

Lecture to Academy

June 6, 1971

LITTLE BIG MAN

". . . Because he delighted in me."

Now I want to fool a little bit. I went to See Little Big Man. I wish you would all go and see that movie. 101520 colleagues, the last few months, trying to push me to see that movie. Go see that movie -- great theology is in it. And mighty speeches like "It's a good day to die." Of course when you get to be my age, you begin to be suspicious. I went and I am sorry to report to my soul that I too was sucked in, I too was taken in like a naive child of 29. There is something amusing about having been taken in. I remember a few years ago, when I was about 15, I bought a watch in Times Square, and it didn't have any works in it after I got down the street a ways. I swear that one in his hand was running. I felt like a fool. But there was something also rather amusing even at that tender age. I was ashamed yet I kept telling people. I was taken in but I felt uncomfortable about two hours. Later I knew it was a spoof. I mean it was a spoof.

It was buffoonery, but it was godawful serious buffoonery, but it was a spoof. The place that I finally woke up is where they were having themselves a stage coach massacre in which the Indians, you know what they do, and in the midst of it, our hero began circus acrobatics. He tried to pull a shot gun away from an old man who was scared so he couldn't use it, but was crying out, "It's mine, it's mine." and the hero jumped down on the first horse and immediately an

Indian appeared on the horse next to him and they were having themselves a circus there in the midst of shooting and arrows everywhere and the hero suddenly stood up on the horse's back and jumped onto the horse in front and the Indian, looked around as if to say well, I can do that too, and with bullets flying and yelling and screaming, right before the audience eyes, the Indian stands up on the horse and he jumps ahead too. The hero is going to show that he can do it so he stands up on his ho, Se and going ninety miles an hour, he jumps to the next horse, and the Indian was not to be outdone, regardless of how serious a moment in history, so he gets up On his horse and beats him. Now, they both reach for a strap and they were tugging back and forth, still in this competition on the lead horses to see whose gonna get the strap and at this time the old man who was scared to death got the shotgun and aimed it out at those two guys, with the shot gun going like this, pulled the trigger and hit the Strap right in two at the very moment that they were going by a river and our hero fell off when the strap broke into the river and was able to escape. Once that got through your skull then you weren't going to take anything in the rest of the movie. If was a spoof.

A very serious spoof. And the material was taken from Custer's Last Stand, which would be the establishment in relationship to the Indians in the last century. At which moment the Indians thoroughly spanked the white people of m is nation for their wickedness. But the movie had nothing whatsoever, this is the spoof, to do with the white man and the red man. It had nothing whatsoever to do with Custer and the dying Indians, It was talking about us. Now the powerof this is that the spoof worked and if the white man in this country had not been deadly guilty for what we had done to the Indians, you wouldn't have been caught by m e spoof. That was a part of the genius; of that artist. Then secondly, we have become sentimental about the Indians and their way of life. And he caught us twice round about. But we also are a people who, right now, are caught in deep guilt relative to what our establishment is doing in the world. Both within our own nation through forces such as they say in the ghetto, the police and also our armed forces in Southeast Asia that go way down below the content. None of us escape this.

You wouldn't believe the complexity of this guilt Structure' that is in us ail. on the other hand, we have

also become sentimental about those in our time who obviously are victims of the Police and victims of the military establishment. We have become sentimental about the youth; we have become sentimental about the long hair. We have become sentimental about this kind of activity and that kind of posture, just deeply sentimental and caught in our sentimentality and guilt. We are paralyzed, nothing happens.

Let me go through that movie. The Indians in that movie call themselves, the human beings. That is, the Cheyenne Indians; the Pawnees aren't human beings, obviously. You have the spoof already. One way to trap anybody is to take the source of his guilt and trade it over against him to his enemy. We silly asinine white people have pretended that we alone are the human beings, in this world. Then suddenly here is a body of people saying they are the human beings, and out of guilt and Sentimentality, we say, Yeah, Yeah. Do you get that picture? The Indians are human beings. Everybody else were people or sometimes, they called them creatures. There were the human beings and the creatures.

In this movie, we started with the creatures and it is about a young man who passed back and forth between these two cultures, which were separated by a great river. Living in the white culture, he came up against the emptiness of the value system, the sheer hypocrisy relative to the value system. It is never the value system is antiquated, the trouble is, I don't mean moral hypocrisy. I mean ontological hypocrisy. That's the problem. Not the moral value system. These come and go. The sickness is the relationship to the value System. So I don't use hypocrisy in some silly moral sense. I mean it in an ontological sense. The moral System was gone and the religious System without which you do not have a moral system had become a colossal joke and a buffoon on the scene.

One of the most interesting scenes in this part was this handsome gorgeous rather delightful female taking a grownup man and giving him a bath, pretending he was a little boy. This was the Preacher's wife, if you remember and even in the midst of it the preacher waddles into the kitchen where the boy is in the tub with this woman bathing him and making the statement, "He seems awful grownup to me," and walks right on. And I forgot. she was singing hymns while she was bathing him. And then he, two slides later, caught her with the village druggist while he was eating ice cream, down in the cellar, and as he said, "that ended his religious phase."

Then you remember the hero situation where they took Wild Bill Hickock. It is a funny thing, the heroes are gone. Hickock was made into a fop. I don't need to spell that out. He was just a fop. The hero Structure of the society was gone, and when there are no heroes anymore, you haven't got a society. No matter what those look like.

Then he took up with the swindler. Now the swindler was almost portrayed as the most refreshing manifestation of white Society for our present time. This is true. He was an honest to God philosopher. He said such things as "there is risk in any business." He was like a cynical salesman' that was so cynical, nothing mattered and therefore he could be nonchalant toward life. I suppose that is why he was named Meriweather. You remember, they got tarred and feathered, the two of them, and when they were carrying them On the pole, the young man said to the old, swindler, "You are whipped." and he said, "No, I'm not whipped, I'm just tarred and feathered." His cynicism, it just shoved to the bottom. The way he put it, there is just no such thing as any kind of moral order. Don't take that in terms of the ethical. Jump back to the ontological and you have what that hardened old cynic was. But the interesting thing about it was that he was always losing a part of his anatomy. In that Stance' life just slowly chips you away. His ear, his arm, his eye and in the last scene' he has lost his leg, there were not many members to go. Just chipped away. Or it was like, the way he kicked the bottom and it was a putrefied hole -- just one limb dropping off. It was like leprosy, in the last stages. That's the picture of our times, that it presents.

But the hero of the Story whose name was Jack not only lived in this culture, which was just creatures, obviously, he also lived with the human beings -- with the Indians. Oh, my, what Indians. The artist

could have portrayed mighty warriors; he could have portrayed mighty politicians such as Hiawatha; he could have portrayed the ability to stand up powerfully against something. Instead, he portrayed the Indians as Homosexual As in the white people, he too exposes and held them up so that the human beings, the Indians, become impotent. This is demonic. The spoof is that you were sort of attracted to them, even over the white man.

It has nothing to do with morality. I mean on the ontological basis and which you have to work pretty hard to set to that. Affeminent.

And then the next tableau, Little Horse, the Contraire, and here was a mighty warrior, riding on a horse backwards and he did everything backwards. when he came to the camp instead of saying "Hello" he would say "Goodbye". When he was leaving he would say "Hello", when he would walk, he would walk backwards; when he took a bath, he would wash with sand and dry himself off with water. Then throughout the movie, the deep immaturity. Somebody has done him a great favor; therefore, he hated this person until he could do the favor back. This has nothing to do with factuality relative to Indians. Here the Indians were immature, Contraires, and you will come back to see that immaturity.

Then the third tableau was sex, and what a spoof this was. It was the pretext, that is, the ontology was gone out of sex. No longer did it have meaning relative to humanness and this was pictured in the hero, who came about this high, crawling from One buffalo robe to another under which there were females, and after two of them in a matter of fifteen minutes or so, he could barely make it to the third one. But with heroic effort, he finally got under the third buffalo robe and all the time the wife, whose name was Sunshine, egged him On to get under the buffalo robes and when he finishes, she has just come in from 10 minutes ago, all by herself, out in the snow having delivered her own baby, with him in her arms, her first concern was, did you give it to them. He said, yes' and with a smile that looked like the angels themselves, she said, "I knew you were a great man. Now would you like to see your son?" And he said, at that time, he just about became an Indian, rather than a white man.

Now the last tableau, I've saved the old man till last. His name was Old Lodge Skins. He sat in the Lodge smoking a pipe and when he sat around smoking a pipe in the Lodge he would have dreams, he would relate in the most esoteric reflections. I mean they were way out. Then the artist had a way of always bringing mist in. Things got misty when old Lodge Skins was going to work into his esoteric reflections in the smoke. The climax of that scene in the movie was when the old man had moved his teepee out in the corral and was sitting there smoking, and it was misty as all get out and he said, "the ponies are trying to tell me something." A little later, the hero came back and it was misty as all get out and he said, "What are the ponies telling you Grandpa" And he pointed, "Don't you hear?" and at that moment you began to hear the drum and bugle corps. Can you imagine the drum and bugle corps on foot and the calvary marching across the field out of the deep mist, and you heard the horses hooves of the Calvary coming, and the old man just sitting there. He didn't try to get the women out of the most awful massacre you ever saw in your life. It was tremendous and the spoof of the director want out of his way, even to show in those massacres, there were only women and children. The Braves were gone. They left, I don't know where they were. Women were brutally cut down but one baby was shot right in the face in the arms of her mother. Those things were bloody, and the old man sitting out there in the midst, not telling his people at all that this was coming. Sitting on his ass. He didn't even call anyone, and say, you ought to do something, he just sat there. This is the spoof of the Indian utter impotence. Just sitting back. The Indians saw the deep sickness of the whites and just sat there in this movie and did nothing. These were called the human beings. flow you have to go over there and look at the whites again to get the climax of it. There is one further tableau that you have to cut over against, this old chief.

That was George Armstrong Custer, who is the most beautiful picture of the end of the road of the Police and the end of the road of the military. When a society has become utterly rotten to the core, it is then

that they begin to defend that deteriorated culture with brute force. And the culture does not need -- its own values, to become defensive in the form of brute force

So you have the leadership of impotent spirituality on the one side, and decadent defensiveness or brutality on the other. One was humans and one was called by those who called themselves humans, creatures. And the hero moves back and forth. Once again, the spoof was that nobody seemed to mind too deeply that yesterday he was fighting on the one side and today he is fighting on another and tomorrow he will show up fighting the Indians, and that was dramatized by the fact that there was a miracle every time he passed over.

The stage coach, that was a passage. Another great one was in the middle of the war, one of the soldiers was about to kill him and he was running around saying, God bless George Washington, God bless mother, and finally in the struggle, the soldier discovered he was a white man, when he wondered why would an Indian say such things in the middle of a ferocious battle. This is very important.

In the movie, the interesting things about him is that he gave himself to neither culture. The first one drove him to suicide. You remember, when he finally saw it, he went to drink. His next step was in the gutter and this is an interesting twist. And when he saw that sawed off stump, and that was the most creative thing in that culture, he decides to retreat to become a hermit. It was in that situation where he saw the trap where an animal that was caught had gnawed off his whole leg, to get out of the trap and risked suicide just to get out of that trap. You know an animal that does that doesn't help himself but it is almost as if the animal does that for the sake of interior integrity, willing to take his own life. And that's where he moved to commit suicide. The end of the road for anyone who dares to look at our society, in this movie, is suicide, there is no other way out.

But at that time there was another one of those miracles when like the Kings army out parading before Buckingham palace, Custer came down the valley, just happened to be at the place where he was about to jump off the cliff, and life saw new reason to save him. Now in the Indian culture he was very clear that there was no other choice whatsoever. He would be on the side of the Indian, he would rather be the impotent female lost in the smoke of ethereal dreams than to be a part of that cancerous society on the other side of the river. I think I would too. As sick as that is.

Now to bring this quickly to an end. There are two ways out there. One, the frightened one, and the hero of the story defeating Custer single handed, by being on to him, he had the truth. He was on to him. And out did Custer and brought about his defeat, that was the defeat of the white man. And in the midst of the battle, Custer obviously went crazy. You can see how this man used the word LITTLE. The name of the hero was Little Big Man. The name of the homosexual was Little Horse. The name of the battle, and this worked out well was Little Big Horn. And the battle was simply a Big Horn, namely, Custer having gone over the brink into insanity itself. Now, one miracle occurred in that battle, in which this contraire who owed his life to the hero shoots Custer, rushes into the scene, and places a blanket over our hero who is wounded unto death, and in the midst of all this fighting, lifts the hero on his back, carries him out and takes him back across the river with the Indians and places him before Grandpa. Then comes the finale from the Indian side. What a picture. The old man gets on his funeral clothes and all through the movie they ground this ax.

What a good day to die. Effeminate impotent people. Of course, you have to see that any day is a good day to die. For they are consumed with death. Grandpa decides, this is the finest day and starts up the mountain. And our hero, who is still in bad shape with the deadly wounds received from Little Big Horn, helps the old man up the hill. Now Custer goes down in the valley in Hell, you see, the devil is in General Custer. Now, he goes up to the mountain top. The counterculture, they like the mountain top. So they waddle up to the top and Grandpa offers to do battle with the mighty spirit, and he gives this prayer.

Lord, I want to thank you for all my victories, and my defeats, and he goes over to stretch himself out to die. And Grandfather, don't let Little one here go insane. He stretches himself out to die and he rises up in a little bit and says, "Am I still in this world?" Yes, Oh, my, too bad. The magic doesn't always work. You damn well bet you the magic doesn't always work. And then one of the greatest scenes you will ever see in a movie out of nowhere comes a drop and hits Grandpa in the face. Then another drop, then another drop. I have often wondered how the Lord -- urinates but -- right in the face. The Lord let loose.

... whose skin is smooth because they copulate with horses and because the snake woman he is living with insists that she does not copulate with horses he calls her "doesn't like horses", that's her name. Then he adds, "but, of course, she lies." This is the edifying conversation as they are going down the hill. You want to look at the symbolism that had to do with horses and copulating them throughout the movie, if you want to get that. Leaning on the shoulder of the Little Big Man. Now I am just about through. What a day to die. And it didn't even work. He was so impotent, he couldn't die. He could have died up there if he had wanted to. If this is such a great day to die, he could have accomplished it.

The name of the hero is LITTLE Big Nan, as if to say that in our day there are no Big Men. There are not, it's all the way you say this, to hell with being a human being, what the world needs is some BIG Men. Some MEN, I say some MEN. But all we have in the movie is only one "wittle" big man. Even that is refreshing. And he was 121 years old and he knew it the way it was. He knew George Armstrong Custer as he was and he said he knew the Indians as they were. And he did. Secondly, he gave his soul to neither. He saw that insanity was the end of one road, that madness itself is genocide, and he saw that sheer impotence which was the death wish and ended up in willing selfdestruction. He didn't have guts enough to go kill himself but he spread himself and his whole people out before the butchery, just the sickridden no purpose. That was old Lodge Skins.

Next, the Little Big Man was also able to spot the devil. And that the Police, the military system. And by outruthing them destroy them. And then the last scene, the little big man helped him up the hill for his last daydream. And then he very kindly helped him down the hill saying: Yes, grandfather, yes, grandfather.

You would be surprised at how many young people that touched.. He just had to go over and pick them up out of the mess and put them back on his feet until they make a mess of it again, and then they go back in and pick them up and get them on their feet again and then two months later, they mess up again and you go pick them up again. And you don't beat them over the head, as long as they are going to be impotent females, that's the way you treat them. You don't go over and beat at them, you just pick em up.

What this world needs is people who will be BIG BIG men. I don't mean in terms of saying, "HO, HO, HO, I'M a big man." Outside they will never know him. It's something deeper. I mean being the People of God in this world. One thing that was terrible in this movie, there was only one Big Man and he was Little, because I think, I think, I think, he was all alone. I don't think you can be a big big man all alone. In our movement, across this world, you and I ought to be prayer. We're not going to make it alone. We're not going to make it alone. But we've got a chance, I mean, we've got a chance, to serve the Church. Yes, and in serving the Church to serve the world. Right now, oh, boy!

You know, I was going to talk about the summer, and this was only a silly little illustration, to get on stage, but I think I'll stop.