

I heard somewhere that you're never old till you have nothing to be against. Me, I can't imagine ever running out of things to be against--so, in that respect, I can't imagine becoming old...For this thinksheet, it's football, which I've been against since 1927*, when I went to a game and didn't make it all the way to the half: got bored and left. Also, angry: I was against war (even against military parades), and football seemed war by another means--war in which the weapons are human bodies.

So far, I haven't been able to write a Letter to the Editor that the CAPE COD TIMES wouldn't print...whatever that means.... [*I was old enough to judge: nine.]

Mung Tsu (Latin, "Mencius"), a cofounder (with Kung Fu-Tzu [Latin, "Confucius"]) of Confucianism, divides life in temptation-stages: LUST (beginning in youth), VIOLENCE (in the midlife flowering of one's personal/social power), and GREED (in old age [currently perfumed as "maturity"], partly in compensation for one's declining powers of body and network). A smattering of social psychology will point, here, to the reason football has such a hold on the American psyche: it converges all the temptation-stages, so generating a high "head."

God gives us a few near-perfect resisters of all three temptations--such as Chih Meng (Mung Fa-li, a direct descendant of Mung Tsu), one of the great souls (maha atmas) I've been privileged to know. Founder of the China Institute (125 E. 65th St., NYC 10021), he gave me his autobiography at New Year's '82--in which he mentions the three temptations as spelled out in his ancestor's FOUR BOOKS (which, + Kung Fu-Tzu's ANALECTS, constitute the scriptures of Confucianism)..."VIOLENCE," here, is using our powers, native and accumulated, to force our will on our fellows in order to use them, against their own humanity, in our interests. Eg, USA/USSR resistance to the UN June/82 global-satellite information service proposal-action.

American gladiators

Debbie Forman in "At Ease" (Jan. 14) is frighteningly right: Capestyle and American-style consciousness at year's end/beginning is, increasingly football. Why frighteningly?

1. Quality of life is determined by the quality of what you give your attention to. Traditional societies are structured and regulated for spiritual formation around what ancestors and parents deem of highest value, supreme worth, so that, generation after generation, both consciousness and life are centered in "the sacred," which both provides peace and joy and motivates to high living instead of "high life." Currently the American sacred is entertainment.

2. Electronic football is misnamed. "sports." "Sports" are something you do; entertainment is something done to you; ergo, electronic football is entertainment, not sports. New Year's Day '82 ~~was~~ not seven, but 11 football games to glue our active eyes and passive souls to: will give us

3. I could never vote for a presidential candidate who loves football -- Nixon, Ford, Reagan. The violent-competitive mentality is, as I see it,

so deformed as to be unable to make mature decisions in the real world. When the globe is perceived as one gigantic football field, attention and money will move not into the struggle for justice and peace but into the great locker room on the Potomac, the Pentagon. Result: We frighten potential enemies (chiefly, the U.S.S.R.) and alienate actual friends (Britain, Europe). Further result: We impoverish our own people in both material and social services.

4. Debbie Forman's essay begins, "It was one of those Sundays. . . . Traditional societies set aside both space (temples, churches) and time (festivals, "Sunday") for the sacred. Currently, the Barnstable Clergy Association is protesting the public schools' invasion of this sacred time: the schools are more and more encroaching, with sports especially, on the day both Christians and Jews consider sacred (Jews, to religious education; Christians, to both worship and religious education). How far can we get when "sports" (both active and passive) is the religion of vast masses of Americans?

5. America's drift away from its traditional sacred, biblical religion (Jewish and Christian), has both private and public consequences. Privately, Americans are self-drugged (by "entertainment" and chemicals) against boredom and fear. Publicly, we are terrified of what life and the Russians may do to us -- and fear freezes creative imagination.

6. As the gladiatorial contests brutalized Rome, so football the American psyche. Who cares that millions of American boys and men must carry football injuries, painful and disabling, through the rest of their lives? Theirs are the bodies of gladiators, sacrificed for public excitement.

19 Jan. 82 WILLIS ELLIOTT
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"What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?"--Henry F. Lyte's "Abide With Me."