

My Groundhog's Day, Disney's *Lion King* & the Minderbinder Complex

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I do most of my writing in the morning, and on Groundhog's Day morning, 1999, I was writing as usual when I was interrupted by knocks at the front door.

Reluctantly, I opened the door. It was Devin, our neighbor's kid. He had a worried look on his face. "Yes, Devin, what is it?" I asked.

"My mom was in a car accident last night, and she said to tell you she's okay but has to go to the hospital for a check-up. Can I stay with you, Mr. Ted?—while she's gone.

"Of course, Devin," I said. "Come in. I'm real glad your mom's okay."

"I won't be no problem, Mr. Ted, I brought the *Lion King* to watch." Devin held up a video and growled like a lion.

"Alright, Devin. You can watch your video while I work," I helped Devin to get the movie going. No sooner did I return to my desk than the phone rang.

"Hey there, Ted. Doing anything this morning? We can sure use some help at the store." It was Clyde, from the Survival Center. With a possible Y2K catastrophe around the corner, the Center was getting busier and busier.

"Can't do, Clyde. Got to baby-sit Devin while his mother's at the hospital."

"She okay?"

"Yeah, nothing serious."

"How's your book on the what-do-you-call-it complex coming along?"

"The *Minderbinder Complex*, Clyde. Named after...."

"Yeah, I know. That greedy s.o.b. Minderbinder character in *Catch-22*. I don't see why you just don't call it the New World Order, like everyone else."

“Because it’s *not* the New World Order, Clyde, not the real one. The real one is the American system, which was built on the premise that sovereignty, the ultimate power, is a property of the people. In the Old World Order system, the monarch’s got the sovereignty. New World Order, sovereignty is a property of the people.”

“Whatever,” Clyde replied. “So look ... give me a ring when you’re coming.”

“Will do, Clyde.” I hung up. I walked into the living room to check up on Devin and was pleased to find him absorbed in the film. “Devin,” I said, “do you know this Groundhog Day?—the only day of the year dedicated to an animal.”

“Shhh, Mr. Ted,” he said, “I’m watching.”

“Okay,” said, smiling. I returned to my desk and enjoyed a whole ten minutes of writing before the next interruption. Devin stood at the door. “Mr. Ted, I’m scared to watch the *Lion King* alone. Would you watch it with me?”

I hesitated for a moment, and then agreed. “What the hay,” I thought, “perhaps this film is something I should be watching.”

Like many baby boomers, I’d been raised on Disney films, and so the idea of watching a contemporary Disney film had a certain nostalgic appeal.

Also, an interest in this particular film had been generated months back, when I heard that certain Christians had complained about something in the film—*subliminals* I think it was. I found the film disturbing for another reason...

The story is a cartoon version of what we might call the “Minderbinder paradigm.” The world, according to this paradigm, is chaotic and highly dangerous—a battlefield in the war of each against all. The only way to preserve law and order, the paradigm maintains, is to create a one world government with absolute power over the masses and all planetary resources.

The ideological basis of the Minderbinder paradigm is Darwinism, which is revered in the Western University as the one and only scientific theory of biology and evolution. In fact, it is not scientific in major respects, and it’s only one of several theories.

Darwinism is a synthesis of the pessimistic philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (“Life is war, each against all”), the pessimistic demographic vision of Thomas Malthus (“Populations tend to breed at a geometrical rate, outstripping food supplies, which replenish themselves at only a mathematical rate”), and the pessimistic views of early nineteenth century British intelligence (“Too many people spells ‘Mobocracy’ and thus population has to be considered a serious problem”).

"My God," I thought to myself as I watched the film. "This is nothing but elitist propaganda ... *The jungle's got to have a responsible elite, a true king, or everything goes to hell.*"

The highlight of my viewing was a little interchange I had with Devin, which went something like this....

Just at the moment when the good lion king is betrayed by his wicked brother, Devin piped up: "Do you think they'll *'peach* President Clinton?"

"Yes, Devin," I replied. "Do you think he should be 'peached?"

"My step-brother says at his school, a coach patted the bum of a girl and he got fired. I think if the president patted a lady's bum, he should be fired, too. It's only fair."

I was impressed. This kid is a good egalitarian—*One law for all*. "Devin, I think you're right, and you know, guy, if you ever run for political office, you've got my vote."

"I like to run sometimes," Devin replied in a serious tone, "but mostly outside, not in somebody's office."

"We need more kids like you," I said, "kids with good manners."

Later, Devin apologized for interrupting me when "it was the scary part of the movie when the father lion got killed."

Devin's mom returned shortly before noon, but I couldn't let him leave without saying a few words about the *Lion King*. "Devin," I said, "in real life, there is no 'ruler of the jungle.' The jungle doesn't need a big lion to rule all the other animals. This is because everything in the jungle, every animal, is self-ruled, ruled by its own instinct, which is a kind of built-in understanding of things--a wisdom about life. Understand?"

"I think so," he said, stretching his syllables in a way that indicated he really didn't understand.

"Let me put it this way... If you were very, very small--the size of a bit of dust--and you took a journey through this body of yours, the inside would seem to be a jungle filled with all kinds of rivers, trees and creatures."

"Scary snakes?"

"Yes, some of those, too. Now, from your point of view as a little, little guy moving through this jungle, it might *seem* that the big and powerful creatures were *ruling* the little creatures. The big ones push the little ones around alright, but ... does that mean that the big ones are *ruling* the little ones?"

"No," Devin replied, "they're just pushing the little ones around, like the bullies at school."

"Right. Bullies don't rule you, they just push you around. Well, if the big bullies inside you aren't running the jungle, what is running the jungle?"

"The jungle is my body, right?"

"Yes."

"Then I would have to say that it's my mind that runs the jungle. When I make up my mind to do something, my body does it."

I had to give Devin a hug. "Devin," I said, "you're brilliant. The jungle in Africa or South America is just like the jungle of your body. There is a kind of mind running it, and what we call *instinct* is sort of like the voice of that great mind in the little creature."

"Then, I guess, the jungle rules the jungle."

Out of the mouth of babes! "Devin, you know you really are brilliant. I couldn't have put it better myself."

We shook hands. "Bye, Mr. Ted."

"Bye, Devin."

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