

LEFT

Do you know what it's like? To see your best friend clubbed, beaten, kicked? It's not even so bad if it's you. That you can take. But your friend. Helpless. Hate. Where do your fine shades of intellectualness take you then? What good are your books and scholastic musings on right and wrong, your discussions of bureaucratic function, of commentary on participatory democracy? You stand watching, . And you hate. You hate the stoic faces in uniform beating others.

I'm left alone with my mind.

Which whirs wildly, trying to make sense. How are you any better than him? You grumble and complain because he objectifies; Yet when he clubs my friend, he clubs me, my brother, my sister. All he sees is a New Left hippy radical that must be destroyed. To save what?

But I don't see him either. Really see him. Every time I see a cop car, black and white with that red cherry, I see no more than that car. Who is the driver? A gut reaction and unthinking revulsion of hatred. He no longer is real flesh for me. I objectify. Is it so simple? Just hate cops and love the rest?

Useless thoughts but I can't stop them. How can I be at the forefront of any movement while seeing wrongs on both sides—when I become as callous as those I'm condemning? Western rationality. Hamlet paralyzed into inaction. Odysseus' scar was outside. Mine is less visible, but no less real on the inside. I long for that Homeric world where events are clearly outlined, where everything is visible, orderly.

But that world does not exist for me now. I try to channel the anger to keep it alive, the commitment to a movement, Rubin's "do it" striving for a better world. To keep from becoming so discouraged and helpless I give up, or worse harden myself to sink into indifference, drained of any emotion. To feel that all actions are equally futile and I am as becoming as callous as those I condemn. Then my social justice commitment feels hollow.

I realize that for now, I have an internal battle I must wage. I need to shout, from a small corner of my soul, "NO." I need to "stop" the war within me before I can contribute to fighting the battle outside me. Cowardice? Perhaps. Prematurely quitting and renunciation? Perhaps. Wisdom to withdraw in the hope of returning stronger? Perhaps.

And that is why I am now on a ship on the way to India via Japan? To fight the battle within. My past self is not strong or wise enough. I seek to gain clarity and evolve a new self. Vague words of Zen Buddhism meditation, spontaneity of actions waft through my mind like hopeful bait. A quiet, clear mind, rid of all dogma, rigidity ideological callousness. Seeking an inner peace to then help share an outer peace. A pipedream? Maybe. After Japan, India, to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram at Pondicerry, Reading Gandhi, about his conceptualization of anon violent

truth force. satyagraha. His wisdom on self and society: “We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. we are ALL “brothers and sisters.” So much internal work left for me to do.

As the shore recedes, I realize that hopes for a simple external solution have been shattered. I sail forward. Hoping that this is one small beginning step toward the internal peace and wisdom I’m seeking.

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J’s comment: The introductory material is great elaboration – it really adds so much interesting detail and background about the discovery of this snippet, where it fits in your writing, and its relationship to your personal journey, your readings and your father (!) are all excellent and illuminating. I also like the way you bring in India and Gandhi.. as well as facing issues pf hatred and objectification on both sides-- New Left and cops--about inside society/outside society, the activist vs. the artist. and the hope that the East might represent an escape, as well as the possibility of peace. Good insight into some of your motivation to leave this country at that time. I like the title Left, good double/triple entendre. Really well-written Love, J