# *Preface*

All my life I have been haunted by the fascinating questions of creativity. Why does an original idea in science and in art "pop up" from the unconscious at a given moment? What is the relation between talent and the creative act, and between creativity and death? Why does a mime or a dance give us such delight? How did Homer, confronting something as gross as the Trojan War, fashion it into poetry which became a guide for the ethics of the whole Greek civilization?

I have asked these questions not as one who stands on the sidelines, but as one who himself participates in art and science. I ask them out of my own excitement, for example, at watching two of my colors on a paper merge into an unpredictable third color. Is it not the distinguishing characteristic of the human being that in the hot race of evolution he pauses for a moment to paint on the cave walls at Lascaux or Altamira those brown-and-red deer and bison which still fill us with amazed admiration and awe? Suppose the apprehension of beauty is itself a way to truth? Suppose that "elegance"—as the word is used by physicists to describe their discoveries—is a key to ultimate reality? Suppose Joyce is right that the artist creates "the uncreated conscience of the race"?

These chapters are a partial record of my ponderings.

They had their birth as lectures given at colleges and universities. I had always hesitated to publish them because they seemed incomplete—the mystery of creation still remained. I then realized that this "unfinished" quality would always remain, and that it is a part of the creative process itself. This realization coincided with the fact that many people who had heard the lectures urged that they be published.

The title was suggested by Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*, a debt I am glad to acknowledge. But one cannot *be* in a vacuum. We express our being by creating. Creativity is a necessary sequel to being. Furthermore, the word *courage* in my title refers, beyond the first few pages of the first chapter, to that particular kind of courage essential for the creative act. This is rarely acknowledged in our discussions of creativity and even more rarely written about.

I want to express my gratitude to several friends who have read all or part of the manuscript and have discussed it with me: Ann Hyde, Magda Denes, and Elinor Roberts.

More than is usually the case, this book was a delight to compile, for it gave me cause to ponder all these questions over again. I only hope the book gives as much pleasure to the reader as it did to me in the compiling of it.

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# *ONE*

# THE COURAGE TO CREATE

We are living at a time when one age is dying and the new age is not yet born. We cannot doubt this as we look about us to see the radical changes in sexual mores, in marriage styles, in family structures, in education, in religion, technology, and almost every other aspect of modern life. And behind it all is the threat of the atom bomb, which recedes into the distance but never disappears. To live with sensitivity in this age of limbo indeed requires courage.

A choice confronts us. Shall we, as we feel our foundations shaking, withdraw in anxiety and panic? Frightened by the loss of our familiar mooring places, shall we become paralyzed and cover our inaction with apathy? If we do those things, we will have surrendered our chance to participate in the forming of the future. We will have forfeited

the distinctive characteristic of human beings—namely, to influence our evolution through our own awareness. We will have capitulated to the blind juggernaut of history and lost the chance to mold the future into a society more equitable and humane.

Or shall we seize the courage necessary to preserve our sensitivity, awareness, and responsibility in the face of radical change? Shall we consciously participate, on however small the scale, in the forming of the new society? I hope our choice will be the latter, for I shall speak on that basis.

We are called upon to do something new, to confront a no man's land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us. This is what the existentialists call the anxiety of nothingness. To live into the future means to leap into the unknown, and this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize.

## 1. WHAT IS COURAGE?

This courage will not be the opposite of despair. We shall often be faced with despair, as indeed every sensitive person has been during the last several decades in this country. Hence Kierkegaard and Nietszche and Camus and Sartre have proclaimed that courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead *in spite of despair.*

Nor is the courage required mere stubbornness—we shall surely have to create with others. But if you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself. Also you will have

betrayed our community in failing to make your contribution to the whole.

A chief characteristic of this courage is that it requires a centeredness within our own being, without which we would feel ourselves to be a vacuum. The "emptiness" within corresponds to an apathy without; and apathy adds up, in the long run, to cowardice. That is why we must always base our commitment in the center of our own being, or else no commitment will be ultimately authentic.

Courage, furthermore, is not to be confused with rashness. What masquerades as courage may turn out to be simply a bravado used to compensate for one's unconscious fear and to prove one's machismo, like the "hot" fliers in World War II. The ultimate end of such rashness is getting one's self killed, or at least one's head battered in with a policeman's billy club—both of which are scarcely productive ways of exhibiting courage.

Courage is not a virtue or value among other personal values like love or fidelity. It is the foundation that underlies and gives reality to all other virtues and personal values. Without courage our love pales into mere dependency. Without courage our fidelity becomes conformism.

The word *courage* comes from the same stem as the French word *coeur*, meaning "heart." Thus just as one's heart, by pumping blood to one's arms, legs, and brain enables all the other physical organs to function, so courage makes possible all the psychological virtues. Without courage other values wither away into mere facsimiles of virtue.

In human beings courage is necessary to make *being* and *becoming* possible. An assertion of the self, a commitment, is essential if the self is to have any reality. This is the distinction between human beings and the rest of

nature. The acorn becomes an oak by means of automatic growth; no commitment is necessary. The kitten similarly becomes a cat on the basis of instinct. *Nature* and *being* are identical in creatures like them. But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day by day. These decisions require courage. This is why Paul Tillich speaks of courage as *ontological*—it is essential to our being.

## 2. PHYSICAL COURAGE

This is the simplest and most obvious kind of courage. In our culture, physical courage takes its form chiefly from the myths of the frontier. Our prototypes have been the pioneer heroes who took the law into their own hands, who survived because they could draw a gun faster than their opponent, who were, above all things, self-reliant and could endure the inevitable loneliness in homesteading with the nearest neighbor twenty miles away.

But the contradictions in our heritage from this frontier are immediately clear to us. Regardless of the heroism it generated in our forebears, this kind of courage has now not only lost its usefulness, but has degenerated into brutality. When I was a child in a small Midwest town, boys were expected to fistfight. But our mothers represented a different viewpoint, so the boys often got licked at school and then whipped for fighting when they came home. This is scarcely an effective way to build character. As a psychoanalyst, I hear time and again of men who had been sensitive as boys and who could not learn to pound others into

submission; consequently, they go through life with the conviction that they are cowards.

America is among the most violent of the so-called civilized nations; our homicide rate is three to ten times higher than that of the nations of Europe. An important cause of this is the influence of that frontier brutality of which we are the heirs.

We need a new kind of physical courage that will neither run rampant in violence nor require our assertion of egocentric power *over* other people. I propose a new form of courage of the body: the use of the body not for the development of musclemen, but for the cultivation of sensitivity. This will mean the development of the capacity to listen with the body. It will be, as Nietszche remarked, a learning to think with the body. It will be a valuing of the body as the means of empathy with others, as expression of the self as a thing of beauty and as a rich source of pleasure.

Such a view of the body is already emerging in America through the influence of yoga, meditation, Zen Buddhism, and other religious psychologies from the Orient. In these traditions, the body is not condemned, but is valued as a source of justified pride. I propose this for our consideration as the kind of physical courage we will need for the new society toward which we are moving.

## 3. MORAL COURAGE

A second kind of courage is moral courage. The persons I have known, or have known of, who have great moral courage have generally abhorred violence. Take, for example,

Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian author who stood up alone against the might of the Soviet bureaucracy in protest against the inhuman and cruel treatment of men and women in Russian prison camps. His numerous books, written in the best prose of modern Russia, cry out against the crushing of any person, whether physically, psychologically, or spiritually. His moral courage stands out the more clearly since he is not a liberal, but a Russian nationalist. He became the symbol of a value lost sight of in a confused world—that the innate worth of a human being must be revered solely because of his or her humanity and regardless of his or her politics. A Dostoevskian character out of old Russia (as Stanley Kunitz describes him), Solzenitsyn proclaimed, "I would gladly give my life if it would advance the cause of truth."

Apprehended by the Soviet police, he was taken to prison. The story is told that he was disrobed and marched out before a firing squad. The purpose of the police was to scare him to death if they could not silence him psychologically; their bullets were blanks. Undaunted, Solzhenitsyn now lives as an exile in Switzerland, where he pursues his gadfly role and levels the same kind of criticism at other nations, like the United States, at the points where our democracy obviously stands in need of radical revision. So long as there exist persons with the moral courage of a Solzhenitsyn, we can be sure that the triumph of "man, the robot" has not yet arrived.

Solzhenitsyn's courage, like that of many persons of similar moral valor, arose not only out of his audaciousness, but also out of his compassion for the human suffering he saw about him during his own sentence in the Soviet prison camp. It is highly significant, and indeed almost a rule,

that moral courage has its source in such identification through one's own sensitivity with the suffering of one's fellow human beings. I am tempted to call this "perceptual courage" because it depends on one's capacity to *perceive*, to let one's self see the suffering of other people. If we let ourselves experience the evil, we will be forced to do something about it. It is a truth, recognizable in all of us, that when we don't want to become involved, when we don't want to confront even the *issue* of whether or not we'll come to the aid of someone who is being unjustly treated, we block off our perception, we blind ourselves to the other's suffering, we cut off our empathy with the person needing help. Hence the most prevalent form of cowardice in our day hides behind the statement "I did not want to become involved."

## 4. SOCIAL COURAGE

The third kind of courage is the opposite to the just described apathy; I call it social courage. It is the courage to relate to other human beings, the capacity to risk one's self in the hope of achieving meaningful intimacy. It is the courage to invest one's self over a period of time in a relationship that will demand an increasing openness.

Intimacy requires courage because risk is inescapable. We cannot know at the outset how the relationship will affect us. Like a chemical mixture, if one of us is changed, both of us will be. Will we grow in self-actualization, or will it destroy us? The one thing we can be certain of is that if we let ourselves fully into the relationship for good or evil, we will not come out unaffected.

A common practice in our day is to avoid working up the courage required for authentic intimacy by shifting the issue to the body, making it a matter of simple physical courage. It is easier in our society to be naked physically than to be naked psychologically or spiritually—easier to share our body than to share our fantasies, hopes, fears, and aspirations, which are felt to be more personal and the sharing of which is experienced as making us more vulnerable. For curious reasons we are shy about sharing the things that matter most. Hence people short-circuit the more "dangerous" building of a relationship by leaping immediately into bed. After all, the body is an object and can be treated mechanically.

But intimacy that begins and remains on the physical level tends to become inauthentic, and we later find ourselves fleeing from the emptiness. Authentic social courage requires intimacy on the many levels of the personality simultaneously. Only by doing this can one overcome personal alienation. No wonder the meeting of new persons brings a throb of anxiety as well as the joy of expectation; and as we go deeper into the relationship each new depth is marked by some new joy and new anxiety. Each meeting can be a harbinger of an unknown fate in store for us but also a stimulus toward the exciting pleasure of authentically knowing another person.

Social courage requires the confronting of two different kinds of fear. These were beautifully described by one of the early psychoanalysts, Otto Rank. The first he calls the "life fear." This is the fear of living autonomously, the fear of being abandoned, the need for dependency on someone else. It shows itself in the need to throw one's self so completely into a relationship that one has no self left with which to relate. One becomes, in effect, a reflection of the

person he or she loves—which sooner or later becomes boring to the partner. This is the fear of self-actualization, as Rank described it. Living some forty years before the days of women's liberation, Rank averred that this kind of fear was most typical of women.

The opposite fear Rank called the "death fear." This is the fear of being totally absorbed by the other, the fear of losing one's self and one's autonomy, the fear of having one's independence taken away. This, said Rank, is the fear most associated with men, for they seek to keep the back door open to beat a hasty retreat in case the relationship becomes too intimate.

Actually, if Rank had lived on into our day he would have agreed that both kinds of fear have to be confronted, in varying proportions to be sure, by both men and women. All our lives we oscillate between these two fears. They are, indeed, the forms of anxiety that lie in wait for anyone who cares for another. But the confronting of these two fears, and the awareness that one grows not only by being one's self but also by participating in other selves, is necessary if we are to move toward self-realization.

Albert Camus, in *Exile and the Kingdom*, wrote a story that illustrates these two opposite kinds of courage. "The Artist at Work" is a tale of a poor Parisian painter who could scarcely get enough money to buy bread for his wife and children. When the artist is on his death bed, his best friend finds the canvas on which the painter was working. It is blank except for one word, unclearly written and in very small letters, that appears in the center. The word can either be *solitary*—being alone; keeping one's distance from events, maintaining the peace of mind necessary for listening to one's deeper self. Or it can be *solidary*—"living in the market place"; solidarity, involvement, or iden-

tifying with the masses, as Karl Marx put it. Opposites though they are, both solitude and solidarity are essential if the artist is to produce works that are not only significant to his or her age, but that will also speak to future generations.

## 5. ONE PARADOX OF COURAGE

A curious paradox characteristic of every kind of courage here confronts us. It is the seeming contradiction that *we must be fully committed, but we must also be aware at the same time that we might possibly be wrong.* This dialectic relationship between conviction and doubt is characteristic of the highest types of courage, and gives the lie to the simplistic definitions that identify courage with mere growth.

People who claim to be *absolutely* convinced that their stand is the only right one are dangerous. Such conviction is the essence not only of dogmatism, but of its more destructive cousin, fanaticism. It blocks off the user from learning new truth, and it is a dead giveaway of unconscious doubt. The person then has to double his or her protests in order to quiet not only the opposition but his or her own unconscious doubts as well.

Whenever I heard—as we all did often during the Nixon-Watergate days—the "I am absolutely convinced" tone or the "I want to make this absolutely clear" statement emanating from the White House, I braced myself, for I knew that some dishonesty was being perpetrated by the telltale sign of overemphasis. Shakespeare aptly said, "The lady [or the politician] doth protest too much, methinks." In such a time, one longs for the presence of a leader like Lincoln, who openly admitted his doubts and as openly pre-

served his commitment. It is infinitely safer to know that the man at the top has his doubts, as you and I have ours, yet has the courage to move ahead in spite of these doubts. In contrast to the fanatic who has stockaded himself against new truth, the person with the courage to believe and at the same time to admit his doubts is flexible and open to new learning.

Paul Cézanne strongly believed that he was discovering and painting a new form of space which would radically influence the future of art, yet he was at the same time filled with painful and ever-present doubts. The relationship between commitment and doubt is by no means an antagonistic one. Commitment is healthiest when it is not *without* doubt, but *in spite of* doubt. To believe fully and at the same moment to have doubts is not at all a contradiction: it presupposes a greater respect for truth, an awareness that truth always goes beyond anything that can be said or done at any given moment. To every thesis there is an antithesis, and to this there is a synthesis. Truth is thus a never-dying process. We then know the meaning of the statement attributed to Leibnitz: "I would walk twenty miles to listen to my worst enemy if I could learn something."

## 6. CREATIVE COURAGE

This bring us to the most important kind of courage of all. Whereas moral courage is the righting of wrongs, creative courage, in contrast, is the discovering of new forms, new symbols, new patterns on which a new society can be built. Every profession can and does require some creative courage. In our day, technology and engineering, diplomacy,

business, and certainly teaching, all of these professions and scores of others are in the midst of radical change and require courageous persons to appreciate and direct this change. The need for creative courage is in direct proportion to the degree of change the profession is undergoing.

But those who present directly and immediately the new forms and symbols are the artists—the dramatists, the musicians, the painters, the dancers, the poets, and those poets of the religious sphere we call saints. They portray the new symbols in the form of images—poetic, aural, plastic, or dramatic, as the case may be. They live out their imaginations. The symbols only dreamt about by most human beings are expressed in graphic form by the artists. But in our appreciation of the created work—let us say a Mozart quintet—we also are performing a creative act. When we engage a painting, which we have to do especially with modern art if we are authentically to see it, we are experiencing some new moment of sensibility. Some new vision is triggered in us by our contact with the painting; something unique is born in us. This is why appreciation of the music or painting or other works of the creative person is also a creative act on our part.

If these symbols are to be understood by us, we must identify with them as we perceive them. In Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, there are no intellectual discussions of the failure of communication in our time; the failure is simply *presented* there on the stage. We see it most vividly, for example, when Lucky, who, at his master's order to "Think," can only sputter out a long speech that has all the pomposity of a philosophical discourse but is actually pure gibberish. As we involve ourselves more and more in the drama, we see represented on stage, larger than life, our general human failure to communicate authentically.

We see on the stage, in Beckett's play, the lone, bare tree, symbolic of the lone, bare relationship the two men have as they wait together for a Godot who never appears; and it elicits from us a similar sense of the alienation that we and multitudes of others experience. The fact that most people have no clear awareness of their alienation only makes this condition more powerful.

In Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, there are no explicit discussions of the disintegration of our society; it is shown as a reality in the drama. The nobility of the human species is not talked *about*, but is presented as a vacuum on the stage. Because this nobility is such a vivid absence, an emptiness that fills the play, you leave the theater with a profound sense of the importance of being human, as you do after having seen *Macbeth* or *King Lear*. O'Neill's capacity to communicate that experience places him among the significant tragedians of history.

Artists can portray these experiences in music or words or clay or marble or on canvas because they express what Jung calls the "collective unconscious." This phrase may not be the most felicitous, but we know that each of us carries in buried dimensions of our being some basic forms, partly generic and partly experiential in origin. It is these the artist expresses.

Thus the artists—in which term I hereafter include the poets, musicians, dramatists, plastic artists, as well as saints—are a "dew" line, to use McLuhan's phrase; they give us a "distant early warning" of what is happening to our culture. In the art of our day we see symbols galore of alienation and anxiety. But at the same time there is form amid discord, beauty amid ugliness, some human love in the midst of hatred—a love that temporarily triumphs over death but always loses out in the long run. The artists thus

express the spiritual meaning of their culture. Our problem is: Can we read their meaning aright?

Take Giotto in what is called the "little Renaissance", which burgeoned in the fourteenth century. In contrast to the two-dimensional medieval mosaics, Giotto presents a new way of seeing life and nature: he gives his paintings three dimensions, and we now see human beings and animals expressing and calling forth from us such specific human emotions as care, or pity, or grief, or joy. In the previous, two-dimensional mosaics in the churches of the Middle Ages, we feel no human being is necessary to see them—they have their own relationship to God. But in Giotto, a human being *viewing* the picture is required; and this human being must take his stance as an *individual* in relation to the picture. Thus the new humanism and the new relation to nature that were to become central in the Renaissance are here born, a hundred years *before* the Renaissance proper.

In our endeavor to grasp these symbols of art, we find ourselves in a realm that beggars our usual conscious thinking. Our task is quite beyond the reach of logic. It brings us to an area in which there are many paradoxes. Take the idea expressed in Shakespeare's four lines at the end of Sonnet 64:

> Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
> That time will come and take my love away.
> This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
> But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

If you have been trained to accept the logic of our society, you will ask: "Why does he have to 'weep to have' his love? Why can he not enjoy his love?" Thus our logic

pushes us always toward adjustment—an adjustment to a crazy world and to a crazy life. And worse yet, we cut ourselves off from understanding the profound depths of experience that Shakespeare is here expressing.

We have all had such experiences, but we tend to cover them over. We may look at an autumn tree so beautiful in its brilliant colors that we feel like weeping; or we may hear music so lovely that we are overcome with sadness. The craven thought then creeps into our consciousness that maybe it would have been better not to have seen the tree at all or not to have heard the music. Then we wouldn't be faced with this uncomfortable paradox—knowing that "time will come and take my love away," that everything we love will die. But the essence of being human is that, in the brief moment we exist on this spinning planet, we can love some persons and some things, in spite of the fact that time and death will ultimately claim us all. That we yearn to stretch the brief moment, to postpone our death a year or so is surely understandable. But such postponement is bound to be a frustrating and ultimately a losing battle.

By the creative act, however, we *are* able to reach beyond our own death. This is why creativity is so important and why we need to confront the problem of the relationship between creativity and death.

## 7

Consider James Joyce, who is often cited as the greatest of modern novelists. At the very end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he has his young hero write in his diary:

Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

What a rich and profound statement that is!—"I go to encounter for the millionth time." In other words, every creative encounter is a *new* event; every time requires another assertion of courage. What Kierkegaard said about love is also true of creativity: every person must start at the beginning. And to encounter "the reality of experience" is surely the basis for all creativity. The task will be "to forge in the smithy of my soul," as arduous as the blacksmith's task of bending red-hot iron in his smithy to make something of value for human life.

But note especially the last words, to forge "the uncreated conscience of my race." Joyce is here saying that conscience is not something handed down ready-made from Mount Sinai, despite reports to the contrary. It is created, first of all, out of the inspiration derived from the artist's symbols and forms. Every authentic artist is engaged in this creating of the conscience of the race, even though he or she may be unaware of the fact. The artist is not a moralist by conscious intention, but is concerned only with hearing and expressing the vision within his or her own being. But out of the symbols the artist sees and creates—as Giotto created the forms for the Renaissance—there is later hewn the ethical structure of the society.

Why is creativity so difficult? And why does it require so much courage? Is it not simply a matter of clearing away the dead forms, the defunct symbols and the myths that have become lifeless? No. Joyce's metaphor is much more accurate: it is as difficult as forging in the smithy of one's soul. We are faced with a puzzling riddle indeed.

Some help comes from George Bernard Shaw. Having attended a concert given by the violinist Heifitz, he wrote the following letter when he got home:

My dear Mr. Heifitz,

My wife and I were overwhelmed by your concert. If you continue to play with such beauty, you will certainly die young. No one can play with such perfection without provoking the jealousy of the gods. I earnestly implore you to play something badly every night before going to bed. . . .

Beneath Shaw's humorous words there is, as there often was with him, a profound truth—creativity provokes the jealousy of the gods. This is why authentic creativity takes so much courage: *an active battle with the gods is occurring.*

I cannot give you any complete explanation of why this is so; I can only share my reflections. Down through the ages, authentically creative figures have consistently found themselves in such a struggle. Degas once wrote, "A painter paints a picture with the same feeling as that with which a criminal commits a crime." In Judaism and Christianity the second of the Ten Commandments adjures us, "You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." I am aware that the ostensible purpose of this commandment was to protect the Jewish people from idol worship in those idol-strewn times.

But the commandment also expresses the timeless fear that every society harbors of its artists, poets, and saints. For they are the ones who threaten the status quo, which each society is devoted to protecting. It is clearest in the struggles occurring in Russia to control the utterances of the poets and the styles of the artists; but it is true also in

our own country, if not so blatant. Yet in spite of this divine prohibition, and despite the courage necessary to flout it, countless Jews and Christians through the ages have devoted themselves to painting and sculpting and have continued to make graven images and produce symbols in one form or another. Many of them have had the same experience of a battle with the gods.

A host of other riddles, which I can only cite without comment, are bound up with this major one. One is that genius and psychosis are so close to each other. Another is that creativity carries such an inexplicable guilt feeling. A third is that so many artists and poets commit suicide, and often at the very height of their achievement.

As I tried to puzzle out the riddle of the battle with the gods, I went back to the prototypes in human cultural history, to those myths that illuminate how people have understood the creative act. I do not use this term *myth* in the common present-day deteriorated meaning of "falsehood." This is an error that could be committed only by a society that has become so inebriated with adding up empirical facts that it seals off the deeper wisdom of human history. I use *myth* as meaning, rather, a dramatic presentation of the moral wisdom of the race. The myth uses the totality of the senses rather than just the intellect.

In ancient Greek civilization, there is the myth of Prometheus, a Titan living on Mount Olympus, who saw that human beings were without fire. His stealing fire from the gods and giving it to humankind is taken henceforth by the Greeks as the beginning of civilization, not only in cooking and in the weaving of textiles, but in philosophy, science, drama, and in culture itself.

But the important point is that Zeus *was outraged.* He

decreed that Prometheus be punished by being bound to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture was to come each morning and eat away his liver which would grow again at night. This element in the myth, incidentally, is a vivid symbol of the creative process. All artists have at some time had the experience at the end of the day of feeling tired, spent, and so certain they can never express their vision that they vow to forget it and start all over again on something else the next morning. But during the night their "liver grows back again." They arise full of energy and go back with renewed hope to their task, again to strive in the smithy of their soul.

Least anyone think the myth of Prometheus can be brushed aside as merely an idiosyncractic tale concoted by playful Greeks, let me remind you that in the Judeo-Christian tradition almost exactly the same truth is presented. I refer to the myth of Adam and Eve. This is the drama of the emerging of moral consciousness. As Kierkegaard said in relation to this myth (and to all myths), the truth that happens internally is presented as though it were external. The myth of Adam is re-enacted in every infant, beginning a few months after birth and developing into recognizable form at the age of two or three, though ideally it should continue enlarging all the rest of one's life. The eating of the apple of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes the dawn of human consciousness, moral conscience and consciousness being at this point synonymous. The innocence of the Garden of Eden—the womb and the "dreaming consciousness" (the phrase is Kierkegaard's) of gestation and the first month of life—are destroyed forever.

The function of psychoanalysis is to increase this con-

sciousness, indeed to *help* people eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It should not surprise us if this experience is as terrifying for many people as it was for Oedipus. Any theory of "resistance" that omits the terror of human consciousness is incomplete and probably wrong.

In place of innocent bliss, the infant now experiences anxiety and guilt feelings. Also, as part of the child's legacy is the sense of individual responsibility, and, most important of all, developing only later, the capacity to love. The "shadow" side of this process is the emergence of repressions and, concomitantly, neurosis. A fateful event indeed! If you call this the "fall of man," you should join Hegel and other penetrating analysts of history who have proclaimed that it was a "fall upward"; for without this experience there would be neither creativity nor consciousness as we know them.

But, again, *Yahweh was angry*. Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden by an angel with a flaming sword. The troublesome paradox confronts us in that both the Greek and the Judeo-Christian myths present creativity and consciousness as being born in rebellion against an omnipotent force. Are we to conclude that these chief gods, Zeus and Yahweh, did not wish humankind to have moral consciousness and the arts of civilization? It is a mystery indeed.

The most obvious explanation is that the creative artist and poet and saint must fight the *actual* (as contrasted to the ideal) gods of our society—the god of conformism as well as the gods of apathy, material success, and exploitative power. These are the "idols" of our society that are worshiped by multitudes of people. But this point does not

go deeply enough to give us an answer to the riddle.

In my search for some illumination, I went back again to the myths to read them more carefully. I discovered that at the end of the myth of Prometheus there is the curious addendum: Prometheus could be freed from his chains and his torture only when an immortal would renounce his immortality as expiation for Prometheus. This was done by Chiron (who is, incidentally, another fascinating symbol—half horse and half man, renowned for his wisdom and skill in medicine and healing, he brought up Asclepius, the god of medicine). This conclusion to the myth tells us that the riddle is connected with the problem of death.

The same with Adam and Eve. Enraged at their eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Yahweh cries out that He is afraid they will eat of the tree of eternal life and become like "one of us." So! Again the riddle has to do with the problem of death, of which eternal life is one aspect.

The battle with the gods thus hinges on our own mortality! Creativity is a yearning for immortality. We human beings know that we must die. We have, strangely enough, a word for death. We know that each of us must develop the courage to confront death. Yet we also must rebel and struggle against it. Creativity comes from this struggle—out of the rebellion the creative act is born. Creativity is not merely the innocent spontaneity of our youth and childhood; it must also be married to the passion of the adult human being, which is a passion to live beyond one's death. Michelangelo's writhing, unfinished statues of slaves, struggling in their prisons of stone, are the most fitting symbol for our human condition.

## 8

When I use the word *rebel* for the artist, I do not refer to revolutionary or to such things as taking over the dean's office; that is a different matter. Artists are generally soft-spoken persons who are concerned with their inner visions and images. But that is precisely what makes them feared by any coercive society. For they are the bearers of the human being's age-old capacity to be insurgent. They love to emerse themselves in chaos in order to put it into form, just as God created form out of chaos in Genesis. Forever unsatisfied with the mundane, the apathetic, the conventional, they always push on to newer worlds. Thus are they the creators of the "uncreated conscience of the race."

This requires an intensity of emotion, a heightened vitality—for is not the vital forever in opposition to death? We could call this intensity by many different names: I choose to call it rage. Stanley Kunitz, contemporary poet, states that "the poet writes his poems out of his rage." This rage is necessary to ignite the poet's passion, to call forth his abilities, to bring together in ecstasy his flamelike insights, that he may surpass himself in his poems. The rage is against injustice, of which there is certainly plenty in our society. But ultimately it is rage against the prototype of all injustice—death.

We recall the first lines of a poem by another contemporary poet, Dylan Thomas, on the death of his father:

> Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And the poem ends:

> And you, my father, there on the sad height,
> Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
> Do not go gentle into that good night.
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Note that he does not ask merely to be blessed. "Curse . . . me . . . with your *fierce* tears." Note also that it is Dylan Thomas, and not his father, who writes the poem. The father had to confront death and in some way accept it. But the son expresses the eternally insurgent spirit—and as a result we have the piercing elegance of this poem.

This rage has nothing at all to do with rational concepts of death, in which we stand outside the experience of death and make objective, statistical comments about it. That always has to do with someone else's death, not our own. We all know that each generation, whether of leaves or grass or human beings or any living things, must die in order for a new generation be born. I am speaking of death in a different sense. A child has a dog, and the dog dies. The child's grief is mixed with deep anger. If someone tries to explain death in the objective, evolutionary way to him —everything dies, and dogs die sooner than human beings —he may well strike out against the explainer. The child probably knows all that anyway. His real sense of loss and betrayal comes from the fact that his love for his dog and the dog's devotion to him are now gone. It is the personal, subjective experience of death of which I am speaking.

As we grow older we learn how to understand each other better. Hopefully, we learn also to love more authentically. Understanding and love require a wisdom that comes only with age. But at the highest point in the development of

that wisdom, we will be blotted out. No longer will we see the trees turning scarlet in the autumn. No longer will we see the grass pushing up so tenderly in the spring. Each of us will become only a memory that will grow fainter every year.

This most difficult of truths is put by another modern poet, Marianne Moore, into these words:

> What is our innocence,
> what is our guilt? All are
> naked, none is safe. And whence
> is courage . . .

And then, after considering death and how we can confront it, she ends her poem:

> So he who strongly feels,
> behaves. The very bird,
> grown taller as he sings, steels
> his form straight up. Though he is captive,
> his mighty singing
> says, satisfaction is a lowly
> thing, how pure a thing is joy.
> This is mortality,
> this is eternity.

Thus mortality is at last brought into antiphony with its opposite, eternity.

## 9

For many people the relating of rebellion to religion will be a hard truth. It brings with it the final paradox. In religion, it is not the sycophants or those who cling most faithfully to the status quo who are ultimately praised. It is the insurgents. Recall how often in human history the

saint and the rebel have been the same person. Socrates was a rebel, and he was sentenced to drink hemlock. Jesus was a rebel, and he was crucified for it. Joan of Arc was a rebel, and she was burned at the stake.

Yet each of these figures and hundreds like them, though ostricized by their contemporaries, were recognized and worshiped by the following ages as having made the most significant creative contributions in ethics and religion to civilization.

Those we call saints rebelled against an outmoded and inadequate form of God on the basis of their new insights into divinity. The teachings that led to their deaths raised the ethical and spiritual levels of their societies. They were aware that Zeus, the jealous god of Mount Olympus, would no longer do. Hence Prometheus stands for a religion of compassion. They rebelled against Yahweh, the primitive tribal god of the Hebrews who gloried in the deaths of thousands of Philistines. In place of him came the new visions of Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah of the god of love and justice. Their rebellion was motivated by new insights into the meaning of godliness. They rebelled, as Paul Tillich has so beautifully stated, against God in the name of the God beyond God. The continuous emergence of the God beyond God is the mark of creative courage in the religious sphere.

Whatever sphere we may be in, there is a profound joy in the realization that we are helping to form the structure of the new world. This is creative courage, however minor or fortuitous our creations may be. We can then say, with Joyce, Welcome, O life! We go for the millionth time to forge in the smithy of our souls the uncreated conscience of the race.

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