**The Rule of Reason and the Drive Toward Violence**

**Morality and Modern Warfare:**

**Community of Fear** by Harrison Brown and James Real, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. 40 pp. Single copies free.

by William Pfaff

In the October issue of *The Twentieth Century* (London) Sir John Lomax argues briefly, coldly and quite brilliantly that the human predilection for war is the result of a regrettable evolutionary fact: the "early brain parts (thalamus)" of the human species, containing the instinct of survival expressed through aggression, cunning and destruction, became "an ingrained influence a quarter of a million years before the completest brain element (cortex) evolved as the dominant instrument of *homo sapiens*." By the power of cerebration thus acquired, man became ruler among creatures; but with this success the balance of opposition by competitive species was lost and man's power of cerebration, this power acquired through partaking of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, was thenceforth "differentiation adrift."

If the presumption is then made that earlier characteristics predominate over the later, man's situation since his day of triumph in the evolutionary competition has been not unlike that of "the dinosupian reptiles with the disappearance of the interglacial climates to which they had become adapted by over-specialization. Like man's, their evolution-ary advance had been pressed so far ahead on a front so narrow that there was no room for retreat. The type had reached a stage at which none of its essential qualities could be 'naturally selected.' It died out."

So, drastically to abbreviate Sir John's argument, shall man die out. His higher intelligence produces optimistic aspirations and a search for order. But his ruling unconscious characteristics—without the balancing challenge of a competitive species—drive him to purposeless violence directed against man himself.

"Mankind cannot avoid his Oedipan destiny ... he ... turns to . . . faith . . . in a premise so blatantly false as that man has only to obey his highest faculties to win a future of peace and goodwill, whereas, in harsh truth, the better exercise of his incomparable brain must hasten the swift rush toward the denouement of all his diligence ... atomic war, the form of which all can see though its last details are preserved as a state secret."

This cruel essay is usefully read in conjunction with the books under review, for they are, respectively, an attempt at rational dealing with the crisis of nuclear weapons, and a sentimental polemic against violence. Neither of them provides a decisive refutation of the Lomax argument, although the former provides evidence in opposition.

**Morality and Modern Warfare** is a collection of eight essays by Catholics on the moral problems created by the existence and potential use of nuclear weapons. It is uneven, as are most such collections, and inevitably is a tentative effort: none of the authors really closes with his subject save Gordon Zahn, and as a pacifist, Mr. Zahn holds one of the two possible categorical answers to the problem of war and morality.

And Mr. Zahn makes his case very ably, directing much of his anger against those Catholic moralists who thrive on the delineation of the detailed application of moral precepts to private sins and evade the moral issues that are of profound social consequence. His complaint is a more facile and single-minded version of John Cogley’s recent appeal to Catholic theologians to address themselves to the real intellectual issues of the contemporary world.

The most celebrated American Catholic theologian to be doing just that is, of course, John Courtney Murray, a contributor to this book. And his is the best and most useful of the essays, not only providing a statement of "the state of the question" but striking onto some new ground.

Murray first makes a careful survey of papal statements on modern war, attempting to define with precision the content of authoritative Catholic teaching on the morality of war. He finds that, while Catholic theory is limited, it specifically declines to make an unqualified condemnation of atomic, bacteriological or chemical warfare. The ABC weapons, rather, are made subject to the general doctrine of just war as understood by the Catholic Church and as modified under Pius XII. The modification was a limitation of just war to one imposed by self-defense against "obvious and extremely grave injustice."

In the past, war was regarded, in extreme circumstances, as warranted to vindicate legal rights or legitimate interests. The other elements which must be present are the traditional ones: that war is the last resort and that the moral and material damage it involves are not disproportionate to the evil that would be suffered. Mr. Zahn holds one of the two possible categorical answers to the problem of war and morality.
Such a doctrine is, of course, seen by many as at best impossible to apply and at worst as a dismal compromise with unqualified evil. Indeed, one of Mr. Zahn's arguments is that Catholic authorities have almost invariably been unwilling to provide counsel on the legitimacy of a war until all the evidence was in—a time when their advice could be of interest only to the historians.

Father Murray, however, is the variant from the almost invariable, and the balance of his essay is a brief but seminal exploration of how these Catholic principles apply to the contemporary dilemmas of military men and political officials. He discusses pre-emptive war, limited war, and the possibility of surrender to grave evil as a morally responsible act. While he is not content merely to enunciate principle, he also refuses to enter the area of the political man's responsibility, the area of policy. He is concerned, as he says, to set the terms for rational debate on policy, and this is no small service in a nation given to a profound confusion of sentiment with reason.

One other of the essays in this book is of unusual interest, that of Colonel John K. Morriarity. His subject is the rush of technology that continues to transform the character of modern war, and admirably discussing it, he also illustrates a point that warrants emphasis.

It is extremely difficult to talk meaningfully about the issues of war and morality without rather detailed knowledge of the technology of weapons and the development of military doctrine. For technology is volatile; it proceeds by a geometrical progression and military doctrine is constantly modified to accommodate technological change. The immediate moral issues cannot but shift too, and a general agreement (as among most of the writers in this book) that "limited war" is licit is really of little help to military and political men dealing in terms of specific weapons with specific effects, and doctrines formulated in terms of these weapons and a transitory political situation. Colonel Morriarity points out, for example, that the destruction of enemy industry is of secondary military interest today because the capacity to make decisive war lies in the weapons at hand; a nation's base of economic mobilization is no longer of primary importance.

Finally, there is a significant failure in this book as in many other discussions of these issues: a deafness to political reality, an addiction to abstraction. Morriarity, in speaking of the effect of technological change on the military man, uses a phrase that is of more general application: "the opponent...loses the character of flesh and blood and becomes, in effect, a set of performance specifications which one's latest weapons system does not quite meet."

Not only military men so fail to understand their opponent. Scientists and social scientists tend to conceive of Russia as a mathematical phenomenon occurring in the context of the theory of games. The moralist tends to treat that nation as a manifestation of evil subject only to classification as equal, superior or inferior to a given quantity of nuclear blast. Even the political men tend to regard it as a curiosity to be studied through the arrangement of officials on a ceremonial dais or, as among the strategists of "protracted conflict" (represented in this book), as a conspiratorial apparatus of diabolical cunning, discoverer of secrets of "conflict management" that are simultaneously of surpassing effectiveness and fatally flawed. But do these Russians not bleed when they are pricked?

Surely we are in a situation where specialization has—to borrow Sir John's phrase—pressed too far ahead on fronts too narrow. If we are to deal usefully with these great issues there must be a joining of disciplines, a communication among military men, politicians and moral philosophers of a kind infrequently attempted. This is not to say that the rigor of any of the disciplines should be compromised. It means that we require more theologians and philosophers who understand, as Father Murray does, the military realities; more theologians who understand, as Reinhold Niebuhr does, the realities of politics; more military and political men willing to spare time to discover what theology may contribute to political discourse.

Community of Fear is a brief account of the horrors of nuclear war. Its assumption appears to be that if people can be sufficiently frightened they will demand and obtain peace. It appears to be directed against those who believe that nuclear weapons must be incorporated into a politically meaningful doctrine of war—the Air Force, the RAND Corporation, such writers as Herman Kahn and Henry Kissinger. It is an emotional book, dominated by "probably's" and "if's" and "can lead to's", innocent of political insight or of respect for the personal anguish of men who bear national responsibility. Its arguments make that assumption of dichotomy between good and villainous forces in our political life that is so seductive to the second-rate. It is a useful compendium of information and an interesting expression of one impassioned viewpoint in our national life, but its manifest conviction that emotion is a suitable substitute for intelligence and its addiction to polite demagogy lend considerable support to the terrible judgment on man invoked by Sir John Lomax.
Independence for Africa
In this progress report based on firsthand observations, a noted American scholar of African affairs provides an indispensable guide to the central problems that beset each of the emerging nations in the movement toward independence and political responsibility.

African Women Speak
The Office for UN Affairs. Maryknoll Pub. 117 pp. $1.
African women face the multiple challenges of emancipation as members of changing societies, in this seminar held by the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations in Lomé, Togo.

Listen, Yankee
C. Wright Mills. McGraw-Hill. 192 pp. $3.95.
Professor Mills, social scientist and ideological gadfly, appears here an empathic guide as a Cuban revolutionary, setting before the American public facts and issues which he considers to have been largely ignored or distorted by the American press.

The Policy Machine
Robert Ellsworth Elder. Syracuse Univ. 238 pp. $4.50.
The modus operandi of the State Department and its evolution over the last ten years are intimately described and evaluated with the aim of acquainting the individual citizen with the way top-level policy decisions are made and the part he can play in the process.

The Enlargement of the Presidency
Rexford G. Tugwell. Doubleday. 508 pp. $6.95.
Mr. Tugwell's latest book is a leisurely, perceptive and often humorous survey of the Presidential succession and its effects upon the proper scope and emphasis of executive power.

The Long Way to Freedom
An encyclopedic history of man's struggle for freedom, this volume defines the main theme of that struggle as the attempt to deal with the paradoxical nature of all civilizing agents—religion, politics, economics, science—which historically have been instruments of oppression as well as of liberation.

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