

Robert Speaks

An interpretive philosophical essay

By Robert Bodrog-Goodland

This week I shall take one basic question and relate it to the ideologies of four different philosophers, and in so doing, try to interpret that question as would each of the four.

To begin with, let us create our hypothetical situation.

Here I am, all of eighteen years old, let assume that I still sleep with my teddy bear. I find that I can fall asleep much easier when he is with me; as well, he is also very conducive to study, and I can concentrate much better and therefore perform my necessary function(s) better when he is near.

The question is: Is it right for me to sleep with, and use my teddy bear as outlined above?

THE ARISTOTELIAN VIEWPOINT

Aristotle once said that "a hammer or anything else is called good because it does well what it supposed to do"; therefore, to determine

whether or not it is right for me to use my teddy bear as I have described, we must first determine the purpose or function of a teddy bear.

Most people would agree that its primary function would be basically to soothe, give comfort and in general, produce a feeling of security. And since in this case the teddy is doing just that, performing its intended function as it should, (and so am I) therefore, according to Aristotle's ethical principles nothing is wrong concerning my relationship with my teddy bear.

THE KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Kant's first categorical imperative says, "Act only on that maxim whereby you would at the same time will that it should become a universal law"; that is to say, if on principle I would be willing for everyone else to act as I do.

In this case I would see no wrong if others used and

interacted with their teddy bears as I do, and therefore with reference to this categorical imperative it would appear that according to Kant it also seems acceptable to use my teddy bear as such.

JOHN STUART MILL — THE UTILITARIAN APPROACH

My understanding of Mill's philosophy is that whatever gives us the greatest pleasure and the least pain is the standard for what is good in human behavior.

My teddy bear helps me, assists me in accomplishing my goals and therefore contributes to my happiness and general well-being as a person.

He is in fact helping to create happiness, hence causing me pleasure. And since it would be very difficult for anyone to state with any degree of validity that I am causing any person or people any foreseeable harm as a result of my actions, I would have to say that ac-

ording to Mill's utilitarian point of view, I am again justified in those actions.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE — THE EXISTENTIALIST OPINION

Sartre believed that we are all totally free and totally responsible. Therefore, we are responsible for what we become as a result of the decisions we make.

So if I become hopelessly addicted and unable to perform my various functions or duties without my teddy bear, I have no one to blame for these results except myself.

I alone am responsible for what has occurred as a result of the decisions I have made.

And since I was completely free to choose to sleep or not to sleep with my teddy bear, therefore the burden of the consequences because of my actions rests solely upon myself.

CONCLUSION

So; there you have it. At least three of the greatest philosophers in the history

of mankind agree that it's OK for me to cuddle with, sleep with, and use my teddy bear in accordance with the best of my academic abilities.

And at least one other, Sartre, seems to imply that it is still acceptable as long as I am prepared to bear the burden of any consequences which might arise from the give situation, and acknow-

ledge that these are mine and my responsibility alone.

To summarize, draw a conclusion, I can only say that this just might be the one time we'll ever see these four great men — Aristotle, Kant, Mill and Sartre — ever agreeing so closely on any given issue and it would appear that sometimes happiness can be best defined as a warm teddy bear.

South Africa continued from p. 5

Why does the International Monetary Fund continue to grant loans to such a nation?

One would think that if all the members of the UN got together and agreed on some form of international embargo against South Africa, it would bring that country to its knees and force it to sit up and realize that until it cleans up its act, it had better not count on any outside aid whatsoever.

Rarely do answers come quickly or easily. Ant although we are free and enjoy so many varied privileges in this great land of ours, we must not forget or simply turn our backs on others less fortunate merely because their problems do not directly concern us.

We must not wait for our own freedoms and livelihood to become threatened before we act. For just as we have an obligation to ourselves, that obligation should also apply to our fellow man.

As the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once said: "In choosing for ourselves, we choose for all men".

Chronology continued

ANC leaders captured at Rivonia as nationalist movement goes underground.

1963

'Separate development' proclaimed as state policy and Transkei given separate constitution.

1973

Over 60,000 black workers strike in Durban as black trade union organisation grows.

1973-1976

Rise of the black consciousness movement.

1976

Hundreds are killed by police in urban uprisings lead by black students. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's *Inkatha* — movement grows in Natal.

1977

All black consciousness movements banned. Christian Institute banned.

1978-1979

Black trade unions begin organising in national federations. Strikes by black workers escalate.

1980-1982

ANC sabotage attacks on police stations and economic installation quadruple.

1982

'Influx control' into towns tightened. National Party splits over ways to contain black revolt.

1976-1982

8 million blacks lose South African citizenship as bantustans are given 'independence' as 'homelands': Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, Ciskei.

1983

Attempts to co-opt 'Coloureds' and 'Asians' in new tricameral legislature.

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