'The Shadow'. It presupposes that evil, especially extreme evil, is something of which only others are capable. Not so! The truth is that there is literally no enormity of which each and every one of us is not *potentially* capable. One and all we labour under the same burden of mortality. One and all, our nature is terribly flawed.

From this primal failure in integrity, from this 'lie in the soul' which the great philosopher of antiquity identified as the worst of lies, flows all that we know as intolerance. Branded in the face with that lie the Pharisees of our time buy for resort to the lash, the isolation cell, the bullet, the detention camp, the gibbet; for the oppression of minorities, of the young, the deprived, the sexually deviant and the sick.

'Thank God that I am not as other men!' But they are as other men and, as in a glass darkly, they know it. Obscurely felt, and deeply dreaded, there eats at their hearts a little maggot of unquiet. For the evil these people hate (when it is evil) is the evil in themselves! The fury with which they vilify their fellows reflects only their terror of themselves. The guilt they impute to others is their own guilt buried under piled pyramids of self-righteousness. Their screams of moral indignation are screams of hysteria designed to drown the still, small voice remorselessly reminding them that they, too, are blighted at the root.

When any man thus spiritually stunted identifies with a particular

group his emotional commitment tends to be total. The group, to him, is good, righteous, and incapable of wrong. For the group is identical with himself, and *he* is good, righteous, and incapable of wrong. Even the most overwhelming evidence of wrong-doing by the group, its agents or its representatives, will not compel him to admission of such wrong-doing. Alternatively, he will admit the formal wrong-doing, but plead circumstantial justification.

Take, for example, the universal tendency to identify with the armed forces of one's country. Those forces are, we will suppose, engaged in fighting overseas. They are widely reported as having performed one or more acts of barbarity. The immediate reaction from the mass of that nation, long before the facts are known or even ascertainable, will be outright denial. They themselves, they believe, would not do it. But they are identified with 'our boys' and therefore 'our boys' would not do it.

Even the witness of their own newspapers, even the testimony of respected national figures, will do nothing to penetrate their iron-clad certitudes. Instead, their most frenetic vituperation will be reserved for these blasphemers against all that they hold most sacred. Not only do they not believe that 'our boys' would do it; they do not even believe that 'our boys' are potentially capable of doing it.

Rather than find the courage to pronounce a judgment in defiance of their own self-righteousness, rather than confront that terrible Shadow, they will outface any fact, however well established, and cling to any lie, no matter how flagrant. There are none so blind as those who dare not see.

But moral inadequacy, like any infirmity, is a motive for compassion and fellow-feeling, not for denunciation; and still less for the adoption of superior moral postures. If people have such illusions it is only because they need them. It is for those who do not need them to attribute the circumstance to some undeserved endowment or some unmerited access of sensibility, or both. In any event, it is as certain as things can ever be that anybody not flawed in one way will be flawed in another. Let no man cast the first or any subsequent stone.

In a word, we must identify in the first instance, not with a group, but with the whole of humanity; with Hitler as with Gandhi, with the butchers of My Lai as with the Berrigan brothers, with the mindless advocates of violence as with their victims. Then there shall be neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free.

It should not be supposed that such a view of things implies a regression to mere moral agnosticism. It is in no way incompatible with the objective intellectual judgment that ultimate justice lies with one cause rather than with another; nor with consequential sympathy with that cause, nor moral commitment to it. Where palpable good confronts palpable evil, neutrality is treason.

But if one's *primary* identification is with the 'good' as against the

'bad' among one's fellows, with a group rather than with all of them, then the declension into hatred can be swift and inescapable and the very direst infamies are suddenly made possible.

## The Old Wine is Good

### by Simon Tugwell, O.P.

In the great effort of 'ressourcement' in which the Church is currently engaged, while the Dominicans have set themselves to produce a massive new edition of St Thomas, the Cistercians have undertaken a multi-volume series of new English translations of the Cistercian Fathers.<sup>1</sup>

This venture is warmly to be welcomed. The Cistercian corpus is intrinsically valuable, and is, historically speaking, one of the major monuments of western monasticism; it is also peculiarly significant as revealing the immediate context for the great theological synthesis of St Thomas Aquinas.

To take this last point first. It is often forgotten just how thoroughly monastic the early Dominicans were. The *De modo studendi* generally ascribed to St Thomas himself is thoroughly monastic. It is curious how Victor White, for all his insight, missed the reference to the Song of Songs in the bit about the wine-cellar—a monastic commonplace. St Bernard, for instance, says that anyone who proposes to teach others must himself have been 'introduced into the wine-cellar', that is to say, must have had personal experience of the intoxicating force of heavenly sweetness. A book written by an anonymous Dominican novice master, and enthusiastically approved by the General Chapter of 1283, leans heavily on Bernard and William of St Thierry. A little later, St Vincent Ferrer's *On the Spiritual Life* teaches the same, monastic, spirituality.

It is this monastic context that shows the kind of experience of life underlying St Thomas' whole moral theology. If we want to see through the apparently dry formulae, the neat ordering of philosophical concepts, and get something of the feel of it, of what it means to gather life together around *ratio* and *prudencia* and *caritas*, it is to the monks we must turn, and not least the Cistercians. Occasionally St Thomas gives the game away. He refers, for instance, to 'the gift

<sup>1</sup>Aelred of Rievaulx (No. 2), *Treatises, The Pastoral Prayer*, Introd. David Knowles. Bernard of Clairvaux (No. 4), *On the Song of Songs 1*, Trs. Kilian Walsh, O.C.S.O., Introd. M. Corneille Halfants, O.C.S.O. William of St Thierry (No. 3), *On Contemplating God*, etc. Trs. Sr. Penelope, C.S.M.V., Introd. Jacques Hourlier, O.S.A. (No. 6), *Exposition of the Song of Songs*, Trs. M. Columba Hart, O.S.B., Introd. J. M. Dechanet, O.S.B. (No. 12), *The Golden Epistle*, Trs. Theodore Berkeley, O.C.S.O., Introd. J. M. Dechanet, O.S.B. (Cistercian Publications, Spencer, Mass., and Irish University Press, Shannon, Ireland.)