

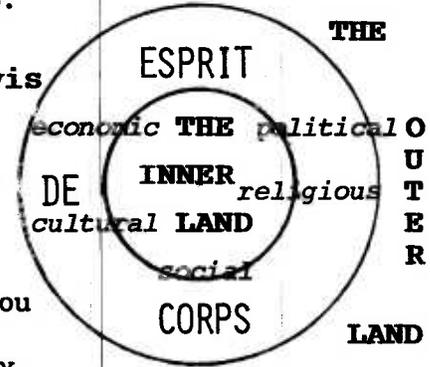
THE WHEEL WITHIN THE WHEEL:

IS THE MILITARY NECESSARY? -----

ELLIOTT #1813

The itch I'm scratching in this thinksheet is this: I'm been hearing/reading a lot of Manichean nonsense from "religious leaders" (especially professors with cushy chairs) about the military in general and, in particular, "the Pentagon" and "the military budget." Besides being not-of-this-world in the bad sense, and special pleading (for "peace," "spirituality," et al) in the worst sense, it's confusing the troops (i.e., the USA citizenry, or at least masses of mainline churchfolk), sapping morale, and depleting our fast-diminishing store of esprit de corps (the sociopolitical body's spirit). An alternative title for this thinksheet is, ON BEING HONEST TO ARMS.

1. No, the military is not necessary. Not even a necessary evil. Just an evil vis-a-vis God, (1) who asks for trust and views the military as a rival trust-center, and (2) who has the power to bring good out of evil, including the military. These words I speak from within "the inner land," by which I mean (a) my heart and (b) my intimate-communal, vs. my public, life--my *Gemeinde* vs. the *Gesellschaft*. The closer you look, the more complicated it gets! It could mean no more than that the church, unlike the premodern papacy, should not have an army--but I mean more than that. It could mean that Christians in a hostile environment (such as today's Islamic world) should not arm themselves against their communities' enemies--but I mean less than that. On the eastern littoral of the Mediterranean, 1984, are Arab states, a Christian state, and a Jewish state. Faithful Muslims tend to generosity toward "infidels" living in Muslim states, but are enraged at the blasphemy of a nonMuslim state--e.g., Lebanon with a Christian president, and the State of Israel--existing within "the Land of Islam," meaning any territory Muslims have ever controlled. Jews and Christians, considering this a defect in Islam, have the choice of foregoing creating/participating in a nonMuslim state within the Land of Islam, or arming themselves against *jihad*. ANAMOLY: The USA protects a Jewish state in the area, but refuses to protect a Christian state --though about half of each state is of religion(s) other than that of its government. This is a change of USA policy: In 1958, the very day before Loree and I were to go to Damascus, our USMC hit the Beirut beaches to prevent a Muslim takeover of the government from the Christians, admittedly the dominant element in the fragile accord. As for our warships now (Mar/84) off the Straits of Hormuz to guarantee the flow of oil, what right have they (I speak in the Islamic mode) to any interests in natural resources within the Land of Islam? This is not Khomeini fundamentalism; it's fundamental Islam. Short of the Second Coming, the only hope for "nonmilitary solutions" in the area is military stasis, the stalemate that turns military dreams into nightmares. How necessary, then, the military is for "the outer land"! Yes, the results of military action are ambiguous; but so of all other action on the plane of history.



2. Of a people and state (government, i.e.), "the inner land" (= "civil religion" and the sects) is the Munchie, the nonhole in the doughnut of social reality, the wheel within the wheel (*pace* Ezekiel and this thinksheet's title). Its energy in the USA explains the nondominance of the Pentagon, whose political inferiority is confirmed, in recent American history, by its hands-tied ineptitude: Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, Carter's flawed-failed attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran, the Beirut airport (exception: Granada, a miniscule staging). PARADOX: What's a laughingstock abroad, viz., the USA military ineptitude, is at home a resounding affirmation over

In 1940 I was with Jordan when he decided to begin such a community, to which I've never felt the slightest pull. We were fellow-students in a doctoral seminar on "The Greek and the Message of Matthew." Arnold and Jordan started Sermon-on-the-Mount communities, less crazy than most ideas.

of the (though stupid)* dominance of the political over the military. Health at home, sickness abroad. (*In present operation.)

3. Journalists, heightening (for attention's sake) differences, hinder focus on common interests, which alone make mediation possible: "news" is an enemy of "peace." I hate to admit it, for I'm in general for open information: Meg Thatcher's no-news policy in the Falklands/Malvinas war, and Reagan's ditto in the Grenada war, was a Good Idea. As I see it, in both cases "common interests" lay beyond military dominance by "us," meaning defective but nonauthoritarian governments (meaning, in these cases, nonmilitary governments: the Falklands/Malvinas and Grenada had come under the sway of military governments). As a liberal, I am anguished to be against open information; but as an anti-ideolog, I rejoice at an exception to my liberalism.

3. On my diagram, the state (i.e., the government--e.g., "Moscow," "Washington") is the boundary-line between the inner and outer wheels. I've described what's in between as "esprit de corps," a nation-people's "spirit" of affirmation-aggression (=vitality + the will to self-defense, if not also expansion). In italics are the dimensions of social life in play, distributing the energies of "the inner land" to the surviving/striving struggles vis-a-vis "the outer land." BIO-ANALOGY: Skin, which has (for individual and society) an appropriate thickness (thickskinned, too insensitive; thinskin, too sensitive--e.g., at the moment Iran is too thickskinned and America too thinskin; or, psychiatrically, Iran is presently overwilled and the USA underwilled).

4. "The Moral Majority" seems politically feeble but is psychologically powerful because it effectively points to America's loss of esprit de corps and correctly diagnoses this effeteness as loss of (spiritual) nerve. Though not dominantly so, we are historically and predominantly Protestant; but liberalism has made everything Protestant (except itself!) suspect or worse. I am no Protestant triumphalist; but I observe that both the strengths and the defects of Protestantism tend to check Catholicism's triumphalism and Judaism's tribalism--and, at least in this sense, "the American way of life" is Protestant, and need not be ashamedly so.

5. The four italics dimensions (on my diagram) should be assessed and planned in the diagram's total context. Taken as dominant, each of the five dimensions commits hubris: economic determinism (laissez faire, Marxist, et al), political determinism (etatism in its various flavors), cultural determinism (esthetic idolatry), social determinism (varicolored-feathered socialisms), and religious determinism (priestcraft claiming prophetic and kingly powers). Because "the American way of life" is theoretically against all these sins of hubris, nothing should prevent the public schools' innoculating students against them (though it would take courage to face down the howls from many antiAmerican angles).

6. I love and fear "America." On national holidays, on our house we fly a family heirloom, an 80-year-old 11-foot/14-foot tattered, 46-star American flag, which fills me with pride (as a citizen) and wariness (as a Christian and philosopher). Yes, all things historical are ambiguous. And, when the chips are down as they sometimes are, there's no way to defend one's "values" (inner/outer lands) without committing "crimes against humanity." *Lo-Amen: Let it not be! Maran, Atha: Come, Lord Jesus!*

7. I believe that God calls certain persons to establish inner-land communities, such as Eberhard Arnold's 1920 Bruderhof and Clarence Jordan's 1941 Koinonia Farm, in the midst of "public" communities.