The Man With the Golden Arm
A theological reflection on drug prohibition

By Cris Crawford
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> *"I submit that literature is made upon any occasion that a challenge is put to the legal apparatus by a conscience in touch with humanity.... The hard necessity of bringing the judge on the bench down into the dock has been the peculiar responsibility of the writer in all ages of man." —Nelson Algren*

Introduction

The themes and subplots of Nelson Algren's masterpiece *The Man with the Golden Arm* are complex and varied. The setting is Chicago in the years immediately following World War II. The story line revolves loosely around the murder of a drug dealer, but the murder is unpremeditated, not particularly regrettable, and may never have been prosecuted but for an election to which the author only briefly alludes. There is a bad marriage, a sad love affair, a subculture of illegal gambling and petty crime, a criminal justice system, and alcoholism, all of which are superbly depicted with an uncanny insight into the psychological distortions that lay a person low. Every character has a different sad story. One by one they succumb to their individual tragic fates. Their attempts at survival are uniformly either futile or directly counterproductive.

Ultimately, the story is about the struggle of a card dealer named Francis Majcinek, known as Frankie Machine, to overcome a morphine addiction acquired during the war. The book exposes us to the lives of the down and out, the condemned members of society whom solid citizens rarely encounter, and never as human beings with souls. The reader is confronted with the revolting behavior of genuinely despicable people with few if any redeeming qualities. Algren's raw depiction of the human condition forces us to confront images of our brothers and sisters in a way that generates a sort of understanding, rather than sympathy, which precludes idealization. Writer Kurt Vonnegut, who was Algren's friend, remarks:

> He broke new ground by depicting persons said to be dehumanized by poverty and ignorance and injustice as being *genuinely* dehumanized, and dehumanized quite *permanently*. Contrast, if you will, the poor people in this book with those in the works of social reformers like Charles Dickens and George Bernard Shaw, and particularly with those in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, with their very promising wit and resourcefulness and courage. Reporting on what he saw of dehumanized Americans with his own eyes day after day, year after year, Algren said in effect, "Hey—an awful lot of these people your hearts are bleeding for are really mean and stupid. That's just a fact. Did you know that?"

> And why didn't he soften his stories, as most writers would have, with characters with a little wisdom and power who did all they could to help the dehumanized? His penchant for truth again shoved him in the direction of unpopularity. Altruists in his experience were about as common as unicorns, and especially in Chicago....
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> So—was there anything he expected to accomplish with so much dismaying truthfulness? ...As I understand him, he would be satisfied were we to agree with him that persons unlucky and poor and not very bright are to be respected for surviving, although they often have no choice but to do so in ways unattractive and blameworthy to those who are a lot better off. (p. 370)

As the story opens, Frankie and his pal Sparrow have been picked up for running an illegal poker game. Frankie is the dealer and Sparrow is the steerer, a sort of doorman who decides who is eligible to play. They both work for some kind of crook who is responsible for paying the cop on the beat to allow the game to continue. When their boss is late with the payment, Frankie and Sparrow are arrested, jailed overnight and let go the next day. While in jail Frankie has a dream, and we start to understand that he was addicted to morphine during World War II while recovering from a serious injury.

Next we are introduced to Frankie's wife Sophie, and we learn of the accident that changed their relationship. The day the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, he had a car accident after drinking "A-bombs" at the local bar, consisting of triple whiskey shots rather than doubles. His wife Sophie was hurt, though at the hospital it was said to be shock and that she had no injuries. Two weeks later she claimed her legs had gone numb, and she started using a wheelchair. But several situations lead us to think this is a psychological injury, if not fraudulent (at least at first). The doctor she sees first does not believe she has a physical problem, and treats her as a psychiatric patient. Then we learn that one night she was walking up the stairs by herself until she realized a neighbor was watching her, at which point she fell to the floor. Finally we are told over and over again that this accident has cemented her marriage to Frankie. He will never leave her now because of the guilt he feels about crippling her.

After we are introduced to Sophie and told about the accident, we follow Frankie as he goes to get a fix, a shot of morphine. Algren takes us through the process in poetic detail while at the same time giving us a feeling for both his relationship with the "Fixer" and the progression of his addiction. His price for a small fix every few days has gone from a dollar to two and half dollars, and the Fixer sees a day in the future when he will be spending hundreds of dollars at a time to feed his habit. Now, and throughout the story, we hear of the personification of Frankie's addiction, an army private named McGantic.

> He had met him before, that certain down-at-heel vet growing stooped from carrying a thirty-five-pound monkey on his back. Frankie remembered that face, ravaged by love of its own suffering

> as by some endless all-night orgy. A face forged out of his own wound fever in a windy ward tent on the narrow Meuse. He had met Private McGantic before: both had served their country well.
>
> This was the fellow who looked somehow a little like everyone else in the world and was more real to a junkie than any real man could ever be. The projected image of one's own pain when that pain has become too great to be borne. The image of one hooked so hopelessly on morphine that there would be no getting the monkey off without another's help. There are so few ways to help old sad frayed and weary West Side junkies.
>
> Frankie felt no pity for himself, yet felt compassion for this McGantic. he worried, as the sickness rose in himself, about what in God's name McGantic would do tomorrow when the money and the morphine both give out. Where then, in that terrible hour, would Private M. find the strength to carry the monkey through one more endless day? (57)

We see Frankie's addiction as both the result of personal weakness and deterministic forces beyond his control. Every fix is his last fix. Once the painful symptoms of withdrawal abate, he thinks he will never need another fix. But we also see the origins of the addiction as an uninvited consequence of the war and a way of tolerating his bleak marriage. We see from the beginning, through Sparrow's bewilderment, that the only people who know Frankie has a problem are Frankie himself, the dealer, and the repulsive Blind Pig, who becomes the dealer after Frankie kills "Fixer" in a fit of rage. He wants to kick the habit, and he manages to do so twice – once when he is jailed for six months after being caught shoplifting with Sparrow, and again at the end of the story, when he is out of work and being chased by the law.

Society at large has two responses for dealing with Frankie's habit. The first is criminalization, which we see does nothing to stop him from getting his fix. Even when he is on the run, he knows a place he can go where the junkies wait in public to meet their dealers. Once or twice in the book, an allusion is made to hospitalization, but this is presented as a remote possibility in Frankie's case. Other than that, there is cold turkey withdrawal on one's own, in prison, or as we finally see in Frankie's last attempt to get clean, hiding from the law in the apartment of his old girlfriend Molly, with whom he has fallen in love.

Frankie's addiction to morphine is evil any way you look at it. It diminishes him as a person and divides him from the people who care for him. If he wishes to stop taking morphine, he has to endure many days of agonizing pain that resolve into days of the memory of that pain along with the memory of the relief provided by the narcotic. It is just too much to bear. Every episode of withdrawal followed by another fix sets him back to a false feeling of starting over, broke and dreaming of an impossible future where he will play the drums in a big band, only to fade in a few days when the cycle will repeat. Meanwhile even his job dealing cards begins to suffer from his deteriorating physical condition. Nobody can help him because nobody knows. Near the end of the story we hear that Sophie's friend Vi has joined a

temperance organization and gotten herself and the alcoholic dog Rumdum sober, but there is no such organization for Frankie. His habit is a crime as well as a social stigma, though it is impossible to tell how much weight either factor has.

Ethical questions

The questions that will be addressed in this paper are the following. Given that in many cases, alcohol and drug abuse is clearly a social ill, is it imperative that Christians or others in our society be concerned with helping alcoholics and drug addicts? What is one person's responsibility to help another person? What is one person's responsibility to work towards broader social change? And is there a justification for approaching the problem through the legal prohibition of drugs?

A quote that is questionably attributed to Howard Thurman can be found all over the internet: "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive." (The closest I could come to an actual citation was that John Eldredge, author of *Wild at Heart*, cited this quote from another book, and attributed it to the unnamed spiritual advisor of the second author, Gil Bailie.) The sentiment expressed in this quote is worth consideration. If our ideal of the good is a world of happy, productive people (or something like that), why not just *be* a happy, productive person? People tend to learn from example, after all.

Rather than minding the business of others, a person might achieve the greatest good by simply doing what they love. Perhaps the desire to help addicts is fueled by a sense of grandiosity or an unconscious feeling of inadequacy in the personal sphere. A proper humility could lead to a life that consists of activities that nurture and spread happiness first and foremost in one's own person, and then among one's friends, family and neighbors if time and resources allow.

My church's social action committee agenda for this month consists of seven ongoing projects and five new proposals, ranging from direct provision of housing the homeless in a multi-church cooperative (along with social services to help them find a home) to initiatives to combat anthropogenic global warming. In the past year, there have been about a dozen other social action projects apart from these. Do the members of our congregation have an obligation to participate to some degree in all of these causes? Some of them? Any of them?

A more realistic approach is that some people are called to social action and some are not. It is a matter of conscience, and in some cases the different strands of motivation cannot be teased apart. The call to social action may be a call to be healed in disguise. Delusions of grandeur may dissipate in the process of serving dinner at the Salvation Army. The twelfth step

of the spiritual program of Alcoholics Anonymous states, "Having undergone a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." The proselytizing activity mentioned in this step is often explained to be self-interested. What one alcoholic has to offer another is sometimes valuable, but often turns out to be of no consequence. Helping others keeps one sober, and is often undertaken for exactly that reason.

(It deserves more than a footnote to remark here that charitable feelings on the part of non-alcoholics have almost nothing to do with the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is a group founded and maintained by the down-and-out for the down-and-out.)

There are people for whom the conditions of poverty and deprivation present a clear moral imperative to act. Howard Thurman addresses this in his lecture "Mysticism and Social Change." For Thurman, mysticism means direct perception of God's presence. He explains how it leads to ethical behavior.

> In his act of worship the mystic achieves a transcending unity. His self-centeredness is resolved in a higher synthesis. God possesses him. Something new enters the picture, it is a new value judgment. Now things are not ethical or unethical merely because they aid or take away from his achieving individuality but because they are now viewed as ways that lead to the mount of vision or away from the mount of vision. The meaning of life is for him summarized in the vision of the good which he has thoroughly experienced. The vision makes mandatory that he *be* good so as to stand ever in immediate candidacy for the reception of God. (p. 112)

After examining the personal consequences of the mystical experience, Thurman turns to the question of what sort of service the mystic is obligated to render to humanity. He makes a distinction between service offered in humility and service offered from a sense of patronage, that is, with an exaggerated sense of self worth and an expectation of gratitude. An immediate experience of God's presence fosters a sense of humility. It leads the individual to perform good works without expectation of thanks. "The highest mystics insist that the essence of right acting is that it should be performed without regard to merit, to reward or punishment. Only the rare spirit achieves this as a rule of life but it is to be noted that whenever men love each other, action for the beloved takes on this quality of disinterestedness." (116)

Thurman's analysis of the connection between the mystical experience of God and a concern for humanity illustrates one way in which a genuine ethical imperative may arise. However the urge to make things right in the world is not found exclusively in Christian mysticism. Christian mysticism may provide a context which fosters this drive or renders it intelligible and justifiable, but it can be identified in other people as well. There are people of all sorts who want to make the world a better place and who can identify it as some sort of drive or moral

imperative. The point is that this sort of humanitarian motivation does not have to be assumed to be universal. We don't need everybody picking up everybody else out of the gutter in order for society to thrive.

So question "should one help the down-and-out?" resolves into two questions. For those whose conscience impels them to want to help the down-and-out, the question becomes, "What can I do to help?" The second question relates to the rest of the world, at least those with the means to help. Should they help anyway? If they do not want to, should they be exhorted by persuasion or otherwise forced to help those who have been identified as needing help? The wisdom questionably attributed to Thurman provides a happier scenario. "Do what makes you come alive. The world needs people who have come alive." This is true liberality, the position that what is good arises in the soul of the individual, and that the form in which goodness becomes manifest cannot be dictated by another human being.

Drug prohibition

The question now becomes, given the plight of the down-and-out, what can a person do to make things better? In the case of drugs and alcohol, prohibition has seemed like an obvious choice. Perhaps the force of law can be used to prevent people from taking harmful drugs, for their own good and for the good of society. This last clause provides a stronger justification for the use of force. There are activities and enjoinders that would improve life for many people, which are not generally considered cause for legislation, such as getting enough sleep or avoiding glazed donuts. A bad donut habit can be just as deadly for some people (for example, people with diabetes) as drugs are for others. But drug addicts don't just harm themselves, they harm others, sometimes grievously.

However in Frankie's case, which is extremely realistic (Algren was acquainted with junkies and lived in the neighborhood he described), we see that criminalization had a negligible effect. He managed to kick the habit in prison, but he started using again shortly after he was released. He killed a man, but an argument can be made that such crimes are the result of drug prohibition, rather than the result of drug use itself.

In his book *Drug War Crimes*, former Boston University economics professor Jeffrey Miron gives evidence that prohibition may have a slight effect of curbing use, though this data is hard to identify. Alcohol use requires a careful analysis of deaths by cirrhosis of the liver, which requires an understanding of the disease. There is some evidence that the cirrhosis death rate had begun to drop prior to Federal Alcohol prohibition, and arguments that this was due to earlier state prohibition laws are weak (Miron, Chapter 3: The Effect of Drug Prohibition on Drug Consumption: Evidence from Alcohol Prohibition). However it must be acknowledge that prohibition may have an effect on curbing

drug use. Miron says, "prohibition plausibly reduces drug consumption relative to what would occur under laissez-faire, but the magnitude of this reduction is not necessarily large." (Miron, p. 11) A recent snapshot of problematic substance use in the United States can be found in Kaplan and Sadock's *Synopsis of Psychiatry*, a textbook for Medical Students. "In 1996, 6.1 percent of the population age 12 years or older were current illicit drug users (used an illegal drug in the previous month). Alcohol and nicotine (cigarettes) are the most commonly used substances, but marijuana, hashish, and cocaine are also commonly used. In general, however, for all four of these substances—alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, and cocaine—there has been a gradual but consistent decrease in use from a high around 1980 to 1992. Since 1993, however, substance abuse has been increasing among children and adolescents under age 18." (p. 378)

This snapshot is based on data up to 1995. More recent data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse can be found on the Office of Applied Studies web site of US Department of Health and Human Services. (http://www.oas.samhsa.gov) For example, an article in the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration News* reports data from 2004 that gives a lifetime prevalence for illicit drug use as 7.9 percent of the population age 12 years or older (higher), but shows a decline in illicit drug use among children and adolescents. (http://www.samhsa.gov/samhsa_news/VolumeXIII_5/article6.htm, accessed 4/23/09)

One argument in favor of drug prohibition is that it reduces the harm done to persons other than the addict. By forcing people to not use drugs, the crime associated with drug use will also diminish. However the evidence and the economic analysis of prohibition strongly counter this claim. In fact drug prohibition increases violence. According to Miron, "the evidence provides no indication that prohibition reduces violence; in fact, enforcement is consistently associated with higher rates of violence." (p. 43) The economic analysis of prohibition shows that if drug use is criminalized, the drug trade continues in a black market. The fundamental similarity between a black market and a legal market are that buyers and sellers cooperatively exchange money for goods. The fundamental difference is that the buyers and sellers in a black market do not have recourse to normal channels of contract law. If I pay someone to do work on my house, for example, I write them a check for partial payment to secure the contract. I use a check so that I have a record of the payment. If, for some reason, they do not do the work, I can take them to small claims court. This is a common occurrence and prevents fraud in a well-functioning system. If the transaction is illegal, however, I will use cash to *prevent* there being any record of payment, and if something goes wrong with the transaction, my only recourse is to take police action (force) into my own hands.

A second consequence of drug prohibition is that the risk involved in transporting drugs leads to more concentrated forms of drugs being preferred, because smaller amounts of substances can be transported more easily. So the prohibited drugs become more dangerous. The concentrated drugs are injected rather than eaten or smoked, thereby increasing the incidence of transmission of blood-borne disease.

One reason people support prohibition is to combat the problem of children taking drugs. But prohibition increases the involvement of children in the drug trade. Because children are not punished in the same way as adults, drug dealers prefer using children to conduct drug transactions. Children then become tempting targets for robbery because they are carrying so much cash, and they acquire handguns to defend themselves.

These analyses are economic. They show with evidence and theory how prohibition causes certain evils. The economic question then becomes one of balancing the benefits of prohibition against the harm. However there are other consequences of prohibition that are less easy to analyze, but still rather obvious. The first is the phenomenon of a racial divide in drug law enforcement. While drug use as a percentage of population is constant across all racial categories, a larger proportion of persons belonging to racial minorities are arrested for drug use than whites. Even larger percentages of minorities are convicted and incarcerated. Drug use is a federal crime, so those convicted of drug use or trafficking cannot vote, and usually have trouble finding work once they are released from prison. So the costs borne by society are disproportionately borne by minorities.

Theological considerations

In 2006, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution calling for the prohibition of alcohol as one of its planks (see Appendix A). Southern Baptists were urged, among other things, "to take an active role in supporting legislation that is intended to curb alcohol use in our communities and nation." The resolution itself does not give a theological rationale or justification for church members involvement in the legislative process. Of course that does not mean that there is no such rationale, but it is not evident from the resolution. The reasons given for opposing alcohol use are that alcohol leads to physical, mental and emotional damage, injuries and death, the breakup of families and homes, and the possibility of addiction or use of other kinds of drugs. Aside from a quotation from Proverbs, these arguments are not theological per se. They could be made by a secular opponent of alcohol use. And as I have indicated, the best realistic outcome for reducing drug use is relatively small, while the harms caused by drug prohibition are starkly real and significant.

John Howard Yoder

In *The Christian Witness to the State*, John Howard Yoder outlines a theological basis for the relationship between church and state, that might provide grounds for understanding how a Christian could ask the state to prohibit vice. His analysis not only puts the relationship between the church and the State on solid biblical grounds, it fully acknowledges that the nature of the State is force. Whether or not compassion and conscience are involved in the process of creating laws or the behavior of government officials, the fundamental nature of the State is that its laws are backed by force, or the Sword, as Yoder calls it. Clearly prohibition is a situation in which the State arrests and punishes criminals. However, even such a seemingly altruistic process as distributing tax money to deserving causes, such as battered women and homeless people, is based on force. People who refuse to pay taxes for any reason may be arrested, tried and jailed, though this is rare. More often the State simply garnishes their wages or confiscates their property.

Yoder presents two theoretical understanding of the state, based on a reading of Romans 13. The first is the one he calls *positivistic* which holds that "whatever state now exists in any given time and place is the state which god desires to exist then and there." (Yoder, 74) Therefore the will of the State is the will of God. He ascribes this extreme formulation to some Lutheran traditions. Another point of view is that what Romans 13 contains is an outline for how a legitimate state should function. One that does not so function is not legitimate and should not be obeyed on principle, though it may be obeyed due to pragmatic considerations.

A third alternative questions whether Paul was actually laying down a definition of a state at all. "Paul was simply arguing that the Christians in Rome should not rebel even against a government which threatened to mistreat them. They could be confident that God was using the powers in and behind the state within His providential purpose." (75) This analysis provides for an understanding of two types of state which call for two different responses from a Christian. In the first case, a righteous state can be seen to be an instrument of order in society. Then the duty of the Christian is to submit to the dictates of the state. In the second case, the state is rebellious against the law of god, and the responsibility of the church is to deny its right to exist. This point of view reconciles the fallen state described as the beast in Revelation 13; however Yoder argues that this interpretation misses the point of Revelation 13. He says the meaning of this passage is to be found in the relationship between the state and the spokesmen of the church who idolize the state. Thus rebellion has no biblical warrant.

One of Yoder's main points is that a Christian community should never attempt to advise the state to implement any moral policy that they have failed to implement in their own community. Narrowly, this can be interpreted as refusing to lobby for

prohibition when the congregation has not managed to abstain from drugs or alcohol.

Yoder does not directly address the matter of prohibition, but the example he gives for social welfare indicates one approach that might be taken. The question is not one of which institutions are justified or desirable, but under what conditions can an economic outcome be justifiably backed by violence, or the state as sword. According to Yoder, "Intervention is most justified where the delinquency it aims to prevent or correct is the most directly harmful. When the state forces the Amish to send their children to school or accept social security, we cannot adequately evaluate this by making religious liberty and absolute, nor by discussing whether it would be good for everyone to have a certain amount of education and a certain retirement income; the question is how much harm will come to society if these laws are not thus violently and intransigently enforced." (58)

Yoder makes it clear that he is not discussing any form of theory of the state. He brings in another category of state function: that of providing a service which does not require the forcible participation of the citizenry. Examples are the Post Office, universities, etc. However these state institutions can also involve waste, fraud, impersonality and the like which "would lead us to prefer keeping some voluntary forms of community under other leadership." (59) Yoder is quick to point out that this does not imply the espousal of libertarianism. The questions to consider are whether other values are sacrificed for the sake of such institutions, and to what degree are such institutions identified with the police arm of the state, such that dissent is the same as political rebellion. He says, "The distinction between policing evils and coordinating social cooperation is not a theoretically clear one, but it becomes clear each time we ask how the sanctions of the sword are involved." (59)

According to this view of the relationship between church and state, there is a justification for asking the state to prohibit drug use. If the state is seen as a stabilizing factor in its best incarnation, easing the life of people on earth while we progress towards the reign of God, then the Christian witness is justified in advising it to take a role in prohibiting the use of drugs. However because it can be seen that prohibition causes particular evils to flourish, the values that are sacrificed are enormous, and the Christian must face this fact and ask whether it is worth it, rather than hide his or her head in the sand and pretend that the state knows what it is doing.

"We are all members of one another."

The controversy about state prohibition of drugs as a practical effect conceals a different kind of evil, the alienation of human beings from one another.

The Man with the Golden Arm opens in the station-house, with a description of police captain Bednar. "The city had filled him with the guilt of others; he was numbed by his charge sheet's accusations. For twenty years, upon the same scarred desk, he had been recording larceny and arson, sodomy and simony, boosting, hijacking and shootings in sudden affray: blackmail and terrorism, incest and pauperism, embezzlement and horse theft, tampering and procuring, abduction and quackery, adultery and mackery. Till the finger of guilt, pointing so sternly for so long across the query-room blotter, had grown bored with it all at last and turned, capriciously, to touch the fibers of the dark gray muscle behind the captain's light gray eyes. So that though by daylight he remained the pursuer there had come nights, this windless first week of December, when he had dreamed he was being pursued." (p. 5)

Later on in the story, his guilt attaches itself to a phrase that he doesn't quite understand.

> "He dismissed the cook for some gaunt wreck in a smudged clerical collar. "Are you a preacher?" The captain sounded puzzled.
>
> "I've been defrocked."
>
> "You still preach pretty good when it comes to cashing phony checks. What were you defrocked for?"
>
> "Because I believe we are all members of one another."
>
> That one stopped the captain cold. He studied the wreck as if suddenly so uncertain of himself that he was afraid to ask him what he had meant by that. "I don't get it," he acknowledged at last, and passed on, with greater confidence, to a little heroin-head batting his eyes and coughing the little dry addict's cough politely into his palm." (p. 196)

Frankie's pal Sparrow witnessed Frankie's murder of the drug dealer. In a fit of rage, Frankie broke his neck as the dealer stooped to pick up a "lucky" silver dollar. They dragged his body behind some trash, where it was found a few days later. Frankie was immediately suspected of the murder, and Sparrow was known to be a witness, but nothing was done until the murder was used to sling mud during a political campaign. Then Sparrow was set up and arrested in a poignant scene. Frankie was no longer his friend, because he had taken the rap for Sparrow in the shoplifting incident. He was no longer able to work the door for the poker game, so he agreed to take a fix to a junkie for the new dealer, and the junkie was Frankie himself. But it was a setup to arrest Sparrow and get him to testify against Frankie in the murder case. He refuses to do so for a month, but he becomes more and more afraid of the prison sentence with which he is threatened for drug dealing, and finally he agrees to testify against Frankie. Bednar feels particularly bad at this point.

> Alone below the glare lamp in the abandoned query room, stifled by a ravaging guilt, he knew now those whom he had denied, those beyond the wall, had all along been members of himself. Theirs had

> been the common humanity, the common weakness and the common failure which was all that now could offer fresh hope to his heart.
>
> Yet he had betrayed them for so long he could not go to them for redemption. He was unworthy of the lowliest—and there was no court to try any captain for doing his simple duty. No place was provided, by church or state, where such a captain might atone for everything he had committed in his heart. No judge had been appointed to pass sentence upon such a captain. He had been left to judge himself.
>
> All debts had to be paid. Yet for his own there was no currency. All errors must ultimately be punished. Yet for his own, that of saving himself at the cost of others less cunning than himself, the punishment must be simply this: more lost, more fallen and more alone than any man at all. (294)

Bednar is faced with the existential realization that the artificial difference between the people who sit opposite him at his desk and himself has left him alone and unredeemable. For those of us who have managed to function well in society, Bednar is the one character with whom we can identify. He has a job, he is righteous and he is doing his best. But he sees with clarity that the division between himself and the humanity with which he has to deal on a daily basis is artificial.

This is what the criminalization of deviant behavior does. It allows those of us who have all the skills and circumstances to function in society to marginalize and sequester those who do not. Algren's genius was that he was able to stop the reader in his tracks, turn him around and bring him face to face with the actual, real humanity of the people we often despise in spite of our humanitarian rhetoric. Support for drug prohibition builds a barrier of denial and distance between the functional and the dysfunctional. The cost to the dysfunctional is enormous and immediate, but the cost to the rest of us is a spiritual disconnectedness that renders us less human than we ought to be.

Appendix A

The Southern Baptist Convention Resolution of 2006 on Alcohol Use in America.

WHEREAS, Years of research confirm biblical warnings that alcohol use leads to physical, mental, and emotional damage (e.g., Proverbs 23:29-35)[*]; and

WHEREAS, Alcohol use has led to countless injuries and deaths on our nation's highways; and

WHEREAS, The breakup of families and homes can be directly and indirectly attributed to alcohol use by one or more members of a family; and

WHEREAS, The use of alcohol as a recreational beverage has been shown to lead individuals down a path of addiction to alcohol and toward the use of other kinds of drugs, both legal and illegal; and

WHEREAS, There are some religious leaders who are now advocating the consumption of alcoholic beverages based on a misinterpretation of the doctrine of "our freedom in Christ"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, June 13-14, 2006, express our total opposition to the manufacturing, advertising, distributing, and consuming of alcoholic beverages; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge that no one be elected to serve as a trustee or member of any entity or committee of the Southern Baptist Convention that is a user of alcoholic beverages.

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptists to take an active role in supporting legislation that is intended to curb alcohol use in our communities and nation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptists to be actively involved in educating students and adults concerning the destructive nature of alcoholic beverages; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we commend organizations and ministries that treat alcohol-related problems from a biblical perspective and promote abstinence and encourage local churches to begin and/or support such biblically-based ministries.

*Proverbs 23:29-35 (NRSV)

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?
Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines.
Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.
At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.
Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things.
You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.
"They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt. They beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."

Appendix B

Romans 13 (NRSV) Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; 4 for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. 6 For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is due them--taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. 8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. 11 Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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