

That day I shook hands with that wary little man called "Selfishness," who breathes the purest suspicion and proudly wears the garments of self-sacrifice.

A Youthful Mind

Clark Kimball

THE TRIAL went on. For many long days the eight defendants had thrown icy stares at the prosecutor and his staff. Charged with crimes against humanity, the defendants were getting a taste of the Western, democratic judicial processes.

"But," cried the inquiring voice of one youth, "I do not understand how German citizens could be tried in Germany by foreigners. Was Germany a part of this Western bloc so as to be subject to the same laws?"

"No, my son," came the reply, "but we have a moral right to try these men. They have committed the worst of atrocities against humanity. These deeds must not go unavenged."

"Didn't the Germans hate the Jews?"

"Perhaps some of them did."

"Didn't the Nazis feel that the extermination of Jews was in the best interests of the German republic?" further probed the inquisitive one.

"Perhaps so, young one, but these men were not speaking for the people as a whole. It is unthinkable that the people as a whole of any State could entertain such a terrible magnitude of hatred resulting in the cold-blooded slaughtering of millions of human beings. These were but a few fanatics not much responsive to the German people as such."

"But is not the State an organized entity whose outward expressions are determined by its leaders?"

"That must be admitted, for one state deals with another through leader-to-leader contact."

"Were not the fanatical few to which you refer the outward expression of the German State due to their positions of leadership?"

"Well, yes."

"I," claimed the youth, "have been brought up believing that the taking of any life is a violation of the moral standard. Is it not the case, though, that the circumstances of my upbringing have contributed to my beliefs?"

"To some extent this is true. There is, however, a universal code which man by nature is forced to recognize. One aspect of it is the value of human life."

"Do we not kill thousands of men in war?"

"Yes."

"Is it not most desirable for a man who claims he recognizes a moral code to adhere to it completely, regardless of the consequences? How else can it be a true moral code? Can it be said that a man really has a moral code if he reaches for rationalizations to permit his violating the very code he set up as a standard for judging all the world's people?"

"If one lies, is he honest?"

"Certainly not!"

"If I steal my neighbor's chicken, am I a thief?"

"Yes, of course."

"Even if I were hungry?"

"Yes."

"Or if I stole to give to my starving neighbor across the street?"

"Still."

"There, you see," exclaimed the now bright-eyed youth, "I would be called a thief even if circumstances required me to steal my neighbor's chicken. By the same reasoning, I cannot fail to see the comparison to taking a man's life in war. Even though circumstances allegedly require this, once done the nation no longer abides by its professed moral belief. If it is truly a universal moral law—an existence of Right—, no possible reason for breaking it could be given. Do you agree?"

"We seem to be forced to that conclusion."

"Did not God admonish man to 'Judge not others least ye yourself be judged'?"

"He did."

"When we try these men, are we not acting as judges? Aren't we saying in effect that the entire Nazi system was not based upon the 'correct' moral guidelines? Further, are we not saying that all men must adhere to our particular standards because we say they are the 'right' ones?"

"We are judging only insofar as determining violations of generally accepted moral ideas."

"Did you not admit earlier that the Nazi leaders perhaps had other moral beliefs at least as far as the Jewish problem is concerned?"

"Yes."

"Would we be trying these men if we had not been victorious over them in war? If the Germans had not swept out of their boundaries, but had stayed in Germany and still carried out their murders, would they have been tried?"

"Probably not."

"To the victors belong the spoils. Tell me: are you in a position to carry out judgments for all mankind?"

"No, only for myself."

"Then who are you or who am I to say that these men have violated the rights of humanity? How can we sit in judgment on them? How can we say all men should recognize a moral code which

we ourselves break? We do not know that we are right since none of us is in God's position. We have no business trying these eight men for violating OUR code. They adhered to theirs. How, I then wonder, have we dared to assume the role of judges?"

Out of the Park, Happy

Sharon Sperry

I WALKED to the edge of the sidewalk. He was standing across the street with his back turned to me so that all I could see was a bulky, black rain coat and two brown trousered legs with an umbrella resting against them. His head was round and small for the size of his frame, and his hair was beginning to thin so that a shiny spot at the crown reflected the sun. I called out, but when he didn't turn, I ran across the street to him. I was panting when I reached his side. He glanced at me and frowned. I smiled, but he only softened the frown and directed his gaze to the bush in front of us. Moments pass while I waited for some word of recognition. Abruptly he turned and walked to a nearby bench. I followed and felt vaguely like a small child tagging after him. When he had sat down, he glanced up at me, standing before him, and his face once again became the warmth I had remembered.

"You are excited about something?"

I nodded my head, unable to say what I felt. He motioned to the seat beside him. I put my books on the ground and sat down. He had picked up a stick from the sidewalk. It was about two inches long and the diameter of a finger. He carefully removed the scaly bark while he spoke.

"I did not think it wise for you to speak too soon. Happiness is enriched by proper telling, but not in a panting voice with run-on words. Now you have caught your breath. Tell me what makes you so happy."

"I got the job!"

He nodded his head and smiled.

We talked on, and he told me about a group of children he'd seen in the park. The nursemaid would stop their game if she thought it was being played badly and then would start it over by her own rules. One child, when he was stopped, had cried and run off. He had seen the child on the other side of the park, where, together, they had played a game about the birds and animals. They were happy until the nursemaid found them. He said that there were tears in the eyes of the child, but that the nursemaid had only glared and shaken her fist at him. It was sad, the way he told it, and I didn't say anything, just listened to the breeze as it rustled the leaves. He smiled at me and then asked, "Are you happy with yourself, with this life?"

I didn't pass it off. His mouth smiled, but his eyes were strangely serious. I only looked at him and then at the ground and my feet.