

FOREWORD

Nobody knows where G. Miller is: not his wife, not his daughter, not his students, certainly not his colleagues, and if he is in his usual state of mind, not even himself, I'm afraid. I imagine him holed up at some out-of-the-way motel that has Sports Channel and Music Television, his room littered with *National Enquirers* and seven-ounce Hershey bar wrappers.

Six months ago, Miller faxed me a fat unwieldy manuscript (over one thousand pages) and half enjoined and half entreated me to edit it and find someone to publish it. This manuscript has been a royal pain in the neck for me. For example, many of the faxed pages are too light to read. Also, at inopportune moments pages are absent (did he forget or was it the fax machine?—I don't know). And to make matters worse, some of the pages are not numbered. The manuscript is unusual in another way as well: while some pages are dense with scrawling, others have only one or two large words on words on them, usually in thick black magic marker. What am I left with here? Something akin to the Dead Sea Scrolls, fractured fragments that will have to be pieced together with care and precision. I suppose I'm the only one he trusts to sort through and synthesize the text and make it coherent. He always called me his best student and one of the few who appreciated his philosophical offerings. My loyalties for G. Miller do run deep, but this represents an encroachment on my graduate school studies and my personal life in general.

Since he is such a strange man and this is such a strange text introductions are in order. I should, I suppose, introduce G. Miller to the philosophical community, though I doubt he would not care much to be introduced to it, nor they to him. G. Miller is a modern-day Diogenes, a Cynic in the classical sense of the term. The first course I ever had with him I walked in late on the first day only to find the whole class flipping him off, in unison, as if in some kind of mock religious ceremony. It was a ritual repeated in every class I ever took with him. This ritual, he explained, should remind us that we should have no immediate and facile respect for the views of authorities until we have understood them and their views (he never had much respect for respect, as far I could tell). G. Miller abhors authority, believe me, and won't back down from anybody. He urged his students to bow only to intellectual and emotional

insight and nothing else. In one heated debate I remember him saying that even if God appeared in that moment he would tell His, Her, or Its Majesty to take a seat and raise a hand just like everyone else.

By what I just said you can see that G. Miller is an overly theatrical romantic, or if you don't like this sort of thing, you would probably call him a nut. Of all the classes I took with him, I remember two incidents in particular. Once, when his business ethics class showed little concern for the environment, he picked up a trash can and heaved its contents at some frightened students, screeching: "You want to live in an environment that you shit and piss in, fine here you go." Another time, during a public lecture before the whole university, Miller tried to persuade a young African-American man that the two had similar feelings about oppression. After a long interchange, in which the two discussants compared oppression (with Miller drawing lopsided pyramids on the blackboard to describe his people's oppression), Miller ended the discussion by taking a pencil and stabbing himself with it to demonstrate that he too felt and understood the value of pain. The subsequent blood poisoning did nothing to change his opponent's argument, but it did (1) induce university officials to issue a five-page memo to students concerning the proper use of writing implements, (2) force the state legislature to enact stiffer penalties for the concealment of pens, pencils and magic markers over one inch in length, and (3) inspire several songs, including a number one country hit.

This book—how would I describe it? The philosophical world will look down upon it, as G. Miller's colleagues have looked down upon him. To them he is a clown and has nothing to say. He always reminded his class that sometimes clowns know more than so-called sages and inveterately pointed to the fool in *King Lear* to make his point. His views of his colleagues, which he was not above shrieking, especially after the caffeine kicked in during his lectures, can be summed up by a passage from Heraclitus, which he often quoted verbatim and from memory: "It would be right for all the Ephesians above age to strangle themselves and leave the city to those below age; for they cast out Hermodorus, the best man among them, saying: 'Let no man among us be the best; if there is one, let it be elsewhere and among others.'"

Miller's mouthy and so is his book. He's overbearing and so is his book. He's hyperbole's henchman and hyperbole is the book. He's not boring, nor is his book. It's not written in the familiar obsequious

academese, where the arguments are designed for promotion rather than promotion of the truth. "Socrates was a great truth-bearer," he once told us, "because he wasn't a being-toward-a-tenure-track-position." In one of his customary moments of self-delusionary grandeur, G. Miller often described this project to me: "It has the buoyancy and the bathos of Voltaire's *Candide* or Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and cheery lasciviousness of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. But beneath the absurdity is an undercurrent of solemnity, earnestness, and moral purity found in something like Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*." (Don't be amazed by G. Miller's shift from the comic to the tragic: it happened a lot in his lectures and happens a lot in the book).

The book is dedicated to Miller's daughter, Laura, which is why the book is called *The Lauramachean Ethics*. Every lecture he ever gave included Laura in it, whether it was Laura who wore the Ring of Gyges, or Laura who distinguished between synthetic and analytic statements, or Laura who embraced Kant's formula of humanity. I must confess that I doubt that Laura, unless she is a professional philosopher, would be able to understand much of the text. It takes its point of departure from unpopular suppositions and is often stifled in Gordian knots. The text is *An Idiosyncratic Ethics*, as Miller calls it. Everything about the book is idiosyncratic: its title, style, most of the content, even my *deus ex machina* appearance from time to time.

I presume you would like to know something about me, the editor of this text. I am not a philosopher *per se* (history was my major, with a concentration in Twentieth Century Eccentrics), though I do consider myself an expert on G. Miller's thought (an accomplishment that may or may not be something to be proud of). I have four notebooks full of class notes and have parts of his incomplete works that he sent me (what Miller likes to call his *Schlocklass*).

Because of the ungodly state of the manuscript, I am called upon to intervene at various points in the text. These are what I have called "Editorial Interpolations." Twelve such interpolations are in the book. I have tried not to be obtrusive, but I am—I know—and I apologize. For the sake of elucidation, I have interrupted the flow of the text with revealing passages from the *Schlocklass*, his public lectures, and my class notes. Wherever I must make an appearance I shall, mostly to provide continuity. I will also interject when I think that G. Miller has missed the point or has gone overboard.

This book is him, nothing more, nothing less.

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