

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF MORAL COURAGE.

### CHAPTER 21.

Animals can tell if you are afraid, better probably than your fellow humans can; it is harder to “pull the wool” over their eyes. So there are two types of fear predominantly, fear of outward circumstances, and the inner fear which makes the heart go cold.

Goethe records how on his Italian Journey, on descending from the Alps, he came across an architectural conference debating whether it was better to imitate or originate. Imitating won the verdict. I am inclined to agree; though there is no need to be a plagiarist. It is daunting to have to set out on one’s own, and break new ground. Much better to build on the efforts of one’s forebears, if one can. But there comes a time when one can no longer do that. Carl Gustav Jung, who considered himself a Christian, in the 1950s tried to interest the theologians of the Church of England in his work, and persuade them that they must abandon dogma, and take account of the realities of the spiritual world as he had found them in practice. It is a reasonable argument that theory is no good, if it conflicts with experience; and his experience pre-eminently was his descent into the unconscious between 1914 and 1919. But without exception the theologians turned a deaf ear. This chapter of the debate between science and religion was to be about the mind, apparently the last great unknown. Jung was saying the human soul is unbelievably complex, whereas I have never heard a clergyman suggest it had any structure at all. The chasm between their attitudes was as deep as that! Religion has been the great world of dreams, from Jacob onwards. But they want to be realistic dreams; not just wishful thinking.

Jesus turned Judaism, the best religion at the time, into the most sublime religion the world has known. Jesus said he came to show us the Father; in other words to teach us about the intimacy that can exist between God and the soul; which if it is reality and not fantasy, is far deeper than words. This must have started as a dream in his mind; but one he was able to bring to fruition. With difficulty it may be possible from time to time to express this intimacy in words, particularly in regard to what one believes is, or was, one’s vocation. One may of course be mistaken about a vocation, because there is never any absolute safety from wishful thinking. But on the whole it is safer to believe too much, rather than too little. Better to pay a price oneself for over-boldness, than to wreck the whole enterprise by over-timidity. Better to be brave and believe too much, than disappoint God through cowardice, and believe too little.

In many ways the world situation today is similar to what it was in Jesus’ day. Then the Roman world must have been utterly sick of war, after the seven years civil war following the murder of Julius Caesar. Now we are all weary of war; but are compelled to decide

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whether to submit to terror or fight it. Then the old Roman deities were discredited; and the world was waiting for something to take their place: a world religion perhaps. Mithras, the soldier's religion, I understand was a contender; Judaism as the Pharisees understood it did not stand a chance. Christianity now is largely discredited in popular imagination; on the BBC they snigger at it. Islam might claim to be a more marshal religion; but there is hardly a Muslim state that is not tied to third world poverty, except where there is oil. Religion does not stand high in the public's estimation; and the Christianity that the clergy preach now stands as little chance of fulfilling man's spiritual aspirations, as Judaism did then. But the situation now is radically different from that of his day, both because society itself is so different, and also because knowledge particularly scientific knowledge is so immeasurably greater. It would be folly to go about things in the way he did, even if it were possible. We come back to the same maxim: to take the plans of bygone heroes, and to try to force them to fit new situations, is the road to catastrophe. It always was, and always will be. So what is to be done, either in the religious world, or the secular world?

Today I believe it is one and the same question. It was not so in Clausewitz's day. He had no interest in religion; being poor and of somewhat dubious nobility, his prospects of promotion in the army were slender, unless he distinguished himself in war. So he longed for war, yet saw War as an instrument of policy on the part of the State, which he regarded as an organic body, almost as a person. A reasonable view to take in an absolute monarchy; but it meant that success or failure in life for him depended not only on his personal achievement and the chance circumstances of his career, but also on the moral character of the State he served. That is one of the penalties of putting the State into the position that Religion usually occupies; although there may be bonuses as well.

His distress was all the greater after the debacle of 1806. In the years before, he had been a military assistant to Colonel von Scharnhorst, who had done what he could to educate Prussian officers on the need for reform, if the challenge of Napoleonic warfare was to be met. Frederick the Great may have raised a nation of slaves to a pre-eminent position in Europe; but with the death of Frederick, there was no prospect of timid and unimaginative men continuing the system without reform. And Prussian military power became a shadow of its former self. Scharnhorst had considerable success in educating even senior officers to his point of view; but none in penetrating the corridors of power. So when Prussia mobilized, too little and too late in 1806, to the astonishment of Europe, the same timidity controlled its armies. Although at Auerstadt the Prussians outnumbered the French, they collapsed under the French assault. Clausewitz on the right wing was able to organise a battalion into a rear-

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guard, and helped to effect an orderly retreat there; but within a fortnight the troops he was with were forced to surrender. Prussian resistance had almost totally collapsed.

In the years that followed, leading up to the war of liberation, Scharnhorst and Stein and others pursued more successfully the policy of reform; although after victory the Court tried with success to put back the clock. Nevertheless the purpose of reform, while it lasted, was to harness the loyalty of citizens by offering freedom and competence, in place of semi-slavery and incompetence. Our problems are different. In England today, it may be true that the State is disintegrating, and ministers of any government are faced more and more with forces which they cannot understand, still less control; but this is not due to lack of political reform. The willingness to reform is almost hysterical; but many reforms are useless, because they have never been thought through. Our problem is how to revive a public whose apathy stems from a cynical distrust of politicians, which is all too well grounded in truth. I may be wrong, and I may be naïve, but my view is that only a rediscovery of religion has much chance of success. If I am right, it is the clergy who stand in the way of reform; whereas in Prussia it was the Royal Court's reluctance to see its prerogatives disappear.

There is an incompatibility between traditional Christianity and a competent life in the secular world. They are as incompatible as abject penitence without end, and an assured confidence in the world of affairs. They are as unlike as chalk and cheese. I am sure many lay-people will have been aware of this, and found their own solution for it; maybe millions, maybe hundreds of millions. But I have never heard a clergyman either from the pulpit or privately admit the problem exists, still less propose a solution. I can understand this; most clergymen are decent sincere people, but they cannot bring themselves to modify the Christianity of the Gospels. It is all they know of religion, apart from the routine of ordinary prayer. Reform undermines all they are used to; just as it threatened Courtly life in Prussia.

This incompatibility is well illustrated by an anecdote from Durham during the War. Large numbers of Royal Air Force cadets descended on the university for six-months courses. They all studied physics, presumably to learn to handle instruments with confidence, as they were training to become bomber pilots and navigators. They were under a Wing Commander, who was a man with a formidable integrity. One day, his adjutant, who was sympathetic to the truths of religion, was unwise enough to allow the cadets to be inspected by a suffragan bishop, on Palace Green. The Wing Commander was furious; "Here am I, teaching my young gentlemen to be assassins. I'm not having them inspected by that milksop!" A harsh but understandable "appreciation of the situation". For when Air Force cadets have to recognize "friend or foe" on being shown the silhouette of an aircraft for a split second, how does one

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describe the timidity of men who will neither say boldly that Christianity can only be practised by monks in monasteries, and clergymen in cathedrals, nor say that it is equally well available to those defending their country in its hour of need? Who will not say that religion is not only an essential prerequisite if there is to be integrity in civilian society, but also the guarantor that what is necessary in War is legitimate? Is there a single word that adequately encapsulates those who dither between these two attitudes of mind, which go to the very heart of what they are supposed to be professing?

Jung's father was a Lutheran pastor, who lost his faith. But what could he do? He knew no other job. So he suffered in silence; it was too terrible to talk about. And of course it killed him. Clausewitz was made of sterner stuff. Eventually he resigned his commission in the Prussian Army, and took a commission from the Tsar in the Russian Army in time to take part in General Kutuzov's victorious campaign to expel Napoleon from Russia. He negotiated the terms of General Yorck's surrender, which brought a large Prussian force over to the Russian side. And thereafter took an active part in the war of liberation. Eventually he was readmitted to the Prussian Army, and played his part in that army's crucial arrival on the field of Waterloo, in time to tip the scales of victory. His friend Gneisenau must get the credit that the Prussian Army retreated North West to join Wellington after their mauling at Ligny, rather than North East back towards home. And Gneisenau must also have participated in the decision after Waterloo to break all the rules of war, and march on Paris – because Napoleon was finished!

Clausewitz refused to serve his own country while the treaty was effective by which his country agreed to serve the enemy, Napoleon Bonaparte. And who knows what courage his integrity may have inspired in others? Fortune favours the brave; and if the clergy of the Church of England think they are exceptions to this remorseless general rule, I'm afraid they are wrong.

Genius, according to Clausewitz, creates the rules that govern the arts, and never breaks them; though he denied War was truly an art, even if it was not truly a science either. It was not a science for him, because he always rated the human factors, which are imponderable, as supreme. It was central to his thought that no theory, however realistic, matched reality. And that is my view too, both in natural science and in religion, that no theory is more than an approximation to the reality of life; which is why I find Clausewitz such a sympathetic character.