

A Bogotan miasma

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tear apart what the latest esteemed and renowned and revered political or economic or military or ecclesiastic or university-type leader has to tell us about the non-existent possibility of the integration of Latin American Countries.

Rush hour. The people push past in torrents, past vendors hawking umbrellas or trinkets they have stolen or made, past bookstalls, past lighted restaurants playing the rhythmic Colombian music. How different this feel-

ing is from that of the Candelaria, the old quarter, just a few short blocks away. There, after getting out late at night from a show or concert at the Stately European Teatro Colon, one can wander the narrow quiet streets, and the great lighted Plaza Bolivar, 450 years old, lined on all sides with the beautifully dignified architecture of Romanesque churches and government buildings. I am shoved, suffocating, onto a bus, and try to keep my balance as it jerks forward into the night. I'm exhausted. Dead beat.

My lovely amoeba friends rumble in my stomach, and seem to gnaw their way through my back and legs. Sigh. Everyone in Colombia has them: babies are nourished on potatoes, Coca-Cola, and amoebas.

The bus drops me off on Carrera 30. I look up and pause, stunned once more by the view I see every day. There, in the distance, flanked on one side by the darkened fields, and silhouetted on the other by the silent mountains, blaze and twinkle the buildings of the modern city. It is breathtakingly beautiful.

Nathaniel Borenstein

Black and white are gray matters

Were the danger but a moment graver, could we sense so small a change? A recent Grinnell graduate, for whom I retain far more respect than this paragraph will suggest, reserved the phrase 'Cartesian Dualist' as the ultimate epithet with which to deride his opponents in dorm-room debates. To him, it seemed, the philosophical world divided neatly between the bad guys (the Cartesian Dualists) and the good guys (everyone else). The absurdity of such an outlook may be striking when phrased in this way, but the arguments are rather convincing if given a fair hearing (which I have no intention of doing here). Worth noting is that such anti-dualistic dualism is as American a tradition as fighting for the right of oppressed people throughout the world

coma. Ghosts such as myself wander across its body like deeply symbolic dreams, while B&G workers, like anemic red blood cells fed on Hardee's and Coke, slowly clean out the poisons. Wandering the dim and insufficiently chilly halls of ARH, an image from the waning days of fall semester haunted me, challenging me to action unspecified: It was early December, and I was standing in the hallway waiting for my adviser to be free. In a nearby room, a professor whom I hope never to be able to identify was performing the service for which he is paid. The class (perhaps Sociology, English, or Psychology) was discussing a character in a book who had continued to light Sabbath candles weekly despite her forceful repudiation of Judaism as religious superstition. In

American analysts naturally view the woman in question simply: her good side rationally rejects religion as superstition, while her bad side clings to it for the same reason. After centuries of emotional posturing, humanity has finally come to accept what it perceives to be the Mathematical view of the universe: things are either black or white. Unfortunately, it has done so in the century in which Mathematicians discovered multi-valued logic, which permits any number of states of relative truth and falsity. (Multiplicity is not, of course, anything like non-duality. However, the hyphenation itself suggests the dualism to which the very term 'non-duality' is usually subjected, even in the most serious of discussions.)

My dualistic preoccupation involves a more personal factor as well. For five weeks I waited impatiently for a back-ordered contact lens to give me relatively complete color vision for the first time in my life. Pondering the familiar differences between blue and yellow, speculating in ignorant fascination about the unknown nature of red, I was struck by the number of people whose mental world is entirely black and white. Vietnam was first perceived to be a mistake by informed intellectuals who knew that the situation was complex and muddled. We pulled out, however, not because the public saw this truth but because a majority reversed polarities of 'good guys' and 'bad guys' and declared America dead wrong. Such a reversal threshold seems to have been reached in America with the current Iranian-Afghan crises. But this time we are the good guys, the Islamic militants are the bad guys, the Russians are more bad guys, and the Islamic militants are more good guys. Growing American frustrations tempt us to see all as black and white, but to this observer (to whom, until recently, a flashing red light was invisible on a sunny day), the allegedly red cloud over the Persian Gulf seems a dark and dirty gray.

To him, it seemed, the philosophical world

divided neatly between the

bad guys (the Cartesian Dualists)

and the good guys...

to side with us against our adversaries.

I've been notably unable to free my mind of dualism and the reflection thereupon during these past few weeks of snowless Grinnellian tranquility. During winter break the Grinnell campus resembles a student after 72 hours of dexedrine and the final Final. After a brief and unconvincing debauch to celebrate survival, which in Grinnell takes the form of professors grading round-the-clock in their frantic rush to go away, the exhausted campus lapses into a deep and apparently endless

ferreting out her motivations, not one of them stopped to consider cultural conditioning or ethnic identity. Rather the entire class left unchallenged the professor's hypothesis that she had been taught that the candles would "ward off evil spirits."

It would not in any event have availed to point out that Judaism encourages no belief in evil spirits, demons, heaven, or hell. Evil spirits are the close allies of Cartesian Dualists; with spirits, good and evil, one can account for all things without any confusing spectra of alternatives.