

Materials to Guide Reading

LECTURE EIGHT

The Use of Force:

What is the source of the doctor's authority? How does it differ from the authority of the parents and why do they surrender to it? Why do the parents begin by keeping information from the doctor? The parents become despicable in the doctor's eyes-why? In the end, the doctor's description of the child's resistance seems to validate it, in some sense. "She had fought valiantly to keep me from knowing her secret." Why is the secret valuable to the child? Why is her resistance admired by the doctor? The child has knowledge, which it will be to the child's benefit to reveal and to the community's as well. How does this benefit enter into the doctor's motives? Is the doctor a good doctor? Is his behavior professional?

Shooting an Elephant:

What governed the narrator's choice of profession? What is his attitude towards it? towards those in his charge? Is his conduct unprofessional? What difference does it make that the animal destroyed is an elephant? Could the story work just as well if it had been called *Shooting a Criminal* or *Shooting a Chipmunk*? Was the narrator right to shoot the elephant? Clearly, the story is not just about elephants but about the nature of delegated authority-in this sense, anyone in charge is likely to confront the dilemma faced by the narrator. Can you think of any instances of "shooting an elephant" in your business experience?

The Secret Sharer:

How would you describe the managerial strengths and weaknesses of the narrator's promotion, and of Leggatt's? Is it meant to be typical of appointment to authority? What is the significance of the "alone-ness" of the narrator at the outset of the story? Is the condition good, bad, indifferent? The narrator distinguishes himself from his crew in that they "had simply to be equal to their tasks", whereas he had to measure up to "that ideal conception of one's own personality that every man sets up for himself secretly." Can this view of the distinction between the administrator and administered be justified? Do you believe that you hold a position for which mere competence is enough? Do you believe that there are others under your supervision for whom mere competence is enough? Where would you draw this line and what is the meaning of it? Why did the second mate withhold the knowledge of the *Sephora* until the end of the meal? How would you evaluate the narrator's initial moves as captain? Why did Leggatt go overboard? He makes a distinction between swimming till he sinks and committing suicide; is this distinction justified? He also distinguishes between swimming 'round and 'round and swimming straight forward (again, until he sinks). Why is this difference important? Both Archbold (if that is his name) and Leggatt claim to have given the order that saved the ship. Who is telling the truth? Is one of them lying? Leggatt kills one man while saving ship and crew. The narrator risks ship and crew to save one man. Is this recklessness? The narrator says that this was "a matter of conscience". What does he mean by this? One might say that the narrator has created a crisis on the ship. Is it ever managerial wisdom to create a crisis? The narrator speaks of "the chapter of accidents which counts for so much in the book of success." Is the phrase valid in speaking of managerial careers?