

Bale

I was intoxicated by angst and fear of my youth, though. I read and I learned from experience. Somehow my outer-self wasn't aligned with my inner-self. Discipline. What is it? Well, as a child even I knew it wasn't something that was beat into you; or beat out of you, as in to beat the devil out of them. But on one hand there is justice, on the other hand there is understanding. I felt like a child that I received neither. Rather, that was the reason now for my stubborn defiance. I was accused of being a "rebel without a cause" when I was a teenager, and I thought that this may be the case, but it wasn't so. My fears were abundant, and corporal punishment was the culprit. And what harm could a little spanking or paddling do to a child, anyway? And what am I getting at with this line of thought? I say simply this: I see corporal punishment or paddling as a trauma of my past; it was pure torture, and I relate it with God and religion, as God is that disciplinarian of my youth. And I relate my old science teacher, Rod Stricter, to God. Therefore, I see Mr. Stricter as the authoritarian, and as such relate him to God as a father figure and a persecutor. Being such, I have found that any memory of him, any trigger that is... -anything related to physical discipline, as it may be called, -or perhaps physical abuse? -anything related to these triggers of childhood memories I have tried to suppress with the elixir. And in the past, I tried to suppress my traumatic childhood memories with a variety of drugs and alcohol. "Break your jaw to say yes sir?" That's the phrase old Mr. Stricter uttered many times. That's how we treat a child in the South.

I met a lady once, whom I was supposedly getting into a business deal with to open a Christian bookstore. I was speaking to her about something that had to do with growing up and the idea that we can't help how we were raised; that even though we are rational adults, our behaviors are often dictated by how we were raised. And upon telling her that I did something because I was taught that way as an atheist and she said I was an adult now and was free to choose differently. Well, for one thing I wasn't raised to be an atheist: I was raised to believe how I wanted to believe. I was free to choose differently, but this lady was merely saying: Why don't I choose to believe the way I do? I was raised to think for myself and that is what I intend to do here. Papa was on the threshold of the dark and deep of poverty and the emotional pain of loss of control. He saw that he couldn't continue down a particular path and chose another direction. What did he have that I didn't? He had his mental health. And that is a grand thing, to have one's mental capacities. Granny, on the other hand, was to lose her mental faculties during her life. And even she succumbed to the equivalent of what I term elixir. She became addicted or chemically dependent on the drug Benzo. I too have been dependent on Benzo.

But the thing is, I believe I was made to need the elixir. I was subjugated by the likes of tyrants like Mr. Stricter, and the murderous idea of being a humiliated and degraded human being that is dependent on an elixir to socialize and grow began to appeal to me at a young age. I was traumatized at the age of 6, though. And I will briefly discuss this and then delve into my childhood to account for some of the madness that plagues me as an adult.

Misanthropic old Mr. Stricter, he should be dragged out in the street and flogged. But violence doesn't serve a purpose here; in fact, it is violence, the physical violence of abuse that we need to escape and eradicate in American society. No child ever learned anything from the hickory stick except fear and how to get what they want in life; they can use physical force and violence to attain it. In a way, I'm not even here to argue that corporal punishment is either effective or ineffective: I know that it is nothing but harmful in my own case, and so why should it be any different to any other child. There is one factor that makes it certainly detrimental to a person such as I, and that is that Mr. Stricter was a godly man, religious or superstitious at least. He taught that science says that the universe was created with the Big Bang and that humans came to exist through evolution while at the same time adding that some people believe that God created the world in six days and rested on a seventh. That was science to him, and if you didn't like it and didn't reply to his curt and coarse expressions of "You understand?" and "Break your jaw to say yes, sir!" -well if didn't reply "Yes, sir," you were made to walk out into the hall, told to wait there while he got a witness, and while you're waiting the door to the classroom was left open, and all the other children waited and watched and then when Mr. Stricter and the witness came back, chuckling often, you were instructed to bend over and touch your toes, and he tapped your bottom a little to "warm it up" as I have said; and then he came swung the paddle back, held it there for a moment and with all the force he could muster he swung the board, which was about an inch and a half thick, six inches wide and about three feet long, -he came down with the force and violence of his imagined God that he was dealing out right justice for our wrongs; and then after the smack and whack of the first lick he waited and again tapped and warm up his paddle in a sexual manner on the child's buttocks; he waited in order to let the pain sink in so that you felt the severe punishment even more severe than if he swatted you quickly and the pain of the first swat numbed the blows of the next two, for you were struck three times with the paddle; as if this pain instilled any learning other than sheer fear into a child.

Mr. Rod Stricter, on the other hand, was out to execute pious justice and physical and mental abuse upon an innocent and mentally ill child in my case. And so many other teachers exerted their will onto a child. But did this discipline instill doubt? Yes, it did, indeed! It presented a logical fallacy to my teenage mind: Children were to be cherished, while at the same time abused. An educator could physically hit a child! Corporal punishment violates one's body sexually, therefore Rod Stricter could be mistaken for a pederast in my book.

Before class began in Mrs. Victory's English class, I was pushing and shoving, playing with a classmate Peculiar. The bell rang and Mrs. Victory came in and saw us and ordered us out in the hall. She went and got Ms. Cotton to witness the beating. She instructed Peculiar to touch his toes and quickly gave him two hard swats of the paddle. Then she told him to go back into the room, and then she told me to touch my toes, and I did. The paddle came down hard against my buttocks two times and I don't think I've ever felt more humiliated and degraded by another human being. I was told to go back into the classroom, and she stayed out in the hall and spoke with Mrs. Cotton. I told myself that I would never be paddled again. And I never was.

I know now that I wasn't a coward. I was just a scared little boy, but I'm grown now. And this is my reckoning. I am here to tell you that Mr. Stricter was a coward. And that he didn't beat the devil out of any of his schoolchildren. No. He instilled the devils into them: He instilled fear into them. Though, now I think I believe there is no God out of reason and logic, not out of rebellion. But my life was scornful. God is just your conscience, according to my Mom. And I think she is right. The idea of God is either so grand to be infeasible or the idea of God is so simple to be futile. God is what is good and right. And that leaves everything else and Mr. Rod Stricter and his bureaucracy of militant educators to the Devil. There must have been something that old Mr. Stricter had seen in science that he couldn't reconcile with his religion.

I went to school one day and I was in Geography class with Mr. Fudge. We were going over chapter 4 and the secretary called him over the intercom to come to the principal's office. He told us to keep reading over chapter 4 and we would discuss it when he got back. Fix sat behind me in the class and he and I talked a little, all the kids in the class spoke amongst themselves by the time Mr. Fudge returned. Mr. Fudge wouldn't tolerate the disorder and said that there would be a pop quiz over chapter 4 since no one had read it. I didn't understand and asked why we were going to have a pop quiz over something no one had read? Mr. Fudge was angered and told me to step out into the hall. I said no and refused. He reached down and opened his desk drawer and put his hand on the paddle. As if putting his hand on the Bible. He told me to step into the hall. I merely laughed, and he turned red and walked out of the room. He didn't come back. The bell rang and class dismissed itself. The next morning, I was called to the principal's office and was dismissed permanently from school. I felt relieved. It seemed that the madness was over. But the fear was instilled within me.

I relive the experiences often still at night