

PHILOSOPHY

BY CHARLES ANGOFF

I OFTEN think a little child
Asking short, clear, unanswerable questions
Is nearer God's mysteries
Than the long, circular conclusions
Of all the divines, both sacred and merely respected:
Why is the sky? Where does it go to? . . .
Who sent me here? . . .
Are tall people always older? . . .
Why don't trees talk? . . .
How can I tell if a star is happy? . . .

I often think a man
Speaking candidly on a snowy Sunday afternoon
Is closer to heavenly morals
Than Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza
And St. Thomas Aquinas, too:
Always give a good man another chance . . .
It's not decent to talk evil about a woman . . .
Only truth and faith bind for keeps . . .
If you wouldn't like your children to do it,
Don't do it yourself . . .

I often think a woman
Embracing her man, breast to breast,
Whispering the deepest certainties to him,
Sings the song of the angels
More truly than all churchly chants:
Your face and arms and sweet scent
Are all creation, past and future . . .
No tree so stately I am not prouder still . . .
My only light, my dearest treasure . . .
Forever mine . . . Forever yours . . .

FACTS ABOUT MEMORY

BY MARTIN SCHEERER

IT is a common human trait to take the habitual for granted and to demand an explanation for the extraordinary. We know our age and birthplace, the names of our dearest friends and enemies, and innumerable other facts. Yet we rarely stop to inquire how and why we came to know all these things. Not until a right word fails us, or we discover on Monday that we forgot our wallet in the Sunday suit, do we begin to wonder about memory; and if John Smith suddenly finds himself embarrassed because he doesn't know his name and home address, or is unable to recognize his surroundings, we hasten, panic-stricken, to call the nearest mental hospital, and the newspapers report another case of amnesia.

A group of married couples once played a social game. The wives hid behind a screen only showing their bare hands. Each husband had to identify his spouse. "The hand you love to touch" did not produce the expected sense of familiarity. In the heated after-dinner dispute each failing husband pleaded: "But I never mistake

your hand for another woman's when I see you all-in-one; after all, I don't usually see you in pieces."

Called to the witness stand we feel accused by the attorney's suspecting insistence, "Can't you even remember the color of the boy's hair? Why, you stood right next to him when he threw that firecracker under the automobile." Yet all we can remember is a crash and a grinning face with freckles — a total impression. We plead, "Of course I did not memorize the single fact of hair color. I just paid no attention to it; had I only known I would later be questioned about it, I would have noticed this detail." This excuse is honest enough, but it does not explain everything about memory.

We can still tell that joke we laughed at so much when we heard it only *once* many years ago. Little Johnny cries out in protest when he approaches the neighborhood which he passed only once before — while going to the dentist. Some of us remember hundreds of faces, while others remember scores of names. The names and deeds of movie and base-

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