

The World Within and The World Without



Essays on Therapy, Travel, and Self-Discovery

Jerome Levin PhD

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by Jerome D. Levin, Ph.D.

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Introduction

Given the dialectical relationship between the world within and the world without I have found it difficult to assign the articles collected in this volume to any one category. Therapy might seem clearly to belong to the world within, yet this is not so simply true. Of course most forms of therapy deal primarily with the inner world; nevertheless, the outer world, whether in the guise of the therapist him- or herself, or in the form of the patient's family, economic reality or social surround is always there.

Similarly, travel, which at first acquaintance appears to be about the world without, turns out to be very much about the inner world's transformation through experience of foreign climes and alien cultures. Then the Jungians speak of therapy as a "journey" and indeed it is. So travel is therapeutic and therapy is a trip. And both at best eventuate in self-discovery, just as self-discovery, of necessity, involves travel, both inward and outward, and is the ultimate therapy. So my three neat categories kaleidoscopically whirl, coalesce, separate and reunite in an ever-evolving dance.

And then there are articles about literature—mostly reviews—where do they fit in? Reading, if it is more than superficial, necessarily simultaneously transforms and informs, resonating with the inner and outer world. One of my most formative experiences was a literary one—reading Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (not discussed in this volume) in a U. Penn seminar over fifty years ago. It stays with me. Was that a therapeutic experience, a journey, an occasion for self-discovery? Does it concern the world within or the world without? Meaningless questions. Like any profound experience, it was all of the above.

In the end, the best organization I could think of for these pieces, written over many years, was to divide them into three broad categories: therapy, travel, and self-discovery. The literary articles serve as intermezzos between therapy and travel, and between therapy and self-discovery. These essays originally appeared in somewhat different form in many different places: in books, in lectures I have given, as notes for classes I have taught, in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and in the North Fork Reform Synagogue Newsletter. Addressed to different audiences, intended for different purposes, belonging to different genres, they lack uniformity of style, yet are informed by an enduring sensibility. With the exceptions of the Dreaming and Blackouts and parts of the Hughlings Jackson chapters that require some work, these essays are reader friendly. Some are old, but have not been previously

published, and some are new, having been written for this volume. Several of the therapy pieces are imaginative rather than didactic but no less “true” for that. “A Secular Faith,” “Mortality,” “Dayenu, Genug and ‘More,’” and “The Rack of this World” are personal statements that appear under self-discovery. A number of these essays could fit in either of two categories, or even in any of the three. And that once again raises the question of how should they be organized, structured, and given a degree of coherence? There can be no easy solution. Nevertheless, I think the one I came up with will suffice and I hope you, the reader, will agree.

Naturally I will be delighted if you read transfixed from cover to cover (in the case of an e-book like this one, these covers are metaphorical), yet I know that is unlikely. So feel free to select, dip, and hopefully enjoy. For me, working on this project has been a therapeutic journey of self-discovery. Besides, it has been fun.

Jerry Levin

Manorville, New York

March 2014

Therapy

Chapter 1:

By Your Pupils You'll Be Taught

Sigmund Freud once described psychoanalysis (and by extension all psychotherapy) as a “re-education.” And the American poet Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) entitled her memoir of her therapy, “At School With Freud.” So there is ample precedence for my regarding my relationship with my therapy patients as one of teacher and pupil. But it is always more complicated than that and to some extent the vector always goes both ways, describing a dialectical rather than a hierarchical relationship. But in the two therapeutic encounters described below it was more of a reversal than a complex interaction.

Harvey was a mess. A case of arrested development. In his mid-thirties, he was still living with his parents, locked in an adolescent power struggle with his mother. “Oppositionally defiant” in the manner of a fourteen-year-old, Harvey was sullen, sarcastic, insulting to all he encountered, and, not surprisingly, unemployed. To make matters worse, he had hesitatingly and anxiously married and now had a wife and two-year-old, neither of whom he could cope with. He slept much and did little. He managed to destroy every opportunity that came his way. My informal diagnosis was a less polite synonym for anus; my official diagnosis was severe depression.

After much struggle I convinced Harvey to see his primary care physician for an antidepressant. No improvement. Of course it turned out that he wasn't taking the medicine, self-defeatingly rebellious once more. I pushed him and this time he actually went on the medicine. Still no improvement. We sent him to a psychiatrist. Leaving the psychiatrist, who concurred in the severe depression diagnosis, Harvey and his wife stopped for lunch. He had a seizure at the table and was taken by ambulance to a hospital.

An MRI revealed that he had a huge frontal lobe tumor. So much for “oppositionally defiant character disorder” and the rest of my psychological labeling. Fortunately it was benign and after surgical removal, Harvey was a different man. Of course maturational and characterological issues remained and part of Harvey's newfound sense of well-being was a response to having survived a life-threatening illness. Yet allowing for all this Harvey was no longer the hopeless sad sack I had thought him to be. Quite the contrary; he was an engaging, rather charming guy, struggling to put his life back on track.

The “take-home message”? Therapists are trained to approach their patients with non-judgmental, unconditional positive regard. This, I suspect, is an ideal, not infrequently imperfectly lived up to. But, be that as it may, I had abysmally failed to even approach that standard in my feelings and thoughts about Harvey. Further, two absolutely first-rate physicians and I, who although not medically trained have picked up more than one organic condition, totally and completely missed the correct diagnosis. So the first lesson is humility. It behooves me to remember that most of the time I know far less than I think I know and that dogmatic certainty is always dangerous. And the second is to keep *judgment* let alone condescension, out of the picture, not only in therapeutic work but in life.

What I learned from James was far different. An intensely intellectual, aesthetically sensitive retired English professor, James was a patient of many years. When I first knew him he was deeply troubled, enraged, depressed, pedantic, often contemptuous of others, and altogether not a delight to be with. But that was long ago. James had grown enormously and had really worked at it. He was still in therapy, not because of any significant psychopathology, but rather because he found it to be supportive and growth promoting. Though he had some health problems, he found his present life satisfying, enjoying books, his relationship with himself and those with his family and friends. I should have more such success stories.

Then I got a call: James was in the hospital with shingles, which had affected his optic nerve and retina, rendering him essentially blind. His gait and ability to ambulate were also significantly impaired. A tragic interruption of a well-earned rich retirement. I felt appalled, sorry for him, and, being a near contemporary, scared. It’s all so fragile.

A month later, James was in a nursing home-rehab, and I began paying “home visits” to him. One night he described a deeply discouraging consultation with two ophthalmologists who gave him little hope of recovering his sight, saying he left the consultation deeply depressed. I started empathizing with his depression but he interrupted me. “I need something from you. Would you talk to my sister and persuade her that I am not mentally ill? I have told her I might need her assistance if the quality of my life declines to the point where I want to ‘check out,’ and she said she would be available if that was a rational decision and not the product of irrational despair. Would you speak to her and assure her that I’m perfectly rational? In any event it’s not a present issue.” I agreed and started to be empathetic for the second time but James interrupted me once again.

“After the ophthalmologists left and I was feeling so low, I reevaluated and decided to try to regard my situation as an opportunity. I needed to know that I had the freedom to end my life in order to experience my present situation as having positive potential. Now that I have that assurance I am starting to feel exhilarated.” The following week James reported that he still felt exhilarated. He went on to say, “What I realized was that my present situation is an opportunity for me to explore my *inner world*—to relinquish the restless striving that has characterized most of my life and to achieve equanimity and peace. I want to take that inward journey and I’ve started to work with a meditation teacher. I have so much to learn.”

Denial? Manic defense? Perhaps, but even if it was, James’s reaction was magnificently adaptive.

James doesn’t believe in an afterlife, nor does he believe in a transcendent God. Influenced by Buddhism, he does believe in a sort of immanent transcendence, the potential to achieve a state of radical acceptance and open-ended compassion in this life. Acknowledging that he is far from that goal, he has started on the journey.

I was awe struck and humbled. Who was the teacher and who was the pupil; who was the patient and who was the therapist? A meaningless question—some sort of mutual healing was occurring. Of course I told James that everything had to be on the table in our work—his fear, his despair, his anger, along with his “exultation,” acceptance and inner peace. All was real and all was available as spiritual nutrients as well as grist for the therapeutic mill. Nothing was privileged and nothing was to be judged—we would just stay with his experience, whatever that might be.

I left thinking of Robert Browning’s “Rabbi Ben Ezra”:

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be. . . .

A Possible Bridge Between the Neurochemistry of Dreaming and Blackouts

In this paper I would like to explore and suggest a possible link between the neurochemistry of dreaming, the pharmacology of alcohol, the disruptive effect of alcohol on REM sleep, and palimpsests (blackouts). The theory of dreaming I am drawing on is Jonathan Winson's, summarized in his article "The Meaning of Dreams" in *Scientific American*, November 1990, pp. 86-96 (see also Winson, 1985).

There are a number of competing theories about the function and mechanisms of dreams. The best known of these are Freud's theory of the psychological meaningfulness of dreams as compromise formations which give disguised expression to repressed, forbidden wishes and drives; the Hobson-McCarley activation-synthesis hypothesis that dreams are the cortex's best fit interpretation of random stimulation from the brain stem and are inherently psychologically meaningless; and the Crick-Mitcheson reverse learning theory that holds that information overload from the day's experiences prevents orderly storage of relevant information into memory and that REM sleep with its concomitant dreaming erases spurious associations, allowing the coding and storage of information to proceed. The latter theory has been summarized as "We dream to forget." The trouble with this theory is that the dreamer has to "know" what to forget and what to retain for processing, and the theory provides no criterion for or mechanism of such a discrimination. Hobson has abandoned his position that dreams are psychologically meaningless and now holds that the order imposed on the random spikes from the brain stem is a function of the personal view of the world and of remote (childhood) memories of the dreamer.

Winson believes that dreams are meaningful and that they play a vital role in the processing of memory. He bases his theory partly on evolutionary evidence and partly on studies of the hippocampus, Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, and theta rhythms. The hippocampus is a subcortical brain structure importantly involved in learning and in memory; REM sleep is the sleep stage during which dreaming occurs; and theta rhythms are brain waves that occur during survival behavior and during dreaming in most mammals. According to this theory dreams are a nightly record basic to the mammalian memory

process and a means by which animals form strategies for survival by evaluating current experience.

Sleep in healthy human adults normally follows a pattern of stages from hypnagogic to slow wave (90 minutes) to rapid eye movement (REM, 10 minutes) to slow wave to REM to slow wave to REM to slow wave to REM (40 minutes). A similar pattern prevails in all marsupial and placental mammals. REM sleep is under the control of the brain stem. Pontine-geniculate-occipital (PGO) electrical spikes go from the pons in the brain stem to the visual processing center in the occipital lobe of the cortex demonstrating electrochemical transmission along this path. At the same time theta wave activity can be measured. Winson's research has importantly centered on these theta waves.

Theta waves are 6 cycles per second (CPS) brain waves found in the hippocampus of animals during survival behavior: predation in the cat, apprehension of danger in the rabbit, and exploration in the rat. Each of these behaviors is genetically coded and requires response to changing environmental conditions. Theta waves accompany the REM sleep of all of these species. Theta rhythms, which can be measured in the hippocampus, probably play a vital role in memory processing in that limbic structure. Egg-laying mammals (monotremes) do not have REM sleep, nor do they dream. Winson argues from this evolutionary evidence that REM sleep must have survival value for the higher mammals. Explicitly, he argues that theta waves reflect neural processes whereby information essential for survival (Freud's "day residues") are reprocessed into memory during REM sleep. The hippocampus and the neocortex are responsible for memory. There are three layers of cells in the hippocampus, two of which emit theta rhythms that flow to the neocortex. Brain stem neurons control this theta rhythm. In animals blocking theta rhythms destroys spatial memory.

The basic mechanism of memory is believed to involve Long-Term-Potential (LTP), a process in which relatively enduring changes in nerve cells are induced by intense electrical stimulation. After tetanic (high frequency electrical) stimulation of the pathway from the cortex to the granule cells of the hippocampus, a single electrical pulse causes rapid firing, far above baselines, of the granule cell neurons. The potentiation of these neurons is considered a model for memory, a mechanism by which neural structure and function are altered. LTP is induced by activity of the N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor. This receptor molecule is embedded in the dendrites of all the above-mentioned neurons. The NMDA receptor is activated by a neurotransmitter, the amino acid, glutamate. Glutamate opens a non-NMDA channel that permits the entry of sodium ions from the

intracellular space depolarizing the neuron. NMDA is unique among receptor molecules in that it can be further activated by glutamate, opening a second channel that slows the influx of calcium ions (Ca^{++}). Ca^{++} serves as a “secondary messenger”; its presence in the cell provides additional electric stimulation eventuating in LTP. LTP is caused naturally by theta waves activating NMDA receptors. Theta waves partition information into 20 msec bites. Thus, NMDA in the presence of theta waves provides the neurochemical basis for long-term storage of biologically significant information.

It has been demonstrated that hippocampal neurons that fire during neural mapping of survival information also fire during REM sleep, which suggests that re-mapping or reprocessing is occurring. Non-REM mammals (monotremes) have a large amount of neocortex; REM mammals have proportionately less; they don't need it to interpret, integrate, and reprocesses survival information. The information being reprocessed is both motor and visual, and inhibition of motor, but not eye, activity is required if REM is not to be interrupted. And indeed, motor inhibition is characteristic of REM states.

So each species processes information vital to its survival: location of food, means of predation, or escape strategies. In REM sleep this information is re-accessed and integrated with past experience to form a survival strategy for the future. Since animals don't have language, their dreams are visual, as are those of humans. Winson concludes that human dreams reflect individual strategies for survival. Experiments have demonstrated that people dream about current crises and that they try to work out strategies for dealing with them in those dreams. Dreams are hard to interpret because the associations the neocortex brings to them are complex. These associations tend to reflect childhood experiences. Dreams give us access to and themselves constitute an infrastructure by which new experience is compared to past and integrated.

A major problem with the Winson theory is that theta rhythm has not been demonstrated in primates. If the theory is correct, either theta occurs in primates, but hasn't yet been discovered, or primates have an alternate neural mechanism that activates the NMDA receptor.

This brings us to alcohol. The pharmacology of ethanol is still poorly understood, but two types of mechanisms have been demonstrated. The classical theory holds that alcohol asserts its effect by disorganizing the fatty material in the cell membrane of the neuron, which in turn disorganizes and disrupts the functioning of the receptor protein molecules embedded in these fatty layers. The trouble with this theory is that effects of alcohol on

these phenomena, particularly in low doses, is too small to account for the subjective and behavioral consequences of drinking. More recent theories have demonstrated and highlighted ethanol's direct effects on nerve cell receptors, particularly on the NMDA receptor, the recognition site for glutamate that activates the secondary messenger system by opening a channel for Ca⁺⁺. The response of the neuron to glutamate is greatly reduced by alcohol. (The effect of alcohol on the GABA receptor, which also plays an important role in intoxication, isn't directly relevant to the present argument and needn't concern us further.) But as we saw above, the glutamate-NMDA-Ca⁺⁺ secondary messenger system is the basis of LTP, which in turn is the basis of memory. Further, it is well known that alcohol disrupts and disturbs REM sleep, in fact reducing it, and that REM rebound occurs when drinking ceases. NMDA plays a vital role in the hippocampal-neocortex reprocessing that occurs during REM. If alcohol blocks NMDA functioning, preventing LTP during REM, this may be the mechanism of blackouts. The kind of blackouts where there is no recall at all may be due to the lack of REM reprocessing, which results from alcohol's blockage of LTP by the NMDA-glutamate-Ca⁺⁺ mechanism, whereas the kind of blackout that the drinker comes out of while still drinking may be due to blockage of primary memory processing by the same mechanism in the hippocampus during the awake state.

Further, if Winson's dream theory is correct, we have another instance of an attempt at self-cure through the use of alcohol not only failing, but making things worse. If some people drink because they have difficulty coping, and dreaming is an important coping mechanism through which current information is fixed in memory and integrated with past experience in such a way that it enhances adaptive (survival) behavior, and excessive drinking disrupts and diminishes this process, then the heavy drinker is depriving him- or herself of an important coping response and a vicious cycle is set up. A fundamental resource for understanding self and world is lost.

This paper makes no claims to originality. It merely points to a hitherto unremarked-upon connection between the neurochemistry of dreaming, the pharmacology of alcohol, blackouts, and a new aspect of the downward course of addictive drinking. The author hopes that those with appropriate training will further explore the effect of alcohol on hippocampal function during REM and its possible link to blackouts.

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Spiritual Envy as a Countertransference

As a psychotherapist I deal daily with my patients' feelings about me (the "transference") and my feelings about them (the "countertransference"). Over many years I have experienced what I thought was every possible feeling: sadness, fear, despair, anger, love, hate, rage, joy, frustration, satisfaction, admiration, sexual longing, disdain, compassion, impatience and long periods of muted emotions best characterized as a deep desire to help. Then in the past few months a strange (to me), disquieting, hard-to-define yet quite strong emotion surfaced that I finally identified as "spiritual envy." Let me explain.

An important part of my job is to be aware of my feelings and to sort out what is being induced by the patient and what is strictly my stuff, and to use that knowledge in the service of the therapy. By now I'm pretty good at that. As I said, mostly I'm not feeling anything very powerfully; rather I stay focused on the work, which ranges from interpreting unconscious motives to giving advice. Yet in working with five very different people during the past few months I experienced something initially inchoate that sort of gnawed and wouldn't go away, leaving me with an inner restlessness. The mysterious nature of this restlessness made it all the more unnerving. At first I didn't see any connection or commonality among my reactions to this radically disparate quintet. Then, Shazam! A light went off. In each case I was envious. But envious of what? That puzzled me for a long time. Then I realized that in their entirely individual way, each of them had found some sort of spiritual center, serenity and inner peace.

Over the years I have been envious of patients' wealth, achievements, intelligence, sexual adventures and good looks. Sometimes that envy has been quite intense. A best-selling author with a five million dollar contract who was (in my opinion) a tenth-rate writer comes to mind. But spiritual envy was brand new to me.

All of the objects of my envy experienced themselves as full as opposed to empty. They were radically self-accepting and were connected to something outside of themselves. Each one was free of incapacitating guilt. Each was, in his or her own way, increasingly joyful. And I definitely wanted what they had.

Nancy came to me deeply depressed. The anniversary of her son's suicide was approaching and her guilt was crushing. It wasn't entirely irrational or the ubiquitous "survivor" guilt. She had indeed been an irresponsible and in some ways neglectful parent, entangled in stormy marriages and relationships, complicated at times by drug use. She was also furious at her son, although she didn't know it. Therapy helped, as did her involvement with a Twelve Step Program (i.e., one that uses Alcoholics Anonymous' twelve steps of recovery). Her guilt lessened but hardly disappeared. I saw no possibility of her "recovering" from her son's suicide. Then she began attending a "born-again" congregation, forming a powerful bond with a charismatic woman pastor. Soon she was speaking of Jesus' love and of feeling His and the Holy Spirit's presence within her. She experienced forgiveness and her guilt deliquesced. She also developed a belief that her son was now safe in the arms of Jesus, and that his sins, including his suicide, were forgiven. My initial reaction was judgment—an interesting counterpoint to Jesus' acceptance and forgiveness. To me this was *goyishe mishegas* (gentile craziness). Yet I couldn't ignore what was so clearly before my eyes. This previously tormented woman had become peaceful, even joyful. In the course of time my judgment turned to envy. *Goyishe mishegas* or not, it was pretty wonderful.

John was a sad sack loser. At least that was how he experienced himself when he came to me. A lapsed—furiously angry at the Church—Catholic, he felt spiritually deficient and didn't know what to do with that feeling. Trained as a theologian, he had become a psychotherapist. He struggled with many compulsions. He'd long been in recovery from his alcoholism and had found some solace in AA, but had never come to terms with his sexual compulsiveness, which threatened his third and by far best marriage. He was also constantly behind the eight ball financially, and unable to be truthful to himself or his wife about money. He didn't make much and didn't manage that very well. His dominant emotions were shame and a pervasive sense of failure. Over many years of therapy, John faced and resolved these issues or at least significantly improved in all these areas. He derived deep satisfaction from a job working with survivors of 9/11 and he was very good at it. That experience was transformative. After that his career took off, but more importantly he was a changed man. He no longer looked or felt like a beaten dog. These changes were gradual and cumulative. Then he began speaking of a feeling of integration, a realization that all of his mistakes and failures contributed to who he had become—a person he increasingly liked—and were intrinsic to his gifts as a therapist. This was a sort of self-forgiveness through acceptance. It reminded me of the great psychodynamic theorist Erik Erikson's description of what he calls "final integrity" characterized by "acceptance of the one and only life that

has been possible.” One day, looking at this transformed man, now radiating confidence, I realized that I was envious. John would speak of his experiences of spirituality in everyday life and of the practices—meditation, prayer, political activity—that he used to enhance those experiences, and I was even more deeply envious. But I also realized that I am a “moving hand having writ. . . .” kind of guy and don’t have open to me John’s avenues of self-acceptance through integration.

Harry is a retired English professor whom I’ve treated on and off for many years. When I first met him he was pretentious, affected, fussy and always straining to impress. It would have been easy to caricature him. An active alcoholic, married to a woman he detested, he was miserable. A man with strong homosexual feelings and considerable experience, he had chosen to marry and give all that up. He had had a series of satisfactory sexual and emotional relationships with women, yet in his heart he still craved a relationship with a man. He was the last person in the world I thought I would ever envy.

Harry quit drinking—not without a struggle—long ago and he has had a rather tepid, off-again-on-again relationship with AA. An ex-Catholic who despises the Church—so much so that he won’t walk into a Catholic church even for a funeral—he has never embraced AA’s style of spirituality. When his wife died he returned to therapy with me after a lapse of many years. He resumed a homosexual lifestyle without much success, a source of pain but not unhappiness at this point. I’m not sure how it happened but over the last five years Harry’s pretentiousness, affectedness and strained quality have largely disappeared. Though regretful that he has not found a male partner, he doesn’t torment himself over it. He no longer hates his wife and speaks sincerely of her good qualities and of the joy of their early years of marriage. He also takes responsibility—particularly for the hurt his continued homosexual preference caused her—for the difficulties in the marriage. He is back in AA with mixed feelings but derives some satisfaction from attending meetings and from having made some friends there. But the chief source of his present happiness is his intense, loving relationships with his stepdaughter and his granddaughters. Harry has achieved what AA would call “serenity.” And I have some envy of that.

But the chief focus of my envy is Harry’s absence of fear of death. He is a “committed” non-believer. For him death is simply the cessation of consciousness and nothing to fear, since it is not a “possible experience.” I am reminded of the Roman writer Lucretius, who made a similar argument that fear of death is a stock in trade of religion, which promotes and exploits it in the service of its own power needs. And in both the case of Lucretius and Harry I am, or was, suspicious that this is whistling in the dark. But as time goes on, I am

more and more sure that Harry's absence of fear is real. He has dealt with a life-threatening illness (which is, hopefully, permanently in remission) and his fearlessness has remained constant. And I am indeed envious of that.

Maurice is a Jewish medical school professor with a worldwide reputation. No doubt I have been envious of that, but that kind of envy is not what I'm talking about in this article. What I do want to look at is my envy of his ability to act "as if." Maurice is a nonbeliever who prays and meditates daily. He too is a recovering substance abuser, that behavior in long remission. Yet he continues to attend Twelve Step meetings daily, a practice that, along with prayer, gives him centeredness and security. That structure, along with the constancy of his ongoing relationship with me, has allowed Maurice to go through threshold anxiety time and time again to establish strong, loving relationships late in life that were not previously possible. Maurice's behaving "as if" he were a believer in his meditation and prayer practice importantly induces a humility that protects him from the reactive grandiosity that characterized most of his life.

All his achievements did little to diminish the shame that came out of a horrendous childhood with a famous drug-addicted physician father who died of his illness and an emotionally abandoning mother. Anti-Semitism at a renowned prep school did not help either. But now Maurice's daily spiritual practices, engaged in without belief in an Other who listens or cares, are transforming. Maurice doesn't quite have Harry's serenity or Nancy's emotionally vital relationship with Jesus, but he does have something really valuable coming from his acting as if. I've tried it and sometimes it has worked and sometimes it hasn't, but at least for now, acting as if isn't an option for me and I do indeed envy Maurice's success with it.

Larry is another non-practicing Jew, but he is a believer. He's not alienated from Judaism or from its rituals and worship practices, but he has had little participation in them. A medical professional with a severe drinking problem, he fairly recently became stably sober and is deeply committed to his recovery. He works very hard at it, using a range of therapeutic modalities, and that hard work is paying off. Larry, like Maurice, prays daily and meditates, but unlike Maurice, weaves reading of "spiritual" works into his routine. Larry believes that his prayers are heard, if not necessarily answered. That is not possible for me. But it is what I'll call Larry's "spiritual enthusiasm" that I really envy. Larry, somewhat like John, finds sources of wonder, beauty and meaning in everyday events. Each such discovery excites him. I know some of this is a result of what AA calls the "pink cloud" and what mental health professionals call "hypomania." But it isn't only that Larry

conveys a genuineness and self-validation when he shares these moments of spiritual awareness that I can't honestly apply a reductivist rubric to. They are real. For example, he related a moment in the recovery room where his 84-year-old patient told him of his experience landing in Normandy and later participating in the liberation of a concentration camp after he himself had escaped from the Nazis. His patient returned to America to go on to become a longtime marathon runner. Larry was deeply moved by this capsule autobiography, seeing beauty and meaning in his patient's life. Larry contrasted this response to his former emotional and spiritual deadness. He characterized this experience and his response to it and to the story itself as an example of spirituality in everyday life. His enthusiasm was palpable. What I was particularly envious of was Larry's openness and receptivity—his ability to see, hear and honor these evidences of "spirit." I, too, am sometimes receptive and open to beauty, if not meaning, in nature, art and human striving but I cannot will its continuous presence. It comes and goes. At least for now, Larry has that ongoing receptivity and that is indeed enviable.

Envy is usually, and correctly, seen as a destructive emotion, corrosive to the one who feels it and a threat to the object of the envy. Envy all too easily turns to hatred, as did the German envy of the Jews, in that case to murderous hatred. Envy usually prevents the envious one from constructive identification with that which is envied, making it impossible for the envy to lead to emulation and growth. Put more simply, envy makes taking in good things from the envied object impossible. The psychodynamic theorist Melanie Klein made the infant's postulated envy of the "good breast" a block to emotional growth unless overcome by gratitude for the goodness of that breast. Whatever the veracity of Klein's developmental theory, there is no question but that intense envy contributes to adult psychopathology.

If spiritual envy shared these traits—pain for the one who feels it and the impossibility of acquiring what is envied for oneself—it would be an unmitigated disaster. But that doesn't seem to be the case, at least not for me with spiritual envy. Yes, yearning and the conscious awareness of deficit and even of a certain degree of emptiness can probably only be assuaged by beliefs of which I am not capable. And yes, there's pain in this, but nothing intolerable. Nancy's experience of being suffused with the love and forgiveness of Jesus is not open to me. John's sense of integration and acceptance of the one and only life possible is an ideal perhaps to be striven for but not a present reality for me. Harry's serenity in the contemplation of death is not mine. Maurice's acting "as if" he too had faith is not a readily trodden path for me. And Larry's exuberant discovery of the spiritual in everyday life is, at

best, intermittently open to me. On the positive side, I'm not aware of any hostility (and I've looked for it) towards any of these five successful questers. What my envy has given me is an awareness of the richness of human spiritual potentiality and an appreciation, seemingly impossible in other types of envy, of the beauty and transformative power of very diverse spiritual journeys. I find it possible to enjoy rather than hate or fear what I genuinely envy. And more internally, I feel a growing acceptance of my earthboundness with all of its awareness of the irredeemable reality of past guilt, the radical limitation of the potential for relatedness or embeddedness that transcends aloneness, the absence of a saving power and the irredeemable fear of ceasing to be. And it has occurred to me that this existential stance is, just possibly, a spiritual one as well.

The Clinical Significance of John Hughlings Jackson

John Hughlings Jackson's life was a sad one. It was also one of great achievement. It was only that achievement that prevented his life from being tragic. One of the nineteenth-century fathers of modern neurology, Jackson died alone, virtually reclusive, yet paradoxically full of honors at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is difficult to assess his personality. He was riddled with neurotic, perhaps more than neurotic, quirks; yet was loved, even revered, by generations of students, widely respected as a medical giant not only in his native England, but on the continent and in the United States, and able to function at the highest level not only as a bedside physician but as a meticulous observer whose breakthrough synthesis of those observations constituted a new, holistic understanding of the human nervous system. The parts of this man don't fit together very comfortably, leaving Jackson something of an enigma. Perhaps the *DSM-IV* characterizations of emotional illnesses are less applicable to Hughlings Jackson than an older nosology that would characterize him as an eccentric Victorian gentleman.

He wasn't a very good writer and much of his language now seems archaic. Contemporary scientific papers don't read like Jackson's and the advances in neurology have been so phenomenal that Jackson's neurological world seems remote and hardly relevant. Yet his influence has been enormous and current historians of medicine have, so to speak, "re-discovered" him, according him a much higher status in that history than he has enjoyed for many years. In this paper I will try to briefly summarize Hughling Jackson's most important contributions to our understanding of the nervous system and how it operates, and then look at the implication of that work for psychotherapy.

It is important to see Jackson's work in historical context. When he was formulating his hypotheses, the neuron was undiscovered, let alone action potentials and synaptic transmission. He had only his clinical experience and the evidence of the autopsy room to work with and he made the most of them. Neurology has, of course, marched on although some of Jackson's formulations are still of use to the practicing physician, be he or she general practitioner or neurologist; and his theoretical insights still resonate. As I'm a psychotherapist, not a neurologist, the major thrust of this paper is the articulation of the usefulness of Jackson's now more than a century old observations and insights in

understanding psychopathology and treating it psychotherapeutically. I will also try to relate his work to his life.

Jackson's life, for all its honors and accomplishments, was one pervaded by loss. It starts at the very beginning with the death of his mother before Jackson was a year old. Born in 1835 in Yorkshire, John Hughlings was the last of five children who followed one another in roughly two-year intervals. The oldest, Ann, his only sister, apparently suffered ill health from a very early age. Only six years older than John, it is unlikely that she played much of a role in raising him. More than likely he was primarily raised by servants. Ann died not long after giving birth at the age of 29 of "convulsions." One wonders if his sister's death from convulsions played a part in Jackson's later interest in epilepsy. His father, Samuel Jackson, was a brewer and is described as a yeoman and "gentleman." He apparently prospered and then lost his money speculating on the then new railroads. He died shortly thereafter at the age of 51 when Hughlings Jackson was 23. The mother, Sarah, was of Welsh extraction, daughter of a revenue collector. Her family was slightly higher in the social hierarchy than was that of her husband. Her maiden name was Hughlings and the future father of British neurology was the only child given her name. It is certainly of emotional significance that he became known by his mother's maiden name and not by his surname. That must have provided him with some sort of connection to the mother he had never known.

His three brothers seem to have been close to him, especially Thomas, who went to boarding school with him. He was to lose them too through their early immigration to New Zealand. Thomas later distinguished himself as a sailor who single-handedly sailed his ship home after the rest of the crew deserted in San Francisco to join the gold rush. And after immigrating he prospered in New Zealand. Another brother did well as a lawyer there and yet another was a leader in the Maori Wars, then becoming a legislator. Hughlings definitely belonged to a strong cohort.

There are several extant letters of Jackson's expressing his gratitude to Thomas for his kindness (and presumably protection) during their school years, at a time when the cane ruled such establishments. By the time he was 25, Hughlings Jackson had no living relatives in England; he was, for all practical purposes, a man without family. Jackson had a very low opinion of his teachers and of formal education in general. If he had feelings about the disciplinary practices of the schools he attended he didn't express them, but he did strongly remonstrate against what he saw as the narrow, stifling restraint of formal education as he knew it; what he did value was what a man—in this case himself—discovered on his own.

When asked if he regretted not having gone to university, he disparaged such education as essentially valueless. This may have been partly defense, for by that time he was moving in the higher reaches of London medicine among many Ox-Bridge graduates. More fundamentally, like many highly creative people, he hypervalued his independence. He credited much of his success to having escaped “over-teaching.” Jackson was definitely one to subscribe to the ethos of “don’t fence me in.” In adulthood this took on a tinge of phobic avoidance, of which more later.

Jackson left school at 15, became apprentice to a Dr. Andrews in York. Medical apprenticeship was then common, but of variable quality. Often such apprentices were little more than servants. That wasn’t Jackson’s experience. He learned a great deal from Andrews and always valued the experience. He went on to York Medical School, an establishment no longer extant. I don’t know whether or not it folded in Jackson’s lifetime, but if it did, that would have been yet another loss.

Whatever Jackson’s opinion of his boarding school teachers, they must have taught him something. He was a voracious (yet indiscriminate) reader the rest of his life, a prolific writer, and he did so well at York Medical School that he went on to pass his exams to qualify as a medical practitioner on the first try (which was not always the case with aspiring physicians). York was a provincial school with a strong faculty—one of Jackson’s instructors went on to hold a chair in medicine at Edinburgh. After medical school Jackson did what we would call a residency in London. Except for a brief return to Yorkshire during his father’s last illness, he spent the rest of his career in London. He did, however, retain a deep affection for his birthplace, which he visited annually.

Those who knew Jackson regarded him as highly ambitious. Although free of vanity or a sense of self-importance, he well knew the worth of his gifts. Living with his fellow Yorkshireman and lifelong friend Jonathan Hutchison, Jackson joined him as a medical journalist, his first “job” in London. Their reporting gave Jackson knowledge of the latest medical advances and contact with leading researchers. London was an uninterrupted string of triumphs for him as he rose from appointment to more prestigious appointment at leading teaching hospitals. Along the way he acquired a sort of mail-order M.D. from St. Andrews University in Scotland. In later years he received many honorary degrees. The one from Bologna with its ancient medical school gave him the most satisfaction. He was also elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. Professionally, his life could not have been more satisfying or more successful. Hughlings was not lacking in courage. He played a leading role in

treating the victims of the London cholera outbreak of 1862, for which he received a gold watch that he treasured for the rest of his life.

His personal life did not go so well. He suffered the most grievous of his many losses when his wife, Elizabeth, died before her fortieth birthday. “Lizzie” was a cousin and friend from childhood on. He had courted her for many years before they married. From all reports by his friends and the evidence of his letters to his family in New Zealand, their marriage was an exceptionally happy one. They had been married eleven years when Lizzie died of a series of fits of a type now known as Jacksonian epilepsy during a brief illness apparently of some sort of cerebral septic thrombosis. Did Lizzie have the seizure as the result of a stroke? Or did a stroke result from the seizure? We don’t know. Had Lizzie been epileptic before the fatal event? In the nineteenth century there was intense shame associated with having the “falling disease” so the Jacksons may have concealed it. And then maybe there was no “premorbid” epilepsy. Again, we just don’t know. In any event, there is a deep irony in that both Hughlings Jackson’s mother and his wife, died, at least in part, from the very brain malady he did so much to elucidate. Lizzie died in 1876 when Jackson was only 41. He never remarried, nor would he have a woman run his household. They had had no children. For the rest of his life he did not permit his few female guests to sit on her side of the table. He had told one of his friends, “There is nothing in the world to compare with domestic happiness.” Her loss after all the others in his life must have been devastating. There was no slacking in his professional productivity, nor of his creativity, but he was no longer the same man. As time went on he became progressively more reclusive, a tendency perhaps exacerbated by his growing deafness during his later years.

Jackson, although he had been taken to church as a child, had several clergymen as ancestors, and certainly attended compulsory chapel in boarding school was, as an adult, a lifelong, unwavering nonbeliever, closer to atheism than to agnosticism. He was adamant in his belief that there was no afterlife. So he had none of the solace that religion can give when he lost Lizzie, nor had he any hope of seeing her again in the great by-and-by. Jackson’s stance was not uncommon among Victorian intellectuals, but nevertheless put him in the minority position and no doubt contributed to his tendency towards self-isolation.

I noted above that Hughlings Jackson was quirky, particularly if he felt his freedom constrained in any way. He was exceedingly restless, sometimes breaking off conversations for no apparent reason, and in general having difficulty staying still. Even in his younger days he was well known for his absentmindedness. For example, he almost missed an interview for an important hospital appointment because he “forgot about it.” A friend had

to round him up and he got the job. One suspects that he was cut some, or more than some, slack because of his extraordinary abilities. Taking out his handkerchief at a dinner party (which he didn't often attend) a glob of brain he had wrapped in his handkerchief at an autopsy fell out on his plate. His hostess's reaction is unrecorded.

Except for his annual visits to his native Yorkshire, Jackson disliked travel, particularly foreign travel. When he did travel he rarely stayed in the same town for more than a day. Riding in a carriage, he would abruptly stop it and jump out, and he was known to leave trains before his stop and walk the rest of the way. When he gave rides to younger doctors he sometimes got bored and suddenly asked them to leave and walk home. Although he had little interest in the arts, apart from literature, he did sometimes attend the theater, apparently enjoying it. However, the anticipation of having to sit through an entire play, particularly if he didn't like it, was too much for him. So he would buy a ticket for let's say Tuesday night to see Act I, a ticket for Wednesday night to see Act II and a ticket for Thursday night to see Act III—if he liked the play. Jackson saw very few Act IIIs.

His anxiety disorder, if that's what it was, also affected his literary style to its detriment. He compulsively qualified everything and then qualified the qualifications, often in stacked footnotes. He felt compelled to nail down every possible detail or alternate possibility. That makes for difficult reading, which contributed to the decline of his influence after his death in 1911. In fairness to Jackson, he was dealing with cutting edge material, often of great intrinsic difficulty, and some of the "obscurity" of his writings is due not to manner but to matter. This obsessiveness was a strength when it came to the meticulous observation that was the basis of his scientific creativity. Jackson's great gift was the ability to see what others had not seen, and that gift was inseparable from his neurosis, quirkiness, eccentricity—call it what you will. The great French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, roughly a contemporary of Hughlings Jackson, told Sigmund Freud to "look at the same thing over and over again." Hughlings Jackson would have completely understood that.

Although an inspiring clinical teacher who elicited strong emotions of gratitude, affection and respect from the junior physicians he mentored, he was a poor lecturer. Again, too many qualifications and a weak speaking voice. Hughlings Jackson was an avid, perhaps compulsive, reader, devouring everything from dime novels to detective stories to serious literature. His particular favorites were Jane Austen, Thackeray and Dickens, whom he read and reread. Jackson had no interest in retaining what he read, and one suspects that he sometimes used his reading defensively, as a place to hide—another manifestation of the obsessive-compulsive side of his personality. He had a similar relationship to books

themselves, tearing pages that interested him out of their bindings to give to friends or to put in his pockets. He also tore covers off books.

Jackson's handwriting was notorious. It was so bad as to be illegible. His longtime friend, Jonathan Hutchison, suffered a stroke late in his life and trying to learn to write again during his rehabilitation commented, "Bad as my writing is, it is better than Dr. Jackson's at its best." This, along with Jackson's other quirks, suggests some sort of neurological impediment. Jackson's restlessness and intolerance of confinement was so intense that he would abruptly excuse himself at the dinner table, regardless of whether he was host or guest, and retreat to a chair, preferably by a fire and bury his head in a book.

Jackson was the sort of family friend who became "honorary uncle" to his friends' children, taking them to the zoo and buying them ices. He had pictures of many of them in his home. But there was no evidence that he was particularly close to any of them. Again a picture of a kind, shy, lonely man with virtually no attachments after the death of his wife. As he aged, Jackson became more and more reclusive in his personal life, although still active professionally. His deafness played into this, but it also gave him a rationalization for avoiding people. Given that he was a pioneer in the study of aphasia, there is a deep irony in the fact that he virtually lost a vital component of receptive language, the ability to hear it. Just as his other major neurological interest, epilepsy, affected him personally, so did language deficits.

So disparate are the various aspects of Jackson's personality that I am reminded of his fellow Victorian Robert Louis Stevenson's creation Jekyll and Hyde. The ambitious, confident, productive original physician and researcher was just as different from the reclusive eccentric as Jekyll is from Hyde, the analogy breaking down in the absence of anything malignant in Jackson's shadow side.

In his will Jackson specified that all of his papers be burnt, a request that was fulfilled. One wonders why. If Jackson's literary remains were scientific papers, given his compulsion for exactitude, he would have easily thought them unworthy of publication. Or did they contain private thoughts and/or personal secrets? We will never know.

Let us look at Jackson's contribution to our understandings of epilepsy, aphasia, localization and the organization of the nervous system. Epilepsy provided Jackson with his window into the workings of the nervous system. His interest in it developed early in his career and continued until almost the end of his life. Jackson was not a researcher in the usual sense; he was a clinician, looking for ways to understand his patients' pathologies and

treatment. For all his contributions to theory and the strong philosophical bent of his mind, his overarching concern was the practical one of an active physician working with sick people. Not having a laboratory as a source of knowledge, Jackson came to regard the illness itself as “an experiment set up by disease.” So a disease is an experiment of nature allowing a sufficiently astute physician, in this case Jackson, to learn and to formulate theories about function. The meticulous, prolonged, repeated observation of that “experiment” was Jackson’s research tool. Only later did he supplement it with evidence provided by autopsies. At that point in his career he was an enthusiastic performer of autopsies.

Towards the end of his life Jackson was said to suffer “vertigo” as well as deafness. It is entirely possible that Jackson’s vertigo was a consequence of a disturbance or disease process in the semicircular canals, which may in turn have been somehow related to his growing deafness. But it is also possible that the vertigo was a manifestation of the anxiety that seemed to have plagued Jackson much of his life and against which he erected such strong, and mostly successful, obsessive-compulsive and avoidant defenses. Vertigo threatens its sufferers with falling, giving it an overlap with epilepsy, the falling sickness. It is possible that Jackson’s vertigo was, at least in part, an unconscious identification with both his lost mother and lost wife, each of whom had suffered seizures. Be that as it may, it would have been far more acceptable to have diagnosed a figure as revered as Jackson as having vertigo rather than having an anxiety disorder.

The first malady Jackson applied his tool to was epilepsy. In the 1860s and ’70s, when he started his work on epilepsy, it was poorly, if at all, understood. The “falling sickness” had been known since ancient times, its best known sufferer being Julius Caesar, but it was regarded superstitiously, or at best mythologically, often understood as a visitation of the devil, or a manifestation of the patient’s moral turpitude. By the second half of the nineteenth century, such etiological nonsense was no longer believed by scientists or educated laymen, yet a strong stigma remained attached to epilepsy and epileptics continued to suffer what we would call discrimination. Scientific medicine had made early attempts to figure out the falling sickness, but so far had little of substance to offer. Hughlings Jackson changed all that.

As he always did, Jackson gathered as many cases—people suffering from epilepsy—as he could and took every opportunity to observe their seizures. He observed this with the most astute attention to every nuance, every clinical manifestation, every muscular clue. What he saw was a progression from twitching in the fingers and hands to spasmodic

muscular contractions in the lower arm, then the upper arm as the “fit” progressed from the periphery to the center, eventually involving the entire body and loss of consciousness. This “Jacksonian march,” as it came to be called, was given the name of Jacksonian epilepsy by no less a figure than the grand man of nineteenth-century neurology, Charcot.

Jackson drew multiple inferences from the data of “nature’s experiment.” First he noticed that all seizures were not alike; they varied from patient to patient and sometimes from attack to attack in the same patient. For example, some Jacksonian seizures start in the feet. From this observation he concluded that there was no one epilepsy but rather epilepsies. This was an important determinant of Jackson’s view on the localization of function in the brain (cf. below). An attack of Jacksonian epilepsy is today usually referred to as a grand mal seizure. Jackson also observed and described premonitory experiences of sufferers from epilepsy, now known as the “aura.” He also took note of post-seizure experience, including confusion, ignorance of the episode, euphoria, and commonly delayed depression. Most importantly, Hughlings Jackson inferred and postulated “an uncontrolled discharge” in the cerebral cortex, a discharge that moved across what is now known as the “motor strip” in the left hemisphere. He saw epilepsy as “an occasional, sudden, excessive, rapid, local discharge of grey matter.” In the 1860s (and for many years later) the nature of that “discharge” was poorly, if at all, understood, some arguing that it was chemical, others that it was electrical. Of course we now know that this is a meaningless discrimination, since the “discharge” is both, an electro-chemical phenomenon. In 1870 Fritsch and Hitzig provided experimental evidence supporting Jackson’s theory of epilepsy when they applied electrical stimulation to the motor cortex of dogs, observing movements of the body or limbs. Depending on where the current was applied, movements of the opposite side limb, or the hand, face, or neck resulted. Stronger currents evoked convulsions. Jackson’s theory was thus vindicated.

Jackson believed that epilepsy was purely a brain disease; he didn’t think psychological factors entered into it. Sigmund Freud, an admirer of Jackson, disagreed. In his paper on Dostoevsky, he postulated that the great Russian author’s falling sickness was psychologically driven as a punishment for his death wishes towards his father, a fitting self-punishment, since it was a sort of “little death” inflicted on himself as a just punishment for his death wishes. I can’t be sure what Jackson would have thought of this, but probably not much.

In subsequent years Jackson described what is now called temporal lobe psychomotor epilepsy with its petit mal seizures in which motor phenomena are always minimal and the

“fit” characterized by changes in consciousness, often accompanied by feelings of doom or of impending death. This would seem to be more in line with Freud’s thoughts about Dostoevsky’s epileptic fits. Jackson thought, probably correctly, that déjà vu, which often accompanied such fits, was an epiphenomenon of these discharges. As the years went on, more and more autopsy reports confirmed Jackson’s conclusions, making possible neurological interventions to remove the diseased tissue causing the uncontrolled discharges, which sometimes effected a cure. So Hughlings Jackson’s findings on epilepsy provided one of the first rational bases for neurosurgery. When it comes to epilepsy he didn’t miss much.

That brings us to aphasia, Hughlings Jackson’s next area of medical investigation. Like epilepsy, aphasia was poorly understood. The phenomenon itself was apparently well known, yet according to Jackson not really well known at all. What was missing was the minute, painstaking observation of the phenomenon, which was Jackson’s great strength. On closer examination, aphasia turned out to be many things and, just as Jackson demonstrated there was no such thing as epilepsy, but epilepsies, he demonstrated that there was no one aphasia but rather a multitude of related but individualized aphasias. In fact, each patient’s aphasia was in some measure a unique phenomenon. And to make matters worse, there was little or no understanding of the underlying brain pathology that resulted in the disease or diseases. Jackson’s careful observations led him to conclude that aphasia was not a disorder of speech, but rather a disorder of language, the neurological representation of that language being a symbol of a symbol (i.e., a symbol of the words themselves). There was then no knowledge of what that neural representation might be.

Jackson’s clinical observation led him to “conclude that intellectual [we would say learned or as he sometimes called it propositional language] and emotional language were distinct entities.” He saw patients who were radically impaired in their intellectual-verbal abilities yet quite capable of emotional expression and patients who had extensive brain damage yet were not aphasic. Jackson inferred that there was no single language center in the brain. His final position, arrived at many years later, was that “language is represented in every part of the brain.” In fact, Jackson believed this was true more generally and that “every part in the body is represented in every part of the brain.” By then it was known that aphasia was somehow correlated with damage to the cerebral cortex, an association revealed by those experiments of nature, strokes and accidents. But the clinical data and theoretical constructs were still chaotic and confused.

That brings us to the infamous controversy over the “localization of function” in the brain in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Localization of function was the correlation between particular motor (or sensory) capacities with explicitly defined parts of cerebral anatomy. That was the essence of localization theory. It had been developed out of the pseudo-science of phrenology developed by Franz Joseph Gall in the eighteenth century. Gall made real contributions to neurology, including pioneering the notion of localization, but the way he did so—by postulating that the external examination of the skull, particularly feeling the bumps and irregularities on it, accurately revealed character traits that were determined by those bumps—was nonsense. It turned out to be pernicious nonsense when it was used to justify racism later in the nineteenth century. But the seeds of localization of function that had been planted by Gall brought forth fruit.

The French neurologist Paul Brocca found an area in what is now known as the motor cortex, namely the third gyrus of the left hemisphere, that was always damaged (or destroyed) in patients with right hemiplegia and aphasia. From there it was but a short step to stating that the capacity for speech (Jackson took exception to this, always speaking of language or linguistic capacity, not speech) resided there. That was an historical achievement, the first demonstration of localization of function in the brain. It was also early evidence of specialization of function by the two cerebral hemispheres—all this emerging from the study of aphasia. The area in question in this third gyrus is now known as Brocca’s Area in honor of the discoverer of its role in language capacity.

In 1868 the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its annual meeting in Norwich. Both Brocca and Jackson were invited to speak on aphasia. For a long time medical history spoke of an epic debate over localization between the two men, which Brocca won hands down. More current historians of medicine assert that such a debate never took place and although both men spoke on the localization aspects of aphasia, there is no clear evidence that the two men ever met at the conference or that they heard each other’s papers. Brocca’s papers were not well received at the time. The reaction to Jackson’s paper is not known.

Jackson himself contributed a great deal of clinical material supporting the notion of localization in the course of his career and he always gave Brocca, whom he admired, due credit; nevertheless Jackson’s notion of localization differed importantly from that of Brocca. Brocca’s notion was pretty much straightforward: Area A controlled Function B. Jackson’s was far more complex and nuanced. He had a finer sense that “the shinbone is connected to the thigh bone,” that there is interaction between the parts, and that the

relationships are “dynamic,” even dialectical, rather than linear. Later on, Jackson came up with the notion of bottom-up as well as top-down control, though he certainly did not have that terminology available to him. He also realized the importance of disinhibition (again not in that language) in pathology.

Returning to aphasia, his final take on it was that “the ‘faculty’ of language cannot be so localized anywhere in the left hemisphere, or anywhere else except in the whole brain or in the whole body.”

He also subscribed to Herbert Spencer’s belief that evolution always moved towards greater differentiation—specialization—of structure, which in turn makes for far more differentiation of function. This is a strong version of the localization hypothesis for which Jackson had contributed compelling evidence in his studies of the Jacksonian march in epileptic seizures. Herbert Spencer, who greatly influenced Jackson, was an auto-didactic philosopher who wrote widely on evolution following Darwin’s groundbreaking book of 1859. So there are two poles in Jackson’s thinking on localization: one narrowly localizing and one reflecting his understanding of what he called “devolution,” the loss of differentiation concomitant with pathology, more holistically. And he thought that his theories were supported by the evidence of evolution.

There was another influence on Jackson’s evolutionary understanding of the nervous system that came from another self-taught philosopher, George Henry Lewes (who also influenced Spencer) who was the great Victorian novelist George Eliot’s longtime live-in lover and later husband. It has been suggested that Jackson treated Lewes for a mysterious disease, perhaps having had some relationship with Eliot herself. The image of Jackson tearing pages out of *Middlemarch* in one of his retreats to a chair by the fire during a formal dinner party brings a smile to one’s face, but there is no way to know if that ever happened. Ironically, Jackson, in spite of being one of the first to advocate localization, came to be associated with a more holistic view of the way the nervous system works. One might say that Jackson wound up with a dialectical tension between the parts and the whole, between localization and complex interaction.

Historically, the localization approach has borne much fruit; yet well into the twentieth century, Carl Lasky of Harvard advocated a theory of equal potentiality of all neural tissue. I think Jackson might have sympathized with this and recent recognition of plasticity of the brain gives some support to it. It is worth noting that when Sigmund Freud published a manuscript on aphasia early in his career, the only authority he cited with approval was

Hughlings Jackson. His book on aphasia was not Jackson's only, or most important, influence on Freud. As important as Jackson's works on epilepsy and aphasia are, his most prescient and enduring contribution is his understanding of the nervous system as hierarchical. In teaching he represented it as a pyramid. Greatly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, especially as elucidated by his philosopher friend Herbert Spencer with whom he carried on correspondence over four decades, Hughlings Jackson believed the human nervous system is evolved from primary forms in lower organisms that were essentially reflexive through an intermediate stage to a higher stage that made language, symbolic representation and discursive thought possible. Further, he thought that all these stages are preserved intact in the human nervous system, the lowest level being represented by the reflex centers of the spinal cord, the intermediate by the subcortical structures of the brain, and the highest by the cerebral cortex. These are not anatomical and functional discrete entities but rather parts of a dynamic, interactive whole. This evolutionary perspective led Hughlings Jackson to see the nervous system as an organ of adaptation. It is what it is through a series of progressive adaptations, and its present task is adaptation to the internal and external environment. These words are mine, but the spirit and concept are Jackson's.

His hierarchical scheme eventuated in understanding of pathology in general and neuropathology in particular as "devolution," or as he sometimes calls it "dissolution." Organization at the highest level is lost or diminished and the organism, in this case the man or woman, is forced to reorganize on a lower level. That too is an adaptation, albeit a compromised one.

Freud adapted Jackson's theory of devolution and reconceptualized it as *regression*, a key psychic defense mechanism. Freud viewed regression as primarily a defense, protecting its users from having to deal with oedipal conflicts. But Freud's regression no less than Jackson's devolution is adaptive as well as defensive. Freud's borrowing and reformulation of devolution makes Jackson an important if indirect contributor to psychoanalytic theory.

For Jackson the highest level of the nervous system was paradoxically the least organized, giving it the most flexibility and making it very different from let us say a spinal reflex, where there is rigid neurological organization and no choice at all. With devolution, this higher, metaphorically speaking, "freedom" is lost. Additionally, the higher centers are no longer able to control the lower centers—disinhibition (not Jackson's word) occurs—as the organism works on a more primitive—evolutionary prior—level of development. This mode of thinking is reflected in speaking of the limbic system as the "reptilian brain."

An important clinical corollary of Jackson's understanding of disease and devolution (or dissolution) is the notion that the disease is not merely or only a localized lesion, but a disorder of the entire body. In fact he thought that if a generalized dissolution had not been in progress disease would not have occurred. It is a particular manifestation of a wider disorganization leading to a restructuring on a lower evolutionary plane. Dialectically, a local lesion necessitates a more general reorganization. He insisted that the physician—and by extrapolation the psychotherapist—treat not the disease but the person who has it. It is the whole person who has been stricken and it is to the whole person that the physician must direct his or her attention. With the spectacular success of medical specialization, Jackson's clinical stance, which is profoundly right, has been lost sight of, much to our detriment. It needs to be brought back into medicine.

Closely associated with the hierarchical ordering of the nervous system and regression down the evolutionary scale of organization as both cause and consequence of pathology is the notion of “negative” and “positive” symptoms. Jackson was not the first to make a distinction between negative and positive symptoms, but he was the one who put it on the map, somewhat similar to Freud's relationship to the notion of the unconscious, which he neither invented nor discovered but did make prominent in both the professional and later the public mind. Jackson never had such a wide audience, but he did promote the distinction to the point where it became common currency in the medical, especially neurological and psychiatric, literature. Correlative to his understanding of the nervous system as hierarchical, he came to believe that the positive symptoms could not be the result of the lesion or the disease itself, which was purely an absence, a destruction of part of the nervous system. It was sort of a notion that nothing can come from nothing. He saw those positive symptoms as a byproduct of the nervous system's attempt to reconstitute itself on a lower, more primitive level of organization. So to speak, they are the unintended consequences of an effort at restoration of function, albeit at a lower level. Disease is regression or, in his terms, dissolution. The negative consequences are the result of the tissue destruction itself. This “negation,” this absence or void, is the neurological basis of what the patient cannot do.

Freud has a somewhat similar understanding of psychosis, theorizing that the “negative symptoms” were a result of withdrawal of libidinal investment in the world, an absence resulting in an intolerable emptiness, and the “positive symptoms,” the hallucinations and delusions, were an attempt at repair, restorative or restitutive. This is a different take on Jackson's understanding of positive and negative symptoms, but it is probably indebted to

it. In contemporary psychiatry, the very different understanding of psychosis is as a consequence of neurochemical abnormality; yet Freud's formulation still resonates with the experience of psychosis itself by its sufferers. In modern medicine, the positive–negative symptom distinction is most often evoked in discussing schizophrenia, where the hallucinations, delusions and catatonic postures are understood as “positive” symptoms and the apathy, lack of motivation, weak or absent goal-directed thinking and emotional flatness are understood as “negative” symptoms. Jackson would probably reverse the labeling, but the differential remains his.

Another Jacksonian concept, “concomitance,” also emerged from his evolutionary hierarchical understanding of the nervous system. It was his attempt to find an answer to an age-old problem: How are mind and brain related? Does one act on the other, and if so, how? These are perhaps more philosophical than neurological problems, but at least one of Jackson's friends, James Taylor, and probably Jonathan Hutchison, thought that Jackson had given serious consideration to changing careers and becoming a professional, presumably academic, philosopher. Jackson, in all likelihood never came close to making such a decision, but he did feel, as a neurologist, that he needed his theory of the mind–body relationship, and that turned out to be concomitance. He felt he needed such a theory to protect neurology from being psychologized. He wanted it to remain a purely physical-biological science in which mental causation was not a factor.

Here Jackson got himself into deep waters indeed. Generations of philosophical thinkers had struggled to account for the relationship—interactive or otherwise—between mind and body. In the seventeenth century René Descartes, mathematician, physicist and philosopher, had developed, and to his satisfaction demonstrated, that there were two underlying substances whose modalities (i.e., particular manifestations) accounted for the experienced world. The two were extended substance and thinking substance. Descartes thus came up with a dualistic *metaphysics*, his system being metaphysical rather than scientific. But as soon as Descartes bifurcated reality he came up with, as it turned out, an intractable problem—how extended substance (matter) interacts with thinking matter (mind). How did one act on the other? His dualism did not even leave a possible locus for that interaction. Descartes came up with a “fudge.” He postulated that they met and interacted in the pineal gland of the brain. Even if this was so, it explained nothing and Descartes offered no explanation of the nature of their alleged interaction in the pineal gland, which left a conundrum for his philosophical and scientific successors.

His near-contemporary, Nicolas Malebranche, came up with a system called *occasionalism*. In it the substances do not interact, but rather on the “occasion” of a thought—say, of lifting my arm—God caused my arm to lift. Mind and body were parallel and not interactive. Rather, God is needed to make the whole system work and is the only source of causation. The God part would have had no appeal to the atheistic Jackson, but his concomitance is not so far from Malebranche’s occasionalism. For Jackson, too, the mental and the physical did not interact, but ran in parallel, or concomitant, one with the other. Lacking Malbranche’s God to keep them in sync, Jackson never offered an explanation of how concomitance came to be. He apparently felt he didn’t need to. But others did.

A generation after Descartes, the Dutch-Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza espoused a “monistic” metaphysics in which there was only one substance with infinite attributes, of which we can know only two, thinking substance and extended substance—thought and matter. Spinoza developed his system in a book called *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometric Order*. It is an a priori deductive system in which empirical evidence plays no part. This could not have been more uncongenial to the super-observer Hughlings Jackson, who in any case would not have been attracted to a monistic system. But ironically Jackson’s mind and body being concomitant with one another is not so different from Spinoza’s two attributes and one substance. Such a theory doesn’t require an explanation of interaction, for there is no interaction. They are two facets of the same thing.

Yet another “answer” was offered by the German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in the early eighteenth century. In a book called *The Monadology* Leibniz elaborated a metaphysics in which ultimate reality consists of “windowless” monads. Whether monads are physical or mental or both is not entirely clear but what is clear is that being windowless they do not interact or communicate with one another; rather they run in parallel, requiring no occasion or divine intervention because they’ve been preset to unfold spontaneously. Leibniz called this a “pre-established” harmony, using the analogy of clocks set at the same time that remain precisely synchronized. When Jackson was told that his theory of concomitance was but a restatement of the two-clock theory (actually Leibniz had an infinite number of clocks) he expressed indifference, saying, “It may be (Leibniz’s two-clock theory); it matters nothing for medical purposes whether it is or not.” What did matter was his belief that for every mental state there was an associated neural state and that while the two came about in parallel, one does not interact with the other. If he had been attracted to a philosophical career, that was in the distant past. Now he was a medical scientist, pure and simple, and he wanted purely empirical neurological explanations.

Jackson died in 1911 but his influence was powerfully manifested into the 1930s when he began to be forgotten. That influence manifests itself in Freud's theory of regression, and his evolutionary understanding of the human psyche, in the Gestalt psychologists' picking up on the integrative, holistic side of Jackson's thought, and particularly in the works of the great German, later American, neurologist Kurt Goldstein. Goldstein formulated his theories working with brain-injured soldiers during World War I. Those formulations were indebted to Jackson's notions of devolution in particular and Jackson's evolutionary model in general, and Goldstein readily acknowledged that debt. He later fled the Nazis and taught for many years at Columbia University's medical school where he wrote his masterly chief work, *The Organism*.

Like Jackson, Goldstein was a meticulous observer. His key observation in his rehabilitation service for the brain-injured soldiers was that they were, or at least many of them tended to be, ritually compulsive. For example, they would spend hours obsessively lining up their underwear on the edge of the shelf provided for that purpose. At first Goldstein interpreted this behavior as a defense against what he called "neurotic anxiety," the kind he had read about in Freud coming from intrapsychic conflict between ego, id and superego. And he thought that the optimal treatment for this sort of anxiety was interpretive psychotherapy—a sort of modified psychoanalysis. But as he continued to observe and work with these grievously wounded, brain-damaged soldiers, he came to the conclusion that this was not so. Rather, the soldiers were defending not against neurotic but what Goldstein called "catastrophic anxiety." Panic-level anxiety induced by trying to live in a world too complex for their compromised nervous systems to handle. They could not manage environmental shifts, particularly sudden ones, or complexity, and being and feeling overwhelmed they were flooded with catastrophic anxiety. They could not modify—enhance—their internal neurological capabilities, so instead they modified and simplified to the best of their abilities the external world—their surrounding environment—for example, by organizing as simply and of necessity as rigidly as possible that surround. Keeping their clothes as tightly organized as they could perfectly illustrated this adaptation. They were desperately in need of predictable order. For the clothes to be chaotically all over the place would have been overwhelming. Goldstein concluded that their compulsiveness was not a defense; rather it was an adaptation to living with a "devolved" nervous system, now organized in an evolutionary prior, more primitive way. Such a way of understanding the injured soldiers' behavior could have been written by Jackson. Goldstein's treatment recommendation was not interpretation of intrapsychic conflict, nor interpretation at all. Rather it was to support and reinforce the defense-adaptation. Goldstein also realized that

neurotic and compulsive anxieties could coexist, and that each case needed to be understood and treated accordingly. This was also pure Jackson.

And indeed, in contemporary psychotherapy and psychoanalysis many symptoms are now understood as defenses against and/or adaptations to both neurotic and catastrophic anxiety.

Goldstein's other major contribution was to view psychopathology, whether it was driven by organic damage or not, as entailing a loss of what he called the "abstract attitude," reducing the patient to functioning at the level of the "concrete attitude." Of course such a level of devolution could be partial, and again Goldstein emphasized that every case was an entity unto itself. His terminology "abstract and concrete" is fairly self-explanatory.

Goldstein saw the loss or limitation of the abstract attitude (i.e., of the ability to generalize and to be free of stimulus-bound here-and-now limitation) as the essence of psychopathology. And he believed it was whether that loss resulted from neurotic conflict or organic damage. Neurotic conflict could lead to very similar concreteness, just as could organic damage. In either case, it was reorganization on a lower evolutionary level, once again a very Jacksonian formulation.

That brings us to making explicit the psychotherapeutic clinical implications of Hughlings Jackson's works.

1. First and foremost, the patient is never his or her disease alone. It is vital for the success of any treatment that the patient be seen as, regarded as, and treated as a whole person. Further, there is the sense in which the disease is located in the whole of the patient, however localized particular manifestations of it may be, and that the disease has existed in the patient prior to his or her becoming symptomatic.

2. None of the above vitiates the therapeutic gains localization theory has made possible. There is a dialectical relationship between holistic and localized understandings of pathology. They are dynamically interconnected and optimal treatment addresses both sides of this polarity.

3. Pathology always results in some degree of devolution—indeed the pathology may be that devolution—and that devolution may be cause or consequence or both. It is reorganization at a simpler, evolutionarily prior level. It may be defense or adaptation or both. It is to be understood and respected.

4. Complexity is intrinsic etiologically, pathologically and therapeutically. There are interconnections everywhere, top-down and bottom-up controls, and disinhibition and deregulation of higher level controls are etiological in much of psychopathology. Again, this is true whether the regression is from Jackson's cortical to subcortical level (i.e., neurological) or Freud's notion of pathology resulting from ego impoverishment empowering the now uninhibited id and/or the tyrannical superego.

5. Psychotherapeutic treatment may be usefully addressed to the localized symptoms as in many behavioral interventions (e.g., the desensitization of a phobia), yet the therapist must always be aware that the symptom is not purely a local phenomenon. It resides in the person and may have complex, multiple inner connections and interactions within the rest of that person. This is not to say that the older psychoanalytic notion of symptom substitution is always true, but it sometimes is, and the clinician, no matter how locally focused the treatment, must always be aware of complexity and dynamic interaction with other parts of the psyche.

Psychotherapeutic treatment of a more dynamic sort that has a more holistic perspective may also usefully address psychopathology. Often the optimal treatment involves both symptom-focused and person-focused interventions. A deeply disturbed young patient in psychodynamic treatment with me believed that he wiggled when he saw a girl on the street. That fear-wish seriously deepened his social isolation. His wiggling may or may not have been delusional. We never figured that out. In any case, he went to a behaviorist for "dewiggling" and left believing that he had ceased to wiggle, which greatly reduced his social anxiety. He continued his work with me, which entailed, among other things, trying to understand his—possibly non-existent—wiggling in terms of its meaning(s) to him. I believe Jackson would have approved this treatment plan. He did not have Freud's notion of overdetermination to work with, yet his treatments all addressed the consequence of overdetermination. So I think I am on firm ground believing that elucidating, understanding, and healing each strand of that overdetermination is a central implication of Jackson's work.

Those Victorians may have been stodgy (though probably not as stodgy as we moderns regard them). Nevertheless, they have important things to say and to teach us so it behooves us to pay attention to them. And that is certainly the case with the work of John Hughlings Jackson, M.D.

Chapter 5:

The Therapist's *Schadenfreude*

When I went into full-time private practice over thirty years ago, my mother, who knew very little about psychotherapy, said to me, “Jerry, don’t make them feel too good too soon or they’ll leave.” She may have known very little about psychotherapy, yet Mother scored a bull’s-eye that made it manifest, in fact crystal clear, that the therapist’s and the patient’s interests don’t necessarily coincide. To the best of my knowledge this is a truth that is never discussed in the professional literature. It may not be too much to claim that Mother pioneered a whole new realm of countertransferential possibility.

I suspect that there are few therapists who haven’t thought (or said to themselves), “Oh, shit!” when a three-times-a-week, high-fee, cash-on-the-barrel-head patient announced he has a great job offer out of town—far out of town—that he is going to accept. Or when a delightful, similarly managed-care unencumbered patient excitedly shares that she has decided to marry her latest romantic interest who happens to live in Ulan Bator. Of course, unless we’re monsters, which most therapists are not, our feelings are mixed. We partially share our patients’ joy at their good fortune; yet that *Schadenfreude* is there. “Why doesn’t Bill take that really decent job offer right here in town? That wouldn’t be so risky.” “Why does Sally want to get married anyway? She’s having a ball in the singles scene.” It’s hard to keep such thoughts down, especially if we rationalize them as better choices for our patients. Yet the truth is that part of us (we hope just a part) doesn’t want the patient to choose a course of action that threatens our income (or other vital interests) and we’re rooting for the patient not to succeed. Even worse, there may be a part of us that needs our patients—for a variety of reasons—to stay sick. *Schadenfreude* indeed.

Our interests and emotions, apart from the financial, may also manifest themselves as a therapist’s *Schadenfreude*—his or her pleasure in the patient’s pain. Envy, for example, readily lends itself to this dynamic. So does envy’s close but importantly different relative, jealousy. Or hatred. Or the self-serving, self-righteous judgment that the patient, who has been living a reprehensible life (in the eyes of the therapist) doesn’t deserve to succeed. Of course we have all heard of Carl Rogers’ insistence that “unconditional acceptance” is the sine qua non of therapeutic efficacy, but this is an ideal frequently far from the reality of what is going on in the therapist’s soul. Although Donald Winnicott wrote a famous paper

on “Hate in the Countertransference,” and Harold Searles tells us that he falls both in love and in hate with every single one of his patients, these extremely uncomfortable feelings—envy, jealousy, hatred, anger, competition and judgment on the part of the therapist—are insufficiently acknowledged. The possibility that these feelings will manifest themselves in *Schadenfreude* is not only unacknowledged; it is simply unthought of and unthinkable. Yet it is so.

The danger isn’t so much that the therapist will consciously sabotage the patient—few of us are sufficiently psychopathic to do that, although a few are. Rather, it lies in an unconscious enactment of perceived self-interest, and of submerged emotions that eventuate in actions and interventions that damage the patient. Assuming basic good will on the part of the therapist, what is needed here is enhanced awareness enabled by personal therapy and dynamic supervision.

These days intensified competition and increasing interference by intrusive and controlling insurance companies exacerbate the problem. Even the most ethical and devoted therapists may be influenced, to the patient’s detriment, by (usually) unconscious considerations of self-interest. The scientific formulation of my mother’s intuitive insight is the notion of “flight into health.” The self-serving potential of such “flight into health” interpretations jumps right out at you. At the risk of parodying clumsy flight into health interpretations, let me suggest something like the following scenario. “John, your thinking that you are feeling better, so much better that you can leave therapy, actually indicates that you are doing worse.” John: “Ugh?” “Yes, you’re convincing yourself that you’re just fine, so you don’t have to look at some painful issues, some deep-seated problems.” “Doc, you must be out of your mind. My only problem is paying for the therapy.” The therapist: “John, you should start coming twice a week, instead of once, so we can really deal with your resistance, expressed in your desire to leave therapy, at a greater depth.”

Now John may indeed be fleeing into health in the service of avoidance, but then he may not be doing so at all. This is a tricky business at best because the therapist has skin in the game on the side of John’s staying in treatment and *Schadenfreude*—his wish that John be really “sick”—may be at work here. It’s always hard to know.

Of course the patient is also bringing some pretty irrational stuff to the table that makes sorting out the therapist’s motivation even more difficult. For example, I am convinced that all—or nearly all—patients in long-term intensive therapy have an unconscious belief/wish that the therapist convey immortality on them. Freud thought that an analysis can never be

completely successful because the analysand has an unconscious wish to be hermaphroditic —to have the advantages of both genders without the liabilities of either, and no can do, no matter how skillful an analyst is. This is his conclusion in his late, great paper “Analysis Terminable and Interminable.” The existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre came to a similar conclusion within a different theoretical framework. As Sartre, borrowing some terminology from Hegel puts it, “Man wants to become the in-itself-for-itself.”—the thing, substantial, solid, self-identical that is aware of (has consciousness of) its substantiality. But things don’t think and thought is not substantial. Sartre concludes, “Man is a futile passion.” The analyst and the existentialist in their very different formulations agree that the patient-seeker cannot succeed and is infinitely frustrated because what he/she fundamentally wants is a self-contradictory impossibility. I wish to put a different spin on this notion. Total satisfaction in therapy is impossible because the patient’s deepest wish—for immortality—cannot be fulfilled, at least not by the therapist. This ultimate frustration engenders rage, which is inexpressible because it is unarticulated. Patients don’t even know that they are angry that the therapist cannot deliver the immortality they seek.

One aspect of this dynamic is transference because parents, originally seen as omnipotent protectors, cannot in the end protect against fate and the inevitability of death. They can’t deliver the goods any more than the therapist can. The parents, who have gotten us into this vale of tears from which nobody escapes alive, are doubly at fault, having the responsibility for both our lives and our deaths. And so in the unconscious is the therapist. A great deal of rage against parents is driven by this unconscious disappointment. Then all this is transferred onto the therapist. Not being insane the patient can’t possibly admit, or even gain awareness of, this wish that cannot be fulfilled, let alone the rage that unfulfillment engenders.

My suggestion that such an unconscious fantasy drama is going on may seem improbable but it is no less unlikely than Melanie Klein’s notion of an unconscious fantasy of destroying the good breast out of envy. In fact, it is less improbable and I do have some evidence for it. On the infrequent occasions I’ve suggested to patients that they are enraged at me because I can’t prevent their ultimate demise, it has resonated, just as my interpretation to alcoholic patients that their drinking themselves to oblivion and awakening in the morning is an unconscious enactment of death and resurrection which is deeply reassuring does. Such processes do go on.

Now the therapist, who no more than the patient has the slightest notion of what is happening, inchoately senses the patient’s radical disillusionment and impossible demand,

all of which induces feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and counter-rage in the therapist. Deeply hurt without knowing it, let alone knowing *why* he or she is hurt, the therapist experiences (probably unconsciously) *Schadenfreude*, the retaliatory wish that the patient, who has induced such painful feelings, not only not be granted the impossible wish, but suffer commensurate punishment for having such a wish and having made such a demand.

At the rational level, the therapist's and the patient's interests coincide; each needs the other to succeed. Yet in the underworld of unconscious desire, mutual *Schadenfreude* reigns. The economic and the existential collude to intensify the therapist's *Schadenfreude*. The economic is more easily dealt with. Most of us would be ashamed of hurting our patients to fatten our wallets. What is needed here is awareness of the role that economic self-interest plays in our work. But at the deeper existential levels of envy and retaliation for impossible expectations, the therapist's *Schadenfreude* is not so easily dealt with.

Chapter 6:

Gateway Drugs

Lawrence Ferlinghetti had it right when he wrote:

The pennycandystore beyond the El
is where I first
fell in love
with unreality
Jellybeans glowed in the semi-gloom
of that September afternoon
A cat upon the counter moved among
the licorice sticks
and tootsie rolls
and Oh Boy Gum¹

When I first heard those lines in Lenny Bernstein’s setting of them I thought of my alcoholic patient (I am a chemical dependency specialist) who told me that his “gateway drug was No-Doz.” What could that possibly mean? The concept of “gateway drugs” usually refers to the use of nicotine and alcohol as predecessors of pot smoking, which in turn serves as a prelude to hard drug (heroin and crack cocaine) use. This is an asymmetrical relationship—there is an empirically established robust connection between the use of hard drugs and the earlier use of gateways, but it is not the case (or anything near to it) that gateways inevitably lead to hard drugs. But No-Doz use as a gateway to alcohol abuse?

I asked what he meant. “Well, when I was in high school I came to believe that no matter how far behind I was, how unprepared I was for the exam or how unresearched the paper was, I could pull my chestnuts out of the fire by taking No-Doz and staying up all night to study or write. The little cardboard box with its sliding drawer glowed with a magical light, and fingering it when it was in my pocket instantly soothed my anxiety. And my No-Doz use did somewhat raise what otherwise would have been abysmally low grades. Then I discovered alcohol and it was all downhill from there.”

My patient had fallen “in love with unreality.” It was not the pharmacology of caffeine that took him down the slippery slope. It was the magic with which he imbued the little

white tablets. He had formed what the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut called an “idealizing transference” to No-Doz, experiencing it as an all-powerful, protective parent who would snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Once that mindset of a belief in a magical rescuer existed, it was easily transferred to a more pernicious drug.

That raises the question of why religion, which is also (from my point of view) a “falling in love with unreality” doesn’t serve as a “gateway drug” to addiction or substance abuse. But it doesn’t. The rather strong evidence is that the correlation is the exact opposite. Religious belief and practice tends, so to speak, to inoculate against substance abuse. Which is not to say that some religious people don’t become substance abusers. They do. But the negative correlation between the two is real. How to explain this? I would speculate that the solidarity of tradition and community, which is real, protects, and that the supernatural belief system, however illusionary (or not), provides a comfort that makes abusive drugs less appealing and less necessary. And perhaps the moral structure inculcated also serves as a protective barrier.

Of course religious practice itself could also be considered an addiction and historically it has sometimes been a highly pernicious one. But that is another question.

¹ The fiftieth anniversary edition of Ferlinghetti’s *A Coney Island of the Mind* is now available and it is wonderful.

Spinoza's "Cognitive Therapy" of Addiction

"Philosophical therapy" has a long and distinguished history. Although contemporary academic philosophy, at least in the United States and the United Kingdom, tends to concern itself with language analysis and the elucidation of arcane technical questions, the Western philosophical tradition has always had a therapeutic purpose. That is, it has sought to discover and elucidate the good life and to demonstrate how one may live it. Most of the great philosophers have also taught ways to remove impediments to traveling the road to the good life; that is, in our terms, they have recognized and tried to deal with resistance. This is nowhere more true than in the case of Spinoza, whose entire work, for all of its technical brilliance on its epistemological and metaphysical sides, is about freeing men from bondage and leading them to what he calls "blessedness."

The work of Plato, the father of Western philosophy, is explicitly therapeutic, both insofar as it adumbrates a therapeutic technique, which he calls dialectic, the search for truth through dialogue and mutual questioning—the famous Socratic method—and insofar as it establishes a value system. It is an ontological/ethical vision that is intended to serve as a guide to entering into a journey toward insight and fulfillment.

The neo-Platonists such as Plotinus were even more explicitly therapeutic and this therapeutic aim of philosophy becomes overt in the works of the stoics and the Epicureans. Albert Ellis credits the Greek stoic philosopher Epictetus with being the spiritual father of his rational emotive therapy (RET). Non-western philosophical traditions, including the Indian and the Chinese, have also been therapeutic in aim, intent, and technique. In the past few years, professional philosophers have started to practice psychotherapy, drawing both on contemporary philosophical analysis and on the tradition from Plato on down. It is unclear how successful, economically or therapeutically, philosophical therapy has been, but it has received a good deal of attention, including coverage in the New York Times.

Thus, we come to Spinoza. I've long admired the man, and have found his metaphysical vision both beautiful and plausible. I have been fascinated by his life and its cultural/historical context. I've also long pondered how, if at all, his insights into human nature and the nature of reality could be used in, or incorporated into, psychotherapy,

particularly the psychotherapy of addiction. Since his theme is escape from bondage, he seems a fitting therapist for the addicted.

From the beginning Spinoza has been a controversial figure. Many have hated him and he has been denounced by a large variety of enemies. He has driven dogmatists and authoritarians of all stripes up the wall. That, too, has recommended him to me. His admirers have included Bertrand Russell and Sigmund Freud, which are equally strong recommendations.

Spinoza lived in a violent and intellectually revolutionary time. He, himself, both in his person and his thought, was part of that revolution. His thought cannot be separated from his life. As I see that life it was a struggle for liberation, for freedom, which was only partly successful. His blind spots and sexual repression prevented the man who wrote so movingly "Of Human Bondage" and its escape from becoming fully liberated. He was not quite free himself. I see him as a deeply conflicted human being. Stephen Nadler (1999), his most recent biographer, disagrees with me on this. His Spinoza is far more placid than mine.

I have decided to use a dramatic format to acquaint the reader with the man and his thought. After this, perhaps histrionic, exposition of his philosophy, I will try to show how at least some of his ideas can be adapted to the treatment of addiction. I have used the device of a chorus as an interlocutor to give voice to Spinoza's unconscious thoughts and feelings, as well as a commentator to give historical background and context. He was suggested by Shakespeare's chorus in *Henry V* and by Thornton Wilder's Stage Manager in *Our Town*, although he most certainly doesn't exist at their aesthetic level. The Chorus is also a psychotherapist in a sense, in fact Spinoza's therapist. Unfortunately, he suffers from unanalyzed countertransference, which manifests, among other ways, in lack of therapeutic tact. The Chorus's intense emotional involvement with Spinoza is, in its own way, another entrapment. Therapists, too, become enslaved to emotions if not to drugs. In addition to the Chorus, I have assumed dramatic license for the introduction of anachronistic characters including Nietzsche, William James, and Freud who question, interact with, and disagree with Spinoza.

SPINOZA

Act One, Scene 1

(Interior of the synagogue in Amsterdam. On the dais sit Rabbis Morteira and Aboab. There are black candles on either side of the rabbis, and down the aisles. Rabbi Isaac Aboab rises

and speaks.)

ABOAB: The chiefs of the counsel do you to wit that having long known the evil opinions and works of Baruch De Espinoza, they have endeavored by diverse ways and promises to withdraw him from his evil ways. and are unable to find a remedy, but on the contrary, they have had every day more knowledge of the abominable heresies practiced and taught by him, and of other awful deeds he performed, and have of this many trustworthy witnesses who have disposed and borne witness in the presence of the said Espinoza, and by whom he stood convicted, and all of this having been examined in the presence of the Gentleman Elders of this community, they resolved with the rabbi's consent, that the said Espinoza be put to the *herem*, and banished from the nation of Israel, as indeed they proclaim the following *herem* on him:

(Morteira blows the shofar-its mournful sounds fade slowly as Aboab continues to speak)

By the decree of the Angels and the words of the Saints, we ban, cut off, curse, and anathematize Baruch De Espinoza, with the anathem a wherewith Joshua anathematized Jericho, with the curse which Elisha laid upon the children, with all the curses written in the Torah:

Cursed be he by day, cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lieth down, and cursed be he when he riseth up; cursed be he when he goeth out, and cursed he he when he cometh in; the Lord shall not pardon him; the wrath and fury of the Lord will be kindled against this man, and bring down upon him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law; and the Lord will destroy his name from under the heavens, and, to his undoing, the Lord will cut him off from all the tribes of Israel, with all the curses of the firmament which are written in the Book of Law; but ye who cleave unto the Lord God, love all of you this day!

CONGREGATION: Amen.

(Shofar is blown again.)

ABOAB: we ordain that no one may communicate with him verbally or in writing, nor show him any favor, nor stay under the same roof with him, nor be within four cubits of him, nor read anything composed or written by him.

(Shofar sounds once more mournfully. Spinoza appears as the synagogue fades, He tries to appear nonchalant, yet is clearly profoundly disturbed. He struggles to deny this.)

SPINOZA: This does not force me to do anything I would not have done of my own accord, had I not been afraid of the scandal. Fools! They should know they cannot cajole or bribe me in to accepting superstition. Rabbi Manasseh might have persuaded me with his critical mind and broadness of thought, but he has left for England on his mad project to convince Cromwell to readmit the Jews. Absurd! As for the two who pronounced the ban, they are fools; I no longer respect them. In any case, I must needs have gone my own way quietly among my people if they had allowed it, but since they haven't, I will do quite well without them.

CHORUS: Things haven't changed very much. This could be Salman Rushdie and the mullahs. Baruch De Espinoza, age 24, has just been excommunicated by the Jewish congregation of Amsterdam, this Amsterdam congregation of Marranos and children of Marranos, Spanish and Portuguese forced converts to Catholicism, many of whom were secret Jews. The Iberian Peninsula remains ruled by absolute monarchy and lies in the icy cruel hands of the Inquisition. Spinoza's father fled to the United Provinces of the Netherlands, themselves formerly subject to the Spanish king. The Jewish congregation and the Dutch burghers are united by a memory of persecution by the hated Spanish. The United Provinces have become a republic, the freest state in Europe. The province of Holland, with its capital city of Amsterdam, offers more freedom of conscience, of speech, of religion than has hitherto been known in Christendom. Yet that freedom of conscience is far from absolute. The Calvinist orthodoxy is as oppressive, repressive, and benighted as their former rulers. They are locked in a bitter struggle with the liberal Republican government of Holland. The Republic attracts all sorts of refugees from persecution: Quakers, Levelers, Ranters, Seekers, Mennonites, Anabaptists, and God knows who else. The commercial oligarchy that rules the Jewish community is paradoxically allied with the most reactionary forces in Holland. These former New Christians, now become New Jews, are a highly educated bunch, professionals and merchants, important members of the Dutch East Indies Company. No longer Christians, they are not really Jews either; their spiritual leaders are obsessed with re-Judaizing them. Ahoab, Morteira, and the Elders fear the widespread religious doubt, the freethinking, the skepticism, and the secularism that pervade so much of their congregation. Its long experience as a clandestine secret society has perhaps made them pseudo-Jews, as once they were pseudo-Christians. The

rabbis must be vigilant. Those who have not become skeptics have become fanatics. Like their former persecutors, they persecute that which they do not understand and that which seems to threaten their sacred heritage—a heritage so many have died for in Spain and Portugal. The royal powers of Spain and Portugal continue to support the Inquisition, which continues its bloody work unabated. As if that horror is not enough, the Thirty Years War has just ended, leaving vast stretches of Europe devastated and decimated. Across the Channel, the English have revolted, killed their king, established a republic, and seen it degenerate into a dictatorship. The center does not hold, the certainties—spiritual, metaphysical, ecclesiastical, intellectual, political, and economic—of a thousand years crumble, and extraordinary vistas open, engendering overpowering fear. Ideologies that have given men security and meaning are assaulted, and that assault is defended against with murderous rage. It won't be long until the witch trials start. Such is the world in which Baruch De Espinoza has been excommunicated.

(Spinoza is once again seen walking away from the Amsterdam synagogue. Again, he looks back.)

CHORUS: You're afraid, aren't you?

SPINOZA: No.

CHORUS: Pissing in your pants.

SPINOZA No.

CHORUS: Cut off forever from friends and family, from community, forever to be an exile, a pariah, a vile object of contempt. (Spinoza shakes his head and frowns.) Oh, those goyim! Your new friends. You can't trust 'em.

SPINOZA: You see how I can trust the Jews.

CHORUS: Look at me. Tell me you're not afraid.

SPINOZA: I'm not.

CHORUS: Look at yourself. Tell yourself you're not . . . afraid. Forever sundered from your roots, your people, your. . .

SPINOZA: Shut up! No! I'm going to the destiny I have chosen. (Runs offstage.)

Scene 2

MANASSEH: These are exciting times. Men are full of discovery. The New Science illuminates all of nature. The artists, like my friend Rembrandt, have learned to show what the new thinkers have discovered—a world luminous with the possibility of rational knowledge. Spain is in eclipse. We need not be so fearful, for Judaism is a rational religion—it too illuminates and casts light, not mystical but cognitive. We must not be afraid of change. The world, especially here in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, grows gentler. Our heritage has nothing to fear from the new knowledge or from the innovators. I have friends among the Cartesians. There is nothing in the Cartesian doctrine that threatens or contradicts anything in Judaism. The new science enriches us, as does Dutch tolerance. Even the sects have things they can teach us. We are too afraid. We have business relations with the Dutch, with the whole world, and that doesn't frighten us. Why do we hold back when it comes to their philosophers and their scientists?

MORTEIRA: You don't hold back. You have become more Gentile than Jewish. You talk rubbish with fools and endanger yourself, our Commandments, and our youth. Ugh! (Spits) Stay with the Torah and the Commandments. All of truth is therein. Philosophers breed apostasy. The Jewish philosophers are no better than your Descartes. Our educated ones are swollen with pride. We have already put you to the ban once; use your mind in defense of our sacred heritage. You are corrupting your most brilliant pupil.

MANASSEH: Give up your dark vision, your medievalism, your blindness. Torah is truth and truth is one, you have naught to fear from my worldliness. Our congregation is of the world and not frightened by it, only you. Do not reject the new knowledge.

ABOAB: Caution, you go too far: You allegorize dangerously. You cite pagans, Christian philosophers, dissolute poets showing off your knowledge of all that corrupts. Guard the truth that was revealed at Sinai; you need but follow the Law of Moses. Salvation lies in following the Law of Moses. Many have died for it.

(Lights dim, a projection shows an auto-da-fe. A crowd of well-dressed Spanish men and women are in a grandstand. Stakes piled high with wood are visible in front of the grandstand. In the second projection, bound men and women are surrounded by Dominican

friars in black hoods and robes, holding crosses. In the third projection, the heretics and Judaizers are bound to the stakes. Some are weeping, and all are transfixed with terror. Christian prayers are sung. In the next projection, the flames burn, and we hear prolonged screaming. The audience nibbles candy as the screaming continues. In the final projection flames have consumed almost all .)

CHORUS: An act of faith—auto-da-fe—isn't piety wonderful? The sanctity of the faith has been preserved. Salvation in Christ shall not be threatened by salvation through the Law of Moses. Burning flesh—we've had a lot of that. Babies burned alive at Auschwitz, not to mention the smell of the crematoriums. Purity of the blood—it wasn't enough to convert if your grandmother's grandfather had Jewish blood the Spanish came up with that. Goebbels couldn't do much better. After the expulsion of 1492, many converted and distinguished themselves as Spanish Catholics. They became physicians, cardinals, lawyers, professors, businessmen. They were too successful. Were they sincere? Some, some not. In any case, the purges of the secret Judaizers began. The Inquisition relied on torture spies, false witnesses, terror to destroy the Marranos. The Inquisition burned them, pious Christians and secret Judaizers alike for the glory of God and the love of Christ—acts of faiths indeed.

(Scene returns to the synagogue where the three rabbis are once again talking.)

ABOAB: Juan Prado wants us to lift his *herem*. He is willing to do penance. His opposition is not as perverse as Baruch's; he wants to return to the community. What shall we make of his skeptical doubts? He studies too much philosophy and shows off his knowledge. We shall humble him and he will return to the Torah and the Law of Moses.

MORTEIRA: not so with Baruch; he has ceased to observe the 613 commandments. His father conformed outwardly but disrespected the rabbinate. I do not say the father deserves the son but I fear for his salvation.

MANASSEH: (interrupting) Michael Spinoza was a leader of this community and a pious Jew. To you, all who are not fanatical are suspect. I have always taught the Law of Moses, yet you doubt me.

MORTEIRA: As is written, one lives by the Torah or one does not.

CHORUS: (Offstage left) Much bullshit is written.

ABOAB: Many have died for the Law of Moses. (Angrily) I will tolerate no deviation.

CHORUS: (To audience) Aboab knows of what he speaks. He has just returned from Brazil where the Portuguese are assuring doctrinal purity.

(Projection of the Jewish street in the Dutch Brazilian colony of Pernambuco. It fades. Second slide shows Portuguese troops and revolting black slaves, killing, burning, and pillaging. Aboab speaks as the slides of the destruction of Pernambuco are on the scrim.)

ABOAB: Volumes would not suffice to relate our miseries. The enemy spread over the field and wood seeking here for booty and there for life. Many of us died, sword in hand, others from want. "They now rest in the cold earth. We survivors were exposed to death in every form; those accustomed to luxuries were glad to seize moldy bread to stay their hunger.

CHORUS: The rabbi didn't make out so well in Brazil. Once the Portuguese defeated the Dutch, it was all over for the Jews.

ABOAB: (Turn toward Morteira) Even you don't know the Inquisition at first hand. You grew up in Venice, lived in the Medici court, and then came here to lead the congregation. You do not know how precious and precarious the treasure you defend is. MORTEIRA: Nonsense. I didn't need to be in Pernambuco, or to be attacked by the Portuguese to understand my task here. The Spanish have forgotten how to be Jews. They are full of skepticism and doubt. They have become too worldly. They believe neither Judaism nor Christianity. They know too much Latin. They should emulate my pupil who fasted forty days so that he would forget his Latin. I know enough.

MANASSEH: Yet they risked their lives to return to Judaism.

MORTEIRA: We must allow no deviation. To open the door but a little is to see the entire structure defiled. Baruch has begun to speak openly. He denies the immortality of the soul. He mocks the Jews and denies that we are the chosen people. He maintains that the Law applies only to the ancient commonwealth. It is time to act.

ABOAB: Bring him in. (Servant leads Spinoza in.) Baruch, we are told that you teach abominations.

SPINOZA: I've done nothing to affront the community.

MORTEIRA: You have left your business and spend your time studying with the atheist Van dan Ende.

ABOAB: Your friends are unbelievers. You are absent from synagogue and seldom seen in the community.

MANASSEH: We have decided to stipend you so that you may return to your talmudic studies at which you so excel.

ABOAB: (To Manasseh) You are responsible for this—your associates are not much better than his. Cajole your errant pupil back to sanity.

MANASSEH: My Gentile friends do no harm. They have the best minds (Aboab spits) of our time. My friendships with them strengthen my Judaism. Read my books. You will see the strength of my commitment.

SPINOZA: (Aside) Not very good books—fuzzy allegorical interpretations of Scripture.

MORTEIRA: Let us not quarrel among ourselves. We are here to deal with Baruch.

SPINOZA: Why did you set an assailant on me who tried to stab me as I left the theater'

MORTEIRA: (Shocked) That's an outrageous accusation. You are the one inquested here. There is naught we can do to prevent reaction to your odious behavior and repellent teachings.

SPINOZA: And you set spies on me! Your witnesses pretended to be my friends, and wheedled statements out of me. I do not proselytize. These are my private thoughts; I attend the synagogue; I pay my communal taxes and poor dues. You have no right to demand more of me.

MORTEIRA: Take care—you are close to having the ban pronounced upon you.

SPINOZA: (Sarcastically) I will teach you the form of excommunication, and all rites of the *herem* in repayment for your kindness in having taught me Hebrew.

MORTEIRA: (Furious) You are outrageous! You have no respect. This is your final opportunity to recant.

ABOAB: Do you deny that you are seldom to be seen in the synagogue?

SPINOZA: My affairs take me elsewhere.

ABOAB: Two witnesses have testified that you deny the immortality of the soul, deny the chosenness of the Jewish people, deny that the Law of Moses is binding on us, maintaining instead that it is but the civil law of the ancient Hebrew commonwealth .

MORTEIRA: [Angrily] And mock the Creator who you say is no creator, but simply the totality of things.

SPINOZA: You understand my thoughts but poorly.

MORTEIRA: Do you or do you not teach these things?

SPINOZA: Scripture itself demonstrates that the Law is but the laws of the ancient commonwealth, which no longer exists. It makes no sense to obey the laws of a state that has perished. The Bible teaches no theoretical postulates. The prophets were not philosophers. They spoke to simple men—the multitude—in the language of their time and place. Scripture was written by men like us at diverse times and places. If we are to understand it, we must understand their personality, their historical situation, their language, and the audience to which they spoke. They used images, metaphors, illustrations that appealed to the imagination, not to reason. They were not philosophers! They were moral teachers with exceptionally vivid imaginations.

MORTEIRA: Vivid imaginations! They speak for God.

MANASSEH: There is no heresy in this. (The other rabbis stare angrily at him .) Judaism does not dictate belief, only practice. Baruch, will you not conform) Practice the rites of your people?

ABOAB: (to Manasseh) You are a menace; yet if you can persuade him, we will be grateful.

MORTEIRA: (to Spinoza) You maintain that even Moses was but a man of vivid imagination?

SPINOZA: All the prophets teach but one simple thing, that men should be just and charitable and that acting so constitutes the true worship of God. Rites are indifferent. Each man should practice those that render him more just and more charitable. Interpret Scripture in terms of itself, look at what it says in context, and you will have to agree with me.

ABOAB: (Angrily) What arrogance! You know more than the rabbis who wrote the Talmud?

SPINOZA: Yes.

MORTEIRA: Incredible! (Sputters) You are beyond . . . (Morteira is so upset that he is unable to continue speaking. He stammers several times and then recovers.) And the Zohar? You disavow it also?

SPINOZA: Superstitious rubbish!

MANASSEH: How do you explain the survival of the Jewish people?

SPINOZA: Gentile hatred has preserved the Jews. Our hatred of the Gentiles and our exclusiveness have made them hate us. The Hebrew Nation has lost all its grace and beauty.

RABBIS: (All three interrupting) Outrageous!

SPINOZA: . . . as one would expect after the defeats and persecutions it has gone through.

MANASSEH: Baruch, I cannot defend this. Be reasonable, forbear these insane teachings and return to us.

MORTEIRA: It is of lesser import, but you also teach that property should be held in common, which would destroy us.

ABOAB: Let us stick to his heresies, they are dreadful enough. (To Spinoza) you deny the immortality of the soul?

SPINOZA: The mind is the idea of the body; without the body there can be no mind. They are two sides of the same coin.

ABOAB: You equivocate.

MORTEIRA: Baruch De Espinoza, I give you a last chance to avoid the *herem*. If you must, you can continue to attend Van dan Ende's school.

MANASSEH: Even our most pious brothers send their children there to learn Latin.

MORTEIRA: We abjure you, return to your Judaic studies, write commentaries for scholars that can do no harm. You have turned away from worldly pursuits, given up your business interests. Use your mind in the service of Judaism, honor our martyrs, obey the Commandments, help others to find salvation through the Law of Moses . . .

SPINOZA: (interrupting) Salvation lies neither in following the Law of Moses nor the Law of Jesus; it lies solely in Reason—in the quest for adequate ideas that do not partake of the realm of the imagination. I realize that the multitude cannot be guided by reason alone. They are dominated by passion, and need rites and ceremonies that will externally shape them so that they will follow the path of Reason that is open but to a few.

A BOAB: (furious) This insanity is reason?

MANASSEH: Baruch, you did love me. Will you not . . . ?

SPINOZA: I must be true to myself I must espouse what the inner light of reason shows to be clear and distinct.

MANASSEH: I cannot support you in this.

MORTEIRA: We have offered to stipend you in a life of scholarship if you but abjure your abominations. Have you no heart? How can you slander your own people who have suffered so deeply for God, for Torah, for the Law of Moses. You are a monster.

SPINOZA: I do what I must. (Exits.)

ABOAB: (to Morteira) It is agreed; he will be placed under the *herem*. (Morteira nods agreement, vehemently) Prepare the black candles.

(The lights dim on the rabbis, who fade. The CHORUS is again visible.)

CHORUS: It was a kind of cognitive dissonant phenomenon. You know, the severity of initiation theory—the tougher it is the more you value it. Go through Parris Island and you consider the Marines the greatest. It was the same for the rebs and their congregation. So many had died so horribly for it, the Law of Moses must be of transcendent value. And Spinoza—crazy kid—brilliant recruit to the Amsterdam counterculture—rebelled against the materialism of the Elders, driving them up the wall. He knows better than to suck back up to the rabbis like that Juan Prado they were talking about. He saw what happened to Uriel da Costa.

(Lights fade.)

Scene 3

(Synagogue is again filled with worshipers. A man stripped to the waist is tied to a pillar and is being whipped. The congregation sings psalms. As he is released he speaks.)

DA COSTA: When I came to Amsterdam from Portugal and became a Jew again, I was disappointed. These Jews were not at all like the Hebrews of the Bible. I started to question and soon doubted my new faith. They drove me out. At first I was glad, but then I couldn't stand the loneliness, so I returned. After I recanted my heresies, the Verger came to me, and with a scourge of leather thongs, gave me nine and thirty stripes. During the time of my whipping, they sang a psalm. After this I prostrated myself, the doorkeeper holding up my head, whilst all, old and young, passed over me, stepping with one foot on the lower part of my legs. (Da Costa picks himself up, leaves the stage, and the congregation resumes singing until a shot is heard. Chorus enters.)

CHORUS: That was Uriel da Costa shooting himself. Uriel was a weak-willed ass, unable to endure excommunication, but he hardly deserved what he got from the multitude. I guess I haven't told you about the multitude. That is one of our hero's favorite words. It is the multitude who burn the heretics and Judaizers, the multitude who drove Aboab out of Pernambuco, the multitude who savaged Europe for thirty years for the greater glory of God. The multitude of popes and

cardinals, rabbis and generals, bourgeoisie and peasants, all who are incapable of philosophical insight. Our friend never did figure out how to deal with the multitude, though he thought he did. Uriel da Costa, vacillating rebel, subjecting himself to humiliation to regain membership in the synagogue, is our hero's model of what not to be.

Scene 4

(Spinoza and his half-sister Rebekeh enter.)

SPINOZA: Take the inheritance. I want only a bed. I give you what I couldn't let you steal from me. Here is my judgment against you. [Hands her legal papers.] Enjoy the goods I have given you.

REBEKEH: You are crazy. You will end like da Costa. You threw away Father's business, spend all your time with that atheistic ex-priest, Van dan Ende, and his revolutionary friends. You despise and revile your own people. I hate you. You love Gentile heretics more than you love us,

SPINOZA: I freely give you what you try to steal from me. Why do you hate me? (Exit Rebekeh.) She is like all the rest. They think the only thing they can lose is money. The elders, the rabbis, Father, my sister, my brother-in-law, my brother can think of nothing but money. It was the same for me when I ran the business. Then I perceived that I pursued a phantom and turned elsewhere to find a cure for my disease.

(Chorus enters.)

CHORUS: Hated your father, didn't you? You're really socking it to him , telling him to shove it, rotate it, cram it. You hate Rebekeh too—dragged her through the courts and then threw your victory in her face. I could go on. You despise your brother in-law even more, and I'm not so sure you don't detest your brother.

SPINOZA: (Shocked) I do not hate my father, but I do not wish to live the life he lived. My sister and brother-in-law are not likable, but I do not hate them.

CHORUS: No? Actions speak louder than words. You are motivated by hate, not love. (Spinoza looks confused.) Your father married that bitch, didn't he, after your mother died. The bitch died too, but not soon enough for you. Your father pushed you into the business and then he died leaving you high and dry .

SPINOZA: Hate my father? No. No, my father was my friend. He sent me to Van dan Ende's school to study Latin as well as to the synagogue school. He was always loving toward me.

CHORUS: That's a lie. He loved your brothers more. He rejected you When you took his anticlericism and skepticism about ritual too far, didn't he?

SPINOZA: No.

CHORUS: How about the psycho-bitch from hell?

SPINOZA: You mean my stepmother? Father had a right to marry whomever he pleased.

CHORUS: You are the world's leading expert on unrequited love, all prettied up to be sure—in fact, presented as the highest form of love—but it is all bullshit. Your father was your first experience of unrequited love.

SPINOZA: (Angrily) No! My father's religion, his devotion to charity and justice, is his heritage to me.

CHORUS: He didn't reject you in the end?

SPINOZA: Perhaps a little. He had mixed feelings. It was okay.

CHORUS: Oh, now that I think about it, he wasn't your first unrequited love. That was your mother. She abandoned you, didn't she? Died, leaving you a devastated 6-year-old with a busy, emotionally distant, uninvolved, only abstractly caring father. (Nastily) You haven't got over that, have you?

SPINOZA: Shut up, you bastard. Shut up. (Puts his hands over his ears and runs off.)

(Projection onto the scrim. Slide of the Jewish cemetery at Ouderkerk showing the tombstone of Spinoza's mother. Spinoza stands before the tombstone weeping.)

CHORUS: Why are you weeping, you who say a free man feels only joy? It's interesting that after your excommunication, you came here and lived as close to your mother's grave as you possibly could. Was your mother's death so traumatic that you can never again risk loving and losing a woman?

SPINOZA: You're despicable.

Scene 5

(Van dan Ende's school.)

VAN DAN ENDE: Descartes has undone scholasticism, old forms crumble. Take nothing on faith, question all, question the sacred books, doubt, doubt, doubt, doubt all that can be doubted.

STUDENT 1: This is a Latin lesson? My father would withdraw me if he knew what you teach here.

STUDENT 2: Don't tell your father, you ass. The professor is the best teacher in Amsterdam. There is no place more exciting than this school.

VAN DAN ENDE: The Calvinists are trying to silence me—to silence all free thought. Dutch freedom is in danger. (Projection shows Van dan Ende on the gallows.)

CHORUS: Radicalism, involvement in hare-brained revolutionary schemes, systematic doubt of everything, even atheism—no wonder Van del Ende ended on the gallows. Quixotic to the last, he joined a rebellion against the French king after having been driven from Holland. The rest were beheaded. He wasn't deemed worthy of that honor, so he was hanged.

VAN DAN ENDE: Property should be held in common. Kings should be driven from their thrones. The people should rule. Descartes hasn't gone far enough. He upholds the Church. I have been a priest, and believe me, the Church is always in the service of the crown. It is all benighted ignorance, justification of the powers that be, using people's fears to enslave them.

STUDENT 3: Should I join a communistic community?

VAN DAN ENDE: I have many friends among the Mennonites, Remonstrants, and the Collegiants. You meet them here, and through your acquaintance with them, you will find the proper path.

STUDENT 4: When are we going to go over the accusative? I have it confused with the dative.

SPINOZA: Do you doubt all religions?

VAN DAN ENDE: Religious doctrines are all foolishness. Their purpose is to keep men enslaved, yet there is a common ethical core, honored more in the breach than in the observance, that I respect. Property should be equally distributed; my Leveler friends are trying to end the exploitation of the poor. I hate all forms of mystification. Men are blinded by holy water so they may be stolen from. (To Spinoza) Baruch, you don't look yourself today.

SPINOZA: I am no longer a Baruch. Henceforth, I am Benedict—Benedictus.

VAN DAN ENDE: You are equally blessed in Latin or in Hebrew. Your mastery of Latin has progressed so far that you wish to translate your name into Latin?

SPINOZA: I am no longer a member of the Jewish congregation of Amsterdam, so it is not fitting that I be called Baruch.

CHORUS: They didn't take your name away. They can't deprive you of that.

SPINOZA: I no longer wish to be Baruch. I am no longer a Jew.

CHORUS: Are you then a Christian?

SPINOZA: No.

CHORUS: What are you then?

SPINOZA: (Frightened) Nothing. Nobody. I don't know.

VAN DAN ENDE: Latin is equally the language of the old scholastic philosophy and of the new science. Whoever would be a member of the community of scholars must learn Latin. Rabbi Manasseh has written books in Latin; it is fitting that you have adapted a Latin name.

SPINOZA: Manasseh opens his home to the best minds; the most advanced thinkers congregate there; he writes Latin works, yet he opens no doors. All his learning is for naught, an empty show of quotes from Lucretius and Virgil, Dante and Aquinas.

CHORUS: You hate'em all. A subtle mind like yours making no distinctions? Your hate blinds you, drives you. Dropping Baruch and becoming—what was it? Benedictus?—is saying "fuck you! Fuck you to 'em all!"

SPINOZA: I can no longer be Baruch. There is no Jew named Baruch, so I must be Benedict. Further. I choose to be. I do not wish to pursue wealth, fame, or lust. I seek a tranquil soul.

CHORUS: Tranquil, my ass! Can't you feel the rage within you? You denigrate the Jews, take away their uniqueness, their chosenness, mock their rituals, ridicule their law.

SPINOZA: They are not chosen. That is the truth, and that is the only reason I say it. I am not motivated by spite.

CHORUS: I am not convinced. (All exit except Spinoza.)

(Enter Clara Maria Van dan Ende, age 13).

CLARA: I have been giving Latin lessons in father's stead.

SPINOZA: I have never known a woman like you. Jewish women are uneducated. I want to marry you.

CLARA: You will have to become a Catholic.

SPINOZA: I can't.

CLARA: Besides, I do not love you. (Exits. Chorus reenters.)

CHORUS: A safe choice. A child. Besides, you knew there was no way that she could marry you.

SPINOZA: I have wished to marry Clara for a long time. She too seeks salvation through knowledge.

CHORUS: Cute ass, too.

SPINOZA: Go away, you nauseate me.

CHORUS: How do you get your rocks off?

SPINOZA: Rocks off?

CHORUS: Go back to your Torah school. You really belong there.

SPINOZA: (Looks perplexed.)

CHORUS: Man, you're 24! You must get horny, get the itch, feel it running out of your ears—what do you do when your cock gets hard?

SPINOZA: Lust is a passive affect, an inadequate idea of a state of my body. I strive to make it an active affect by understanding through reason the infinite concatenation of causes and effects that give me that inadequate idea. Only then can I have an adequate idea, a true understanding, of the bodily state to which you refer.

CHORUS: Oh, brother.

SPINOZA: Enough gutter talk from you.

CHORUS: You write that a man endangers himself in sexual love because he risks his beloved being unfaithful to him, which not only deprives him of the sexual pleasure he seeks but inflicts pain by putting another man's degraded parts and excrementa next to the beloved. Baruch, you have a rich fantasy life, not surprising given your lack of experience of the real thing. This particular fantasy is a regression to anality as a defense against your forbidden oedipal wish. That is, you imagine that your father shits on your mother during intercourse, which disgusts you so that you don't have to feel the pain of his exclusive possession of her.

(Spinoza begins to be ill.)

You write garbage. "A man's degraded parts and excrementa next to the beloved." Baruch, that's sick! You have a sick view of sex. (Pauses) Don't you ever want to get laid? (Spinoza vomits.) Hopeless. Why do you hate your body so?

SPINOZA: I don't hate my body. I don't hate anything.

CHORUS: Ha! Are you revolted by women? Ever see your mother bleeding? (Spinoza pukes again.) Or do you really want a man to stick his dick up your ass—guess not. That must be a passive affect, too. Perhaps you would rather stick yours in his—that would be an active affect. (Laughs) Or maybe you just want to kiss him. All your friends are men. Do you have a secret lust for them?

SPINOZA: I hate no man, but it would not be hard to hate you. Leave me alone.

CHORUS: (To the audience) Was he gay? Probably not. Was he a misogynist? (Pause) Well, let me ask him. (To Spinoza) Do you hate women? Miriam, your mother, abandoned you. (Spinoza shakes his head.) Don't shake your head. In dying, she abandoned you. And Esther, your psychobitch-from-hell stepmother, you hate her for taking your father away from you. Then your sister Rebekeh tried to steal your inheritance. And now, Clara scorns and rejects you. You don't hate them? They are all whores—excuse me, harlots—aren't they? They are filthy, unclean, terrifying. (Spinoza goes after him, trying to grab him by the throat. As he runs, the Chorus says:) In the grip of a passive affect again, I see. (Chorus continues to run around Spinoza, eluding him, as Spinoza continues to chase him.) Contemptuous and phobic of women, unable to feel sexual love for men, ashamed of your own body—what can you do but sublimate, you poor bastard.

(Stage darkens.)

Scene 6

(Spinoza is now a close associate of the radical, communitarian sect of the Collegiants. Scene is set in a Collegiant commune.)

SPINOZA: Now that I have left the commercial life, I need a way to make a living. You, friends, have also abandoned your businesses to seek the highest good—the union of the mind with all of nature.

COLLEGIANT 1: By nature, you mean God?

SPINOZA: I have not yet worked out all of my thoughts on this matter. I only know that I, like you, must seek truth with the guidance of the inner light.

COLLEGIANT 2: What brought you to us after your expulsion by the Jews?

SPINOZA: Experience taught me that all the usual strivings of social life are vain and futile, and I saw that all the things that were the cause or object of my fears had nothing of good or bad in themselves, except insofar as my mind was moved by them. So I resolved at last to try and find out whether there was anything that would be the true good, capable of communicating itself, and that would alone affect my mind, all others being rejected—whether there was something that once found and acquired would continually give me the greatest joy, to eternity. I

say I resolved at last, for at first glance it seemed ill-advised to be willing to lose something certain for something that was uncertain. I saw, of course, the advantages that honor and wealth bring, and that I would be forced to abstain from seeking them if I wished to devote myself seriously to something new and different. And if by chance the greatest happiness lay in them, I saw I should have to do without it. But if it did not lie in them and I devoted my energies only to acquiring them, then I would equally go without it. So I wondered whether perhaps it might be possible to reach my new goal or at least the certainty of attaining it without changing the conduct and plan of life that I shared with other men. Often I tried this, but in vain. For most things that present themselves in life, and that, to judge by their actions, men think to be the highest good, may be reduced to these three: wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure. For as far as sensual pleasure is concerned, the mind is so caught up with it that it is quite prevented from thinking of anything else. But after the enjoyment of sensual pleasure is past, the greatest sadness follows. The mind is also distracted not a little by the pursuit of honor and wealth. Honor and wealth do not have, as sensual pleasure does, repentance as a natural consequence. The more each is possessed, the more joy is increased. And hence, the more we are spurred on to increase them. But if our hopes should by chance be frustrated, we experience the greatest sadness. I saw I was in greatest danger, and that I was forced to seek a remedy with all my strength, however uncertain it might be—like a man suffering a fatal illness, who, foreseeing certain death unless he employs a remedy, is forced to seek it, however uncertain, with all his strength. For all of my hope lies here. All those things that men ordinarily strive for not only provide no remedy but in fact hinder, often causing the destruction of those who possess them and always cause the destruction of those possessed by them. These evils seem to arise from the fact that all happiness or unhappiness is placed in the quality of the object to which we cling with love. Indeed, all these things happen only in the love of those things which can perish, as all the things I have spoken of can do. But love toward the eternal and infinite feeds the mind with a joy entirely exempt from sadness. This is greatly to be desired, and to be sought with all of our strength. I have come here because I feel that you, my friends, share my goals, that you too seek to find an object worthy of your love. I embrace your fellowship, and in our fellowship, we shall find fulfillment. Here I hope that my quest and your companionship will enable me to enjoy continual, supreme, and unending happiness. If I had not met you, I would have found it necessary to form a social

order, such as would be conducive to the attainment of bliss by the greatest number with the least difficulty and danger. It is part of my happiness to lend a helping hand, as you do, that many others may understand even as I do.

CHORUS: (To audience) Now that he has left Jewish Amsterdam he is living in the closest approximation to the East Village that seventeenth-century Holland has to offer. Living with but not a member of the Collegiants—those Cartesians of the Left, believers of property in common and followers of the inner light. (To Spinoza) Why don't you join them instead of remaining a fellow traveler? Always an egalitarian from above, aren't you? Never quite a member of anything. Just can't commit yourself to anything but your theories, eh?

SPINOZA: (To Chorus) I must retain my freedom, my freedom to think my way to blessedness, freedom even from as gentle and good a company of men as these.

CHORUS: Another defense against your homoerotic feelings? Or is it part of your defense against closeness to anybody?

SPINOZA: (To Chorus) Fool! Don't you see that I must preserve my independence? There is no other way I can be true to my mission.

SPINOZA: I wish to show men the path I seek but have not yet found to bliss, insofar as they are capable of it. In the pursuit of that goal, I renounced my people, exiled myself before they exiled me. I will not compromise now, neither will I cut myself off from men.

CHORUS: You're a snob. Many of these Collegiants have scant education, others aren't bright enough for you, so you keep your distance.

SPINOZA: I don't keep my distance. There is love between us. You fool, what I keep is my independence. (Exit Chorus.)

SPINOZA: (Spinoza and his friends light pipes and sip wine. Conversation buzzes on as a rap session ensues. Spinoza's voice emerges from the general buzz.) I must have a way of making a living. I renounced my inheritance; I will learn to grind lenses for telescopes and microscopes. I can thus provide for my material needs, even as I forge the tools that enable men to investigate nature—to peer into the magnificent structures that manifest God's eternal law.

COLLEGIANT 3: I can help you financially. I can afford it, and I will be honored if you will permit me.

SPINOZA: No, I will grind lenses. (Chorus reenters.)

CHORUS: Another part of your masochism and martyrdom. You don't have to grind lenses.

SPINOZA: I wish to. It is part of my identity as a free man and an aid to my scientific researches.

CHORUS: Accept the pension. (Spinoza shakes his head. Chorus continues.) In the coming years, you will be forced to accept it, as your lungs deteriorate as glass dust accumulates in them from your stupid, prideful insistence on grinding lenses. Why be proud? Take the pension now.

SPINOZA: He who pays the piper calls the tune. I haven't gone the lengths I have to establish my independence to compromise it now. You do not know me. I put no value on asceticism—the free man seeks joy. Joy can never be excessive.

CHORUS: The glass dust will kill you.

SPINOZA: The relationship between inhaling pollutants and lung disease has not been established. As a free man, I would not choose to endanger myself should research show that connection to pertain. But I will die young in any case. My lung disease will progress even if the glass particles are not the cause of it.

COLLEGIANT 1: Benedict, you must help us understand Descartes' philosophy more clearly. He like us rejects dogma and authority, founding his thought on the certainty of clear and distinct ideas, ideas whose clearness and distinction can be affirmed by all men using the light within. His thought gives a rational foundation to our way of life, yet we but confusedly comprehend it. It is too complex.

COLLEGIANT 2: Could you demonstrate Descartes' system mathematically, derive it from definitions and axioms as Euclid does his geometry?

COLLEGIANT 3: Yes, give us a geometrical demonstration of Descartes.

CHORUS: (To audience) That Descartes again? You would think he was the Marx of the seventeenth century. He wasn't. A timid rabbit. Radical thinker, my ass! His doubt was purely theoretical. Follow the customs of your time and place, wrote he. Be a conformist, is what he meant. A believer in Catholicism, no less. Like I say, not much of a radical. His politics—who knows? He had royal patrons. Yet there was such excitement around him, the most diverse people thrilled to his partial, limited, hedged-in challenge to received wisdom. Clear and distinct. If it 's not clear and distinct, then throw it out. But what's clear and distinct? As subjective a criterion of truth as can be imagined. My clear and distinct clearly and distinctly isn't Hitler's clear and distinct. Radical subjectivism is dangerous. Yet this Descartes must he counted as one of the liberators, one of the dark enlighteners, one of those who moved us along the painful path to enlightenment.

SPINOZA: (speaking to Collegiants) I don't have the literary skill.

CHORUS: (Returning to his mocking attitude) No doubts about your philosophical skill though. Let's have no false modesty.

COLLEGIANT 3: I will edit it and write a preface.

COLLEGIANT 4: I will publish it.

SPINOZA: I will do it. I will derive Descartes metaphysics geometrically.

CHORUS: And it will be the only book you dare publish under your own name in your lifetime, my cautious one. (to audience) Descartes' metaphysics—that's different from his method of radical doubt. A whole megillah about two substances—extension and thought. Benedict—Baruch—will have none of that. There is only one substance, albeit two names, for him.

Scene 7

(Jan de Witt, Grand Pensioner of the Netherlands, is a vigorous intellectual in his mid-forties. He is self-assured, even arrogant. He is a great man, one of the first to espouse freedom of thought and religion, yet blind to his faults. He does not relate to other people, does nothing to please. He lacks charisma, and wouldn't use it if he had it. Spinoza is now in his mid-thirties. He is cheerful, having come to terms with his exile and having found a

place for himself in the Christian world of which he is a part yet apart. Jan de Witt is with his brother, Cornelius. The Chorus is off to the side with Sigmund Freud.)

DE WITT: I rule by social mathematics. The edicts of the state are derivable. Statistical science determines our economic policy. A republican state is a rational state. Our government here in the Netherlands is a model of the social arrangements that optimize the self-realization of the free men of whom you write. Reason teaches that provision of security and the maintenance of peace are the proper functions of the state. Each man pursues his self-interest. Enlightened self-interest, self-interest when informed by reason, teaches that cooperation with other men maximizes reward and is to be avidly pursued. My policy is to bring all this to pass. Mathematical science rules the state. My brother Cornelius co-calculates policy.

CHORUS: And your cousin, and your cousin's cousins, not to mention your nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, friends and friends' friends. And of course, your father. You run a connection-archy, all of course in the service of reason.

DE WITT: (Who hasn't heard the Chorus) Reason teaches that thought must be free, that religion should play no role in determining a man's place within the state, and that each shall be free to worship as he will, that theology and philosophy shall not trample on each other's domains so that professors may profess as they will in the universities, and that peace, if ever it be possible, shall be the goal of our foreign policy. Prosperity, the flourishing of our commerce, dictates that we pursue peace and maximization of profit through trade. This is clearly shown to be desirable through the application of social mathematics. Peace, freedom, prosperity—the goals of my, our, liberal Republic—are rational goals, goals sought by men's self-interest, yet many oppose them. The clergy and the common people hate me. (Emphatically) The state must rule the church and be the only sovereign. The multitude must not be allowed a say, nor granted the franchise. In our Republic, rule and office go to the man of virtue.

CHORUS: Especially if he is a relative.

DE WITT: Virtue is not the exclusive possession of the nobility. It is found in all ranks, and is accordingly awarded by us.

CHORUS: (Turn away from De Witt and addresses the audience.) The classical dilemma of the liberal. The masses crave authority and must be forced to be free. (Turning to Freud.) The liberals in your Austria restricted the franchise. They too were afraid of the masses, of the multitude. (Projection of Storm Troopers and of a Viennese crowd giving the Fascist salute. The sounds of shouts of "Sig Heil!") They had their reasons, didn't they? (Freud shakes his head.)

FREUD: It's the multitude. Men are controlled by their instincts. Reason is too thin a reed—the ego is too weak.

CHORUS: (To audience) Liberalism is everywhere deconstructed these days. The self-serving pecuniary motives behind its rationalizations exposed for the ideology of the commercial oligarchy that it is. The career open the talents—to virtue, as you put it (pointing to De Witt). It has been an empty promise, an illusion for most men, not to mention women. Actually these quibbles about liberalism don't matter much. The lust for submission, the desire to be ruled, fury, bloodthirstiness, the craving for war—these and not rational self-interest are what motivate men. (To De Witt) You and all of your successor liberals are not merely hypocritical; you are naive, though not naive enough to give the vote to the multitude.

DE WITT: DE WITT: (To Spinoza) The Calvinist clergy are fanatical. They whip the commoners to frenzy. They want power—power to control thought, ban books, run the universities, drive the Cartesians out, put the Prince of Orange back on the throne and end the Republic. They would replace a Catholic inquisition with a Protestant one. I understand the commoners' love for Orange, but their time has passed. The Prince would lead us into foolish wars, wars not dictated by rational calculation, by mathematical reasoning, as was our struggle against the Spanish throne. The Jews, too, back the House of Orange. It is irrational of them to support the Prince now. My government represents their economic interests and defends their religious freedom. Benedict, tell me, why are the Jews against me? You are a Jew. Why this opposition to the Republic?

SPINOZA: I am no longer a Jew.

DE WITT: Nor a Christian. You write a pamphlet defending my government allegorically. I need your support. Write and I will covertly defend and

encourage you. I cannot do so openly as long as the multitude perceives and reviles you as an atheist Jew.

SPINOZA: I am neither atheist nor Jew.

DE WITT: You write convincingly of the wisdom and rationality of the republican form of government, of my government, of the necessity of all sovereignty residing in the state, of the clergy being kept in their place, and of the justification of tolerance and freedom of thought.

SPINOZA: Yes, I write even now of these matters. I write a theological-political treatise in which I consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of line's, planes, and bodies. In the theological part, I treat the biblical text as an historical document like any other written by diverse men in diverse places and times, and use the biblical text itself, the science of grammar, the analysis of the Hebrew language, and of the circumstances and goals and personalities of its writers to explicate its meaning, not allegorically, hut to show that the sacred text teaches no science, no philosophy, no theoretical beliefs, but merely, simply and consistently, that the practice of justice and charity are the only true worship, while rite and ritual, myth and doctrine are indifferent—no part of true religion but mere embellishments, and at their best, incitements to justice and charity. Further, I show that the ancient Hebrews state fell when the priests gained secular power, and that Jewish religious law was but part of the secular law of the ancient Hebrew state. To uphold and practice the ancient laws now is absurd.

CHORUS: As they did in excommunicating you.

SPINOZA: There is nothing special about the Jews. Their vanity maintains their uniqueness. They are not chosen any more than other men. That, too, I have shown in my treatise.

DE WITT: And how do you account for their survival during the centuries after which their state ceased to exist?

SPINOZA: The persecution of the Gentiles has preserved the Jews, as has their contempt for other men and their hatred of them, which has reinforced Gentile hatred. Further, circumcision is their sign of specialness, and it, like the Chinese pigtail, preserves them in the degraded state in which they now exist.

Considering how they have been assaulted, hounded, and persecuted, it is not surprising that they are no longer beautiful.

CHORUS: (To audience) A little Jewish self-hatred here—or just plain hatred—has overcome our apostle of love. So anti-Semitism is caused by Jewish contempt and hatred, a useful text for the authors of The Protocol of the Elders of Zion and of the Nuremberg Laws. (To Spinoza) Watch how you avenge yourself in your writings, Baruch.

DE WITT: And the political part?

SPINOZA: Therein I shall demonstrate how the state must have all power how the clergy must be subordinate, how democracy is the best government, how state power does not extend to control of thought, how religion must be free insofar as rites are concerned, but that the state religion must induce the multitude to act as if they were wise and guided by reason, by inculcating the desire for charity and justice through rewards and punishments, through hope and fear. I will show how the multitude who are not themselves wise can be so led as to live wisely through the rule of the wise—by men of virtue such as yourself. Further, I shall show how the self-interest that rules men dictates that they cooperate with each other and seek peace.

DE WITT: my policy and your theory are akin. We are one. I need your justifications in my battle against the darkness. Write quickly and well, my friend. You have my love, even if I dare not publicly express it.

SPINOZA: And you have my love. In you, reason rules, and men in spite of themselves may come to see where their true blessedness lies. (Spinoza and De Witt embrace.)

CHORUS: (To Spinoza) You could publish neither quickly nor openly. It took you five years away from your philosophical work to defend the Republic, and even then you had to publish under a pseudonym with a phony imprint. But you didn't succeed in fooling anyone. Since publication you experience hatred like you have never known. Already anathematized by the Jews, now the massed hatred of the Gentile world assails you—vile atheist Jew, corrupter of piety. Stick by your motto *caute*, caution, and deny authorship, or you surely will die on the rack, Jan's protection notwithstanding.

(Projection of Spinoza's ring with the word *caute* on the scrim. Spinoza and De Witt walk off, arms around each other's shoulders, talking animatedly, as the stage grows dark.)

Scene 8

(Spinoza is sitting quietly, writing contentedly, smoking his pipe. In the background is his worktable, many books, and apparatus for grinding lenses. Chorus sits to the side.)

SPINOZA: The city of Amsterdam reaps the fruits of this freedom in its own great prosperity and the admiration of all other people. For in this most flourishing state, and most splendid city, men of every nation and religion live together in the greatest harmony, and ask no questions before trading their goods to their fellow citizen, save whether he be rich or poor, and whether he generally acts honestly, or the reverse. His religion and sect are considered of no importance, for they have no effect before the judges in gaining or losing a case, and there is no sect so despised that its followers, provided they harm no one, pay every man his due, and live uprightly, are deprived of the protection of the magisterial authority.

CHORUS: (To audience) Written in the floodtide of liberalism, the apogee of the De Witts.

(Enter Adrian Koerbagh, a middle-aged businessman.)

KOERBAGH: I avidly read your writings, discuss and promulgate them. You have justified the Republic, shown the way to godliness, yet you are considered an atheist. How do you understand this?

(They are interrupted as several of Spinoza's Collegiant friends run in.)

COLLEGIANT 1: *The Theological Political Treatise* has been condemned by the Synod. It has been banned! You are in danger. It is widely believed that you are the author. De Witt cannot protect you. Adrian, you are in danger, too. If they can't get to Benedict, they will settle for you.

(Armed men enter and grab Adrian and take him off projection of a man on the rack. Screams. Center stage darkens.)

CHORUS: (At stage left) That's more like it. The multitude at work again. The freedom of De Witt's Republic is for from absolute.

(Center stage is again lit. Three Judges dressed as Calvinist clergy are sitting at a table. Adrian Koerbagh is dragged in. He has been tortured.) JUDGE 1: You uphold Spinoza's philosophy. Your ideas are his. He wrote the *Treatise*, didn't he?

ADRIAN: No, your Worships. My ideas are my own.

JUDGE 2: You know him.

ADRIAN: We are friends, but he doesn't influence me.

JUDGE 2: (Spits) Blasphemy, atheism, blasphemy!

JUDGE 1 : You talk of the "indwelling spirit of the immanent God" in your book. That is but the Hebrew doctrine of the Shechinah—it must come from the atheist Jew, not you.

ADRIAN: My thoughts are my own.

CHORUS: He is being accused of un-Dutch activities.

(Judges confer.)

JUDGE 1 : We sentence you to ten years in prison, to be followed by exile.

JUDGE 2: You are not severe enough; his right thumb should be cut off, his tongue bored through with a red-hot iron, and he should be jailed for thirty years.

(Spinoza and the Chorus return. Koerbagh and Judges fade into darkness.)

CHORUS: (To Spinoza) They were after you. (Projection of Koerbagh's body being removed from prison.)

CHORUS: He did not live long in prison.

SPINOZA: (Passionately) He who knows himself to be upright does not fear the death of a criminal, and shrinks from no punishment; his mind is not wrung with remorse for any disgraceful deed. He holds that death in a good cause is no punishment, but an honor, and that death for freedom is glory.

Scene 9

(Spinoza sits quietly, surrounded by books and lens-grinding equipment. He is subdued and has aged. He occasionally coughs. Glass dust is seen rising from his workbench. He takes

out a sketchbook and pen and begins drawing. Chorus enters.)

CHORUS: I see that you participate in the drawing mania.

SPINOZA: Drawing mania?

CHORUS: All of Holland draws. You have the bug, too.

SPINOZA: Bug? You distract me. It is the part of the wise man, I say, to refresh and invigorate himself with moderate and pleasant eating and drinking, with sweet scents and the beauty of green plants, with ornament, with music, with sports, with the theater, and with all things of this kind that one may enjoy without hurting another. For the human body is composed of a great number of parts of diverse nature, which constantly need new and varied nourishment, in order that the whole of the body may be equally fit for everything that can follow from its nature. My beer drinking and drawing are of that sort. Why should I not enjoy them? Nothing but a gloomy and sad superstition forbids enjoyment. For why is it more seemly to extinguish hunger and thirst than to drive away melancholy? My reasons and my conclusions are these: No God, no human being, except an envious one, is delighted by my impotence or my trouble, or esteems as any virtue in us tears, sighs, fears, and other things of this kind, which are signs of mental impotence. On the contrary: the greater the joy with which we are affected, the greater the perfection to which we pass thereby, that is to say, the more do we necessarily partake of the divine nature.

CHORUS: Really? A lot of rhetoric to justify playing with your sketchpad. And you are sure it's only an innocent amusement? Nothing more? (Pauses.)

SPINOZA: (Sips at his beer.) Some beer, friend?

CHORUS: No thanks. I'm in recovery.

SPINOZA: Recovery?

CHORUS: The gloomy superstition of my time. I'm only kidding. Let me have a beer. (They sip together.) What do you draw?

SPINOZA: What I will.

CHORUS: Less evasion. (Takes the drawing and stares at it.) Not a bad self-portrait. It's your face but not your body, which is dressed like Masaniello, leader of the Naples rebellion. Identifying with a proletarian rebel, after teaching that rebellion is always wrong and that a wise man's duty is obedience? A bit inconsistent, no?

SPINOZA: He led a rebellion against the Spanish oppressor.

CHORUS: Of the Dutch or of the Jews?

SPINOZA: Of the Neapolitans.

CHORUS: You know what I mean.

SPINOZA: I am confused about this. Rebellion is futile; witness the tragedy in England in which a king was killed to be replaced by another in all but name who was far worse. Yet I admire Masaniello. He died for freedom. Here I can not reconcile my thought and my feeling. when I draw myself as him, I am in the grip of imagination, not of reason, dominated by inadequate ideas and passive affects. My reason tells me that Masaniello's rebellion was as futile as the English one, and that I must not think of myself as him. (Tears up the picture.)

CHORUS: You do violence to the best part of yourself. Your reason is unreason, a voice of repression that enslaves you.

SPINOZA: (Obviously pained) No! Reason is our one hope. I must not give in to the passive affects of the imagination that but feed ambition.

CHORUS: Afraid of your grandiosity? You're very grandiose, you know. (Screams) Drop this passive affect shit, and take a stand for real freedom, political freedom.

SPINOZA: My identification with Masaniello is the product of false pride. (Thinks) Here in Holland, the rebels are the enemies of freedom; thus, I must deny the right of rebellion. You are a hopeless romantic; I am a realist. Be gone!

(Chorus exits. Spinoza picks up the pieces of his self-portrait as Masaniello and weeps. After a time, he dries his tears, and takes out a jar with insects. He takes another jar, also containing insects, and introduces them into the first jar. They battle. Spinoza starts to laugh. A projection shows the insects tearing each other apart as Spinoza continues to

laugh. He opens the jar and takes an insect out. He pulls the wings off and laughs again. Chorus reenters with Freud.)

FREUD: (To Spinoza) As you were the first to see, morality is a reaction-formation, a turning into its opposite—of sadism. However, not all of your sadism has undergone conversion. You are taking a delight in cruelty, a God-given, as the pastors might say, constitutional propensity. Sadism is innate. One of the components of the sexual instinct I have postulated.

CHORUS: You mean he's getting his rocks off. Come, let Baruch, I mean Benedict, alone. (To Spinoza) You're getting pretty worked up over there. (Spinoza giggles as he tears more wings off) (To Freud) He' s close to climax. (To Spinoza) Pretty sadistic, aren't you, considering you teach that philosophy leads us to hate, envy, and harm no one, and to offer mutual benevolence, justice, and charity. Bunk! Look at yourself. Filled with hatred and enjoying every second of it. (Shouts) Sadist!

SPINOZA: You are a bigger fool than I thought. I said no man, not no animal. I owe allegiance only to man, to my own kind.

CHORUS: Kind of biblical, eh" He created the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fishes of the sea for your pleasure. Your sadism denied and repressed trips you up. For all your struggle against the old anthropomorphic God in your attitude toward animals, you fall into the old ways. Your sadism has to come out somehow. Laugh away, my politically incorrect pervert. (Spinoza continues to torture the insects, taking obvious pleasure in it.)

CHORUS: (Sardonically) The wise man seeks joy. (Spinoza puts his insects away and falls into a deep sleep.)

FREUD: Perhaps he will dream and we will learn more.

CHORUS: I already have his number. (Spinoza half awakes.)

SPINOZA: I see a black scaly Brazilian. (Rubs his eyes)] I can't get rid of the image. (Looks at his books.) It is gone. (Looks away.) It is back. (Rubs his eyes.) Stop tormenting me. Go away!

CHORUS: Hallucinating again?

FREUD: What does the scary black Brazilian bring to mind?

CHORUS: It brings to mind the blacks of Pernambuco who with Portuguese help killed so many of Aboab's compatriots, and almost got the old reb himself. The dream is a hidden wish fulfillment. Spinoza identifies with the black invaders and wishes to kill Aboab. The dream makes him anxious because his repudiated death wish breaks through—the return of the repressed, as you would say.

FREUD: Not bad, but what about the father behind the rabbi. He wishes to kill his father.

CHORUS: You 're the analyst.

FREUD: The insects he tortures are his siblings, toward whom he also has death wishes. The open expression of his sadism triggered the dream of death to Aboab and to his father, while the avenging black man punishes him for his forbidden wishes as well as being a self-representation. An artful compromise formation. The mind works beautifully and lawfully, does it not? (Frenzied shouting is heard offstage.)

SPINOZA: Yes, the mind is lawful. Even as we study the causes of hatred, greed, envy, anger, and similar things, we acknowledge that they have certain causes, through which they are understood, and have certain properties, as worthy of our knowledge as the properties of every other thing, by the mere contemplation of which we are pleased. Understanding brings pleasure.

CHORUS: Oh God, if you'll pardon the expression, what an intellectualizer! My task may be hopeless. I cannot get you to feel anything.

FREUD: Yet he is right. Intellectual understanding transforms.

CHORUS: (shouts at Spinoza) Did you wish to kill your father or not? You still want to kill Aboab, don't you?

FREUD: There is no time in the unconscious.

CHORUS: (To Freud) You're just as bad. Another one locked inside of his head. Lose your mind and come to your senses.

(Sounds from the street grow louder. Chorus and Freud exit. Friends of Spinoza rush in. Projection of the mutilated bodies of Jan and Cornelius De Witt hanging from a lamppost.

Projections show the mob carving bits of flesh from the mutilated bodies as souvenirs as it screams invectives. Spinoza's landlord rushes in.)

LANDLORD: Benedict, horrible news. The mob, frenzied by our war losses, broke into the prison where Cornelius, falsely accused, had been racked even as Jan was endeavoring to comfort him, and murdered them both. They were thrown down the steps, trampled, mutilated, and hung from the lamppost but a block from here. The mob even now cuts their bodies to shreds. The Republic has fallen, darkness descends on the Netherlands. (Landlord runs out. Spinoza goes into a paroxysm of rage. He screams.)

SPINOZA: Lowest barbarians! (Writes "lowest barbarians" on a large poster and starts out the door. Landlord reenters and wrestles the poster away.)

LANDLORD: No, Benedict. They will kill you, too.

SPINOZA: (Screaming) Lowest barbarians! (Landlord pushes him back shutting and locking the door.)

Act II, Scene 1

(Spinoza is once more in his room. He is in his early forties and sick. He coughs frequently. Glass dust rises from the bench, and his cough worsens.)

SPINOZA: De Witt foiled. The Republic is no more. Scum. They murdered the greatest statesman in Europe. He alone ruled by reason, calculating policy as he would solve a mathematical problem. He never flattered the multitude or used cheap rhetoric to persuade. He never appealed to their passions.

(Chorus enters and remains apart at the side of the stage.)

CHORUS: (To audience) He was too arrogant. (To Spinoza) You are just as arrogant. You conceal it better.

SPINOZA: (Has not heard the Chorus) So they killed him and his brother. (Shudders) The times darken. I, too, am in danger. I have no taste for martyrdom. I do not understand it. Every creature seeks to preserve himself—strives, endeavors, to continue to exist. All of our actions are motivated by self preservation and the need to increase our power so we may endure. I do not understand suicide.

(Freud enters.)

FREUD: I, too, sought to explain human behavior in terms of the pleasure principle. I gave it up. Analysis shows self-destructiveness to be a basic datum—a primordial fact. Only when I postulated the death instinct could I make sense of men's behavior. You were on the wrong track with your one instinct—*conatus*—self-preservation the endless striving to go on existing, but your obsession with unity, with oneness, blocked your development. Only by postulating two instincts—Eros and Thanatos—the desire for love and for death, can an adequate account be given.

SPINOZA: The free man thinks of nothing less than of death; his wisdom is not a meditation upon death but upon life .

CHORUS: You think of nothing but death—the death of your mother, of your brothers, of your father, of Koerbagh, of the De Witts, of Van dan Ende, even perhaps of the Marrano martyrs who you say you can't understand. (Aboab appears.)

ABOAB: There was and is a sublimity in their death can you not understand it?
(Exits.)

CHORUS: You are dying. Your lungs are gone and soon so will you be (hesitates) gone.

FREUD: (To Chorus) It's denial. His anxiety would overwhelm him if he allowed himself to feel his terror and rage.

CHORUS: (To Freud) I thought there was no concept of death in the unconscious.

FREUD: True. Fear of death is a derivative of fear of castration by the father.

SPINOZA: To be obsessed with death is to be controlled by a passive affect. I would be a free man—active, expressing my essence, by maximizing my power.

FREUD: I hate helplessness more than all else. You are right to be active, to understand, to insist that we use our minds. I create a self out of the chaos of inchoate blind instinct. No longer driven by my instincts, my fears, my passions, I achieve mastery—reclaim as much territory for the ego as I am able, even as your countrymen reclaim the land from the sea.

SPINOZA: Given their miscalculation of the multitude, Jan and Cornelius's murder were inevitable, yet I cannot accept it and remain in the grip of passive affect.

CHORUS: (Scolding, wagging his finger at Spinoza) Freedom lies in choosing What is necessary, no?

SPINOZA: That is so. At this moment, I am not free. (In sudden fury, turns on the CHORUS.) Fucking bastard!

FREUD: We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally, from our relations with other men. The suffering that comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less faithfully inevitable than the suffering that comes from elsewhere.

SPINOZA: Thank you. You are quite right. You bring me back to myself.

FREUD: You are a seeker after consolation—a consolation that doesn't exist. Like the theologians, you are looking for a black cat in a coal bin at midnight, which does not exist, and you find it. My courage sinks to stand up before you as a prophet, and I bow to your reproaches, but I do not know how to bring you consolation, for that is fundamentally what you all demand, the wildest revolutionaries no less than the most conformist, pious believers. (Pauses) You are mourning. At the same time, you resist mourning. You cannot mourn Without meditating on the death of your beloved.

CHORUS: (To Freud) He was in love with De Witt?

SPINOZA: To think of death is to let them win, to let the barbarians determine me. I will not do it. (Breaks down and weeps.)

FREUD: I, too, have experienced loss. As a confirmed unbeliever, I have no one to accuse, and realize there is no place where I can lodge a complaint. Where are we to look for justice? No one inquires after our wishes, our merits, or our claims. (Voice trails off.)

SPINOZA: God's decrees are the eternal laws of nature. He loves himself with a perfect love, but He does not love us, or make exceptions for us.

CHORUS: There is no less pleasure in intellectual understanding of the infinite causal sequence determinant of the most murderous passion than comes from understanding anything else. Or so you say. Where is your pleasure in this? Surely you can come to understand the causes of the mob's fury and come to appreciate the beauty of its causal nexus. Or can you? Philosopher, your philosophy deserts you.

SPINOZA: (Recovering himself) I shall come to understand it, for as Freud says, the pain inflicted by men on other men is no less inevitable than anything else. (Wipes away his tears as he begins coughing.) If only I can come to love the necessity of things, I will be free.

CHORUS: How does it help to understand the inevitability, the necessity of Koerbagh's torture and death, of the burning of the Marrano martyrs, of the savage murder of the De Witts? It is all whistling in the dark—it is all bullshit. Tell me, Benedictus, how does your knowing the causes of your being tortured by man or by nature, by cruel instruments or by disease, how does that understanding help you in your pain ? It helps to know that you must be tortured? I don't think so. Do you really believe this?

Scene 2

(Spinoza is in his room. He looks worse than ever. He is writing a letter. Enter William James, about 30, looking depressed. Freud and Chorus are at stage left)

JAMES: Benedict, you drove me to despair. I suffer the worst type of melancholia, panic fear. If all is determined, if I have no free will, my life is meaningless and there is no sense in my continuing to live.

SPINOZA: On the contrary, if all is grounded in the Divine necessity, then all is intelligible, luminous, comprehensible by the mind—contingency is not freedom. Nor is it meaningful. Freedom of the will is an illusion; men believe themselves to be free only because they do not know the causes of their actions. The more we understand the less free—you have an absurd inadequate notion of

freedom—men are shown to be. Your alleged freedom of the will is only ignorance .

JAMES: Your philosophy drives me to thoughts of the pistol, the dagger, and the razor. You are an apostle of a closed universe. (seek an open universe, a multiverse in which creativity and novelty are possible.

SPINOZA: You are deluded.

JAMES: I do not say that freedom is causelessness. On the contrary, it is me as the cause—as an initiator, as the source of my beliefs, my actions, my feelings.

SPINOZA: You wish to be the cause of yourself Absurd! As I have demonstrated, there can be but one substance that is the cause of itself The infinite, eternal substance that I call God, or Nature. You are but a finite mode, and as such can be the cause of nothing.

JAMES: Then why live?

SPINOZA: Knowing that we are necessarily caused brings joy not sorrow.

JAMES: Not to me. I rebel I cannot accept your philosophy. I do not find your proofs convincing. The existence of free will or its contrary can be neither proved nor disproved. Therefore, I can rationally believe what I wish in this matter. I ask, what is the cash value of my belief? Belief in freedom of the will lifts my depression. Therefore, (defiantly) my first act of free will shall be to believe in free will. My belief, to be sure, can't be optimistic, but I will posit life —affirm the self-governing resistance of the ego to the world. (Exits.)

SPINOZA: A madman. He thinks of suicide. Clearly he is in the grip of passive affects.

FREUD: He also rejects my insights into the determination of our mental life by the unconscious. He can't stand the idea that his thoughts, like everything else, have causes.

(Freud and Chorus exit. A Collegiant friend enters.)

FRIEND: Benedictus, you must accept the offer of a professorship at Heidelberg. Your health is poor. You can no longer grind lenses and it is dangerous here. You may be arrested at any moment.

SPINOZA: If I cast my accounts careful have just enough from my pension to live from quarter to quarter. I need not grind lenses. are there conditions to the appointment?

FRIEND: You must not disturb the established religion.

SPINOZA: I do not know within what limits my freedom to philosophize will be confined in order to avoid the appearance of disturbing the publicly established religion. For schisms arise not so much from an ardent love of religion as from men 's various dispositions, by their love of contradiction, for which they are wont to distort and condemn all things, even those that have been correctly stated. I have already experienced these things while leading a private and solitary life; much more, then, are they to be feared after I shall have risen to this degree of dignity. I must decline. I must decline because of my love of peace, which I believe I can obtain to a certain extent, merely by refraining from public lectures. (Coughs.)

FRIEND: You are rarely seen about, you grow more solitary .

SPINOZA: I have little time left to finish my work.

FRIEND: Yet you endangered yourself by going behind the French lines. The populace thinks that you are up to something traitorous. They rage and accuse you of having illicit intercourse with the enemy. Some believe that you sold your country out for a pension from the French king.

SPINOZA: That is absurd. I am no sycophant. (Landlord runs in.)

LANDLORD: The mob looks at you as a spy. I fear that they will break into my home and plunder it as they drag you out. (Sound of raging mob is heard outside.)

SPINOZA: Fear nothing upon my account. I can easily justify myself; there are people enough, even some of the most considerable persons of the state, who know very well what put me upon that journey. But, however, as soon as the mob makes the least noise at your door, I'll go and meet them, though they were to treat me as they treated the poor messieurs De Witt. I am a good republican, and I have always aimed at the glory and welfare of the state.

LANDLORD: I do not believe you are a spy, yet I fear you will be killed nevertheless. But please not in my house. (Exits.)

FRIEND: You were on a peace mission? If so, they will kill you anyway.

SPINOZA: All my work aims at peace. Peace is the true aim of the state as well as of the philosopher.

FRIEND: We haven't seen much of it. The Synods justify censorship and torture in the name of winning the war and repress dissent. The war with France diverts the people's anger.

SPINOZA: Of the commonwealth, whose subjects are but hindered by terror from taking arms against it, it should rather be said that it is free of war than that it has peace. For peace is not mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from character. Besides, that commonwealth, whose peace depends on the sluggishness of its subjects, may more properly be called a desert than a commonwealth. For a free multitude is guided more by hope than by fear; a conquered one, more by fear than by hope.

MOB: Death to the atheist, communist Jew. Death to Spinoza! Death to the traitor! Kill the bastard!

(Spinoza goes out. Mob gradually quiets and he returns.)

FRIEND: All is well?

SPINOZA: I spoke to them. They saw the steel in my eyes. The danger is past.

FRIEND: When do you publish your *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*? Do you sign it?

SPINOZA: Be cautious is not my motto for nothing. I put a Hamburg imprint on my political book. Nevertheless, the Synods condemned it and my authorship is widely known.

FRIEND: Yet you have never publicly acknowledged it.

SPINOZA: It endangers me. The multitude must read me as an atheist and would kill me. If I had not spoken so forcefully moments ago, I would be dead even now.

FRIEND: But your *Ethics*, that you must publish.

SPINOZA: I set out to Amsterdam with the intention of printing it. While I was engaged in this matter, a rumor was spread everywhere that a book of mine about God was in press, and in it I endeavored to show that there is no God. The rumor was believed by many. Certain theologians seized the opportunity of bringing complaints against me before the Prince, and the magistrates even now denounce my opinions and writings everywhere. When I heard all this from certain trustworthy men, I decided to postpone the publication I was preparing until I saw how the matter turned out, and I also intended to inform you what plan I would then follow. But the business seems to have grown daily worse, so I have decided not to publish now. Friend, when I die, it must be published'

FRIEND: Copies already circulate.

SPINOZA: My papers are in this desk. The landlord knows where to send them.
(Friend exits.)

(Spinoza coughs frequently. He writes and paces then writes more.)

SPINOZA: I must be clear. There can be no doubt. My demonstrations must have certainty. They must convince intellectually, with no admixture of myth, rhetoric, or fantasy, no embellishment, no appeal to the imagination—only to the intellect. My *Ethics* must be demonstrated infallibly in geometrical order. Only then will my ideas be adequate. I will teach men how they may move from the confused realm of the imagination into the realm of reason where affect becomes active and we express ourselves, not another. My presentation must be as clear and distinct, going from definitions not of words but of things themselves and self-evident axioms to certain inferences. Men cannot reach blessedness before they become reasonable. I must write for the few, for those able to philosophize. The others, the multitude, must be led to a simulacrum of reason by external means, by the edicts of the state and the emotional appeal of rites and ceremonies, by the judicious appeal to hope and fear. Else the multitude will destroy us—murder the philosophers like they did Jan and Cornelius.

Enough about the multitude. Try as I may to understand the cause of, the inevitability of their behavior, they nauseate me. My book is not for them; it is for the few. All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare. Yet even in

philosophers, only a stronger affect can transform an existing affect. So I struggle with a dilemma—to appeal to the emotions contradicts that which I demonstrate; yet without profound emotional realignment, blessedness cannot be achieved. It is only by virtue of the emotional transformation induced by the third kind of knowledge, intuitive knowledge, that blessedness becomes possible.

Oh, I see! I see! I do not need to use rhetoric, persuasion, embellishment, or appeals to beauty in my text. If I can but show the way from imagination to reason to intuition, then affective transformation will come from within, and the necessity for all things will become apparent in such a way that that necessity is loved. The eternal laws of nature are what Scripture calls the decrees of God. Nature, or God, is all there is. If men can but come to love—an intellectual, disinterested love—Nature's laws, then they are transformed and become blessed, not in eternity but in time, not then but now. Their lives become timelessly different and they partake of the eternal—not of everlastingness, for they must die. They would see things under the aspect of eternity. Their minds, here in this world, which is the one and only reality that exists, would be transformed.

As they continue to love in the full knowledge that their love is not returned, that God's will is but a metaphor, since His laws could not be otherwise, that God loves only Himself with perfect love, loves only the perfection of His own nature that is manifest in all that is—as they continue to love, they not only reach the blessedness of inner peace, of acceptance, of ravishment before the necessity of all that is, however indifferent to our desires and purposes it may be, but reach the blessedness of a new relationship to other men. A realization that hate can never be good, that benevolence is rational, that my freedom depends on the freedom of others, that only through allegiance with them is the good life possible, that the friendship of other free men is the best that I can hope for. and that charity and justice are the only rational attitudes I can have toward all. The fulfillment of my *conatus*—my indwelling striving, my endeavor to endure—to preserve my being and to increase my power—a desire I share with all individual things, with every finite mode, every particular thing that depends for its existence on other things—is maximized by entering into friendly union With other men.

Joy is rational. There can never be too much. A free man is joyful in his intellectual love of God, of Nature, of the universe, of all that is. Joy is the affect that intuitive knowledge engenders that transforms. I must convey this. I cannot keep it for

myself. I must show those who can follow the way. Intuition is not possible without rationality. I left my family, such as it is, my religion, superstitious as it is, my community, greedy as it is, so I might find blessedness for myself. I have done that but it is not enough. I need share my joy, my liberation, and teach others how to be free. So I must finish my *Ethics*, and it must be published. Even those who do not reach the third kind of knowledge will benefit from becoming more reasonable. I am solitary, yet I am a communitarian. Only in community is freedom possible.

I ramble. I am confused. Let me return to my proofs. (Tries to concentrate. Pained.) So many say I am an atheist while all my thought leads to God—not to the god of superstition, not to the children's God who rewards and punishes, not to the god of miracles. No! To the one God who is eternal, who is all of what is, and never created it. That's why they persecute me. God, or Nature—they can't stand that idea. No, their God must be transcendent, above and outside of this universe. He is not so; He is immanent, indwelling in all that exists. His will manifest in the eternal laws, which are immutable and not in miracles. Scientific study is His worship, as is the ethical fruit of the third kind of knowledge.

CHORUS: (God, or Nature. Equivocating again, aren't you? Yours is a strange nature, not at all like my nature. I remember climbing a mountain and looking out over an endless vista of magnificence. I felt such awe, wonder, and gratitude that I toasted the trailmaker with my canteen. My participation in such beauty was a validation of the worthwhileness of life, but that is not your nature. Your nature has nothing to do with mountains, or seas, or sunsets, or snowflakes. No, your nature is the ground, the logical necessity of those mountains, seas, sunsets, and snowflakes—the mathematical laws of the physicist. So when you say Nature, you are thinking of equations and relationships of equations. Your nature is of the mind, not the senses. Baruch, it is too abstract, your need to distance, idealize, desexualize, avoid the personal, which leads you to mistake abstractions for reality, to eat the menu instead of the steak.

SPINOZA: (Ignoring the Chorus) I'll go over the structure again. I start with definitions. (Rises and paces.) Definition one: By cause of itself, I understand that whose essence involved existence. Definition two. (Spinoza continues pacing and reciting his definitions. Only an occasional word is audible.) . . . conceived through itself . . . by attribute, I understand . . . that thing is called "free," . . . by mode, I understand—by eternity, I understand . . . Yes. Yes. Each

of these definitions is a real definition, it tells of the thing, not of the words. None can rationally refute them. And my axioms? Are they really clear and distinct? I must make them so. Axiom one: Whatever is is either in itself or in another. Axiom two: From a given determinant comes the effect necessarily.

(Enter Chorus, Freud and Nietzsche.)

CHORUS: Oh, brother!

SPINOZA: (Mutters) Axiom six : A true idea must agree with its object.

NIETZSCHE: Someone who clothes his thoughts in the armor of a geometrical order must have enormous fear.

FREUD: His obsessive-compulsive defenses mask anal eroticism.

CHORUS: He wants to roll in shit?

FREUD: His philosophy is a defense against the forbidden pleasures of the anal mucosa induced equally by expulsion and retention. Such a need for control as exhibited by this deductive system is derivative of a profound unconscious wish to relinquish sphincter control.

CHORUS: Ah! He wants to shit on the world. I knew he harbored enormous hostility underneath that "Hate is always wrong because it reduces our power to act" shtick.

NIETZSCHE: Fear—a defense against fear!

FREUD: Against anality.

CHORUS: Against hate and rage.

SPINOZA: Proposition one: A substance is prior in nature to its affectations. This is evident from definitions three and five. QED. (Continues to pace and mumble proofs. As the scene goes on, Spinoza becomes more and more frantic and the QEDs and " It is absurds" follow more and more rapidly and insistentlly.) Proposition five: In nature, there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature, therefore, QED, it is absurd, QED, it is absurd, QED. There is only one substance that necessarily exists, and it is necessarily infinite. QED. Except God, no substance can be conceived, and God acts from the laws of His nature alone.

He has no human properties—neither loves nor hates. God is the immanent, not the transcendent, cause of all things; His existence and His essence are one and the same. QED. So there is nothing but God . And He is a substance, of which there can only be one, which has in finite attributes of which we can know only two—thought and extension . QED. (Spinoza breathes a sigh of relief.)

I have done it! I have shown that God is one. All arguments for a plurality of substances are absurd. Absurd! Absurd! Absurd! Yes, my opponents' arguments lead to absurdity. Yes, there is but one substance, one God, one Nature, and we along with all other particular things are modes—modifications of that one substance. Finite modes depend on other finite modes, but He is dependent on nothing.

CHORUS: Why do you call it God? It has nothing to do with God. You appeal to the imagination in your use of language. You are playing to the gallery when you speak of God. You are dishonest. You wear a mask and dissemble, and those who revile you for your atheism are far from wrong.

NIETZSCHE: When I first discovered you, I was utterly amazed, utterly enchanted. I realized that I had a precursor, and what a precursor! Not only did it seem that your overall tendency was like mine—making knowledge the most powerful affect—but in five main points of your doctrine, I recognized myself you were closest to me precisely in these matters. You deny the freedom of will, the existence of final causes, of a moral world order, of anything that is not egotistic, and of evil. My solitude, which, as on very high mountains, has often made it hard for me to breathe and made my blood rush out, I discovered to be at least a dualitude. It was only later that I realized how you had seduced me, and how false your teaching is, how driven it is by your weakness and hidden pity.

CHORUS: Hate is love grown angry.

NIETZSCHE: (To Spinoza} Why call it He? You speak of brute facticity—the givenness of the universe. Call it It, for It is as it is. Why do you deify Nature?

CHORUS: *Shema Yisroel Adonoy Elohenu Adonoy Echod.* Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Baruch, you went through all you did—your life of exile, your lonely years writing an unpublished book—only to arrive at the

fundamental prayer of Judaism you heard all your life? You didn't need to go through all that to come to monotheism.

SPINOZA: An immanent is not a transcendent cause. Indwelling in the world, not above it, not a cause of its coming into being, not apart from it.

CHORUS: That's still Judaism, albeit shorn of some of its dross.

SPINOZA: (Sticks out his tongue at the Chorus) That's the point—without the dross. My God is not the God of Scripture.

FREUD: I ended my life writing *Moses and Monotheism*. In it, I showed that Moses was a goy who sold the Israelites on his one God without physical representation, and in their acceptance of this goyish notion there was an increase in intellectualization, in spirituality. It was a great step forward in human evolution .

CHORUS: (Pointing at Freud) His biblical scholarship is hardly scientific; it is distorted by his . . .

FREUD: (Interrupts) I too incurred wrath for refusing to flatter the Jews. My therapy is about oneness, the integration of split-off repressed parts of self. Where it was, I shall be—I will reclaim my passive affects, as you call them, and their unconscious determinant instinct, and out of this create a self. In understanding I am transformed into nothing as exalted as your blessedness, but into something like your active affects. My power is increased. If polytheism is a projection of the unintegrated parts of our selves—Mars, our Warlikeness, Venus our libido—then monotheism is a projection of the human project of integrating drives and desires, consciousness and unconsciousness, into a whole. My therapy is about that integration, about the healing of the splits in the self through knowledge and acceptance.

CHORUS: That's your *shema*, your monotheism. I wonder though, what's so great about monotheism? There's a lot to be said for polytheism, for paganism—less fanaticism, less intolerance, more fun. As for your integration of the self, I wonder about that, too. I know a woman who is a multiple personality. She says she feels sorry for "singles." Their lives are so impoverished. Maybe she has a point. You guys are so obsessed with oneness because you are so divided, so split inside. Spinoza, you're split between Baruch and Benedict, between your

first twenty-four years and the rest of your life, between your public persona and your secret thoughts, between Jewishness and universalism between conscious love and unconscious hate, between repudiated passions and the reality within, between spirituality and atheism. You have to insist on one substance; it is your way of denying the divisions within you; thoughts of a unifying underlying reality keep you from exploding into a thousand pieces. (Looking at Freud.)
You didn't change your name, but you have all the same stuff

FREUD: I am an unbeliever—an atheist Jew.

CHORUS: But a Jew nevertheless.

FREUD: I have never denied that. (To Spinoza) You aim too high. You live beyond your emotional means. Forget blessedness. You are right about the necessity for strong emotion for there to be change. Patients only change because they love their analysts. Your intellectual love of God is a transference acting out. Your unrequited love is your experience with your parents projected onto the universe. You need to fall in love with your analyst and work it through. But you can't. You are too afraid of human love. You are a narcissist, unable to love anyone except your fantasy of an unloving beloved.

CHORUS: (To Freud) You go too far Schizoid, perhaps, but not narcissistic.

FREUD: He doesn't transfer. If he doesn't transfer, he is narcissistic.

CHORUS: But he doesn't have an analyst. There aren't any.

FREUD: It doesn't matter; if he did have one, he wouldn't transfer.

CHORUS: Forget it.

SPINOZA: Having demonstrated in geometrical order the identity of nature and God, I will go on to demonstrate the nature and origin of the mind and of the passions by demonstrating their power to hold men in bondage. Finally, I will demonstrate the power of the intellect and show how its proper use leads to freedom.

FREUD: Grandiose—too systematic.

CHORUS: Reluctantly, I must admire your architecture. You have come up with a beautiful system. But you knew from your first definition exactly where you were going, and how you would conclude. Isn't there something wrong here? Is this really a deductive system? Isn't it more like an artistic vision, a product of your imagination—not of your intellect. But the aesthetic and the ethical are disjunctive. The SS enjoyed Beethoven and had slave orchestras play his music. There is no reason to believe that their aesthetic pleasure was any different from yours and mine. So the good and the beautiful are different things. Be that as it may, all your reasons are rationalizations for what you already believe. You hoodwink us with your geometrical derivation.

FREUD: Rationalization is one of the ego defenses.

NIETZSCHE: The hocus pocus of mathematical form with which you clad your philosophy—really, the love of *your* wisdom, in chain mail and mask, to strike terror at the very outset into the heart of any assailant who should dare to glance at that invisible maiden and Pallas Athena—how much personal timidity and vulnerability this masquerade of a sick hermit betrays.

FREUD: I told you it was a narcissistic system.

SPINOZA: I am not a hermit.

NIETZSCHE: You are a compulsory recluse. Under your most spiritual masquerade, perhaps without being aware of it yourself, you are a sophisticated vengeance seeker and poison brewer. Let me lay bare the foundations of your *Ethics*—thereby even you will see yourself as a poison brewer.

SPINOZA: I seek only to lead men to blessedness because I myself cannot find blessedness otherwise. I help them understand their affects.

NIETZSCHE: Your laugh no more, weep no more destruction of the affects through analysis and vivisection is hopelessly naive.

SPINOZA: I have seen too much to be naive.

FREUD: I have found that men have little to recommend them.

CHORUS: (To Freud) You are even more of an elitist. At least he has a (ironically) "treatment" for the multitude. You treat only the "deserving."

FREUD: Patients are mostly scum.

SPINOZA: (Starts pacing up and down, muttering to himself increasingly frantic QEDs) God or Nature has two aspects. Nature naturing and Nature natured. Nature naturing is in itself and conceived through itself—the attributes of substance as expression of an eternal and infinite essence. Nature natured follows from the necessity of God's nature; that is, all the modes of God's attributes insofar as they are considered as things and can neither be nor be conceived without God. The ground of all contingent things is their timeless necessity, the logical inevitability of the totality of all things.

CHORUS: (Laughing and undulating his hips, as if copulating) Nature naturing—ah, ah, ah, uh, uh, uh—(sounds of sexual climax.) Nature natured—plowed but good. You're projecting again. You are talking about your father fucking your mother, and projecting your repressed vision onto the big screen. (Continues to copulate noisily.)

FREUD: Obscurity indicates conflict.

SPINOZA: It's not obscure.

CHORUS: (Screaming) That's why it doesn't love you back! It's the primal scene. Old dad and your mom, Miriam, humping away . Or maybe your father shtoothing that bitch Esther. Either way, you weren't part of it. You took your primal scene jealousy and hatred and converted it into love by reaction formation. This way, you get to contemplate them forever as they grind it out—the mastery of a trauma by repetition. You recreate the primal scene and its most painful part, your exclusion—no love for you. Only now you choose it, create it. That should be right up your alley—active affect. You do it to yourself—instead of passive affect—watching them bang away while your heart is breaking. The really crazy part lies in convincing yourself that the third kind of knowledge makes you love watching them do it eternally—outside of time, because you first saw them doing it before you had a conception of time. There is no time in the unconscious. (Turning to Freud) How am I doing?

FREUD: You have talent. You should go to analytic school.

NIETZSCHE: (To Spinoza) Nature naturing, Nature natured. These gentlemen are right. You're absurdly spiritualized conception is driven by unconscious

motivation. it isn't even adequate technically. You are trying to deal with the relationship between the One and the Many. Nature naturing as the One, and Nature natured as the Many won't do it. The trouble is, there is no One. There is only blind striving, the will to power, repeating itself endlessly. Embrace your fate. Love your destiny—irrational, meaningless, as it is. (Sadly) Benedict, you came so close, so close to my joyful wisdom, joy in the knowledge that what you call rational is but brute fact. Don't love, intellectually or any other way, God. Love your fate. That's as much blessedness as men are capable of (Pointing to Freud.) He's right, you love beyond your emotional means and beyond your philosophical resources. We are really brothers in unbelief, but you must pretty up your vision by calling it a vision of God. The truth is your vision is of a universe without divinity, meaning, significance. It simply is. God is dead. You are trying to resurrect him, and you leave us with the shadows of the dead God. You know that God is dead, but you run from your knowledge; therefore, you deify Nature. Give it up, Benedictus. Allow yourself to despair and you, too, will find the joyful wisdom you look for in the wrong place.

SPINOZA : Knowledge of God is the mind's greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God.

NIETZSCHE: You are no better than Wagner. You write your own *Parsifal*. You both betray me.

SPINOZA: The intellectual love of God transforms.

CHORUS: Why do you cling to this delusion?

FREUD: We must love or grow ill. Since he is incapable of human love, he has no choice but to love his unloving God. Otherwise his libido remains within, becomes toxic, and poisons him.

S PIN OZA : You are all fools. I go on to my theory of the affects. Each man seeks his own advantage. Reason asks nothing contrary to self-interest. There is no singular thing in Nature that is more useful to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason. When each man most seeks his own advantage for himself, then men are most useful to one another.

FREUD: More denial and foolishness.

SPINOZA: The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed by all equally. (Freud, Nietzsche, and the Chorus shake their heads. Spinoza paces, mumbling more QEDs.) Joy is not directly evil, but good. Sadness, on the other hand, is directly evil. Cheerfulness cannot be excessive; it is always good. Melancholy, on the other hand, is always evil. Pleasure can be excessive. It is a titillation if it affects only one part of the body to the neglect of the rest.

CHORUS: You were starting to make sense until you started lamenting your throbbing cock—pleasure— can be excessive if it influences only a part. Why don't you get real? Don't you ever get hard?

SPINOZA: Love and desire can be excessive.

CHORUS: Titillate me. You can titillate me any time. You're not my type, but I'd give you a hand job—just to show you how good excitation of a part can be.

SPINOZA: Hate can never be good. Envy, mockery, disdain, anger, vengeance—all affects arising from hate are evil.

CHORUS: There are no bad orgasms.

FREUD: If there is love, there is hate. The two instincts are primordial.

SPINOZA: He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to repay the other's hate, anger, and disdain toward him, with love or nobility. (Freud, Nietzsche, and the Chorus scream at once)

FREUD: Beyond your emotional means.

NIETZSCHE: A slave morality!

CHORUS: Too much!

SPINOZA: (More QEDs) Self-esteem can arise from reason, and only that self-esteem that does arise from reason can be the greatest there can be. Self-esteem is the highest thing we can hope for. Pity is not a virtue. Humility is not a virtue. He who repents what he has done is twice wretched. He who is guided by fear, and does good to avoid evil, is not guided by reason.

NIETZSCHE: You almost have it. Forget the geometry and let passion guide you.

FREUD: This has less of the unconscious driving it.

CHORUS: (To Spinoza) True, but you're getting to sound like a self-help book.

SPINOZA: You fight me because what I propose is too difficult for you .
Blessedness consists in love of God, a love that arises from the third kind of knowledge—intuition. Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself
The free man is hardly troubled in spirit, but being, by a certain eternal necessity, conscious of himself, and of God, and of things, always possesses true peace of mind. If the way I have shown that can lead to these things now seems very hard, still, it can be found. And of course, what is found so rarely must be hard. For if salvation were at hand, and could be found without great effort, how could nearly everyone neglect it? All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare.

(End scene Darkness.)

Scene 3

(Spinoza 's room.)

CHORUS: (To Freud) It's all personal, isn't it—these theoretical systems. They all come down to disguised expression of forbidden wishes and desires and defenses against those wishes and desires.

FREUD: For the most part, yes.

CHORUS: So ideologies aren't what they seem, aren't about what they purport to be about.

FREUD: The manifest content isn't worth much. It is their latent meaning that is of interest. It concerns the disguised expression of a repressed childhood wish.

CHORUS: It's true of psychoanalysis, of course?

FREUD: Your negative transference to me is manifesting in your resistance to the truth of analytic theory.

CHORUS: I thought ideologies weren't about what they are about. If their manifest meaning has no truth value, then its real meaning is the latent emotional one.

FREUD: (Coldly) Psychoanalysis isn't an ideology. It has no Weltanschauung, except for the scientific one. (Freud pauses, stares at the CHORUS.) What are you thinking about me?

CHORUS: I'm not thinking about you. I'm thinking about psychoanalysis.

FREUD: I am psychoanalysis.

CHORUS: (Shrugs his shoulders) Another narcissist.

FREUD: Come-tell me what are your thoughts about me. Perhaps you struggle against a sexual current, and denigrate analysis in the service of repudiating your homosexual transference to me.

CHORUS: You don't turn me on.

FREUD: According to my theory of negation, to negate a proposition is to affirm it, so I do turn you on.

CHORUS: Do you know the story of the two friends who meet on a train? The first says, "Moshe, tell me where you're going." "I'm going to Pinsk, Abe." "Moshe, you told me you are going to Pinsk because you knew I would think that you were really going to Minsk, while you are really going to Pinsk. So tell me why are you lying to me?"

FREUD: You stole that story from my joke book.

CHORUS: True.

SPINOZA: My ethical theory, my demonstration of the path to blessedness derived from my theory of the emotions, which in turn is derived from my theory of mind, which in turn is based on my metaphysical doctrines, which are demonstrated geometrically is not a disguised wish fulfillment. It is truth.

CHORUS: You are right. The wish fulfillment is not very disguised.

SPINOZA: Your ad hominem attack does nothing to invalidate my conclusions. You must argue on my turf, philosophical discourse. My motivation is irrelevant. You commit the genetic fallacy, equating the origin of my ideas with their truth value. If you wish to dispute me, challenge my proofs, and demonstrate their invalidity, show the error in my reasoning.

CHORUS: I refuse to get caught up in the hocus pocus of the geometrical method. Besides, no one will buy it; it is far too obtuse. You won't make two guilders on it.

SPINOZA: I renounced the pursuit of wealth.

FREUD: Few are rational about money. Your renunciation goes too far. It is tinged with masochism and is contaminated by your hatred of your money-grubbing family. Nonetheless, you are on the right track. Your renunciation costs you little because money rarely brings happiness. Wealth is not a childhood wish.

CHORUS: (To Freud) You equate money and feces, don't you? And the retention of feces is a childhood wish.

FREUD: Hence, hoarding brings satisfaction while acquisitiveness does not.

SPINOZA: You are right. The pursuit of wealth is as mad as the pursuit of excrement. Avarice is a disease.

CHORUS: Even if your *Ethics* is a product of unconscious wishes and its abracadabra of geometric proof an irrelevancy, it is still beautiful—the architecture, the way in which you structure it, the proofs themselves, the movement from metaphysics to psychology to ethics. It is magnificent as an aesthetic object. It gives pleasure in the way a fugue gives pleasure, so that it is actually about beauty, not about truth.

SPINOZA: (Exasperated) On that again!

FREUD: My critics say I am a poet, not a scientist. It is their way of dismissing truths they cannot face.

SPINOZA: My philosophy enjoins the enjoyment of the beautiful, taking joy in theatrical amusements and the like, but (loses control, pounds his fist and shouts) that is not what the *Ethics* is about! On the contrary, it is a demonstration from definitions of real things, and from self-evident, self-validating axioms whose clarity and distinctness is totally transparent, of the necessary existence of one eternal and infinite system, which I call God or Nature, having infinite and eternal attributes of which we know only two—mind and body, thought and extension—which manifest themselves in infinite modes, the laws of mathematical physics, of which I demonstrate but one, the proportion of motion

and rest, and in the finite modes—particular things, including ourselves, which cannot subsist by themselves but which rest logically and for their very existence on the infinite substance. That substance, the ground of things, necessarily exists and can be comprehended in two ways—as the eternal ground of particular things, as Nature naturing, and as the totality of particular things, Nature natured. The human mind is the idea of the human body, mind and body being two attributes of the same finite mode. Further, mind, insofar as it thinks rationally and thinks adequate ideas, thinks the idea of God, which exists eternally and thus sees things under the aspect of eternity and becomes itself eternal, although this in no way confers immortality. Men and their minds live in duration, not eternity, as is true for all finite modes, which must pass away so that the eternal part of the human mind exists insofar as it attains rationality. Further, having demonstrated these diverse truths about the human mind and its nature, I show the nature of the affects and demonstrate that an affect can only be modified by a stronger affect, and that like all finite modes, man's essence consists in his endeavoring to continue existing and to increase his power. Rationality dictates that we do nothing against Nature, and continue to strive to maximize our power, pleasure consisting in the increase of our perfection, in our activity, while displeasure consists of a lessening of our power, perfection, and ability to act. All my insights into affect and into our emotional life is based on this. Further, I demonstrate how enthrallment to the passive affects, to drivenness without understanding, leads to human bondage, while active understanding transforms the givenness and necessity of our lives into freedom when at the end of the long process of deductive reasoning, of seeing the causes of things, our vision moves from the exterior to the interior, from the outside to the inside, and we see that the necessity of events is but the necessity of our own essence, and in that synoptic vision of the whole and of the interiority of necessity, which I call intuitive knowledge, or the third kind of knowledge, I am transformed, and fed that disinterested love of that which is, of reality itself, which I metaphorically and inconsistently rhetorically call God, in such a way and with such power that my adoration of what is and my understanding of why it is and why it must be as it must be, engenders in me an intellectual love that transforms all my affects, being that more powerful affect of which I write, so that I come to experience peace and in that peace, cease to hate, envy, pity, and regret, and accepting all that must be, come to love it. As a result of this transformation, I continue to try to understand, blaming nobody. So following

from the very first axiom, I demonstrate how men can find peace within and be at peace with one another. That, my friend, is not, or is not merely, an aesthetic structure, or a personal ax to grind, or an unconscious wish fulfillment. It is a roadmap for the few who can follow it to blessedness.

CHORUS: And so in the end, to accept the one and only life that has been possible.

(End of scene.)

Scene 4

(Spinoza's room some months later in 1677. Spinoza is now dying. He is turning the pages of a manuscript.)

CHORUS: What are you doing?

SPINOZA: Burning my Dutch translation of the Old Testament.

CHORUS: Your Dutch isn't all that good.

SPINOZA: That's not why I burn it.

CHORUS: Forget that the free man thinks about nothing less than of death, his meditation being a meditation on life.

SPINOZA: It is true that I shall die soon and do what I must before I do. But I do not think of death.

CHORUS: I don't believe you.

SPINOZA: A part of the mind is eternal.

CHORUS: You don't believe that.

SPINOZA: I'm not sure. But my demonstration of the path to wisdom and salvation is valid regardless.

CHORUS: And the book burning?

SPINOZA: It is unfinished, and I have become unsure of whether the multitude reading Scripture is a good idea. It results in even more superstition .

CHORUS: I thought you believed in freedom of thought.

SPINOZA: That doesn't mean I have to contribute to error.

CHORUS: You have another manuscript there.

SPINOZA: My new book on politics.

CHORUS: Oh. the one where you demonstrate that a commercial aristocracy is the best government, that the state should be ruled exactly the way the Jewish community of Amsterdam is ruled—by a merchant oligarchy, like the one that excommunicated you.

SPINOZA: I wasn't thinking of them. I had Venice in mind.

CHORUS: Doesn't matter. Benedict, what's with you? You really have become an ass-kisser. Your God, whom you love with an intellectual love, who loves you not, is bad enough—masochistic submission to father, rabbis, mob, synod. But not this, this direct justification of the bastards who threw you out. You swore that you would never follow the path of da Costa, yet in this book you all but prostrate yourself on the steps of the synagogue to be stepped on and spat upon. Why recommend rule by the few? What happened to your faith in democracy?

SPINOZA: After the De Witts? Surely you jest. But I haven't written the part on democracy yet.

CHORUS: You never see the personal behind the theoretical.

SPINOZA: I see more than you credit me with. (Feeds the rest of his translation into the flames. It makes me sad to destroy this. I would have liked to finish it. My health doesn't permit it. (Weeps.)

CHORUS: The philosopher weeps.

SPINOZA: My not being able to finish it is as necessary as all else. When I see that from the inside, see its inner necessity, then I freely choose that which must be and my sadness evaporates. (Music is heard.) What's that?

CHORUS: Bach's Cantata, *Ich Habe Genug, I Have Enough*, actually written a few years after your death. Can't you hear the world-weariness, the resignation, the wish to leave this earth "*Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod*," "I take joy in my death." I've had enough—take my soul.

SPINOZA: You know that's not my style of religiosity.

CHORUS: I thought you were a God-intoxicated man.

SPI NOZA: I am, but not in that way. I don't yearn for heaven. My salvation is here, in the eternity of my thoughts. I have found an object worthy of my love. My love doesn't exhaust me, I am weary because I am sick; still my meditation is on this life. There is no other. But I listen. It is very beautiful. It seduces me, but I will not give in to its mood of melancholy.

CHORUS: I know, melancholy is a passive affect. I guess Bach is too Christian for you. Maybe this is more to your taste. (Hebrew song, *Dayeinu*, is heard.) "*Dayeinu*," "It would have been enough." It would have been enough if you had parted the Red Sea, it would have been enough if (Breaks off) More life affirming. You should like that better than the Bach .

SPINOZA: That too is superstition—it tells of miracles that never happened. The glory of God is manifested in the uniformity of Nature, not in the violation of its eternal laws.

CHORUS: Superstition, perhaps, but at least it's Jewish superstition. You prefer Jewish superstition to Christian superstition in spite of yourself.

SPINOZA: The song does bring back a few happy moments from my childhood.

CHORUS: I'm surprised you allow yourself such an emotion.

SPINOZA: It's not a matter of allowing myself.

(Several of Spinoza's friends and his landlord burst in.)

FRIEND I: The Jews say the Messiah has come.

FRIEND 2: They say Shabbatai Zvi, a strange man from the East, is the Messiah. He has proclaimed himself the messiah. They believe it. (Jews of Amsterdam enter and mill about talking excitedly about the Messiah from the East.)

JEW I: Yes, but he can't be the Messiah. He is converted to Islam.

JEW 2: That merely proves his divinity, that he works so cleverly that he fools people by pretending to convert.

FRIEND 2: Even the sanest, the best educated, the most rational are caught up in the madness. They truly believe that Shabbatai Zvi is the Messiah.

FRIEND 3: Aboab and Morteira are in ecstasy. Even Manasseh is swept up in the mania.

CHORUS: Shabbatai Zvi easily persuades the credulous, ignorant Eastern masses of his Messiahhood. It isn't long since Chemielnicki's Cossacks swept through the Ukraine, murdering and raping, sewing cats in to the bellies of pregnant women. So it is not surprising that the survivors fall for Shabbatai's nonsense. But that the highly educated Jews of Amsterdam do, that I find unbelievable. I am amazed.

SPINOZA: I am not. They too are of the multitude.

FRIEND 2: They say that he is converted to Islam , yet they believe in him all the more.

SPINOZA: Men are ruled by hope and fear. This strengthens my resolve that the manuscript of the *Ethics* must remain hidden until my death. (To Landlord) You know what to do. (All exit but Spinoza who lights a pipe and sips a beer.) I have finished all the things I wished to demonstrate concerning the mind's power over the affects and its freedom. I die a free man. (Dies. Landlord enters, takes the manuscript of the *Ethics* and runs out. Curtain.)

It is difficult to know what a philosophical therapy would look like. Aside from the recent move of some academic philosophers to reposition themselves as purveyors of psychotherapy, the only model we have is existential psychotherapy, which frankly bases itself on a philosophical school. The existentialists all play down technique and explicitly state that there is no existential technique and that even if such an oxymoron existed, they would not avail themselves of it. On the contrary, the genuineness they seek and the I-Thou encounter of therapist and patient would be vitiated by in any way routinizing, protocoling, or mechanizing existential psychotherapy. Rather than technique, the essence of existential psychotherapy is thematic and attitudinal. This stance and understanding of what existential therapy is and does has been consistently held by thinkers and practitioners as varied as Freud's friend, Ludwig Binswanger; the theologically influenced Rollo May; and the Stanford professor Irvin Yalom. Thematically the existentialists emphasize such ultimates as aloneness, responsibility, limitation, meaning or the absence thereof, relatedness, and

mortality. Attitudinally they emphasize openness to the mystery and unpredictability of the therapeutic process. In looking for what must be characteristic of a Spinozistic theory of addiction, I take my clue from the existentialists and mostly ignore whatever implications for technique his work might have, instead concentrating on the themes and to a lesser extent the attitudes that his work implies.

What is it that we can learn from Spinoza's life and work that can be adapted for therapeutic work in general and substance abuse work in particular? To start with the life, two things jump out as having therapeutic import. First, as the chorus never tires of pointing out, repression does not work. The patient, here Spinoza, must get in contact with his or her repudiated, projected, split-off or repressed sexual, dependent, and aggressive drives, wishes, and fantasies. If he does not, his logic will be contaminated, his emotional life constricted, and his very self impoverished. In the case of the substance abuser or behavioral addict there is enhanced risk of relapse or acting out. The instinctual life cannot be denied.

But there is another side, too, or at least another way of looking at Spinoza's impulse life, namely, as one that was successfully sublimated. That is the view of Bertrand Russell (1945) and of Steven Nadler (1999), so the addiction therapist must not only look to de-repress and to de-project; he must also be attuned to successful sublimation and alert to possibilities for sublimation in the patient's life. He should point out such possibilities and do what he can to facilitate their actualization. It is of some interest that George Vaillant, author of *The Natural History of Alcoholism* (1983), found in his study of the relationship between psychological defenses and life outcomes in *Adaptation of Life* (1977) that those who used sublimation and altruism as primary defenses were the happiest, healthiest, and most successful participants in this longitudinal study. Here is empirical support for one of Spinoza's major theses about the good life; he would be pleased. So the therapist needs to be simultaneously alert for maladaptive repression *and* for successful sublimation, confronting the one while supporting the other.

The next therapeutic lesson of Spinoza's life is that the therapist must be alert to the patient's conflicts with family, community, and larger world. Especially in addiction work our focus tends to be too narrow, ignoring the surround unless it too is addicted. This is a mistake. No patient can be understood without probing for clashes of values, beliefs, and conflict between the patient and his or her environment, both familial and cultural. Spinoza's clash with the Jewish community of Amsterdam gets replayed in many guises in contemporary America. All conflict between patient and family does not derive from the

parents' alcoholism or drug addiction. The therapist needs to look for more subtle conflicts, particularly between discordant value systems. Such discord is often intensely painful, and that pain can be an etiological factor in addiction. It can also maintain it and/or trigger relapse.

What about Spinoza's philosophy? What can that contribute to addiction treatment? I think the key factor in Spinoza's work applicable to therapy is the dialectical tension between cognition and affect. In Spinoza's epistemology there is a hierarchy of stages of knowing, starting with the imagination, progressing to reason, and culminating in intuition. For Spinoza *imagination* is not an honorific term. The imagination gives us only confused, muddy, inadequate ideas. It is a result of forces acting on us; or in his terms, we are passive when we use images as our primary source of knowledge. Even when imagination gives veridical knowledge, it does so without imparting understanding. The active addict lives and knows at the level of images and the imagination. By definition his or her knowledge is inadequate. The therapeutic corollary of this is that the therapist must be active in confronting the addict's inadequate, that is, fuzzy, distorted, or plain wrong, ideas.

The case is better with reason, the next stage in the ladder of insight. Here there is the possibility not only of knowing, but of understanding. Insight becomes possible. The therapeutic import of this is that insight is intrinsic to cure. For the patient to develop adequate ideas about his addiction, that is, to come to understand not only that he is addicted, but also what brought about that state of being and what maintains it, the patient must be capable of reason. Does the patient have an adequate idea of what the addiction is doing to her? If not, what can the therapist do to enable that knowledge? Cognition is crucial. Without knowledge, stable recovery is impossible.

But then there is the other side of Spinoza's dialectic of knowledge encapsulated in his aphorism, "Only a stronger affect can change an affect." So as important as knowledge, cognition, is, it is not enough. Emotion is needed as well. But Spinoza's theory is never simple. Knowledge itself can engender powerful emotion. We therapists, especially in the substance abuse field, who are so wary of intellectualization tend to forget that the mind has its passions just as much as the heart. In fact, in recovery it is the affect released by the insight that it is the alcohol or the gambling or the cocaine that is the cause of the trouble that transforms, as does the insight that one has lost control over substance use or compulsive behavior. Knowledge is emotional, and it is emotion that brings about change.

For Spinoza, intuition is the highest form of cognition. Here there is true insight into the nature of things and the internal necessity of them. Intuition in this sense plays its role in recovery when patients who have come to see the biopsychosocial determinants of their illness in the rational stage of knowing, now have a more total view of their place in family, culture, history, and circumstance, and reach an acceptance of the unalterable nature of that causal nexus. They also come to some comprehension of their place in the universe and their relationship to it. AA's serenity prayer, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference," is profoundly Spinozistic. Being more deterministic than the Program, Spinoza put it somewhat differently: "Freedom is the acceptance of necessity." But acceptance is key — accepting the reality of addiction, accepting limitation, accepting the inevitability of, in Erik Erikson's words, "the one and only life that is possible," But this acceptance must not be facile or cheap. It can not be achieved by repressing the emotions of hatred, rage, and shame, particularly if their object is abusing, possibly substance-involved parents. Only after these emotions are worked through is true acceptance possible.

That brings us to the centrality of love in Spinoza's philosophy. It is love, intellectual love, that is, love that comes from knowledge that transforms and makes change and growth possible. Spinoza is absolutely right here. It is the user's love for substance or compulsion that keeps him in bondage and it is only a stronger, more powerful love that can free him. Only a more powerful affect can release him from bondage and move him toward freedom. The nature of that love will differ from patient to patient. For some it will be love of the TwelveStep program, for some love of the Higher Power, for some love of truth or beauty or children, or an idea, or a quest. But love there must be. Freud knew that, too, when he said, "Love is a great teacher," and put transference love at the center of his therapy.

The episode of Shabbatai Zvi is also instructive. Countertransference incomprehension of the sheer irrationality of addiction is disabling of its treatment. It may help to remember that both the traumatized, downtrodden (the victims of Chmielnicki's massacre) and the highly educated, affluent, who may have been traumatized themselves (the Jews of Amsterdam), are easily bewitched by false messiahs, and there are no false messiahs than drugs and compulsive behavior. Spinoza was right not to be surprised. The multitude, those not anchored to reality, regardless of their level of achievement, are highly vulnerable to belief in false-messiahs, and action on that belief is all too common. Seeing addiction in this way reduces or eliminates countertransference feelings of rage, bewilderment, frustration, and the desire to retaliate.

There are two other aspects of Spinoza's teaching that are crucial for addiction therapy. The first is his emphasis on community, on the necessity of sharing one's quest for blessedness with other men. That is what happens in the Twelve-Step program or in a successful therapy group. Addiction therapists must do all they can to help patients reintegrate into community, whatever community may mean for a particular patient. The second is his emphasis on the irrationality of guilt, self-recrimination, and remorse. The corollary to this is his endorsement of moderation and legitimizing of pleasures of all sorts, as long as they harm neither self nor others. In short, Spinoza is no fan of the superego. Addiction therapists can usefully emulate Spinoza here, dispute their patients' irrational guilt, and endorse their right to pleasures. Most addicts, appearances to the contrary, are gloomy ascetics and they need an anodyne for this. They need to learn, as Spinoza did, that there can never be enough joy.

To end on a less exalted level, Spinoza was a realist. He knew that all men were not capable of blessedness, so he devised a "therapy" for the multitude based on incentives of hope and fear administered by the wise, by those capable of philosophizing. We in our allegiance to an egalitarian ethos tend to find this too elitist. But Spinoza's social analysis is worth keeping in mind. There are patients who are not capable of insight, let alone intellectual love, who are best helped to sobriety and recovery by behavioral interventions, by the use of carrot and stick, or of hope and fear. And there are patients who are capable of insight who require a more dynamic approach. And there are patients who are capable of transformation and transcendence fueled by love. It behooves the therapist to make distinctions and to adopt different tactics with patients at different levels even while keeping in mind that it may be the same patient at different levels of development who receives each of these therapies.

It may seem impossible for the addictions therapist to de-repress, help sublimate, elucidate conflict with family and community, move the patient from imagination to rationality to intuitive knowledge, find the balance between cognition and affect, help the patient work through pain to a state of acceptance, put the patient in contact with the love that transforms, reconnect the patient with community, and evaluate the patient's level of understanding in order to tailor the treatment to reach a particular patient. But as Spinoza said, "All things excellent are as difficult as they are rare," and the goals of Spinozistic therapy are ideals to be striven for, not demands that increase burdens on therapists practicing one of the most difficult of specialties.

A CASE ILLUSTRATION

Steven's was in a sense a Spinozistic therapy. A brilliant man who started out as an engineer and ended up as a poet, he had been bedeviled all his adult life by problematic drinking. His alcoholism had lost him a marriage, had been a main cause of his failure to complete his dissertation, and had played a major role in his being denied tenure as an English professor. Additionally, his recent relapse, after period of sobriety, has led to his current girlfriend breaking off with him, an event that brought him into therapy.

Steven's life has many parallels to Spinoza's. He'd been brought up a Catholic in an overwhelmingly Protestant environment, having the same sort of equivocal relationship to the majority culture that Spinoza did. Of course, it was different. Steven's Catholicism, unlike Spinoza's Judaism, posed no danger of outright persecution, but it did make him an outsider. Further, his widowed mother (Steven's father died when he was 2), emotionally distant, beleaguered, and almost totally preoccupied with the struggle for existence, pushed her gifted son toward the Church and ordination. Perhaps he might even rise to bishop and free her from a life of grinding labor. The priest he served as an altar boy also recognized his talent and tried to recruit him for the Church. The fatherless boy bonded with his spiritual fathers and was soon studying Aquinas and Augustine, just as the adolescent Spinoza had studied Maimonides and Rashi.

But Steven's skeptical and inquiring mind was filled with doubt. Temporizing with the support of his "fathers" who recognized the scientific bent of his mind, he postponed a decision about entering the priesthood and in a masterful compromise between his rational and his mystical sides studied engineering in a Jesuit college. But it was a compromise that was not to endure. By the time he graduated, he had rejected Catholicism and left the Church. He told me he did so because it was the only intellectually honest thing he could do, and intellectual honesty was his highest value.

It was a decision that cost him dearly. This virtually loveless boy turned his back on the institution and people who had given him whatever love he had known. His Jesuit sponsors lost interest in him and his mother became colder than ever. Not surprisingly, he was impelled to find a replacement, and the replacement was alcohol. When I met him thirty years later, he had spent at least ten years trying to stop, alternating periods of abstinence with binge drinking. One of the major impediments to his recovery was his angry, ambivalent, disdainful, and frequently hateful relationship with AA. He became enraged with AA, which he saw, not quite consciously making the connection, as manifesting everything he hated about the Catholic Church: an irrational belief system, hypocrisy, a vacuous and false spirituality, and an optimistic take on life incongruent with his

experience, the ambivalence that brought him back time and time again was a manifestation of his unconscious longing for that which he had rejected.

I would like to highlight a few ways in which Spinozistic therapeutic elements played a role in what was ultimately a successful therapy, one that was failing until this element became incorporated into the treatment.

The first was the way in which I handled Steven's intellectualizations. This was a patient who had read everything and remembered it. His discourse was both philosophical and metaphorical. At times it was beautiful, but it served as a distancing device and was clearly in the service of his addiction. Accordingly, I confronted this defense and tried to get him out of his head and into his gut. My efforts backfired and I almost lost him. My interventions merely made him argumentative. Then I had an "Aha" experience—his head was his gut, or better, his heart. Steven was in love with ideas and with language and this was the basic datum, not his defensive and avoidant use of that love. His was literally an intellectual love, and as soon as I recognized and acknowledged this, things opened up. By going to where Eros was, emotion entered the room. I joined the resistance, so to speak. But I wasn't merely doing that. If I had been, he would have smelled a rat. Rather, I really felt his love of the intellectual and aesthetic and genuinely valued it. It was only after this that its defensive aspect could be analyzed and gotten out of Steven's way.

The rapport that resulted from my change of approach, however fraught with danger of too much countertransference enjoyment of the sheer exhilaration of seeing a first-rate mind at work, gave me an opening to interpret his alcoholism as a substitute religion. This resonated and reverberated. We worked on this for a while before I appealed to his rationality, suggesting that worship of Dionysus was just as irrational as worship of the Trinity. When I reminded him that his intellectual honesty had led him to relinquish the latter belief, he finished my sentence by saying, "So intellectual honesty compels me to relinquish Dionysus." I said, "So it seems."

Amazingly, Steven stopped drinking, this time without returning to AA. I was worried about his isolation. He was a freelance translator who worked and lived alone, and I was his only connection to the world. He went into a deep depression. I interpreted, "You're feeling what you felt when you left the Church, and what you felt when your mother ignored you after your father 'left.' Now, unlike when you relinquished Catholicism, you don't have alcohol to mask and anesthetize your sorrow." This opened up a flood of pain and the

following months were spent working through his now de-repressed rage, hurt, shame, guilt, and longing.

It took almost a year before Steven finished mourning, mourning for many things—father, mother's love, spoiled career, failed marriage, Church as institution and as belief system, and alcohol as ritual, rite, source of hope and comfort, and chemical solace. By then, somewhat parallel to the Chorus, I had come to admire my intellectualizing patient. Toward the end of this mourning period Steven discovered SOS (Secular Organization for Sobriety), a selfhelp group for those addicts who cannot in good faith (no pun intended) subscribe to the tenets of the Twelve-Step movement. Further, since it has far fewer members and meetings than A.A. most of its activity is on the Internet and via e-mail. Both its belief system and its structure were a perfect fit for Steven's value system and personality structure. In a short time he became an avid participant in SOS. In fact he came to love SOS with something like the intellectual love recommended by Spinoza. It gave him an understanding of who he was and of his relationship to the cosmos, including the role that alcohol had played in his life. that was indeed transforming, and unlike AA did not elicit rebellion and skepticism in him. He had finally found something he could give his allegiance to and that brought him into community as he began to spend long hours composing e-mail to follow SOSers in need of support, guidance, and love. SOS allowed Steven to remain alone, satisfying the schizoid side of him that was so afraid of abandonment by people, and simultaneously satisfied the part of him that longed for symbiosis and community.

So Spinozaistic therapeutic insight guided a successful therapy by helping the therapist to see that ideas can be loved, that conflict between value systems can lead to psychopathology, that de-repression (as vital as it is) can only occur in the context of rapport, and that the patient must find his own way to an object worthy of his love, in this case love of SOS with its ethos of mutual selfhelp in the context of immanence, not transcendence, and the realization that the cure necessarily entails reconnection with community on whatever terms work for the patient.

It is important to note that Steven didn't merely come to love ideas; he had always done that, and loving ideas is not intrinsically different from loving, let us say, horseracing. As Freud pointed out, "We must love or grow ill," so it's better to love something than to not love at all. But this is not yet anything like Spinoza 's intellectual love, which transforms. Steven did come to experience something like intellectual love when he came to understand his addiction and its ineluctable determinants, those manifestations of the eternal laws of

nature that made it impossible for him to drink safely. With that understanding came a deeper understanding of himself and his relationship to the universe. This synoptic vision, and his deeply affective acceptance of it is what was mutative, what allowed him to move from depressed addict to reasonably happy recovering person. This change in intellectual stance is both the same as and different from what alcoholics and other addicts experience when they "hit bottom," to use the Twelve-Step phrase. Both involve the relinquishing of denial, but the move toward intellectual love involves a far broader insight and a different type of emotional realignment. It is not the path for all, but it is vital that the therapist travel that road with those patients who are capable of such insight.

I'm going to end Steven 's story on what sounds like a literary flourish, but it is not. It is true. Almost a year after Steven became involved in SOS, he started an e-mail correspondence with a woman in China struggling to maintain her sobriety. Steven was able to help her and they fell in love. He is now living in China with his beloved, the two of them sober and content. Although a non believer, she is a practicing Buddhist, which Steven first saw as an impediment to their relationship. But borrowing a slogan from the Program he rejected, he decided to "Live and let live," and it has worked.

Chapter 8:

The Therapist's Grief

I used to tell my counseling students that they were in training to be professional mourners. That may be slightly hyperbolic, but it isn't far from the truth. One of the most mutative of therapeutic interventions is enabling mourning. Depression, substance abuse, and generalized anxiety are frequent consequences of the failure to mourn. After informing them that they were on their way to become professional mourners, I asked them to read Chekhov's great short story "Heartbreak." "Heartbreak" is told in the first person by a St. Petersburg cab driver who has lost his only child. He tells how he tried to share his grief with his fellow coachmen, with a man in the stable, with the boss, with his fares; nobody wants to listen and he has no way to discharge his heartbreak. Finally, at the end of an excruciating day he returns to the stable, unhitches his horse and tells the entire story of the illness, of the decline, of the death itself, of the funeral, and of his continuing sorrow to the horse. We would discuss the story and then I would look at the class and say, "You're the horse.!"

In listening to patients' grief, all but the most stony-hearted of therapists feel some degree of identification and become sorrowful themselves. Without becoming overwhelmed like the patient, the therapist needs to share the grief, and this being-with is powerfully therapeutic. In identifying with the mourning patient, the therapist opens him- or herself to the emotions associated not only with the patient's loss, but with the therapist's past losses. This can be and sometimes is painful and deeply unsettling.

But the therapist's job entails more than sharing loss with patients in touch with—conscious of—their feelings around that loss. The therapist must also uncover repressed, suppressed, projected, anesthetized (by acting out, symptom formation, and/or drugs and alcohol) denial (more often minimization), and somaticized emotional reactions to loss. I remember one middle-aged woman whose life was dramatically unfulfilled, with a long sequence of failures and self-destructive episodes, who in the course of our work together realized how intensely she longed for her long-dead father. Her getting in touch with how catastrophic Father's death had been for her culminated in a session of unrelieved sobbing "I want my daddy" on my couch for an entire hour. Of course the working through took a long time, but something had shifted for her. She was no longer the same person. She found

a way to ritualize her mourning and memorialize her father. She also realized that her disabling panic attacks, chiefly characterized by feelings of not being able to breathe and impending death, were an identification with her father's fatal heart attack and self-punishment for her ambivalent love (which contained no little hatred) towards him.

That, too, took some working through that freed her from the "stuckness" of her life. She ceased her self-destructive behavior and went on to a long string of personal and professional successes. In the course of this intensive work her therapist (me) got in contact with unmourned losses in his life and took steps to enable him to do some long-deferred, necessary mourning. By our patients we'll be taught.

So far we've been speaking of the therapist's grief associated with the grief of patients occurring mostly through emotional openness to the other (the patient) and identification with him or her. But this is an attenuated grief. There are more direct and more powerful sources of the therapist's grief: namely, termination by or death of the patient.

Roughly speaking, this takes two forms: reaction to the loss of short-term patients and reaction to the loss of long-term patients. I've lost a number of relatively short-term patients, people I didn't know all that well or felt that strong an attachment to. Termination by recently engaged patients, although it may stir feelings of failure and inadequacy and perhaps rage at the departing patient, is rarely traumatic. It may be additionally upsetting if you need the business, yet this is not deep stuff. On the other hand, loss of a relatively new patient through suicide, sudden illness, a substance-assisted accident as in death by DWI (driving while intoxicated), is profoundly disturbing. Here complex grief encompassing conflicting feelings of loss, pity, sorrow, anger, and self-blame may require psychotherapeutic help for the therapist him- or herself. The real danger here is the therapist's failing to get necessary help because fear, pride, shame and disidentification with the patient role get in the way. Not getting help at that juncture is a bad mistake with unpredictable consequences.

That brings us to loss of patients of many years. This is always a meaningful loss for the therapist. If by termination, there may be feelings of satisfaction—even pride—that although it took a long time the patient has benefited enormously and he or she is ready to continue facing life's storms (and joys) without us. But surely there are other feelings—simply missing the patient, anger at "abandonment," intense "pain in the wallet" if the patient's hours cannot be readily filled in a highly competitive, often managed-care market, sorrow at the passing of time accentuated by awareness that both the patient and you are

significantly older, and sorrow not unlike that following a death or other significant loss. The “treatment” of all this is awareness of, rather than denying, repressing, minimizing, anesthetizing, or acting out of these painful, conflictual and to various degrees intense feelings. As in much else in life, what is needed is staying with feelings and working them through. There’s been a sort of death and we need to mourn. In the case of a long-time patient’s actual death we are no longer dealing with the analogical or the symbolic. This is the real thing. Therapists suffering such losses are facing a full-scale mourning process. No, it isn’t like losing a parent, burying a spouse, or losing a close friend, but it is not a trivial loss either. I remember a thirty-year patient—off and on—to whom I had made home visits for several years during his final illness. I was with him the night before he died. His family, with whom I had had considerable contact, failed to notify me of, let alone invite me to, his memorial service. I was deeply hurt. More importantly, I had been deprived of an opportunity to do the mourning I needed to do.

There is also the issue of survivor guilt. Therapists who outlive long-term patients may very easily feel guilty about doing so. Again, awareness is the key, lest one act out the guilt in self-destructive ways or in an act of vengeance on another patient. There is another kind of loss common to therapists who have been around for a while. That is the loss of deeply valued, even beloved analysts and supervisors. These “transferential” relationships are not all transference, at least no more than any other relationship is merely transference. They are often very real, an important part of our professional and even personal lives. Supervisors and analysts are deeply significant for those who live the analytic or at least the therapeutic life.

So yes, we are professional mourners, needing not only to mourn with our patients, but to mourn for ourselves, for the losses in our personal lives, and the losses of our patients through termination or through death. And in all of this, we inevitably get in touch with our own past losses and our own mortality.

Mr. Ducat and Mrs. Hamish: Thoughts on Brief Therapy

By the time I knew him, he was a unit chief at one of the big state hospitals—nowadays called psychiatric centers—on Long Island, and had a small private psychotherapy practice on the side. Most unit chiefs are MDs or PhDs of one sort or another, so for a “mere” social worker to attain such status was a coup. It was hard to see the one-time ne’er-do-well hippie he told he had been in the well turned-out middle-aged man sitting and talking to me. Harvey was highly doubtful about reentering therapy. He told me he had been in three long-term therapies and that the last one had turned out badly. He never specified what that meant. Now he wanted to come back for a “tune-up” to resolve some long-standing issues and he didn’t think he could go back to his last “shrink” so he was trying me. His ambivalence about returning to treatment contained enough material for a long-term therapy by itself.

“I’ve been in therapy multiple times, including several lengthy ones. The first that lasted three years was helpful—I might have stayed longer but I couldn’t afford it at the time. The second two, about two and a half years each, didn’t do much and I left the last one hurt and kind of bitter. I don’t want to knock extended, intensive dynamic therapy. That’s what I do myself in my private practice. But the truth is that the biggest game changer for me was an extremely brief therapeutic encounter. Brief therapy gets bad press from analytic types, and I assume you belong to that camp. I’d like to tell you about my work with Mr. Ducat and Mrs. Hamish. Let me make explicit the subtext—I don’t want to get involved in an open-ended process [and he didn’t]; I just want some help with some marital issues—my anger at my post-menopausal wife’s sexual coldness is making me irrationally angry and threatens to ruin an otherwise long, indeed marvelous, relationship. But back to Mr. Ducat and Mrs. Hamish. I’m telling you about them to demonstrate that I can make deep changes rapidly and to say something positive about ‘brief encounters.’ I don’t really have anything against long-term analytic work, I’m just pissed off at my last therapist.”

I was wondering at that time if brief encounter might refer not only to a therapeutic encounter but to a brief sexual encounter outside of his marriage.

“I was not always the secure professional running, and running well, a complex unit of a hospital; for many years I was a mess. Most of the problem was booze; I was drunk from

morning to night for weeks at a time. As you probably know, the longer I drank the worse it got. Naturally, my alcoholism—I didn't recognize it as that then—didn't do much for my career. In fact, in spite of a pretty prestigious college degree, I didn't have one. I had become unemployable. Disaster followed disaster until I wound up on the 'flight deck.' [AA slang for the locked ward]. It was my third visit there. When I got out I was shaky as hell, unemployed with no prospects and severely depressed. But I was sober—I've stayed so ever since—and became involved with Alcoholics Anonymous. I went to a lot of meetings and found a sponsor. I also started seeing a shrink in a clinic.

“In those early days I doubted I could hold a job even if I could find one and was even more doubtful that I could stay sober. Nevertheless, I really looked hard for employment but with no success whatsoever. I was despairing when a friend suggested I go to FECS. I'd never heard of it but it wound up changing my life.

“FECS was Federation Employment and Guidance Service, an old-line Jewish lower East Side institution, now evolved into a mainstream social service agency. At the time it had an office on Park Avenue South, where I duly made an appointment. It proved disappointing. I went to their employment division where the employment counselor eventually told me that during the present economic downturn (I forget which one that was) they had had no job listings for which a liberal arts major could qualify, especially one with such a spotty work record. Then he said, 'But even if we had more job leads to offer you, it wouldn't do you any good. You don't have the vaguest idea what you want to do.' That was a reasonable conclusion from the rambling interview I had had with him. He went on to say, 'We have a vocational counseling service. Why don't you go upstairs and make an appointment?'

“I started walking out the door thinking, 'Just what you need. An asshole of a high school guidance counselor.' But something stopped me, some remnant of sanity overpowered my defensive arrogance and I turned around and made an appointment, with, as it turned out, Mr. Ducat. We met only three times, but he changed my life. Ducat was an interesting guy; he had written a book called *Occupations in the Bible*, and we immediately connected. In a skillfully probing interview, Ducat elicited enough information to arrive at the tentative hypothesis that some form of social service job would be ideal for me. But he wasn't sure that my alcohol-battered brain retained enough cognitive strength and emotional capacity to undertake the training necessary to get a decent job in that field. So he scheduled an extensive battery of vocational and psychological tests. I was resistant to the testing, my anxiety telling me that I would do abysmally. Ducat reassured me, interpreted my resistance

and got me to take the test battery. It lasted all day. We met twice after that for ‘informing’ interviews. Feedback from the testing and his assessment of me all pointed towards working with people in some therapeutic capacity, and equally importantly, that I was together enough to go in that direction. We talked about social work school, which for some reason I rejected. (Years later I did acquire an MSW.) Then Ducat asked me, ‘Would you like to be on my side of the desk?’ I asked what he meant and he told me about vocational rehabilitation counseling, a field I had never heard of. The more he told me about it, the more I liked it. It was reality based; it touched on economics and sociology, two subjects I had loved in college; it offered opportunities in teaching and administration as well as counseling. Ducat’s suggestion that I might like to do his job with its implication that I would be able to do it was transformative. A game changer. I had given up on professional work—it was beyond the depressed, anxiety-ridden me. Then Ducat’s vote of confidence sharply raised my self-esteem and made hitherto closed possibilities seem possible. He went further, telling me that there was federal money available for training in rehabilitation, making graduate work feasible and that he would give me a recommendation addressed to the chair of the program he had graduated from. I never saw Mr. Ducat again, but I’ve never forgotten him. Studying rehabilitation became my rehabilitation, but it wasn’t an easy or smooth path.

“During my first field placement my anxiety got in the way, exacerbated by having to deal with an erratic, rather crazy supervisor. I became so anxious that I was seriously considering dropping out. Fortunately, I went to the University Counseling Service for help. Enter Mrs. Hamish, who turned out to be the perfect counselor for me. I only saw her four or five times, yet she was able to sufficiently attenuate my anxiety so that I was able to continue in my graduate program. It was so long ago that I don’t remember how she did that—probably mostly by giving me a forum, a safe place, to express rather than act out on my fear—whatever it was that she did, it worked. She, too, was a game changer. It’s been mostly uphill since then.”

I took in all Harvey told me with difficulty. It seemed a little too dramatic to be true. But it was. Harvey and I worked together for several months and rather similarly to Mrs. Hamish, I provided a safe forum for him to express his rage and frustration rather than destructively acting on it. Then he started an affair with a married woman who, like Harvey, had no intention of leaving her mate. She, too, had a “good marriage.” Not long after that Harvey terminated. I could have interpreted the many defensive reasons he needed to withdraw from, indeed avoid, too much connection with me and so by interpretation

perhaps alter his decision to leave. But I chose not to. I had a happy customer, grateful for the help I had given him, so why “talk past the sale”?

Several years later I ran into Harvey at a conference. He told me he still saw his “friend with benefits” once or twice a month, and that they were still both happily married, in his case, happier than ever. If either spouse “knew,” as I suspected they did, they chose to say nothing, and to all appearances remained in love with their mates.

So my therapy with Harvey was also an instance of “successful” brief therapy and over the years he had vastly benefited from his very varied experiences of those brief therapies. Just to keep the scales balanced, I remind the reader that none of Harvey’s later successes would, in all probability, have been possible without his two prolonged therapeutic experiences and his enduring relationship with the Program, aka Alcoholics Anonymous.

Chapter 10:

Transference

The analyst had been deaf for years. He learned to coordinate his “um-hums” with variations in his patients’ breathing. Somehow he sensed when to say, “You are thinking how much I am like your mother.” If the patient writhed on the couch, he knew he had scored. If the patient’s body language gave no clue and his breathing pattern remained constant, the analyst would wait until the stillness of the patient’s head signaled an interruption in the flow of associations and say, “You reject, not even reject—simply act as if I didn’t exist—my interpretations. You are doing to me what your mother did to you—turning a passive experience—having it happen to you—into an active one—doing it to me—as a way to master the trauma of being treated like you weren’t there—and you want me to feel what you felt—shame, humiliation, hurt—deeper than you can imagine—and *rage*—the rage you express by treating me as if I didn’t exist.”

The analyst had learned long ago that all of his patients were so narcissistic that they inevitably felt that they had not received their just due—that both family and world hadn’t recognized their greatness—so the “You reject my interpretation” interpretation rarely failed. More often than not, it brought tears. In his more sadistic moods, the analyst would add, “You felt so impotent, so small, so like a piece of shit—a tiny insignificant turd—and that’s the way you want me to feel.” That inevitably brought tears.

If a patient remained silent for any length of time, the analyst would say, “You are thinking of sucking my cock.” If the patient seemed unmoved, the analyst would continue, “Or, perhaps of my fucking you up the ass—sucking or fucking—either way you take in my strength—the strength you wanted from your father—a wish you could never admit.” The analyst prided himself on the directness of his communications. This, too almost inevitably worked—none of the analyst’s patients felt that they had connected with their fathers.

Just to make sure the patient didn’t think he was fixated on the homosexual transference, the analyst handled the patient’s next protracted silence by interpreting, “You were thinking of killing me, but you were afraid to say so because you fear that I will castrate you.” Sometimes he added, “Just like you feared your father would do when you wanted to kill him when you were six.” However, over the years the analyst had noticed that patients

became more anguished if he did not make the connection with the father, so now he only did so out of boredom.

The analyst wasn't quite so deft with female patients. Yet, with the aid of the biographies he asked them to write as part of the treatment and some lip reading in the initial face-to-face sessions, he had enough information to say "um-hum" appropriately. All in all deafness wasn't so much of a barrier to doing analysis. Besides, what difference did it make? As Freud had said, "They all—the most hide-bound conservatives as well as the most fire-eating revolutionaries—want consolation—and I have none to give them." Life sucks and analysis can't change that. The analyst also often thought that the best that analysis can do is to change neurotic misery into ordinary human unhappiness, as the father of his profession had said. And most of the time he believed he couldn't even do that. So deafness didn't much matter. They all say the same thing anyway.

The analyst often mused that being deaf wasn't so bad—perhaps it was even an advantage. After all, there were so many things that he didn't want to hear. It was true that gender was a bit of a problem. It was harder to fake it, although the analyst didn't really think of what he was doing as "faking it" with a woman. Fortunately, most of his patients suffered gender confusion so it didn't really much matter if he gave a male response to a female. In any case, androgyny was in, and it wasn't too hard to turn lack of therapeutic tact—as disastrous misstatements on the part of the therapist are euphemistically called—into therapeutic triumphs—a challenge that the analyst really got off on.

The analyst missed Mozart, but otherwise found that not hearing what people said was no great disadvantage. When he needed to he could lip-read, which he did quite well. The analyst's sometimes frantic need of reassuring himself that his deafness was inconsequential was expressed in a sort of rehearsal—a rehearsal of what had become an almost obsessive thought—"I can smell a fart readily enough, who needs to hear it too?" Anal themes had played a central role in his training analysis and he usually gave his seminar students an assignment to "contemplate the asshole." No, it wasn't being unable to hear with his two outer ears that troubled the analyst; rather it was the deafness he had developed with his third ear—the one lengthily and painstakingly trained to listen to and for the manifestations of the unconscious—to hear the dynamic process inherent in the self-absorbed narrative patients had spewed on his couch for thirty years. The analyst's gaze frequently wandered from his analysand's almost convulsively heavy breathing to the worn, crumbling paperback volume of Theodore Reik's classic, *Listening With a Third Ear*, and he cringed. This third ear had grown ever deafer years before he had lost his hearing in the other two.

He had first become aware that it was dwindling away years ago when he became anxious over his growing inability to make sense of dreams. It was something like deepening tone deafness. He just couldn't catch the resonances. The analyst's interpretations became progressively more mechanical, banal, stereotypical—and he knew it. In the old days he had been able to virtually dream along with the dreamer, had been able to see behind the manifest content to the underlying meaning. Now dreams were opaque. It was as if he had lost not only his third ear, but his third eye—blind and deaf in the realm of the unconscious. Should he become a behaviorist? He was hardly an analyst anymore and he knew it. But dreams—however much they might be the “royal road to the unconscious”—weren't the only road. There was the transference. But that too grew opaque. The dynamics of interpersonal relations now befuddled him. Half the time the analyst had no idea what was going on between him and his analysand. What was projection? What was realistic perception? Who knew? All was a mystery. It was only after his third ear failed that the analyst's hearing in his other two ears dimmed and within a few years failed altogether.

Ironically, it was his deafness that prevented the analyst's suicide. Now that he couldn't hear, he was protected from crushing feelings of failure and loss. Deafness spared him catastrophic anxiety and the blackness of despair. He was no longer capable of knowing what he did not know. Besides, his stereotypic interpretations and well-timed “um-hums” worked magnificently. Not troubled by the nuances of true analysis, or the discomfort of penetrating interpretations, patients flocked to him. The analyst might almost have been said to start a new school of psychoanalysis—the collusion school. It worked beyond anyone's wildest dreams—analysand and analyst were gratified, their self-esteem rose, transference love induced countertransference love, a warm glow hovered over the treatment room.

The analyst's practice grew until he had no hours open. There was a waiting list. His refusal to publish papers only enhanced his aura. Of course the real reason he hadn't published was that he had nothing to say, but his colleagues thought that he was reluctant to share his breakthroughs in analytic technique. As the years went on, he became a legendary figure in New York analytic circles. Other analysts despaired, and many gave up. The ravages of managed care were killing the profession. Worst yet, the climate of opinion had changed. To admit to being a practitioner of Freud's profession, let alone a Freudian, was to be perceived as a practitioner of an expensive, useless, misogynistic pseudo-science. Empirically verified short-term solution-oriented therapy was in. There were surprisingly few suicides in the profession. But in any case, our analyst was protected from all that. His cache, his long waiting list and the deep pleasure, the self-satisfaction, the feeling perhaps

of being a genius that the efficacy of his “um-hums” and his almost infallible knack of calling out just the right one of an admittedly limited repertoire of interpretations protected him from both managed care and the trashing of analysis. The deafer he had become, the stronger had his self-love become until now he basked in the warmth of adulation from his peers, patients and self. Never had his self-regard been so high—or his income. For the first time in his life he didn’t have to think about money. He could spend freely and buy what he wished. And what he wished to buy was heroin—pure heroin—the best—the good stuff. Now, at long last, he could afford all the heroin he craved.

Dr. Emmanuel Sonnenshine said quietly but firmly, “That’s enough, Mr. Dunkelfarb. You’re in negative transference again. Your fantasy is entirely about your feelings about me. Your hatred for me knows no bounds. But it isn’t really about me. We’re going to have to end now, but in our coming sessions we’re going to need to analyze your fantasy in as much detail as possible.” Dr. Sonnenshine made a secret vow to never take a writer like Dunkelfarb as a patient again, especially one who obsessively reads psychoanalytic literature. He was angry with himself for letting his annoyance come through in his remark about negative transference, but this patient was impossible.

At the next session Dunkelfarb staved off Sonnenshine’s desire to analyze his fantasy by saying, “Dr. Sonnenshine, you know it’s poor analytic technique to interfere with the patient’s free flow of thoughts. Trying out my plot lines and characterizations on you frees me up to write my short stories and novels. That’s what I’m paying you for, and don’t forget it—so get out of my way!”

Dunkelfarb fell silent but not for very long and then continued, “The analyst needed the heroin not only because he was addicted and feared the anguish of withdrawal, but far more saliently, to silence the voice arising from the depths within, which threatened to puncture and destroy his euphoria. Dim as they were, they had to be silenced. Even with heroin, the analyst couldn’t totally stifle the voice that was no less insistent than it was low. It endlessly reiterated, ‘You’re not in a state of grace. You have done awful things. You are a fraud. You don’t listen to your patients even when you have the capacity to. No wonder you can’t hear the unconscious—there’s no music in you, no poetry in you, you can’t dance. You’re superficial, conventional, self-absorbed, a narcissist who will never be a flower, a travesty of a lover—between poor performance and your perverse preoccupations you are an affront to Eros. Even worse, you’re a coward.’ But most of the time, heroin assured the analyst that if waiting list, fortune, and reputation didn’t stifle the voice, then something could and would.”

Dr. Sonnenshine interrupted, “Mr. Dunkelfarb, you entered analysis because your drug use was getting out of control and that frightened you. Don’t you think that has something to do with your attributing heroin addiction to me?” “I’m not attributing it to you, dumbkopf! I’ve been sharing my latest story with you! Aren’t you supposed to support my creativity?” Sonnenshine ran out of patience. “Come on now, be serious. The analyst in your story isn’t Sigmund Freud. Of course, it’s me.” Dunkelfarb shot back, “You mean you’re another fraud!” Sonnenshine lost control, shouting, “Stop this nonsense! How can I help you if you won’t be serious! Our work together is a series of put-ons, just like your life!” Dunkelfarb wet his pants. The urine soaked through to stain Sonnenshine’s immaculate couch. Sonnenshine almost terminated the analysis but restraining himself said, “Mr. Dunkelfarb, that wasn’t anxiety—that was hostility.”

Dr. Sonnenshine was deeply troubled with the session. He was retaliating and it showed in his interpretation of his patient’s associations, in his lecturing, his ridiculing, his moralizing. He had missed a golden opportunity to get to the core of Dunkelfarb’s pathology. Why hadn’t he asked the patient to elaborate on the “analyst’s sexual inadequacy” and “perverse preoccupations”? They were assuredly anal in nature but they needed exploration.

Sonnenshine knew he just wasn’t doing the work that he was capable of. Why was he reacting so powerfully and inappropriately to Dunkelfarb’s provocations? Was there a grain of truth in them? More than a grain? Was it all his countertransference? Dunkelfarb did remind him of his wiseguy brother, the Seventh Avenue multimillionaire who he could barely stand. Or was Dunkelfarb inducing in him a rage similar to his own as a form of communication—a way of making Sonnenshine know how it felt to be Dunkelfarb? Hadn’t Dunkelfarb’s ridiculing such an interpretation in his fantasy made it likely that it was true? Sonnenshine read up on projective identification, as the dynamic by which patient induces emotion in analyst is called. That helped, as did his self-analysis of his countertransference. He regained mastery of his professional self and started doing first-rate work with Dunkelfarb. Once again, the distinctions between projection and projective identification, between transference and countertransference, became clear and Sonnenshine was able to give nuanced, well-timed, non-retaliatory interpretations that Dunkelfarb was able to hear. Dunkelfarb’s self-revelations in his fantasy were illuminated. His use of mockery, sarcasm, and devaluation as defenses against feeling, memory and intimacy was made manifest by Sonnenshine’s interpretations of the fantasy. Dunkelfarb’s use of the fantasy to emasculate Sonnenshine and render him helpless, his terror at learning the intensity of his self-hatred,

his homosexual panic, lest Sonnenshine get close to him, and the yawning chasm—the abyss—threatening should his creativity fail were all made conscious. Sonnenshine was particularly ingenious—even elegant—in the way he used Dunkelfarb’s myth of the deaf analyst in a many-layered simultaneous and successive interpretation. Delivered over many weeks, always at moments when they resonated to help Dunkelfarb realize—not only cognitively, but powerfully affectively—that what he feared more than anything else, his muse dying and the hope/dread that he could salvage something even if not his integrity by writing pulp fiction was at the core of his desperate need to defend.

Further, Dunkelfarb was able to hear, however tremulously, that his fear of the failure of his powers was, at bottom, fear of castration—that devaluing and castrating the analyst in his fantasy was his way of projecting the dreaded threat onto someone else, while simultaneously his mockery held Sonnenshine at such a distance that he couldn’t possibly touch Dunkelfarb emotionally or communicate any painful truths to him. Dunkelfarb’s fantasy was pure transference attributing to the nameless “analyst” the very woodenness, lack of caring, and emotional blindness and deafness of his father and Sonnenshine was able to communicate this too. One of the high points of Sonnenshine’s analytic efficacy was his artistry in putting Dunkelfarb in touch with bottomless shame, rage, and feelings of impotence that his father’s emotional blindness and deafness had induced. To be neither seen nor heard was not to exist. To be treated as a nonentity was to be a nonentity. It was indeed true that just as Dr. Sonnenshine said, the best moments in his relationship with his father had been those in which he had been treated like a piece of shit. That, at least, was to be acknowledged as existing. Sonnenshine suggested that Dunkelfarb’s anal obsessions were existential in origin, that they sprang from his only being regarded as existing when he was regarded as shit.

The searing pain of these realizations freed Dunkelfarb of illusion, of the need for denial, rationalization, intellectualization, mockery and obsessional thinking. Over the ensuing months layer upon layer of defense was stripped away. Dunkelfarb came to know when he was projecting, when he was getting rid of intolerable feelings by inducing them in the other, when he was misperceiving the present as an almost exact replication of the past. The working through phase of the analysis had aesthetic value—the Sonnenshine-Dunkelfarb dialogue became strangely beautiful, a give and take of great subtlety, penetration and emotional truthfulness. Such dialogue is part of the work of art co-authored by analyst and analysand. After his early fall into the pits of a hateful and rejecting countertransference, Sonnenshine had become masterly in the ingenuity and not infrequent

kindness with which he conveyed the most unwelcome and painful truths. Dunkelfarb's artistry consisted in the grace, even courage, with which he was able to take in such unwelcome communications from Sonnenshine.

Yet, for all of this, the alliance between patient and therapist remained fragile. Dunkelfarb became melancholic, was more and more silent during the sessions. His mood darkened ever more. Gone were his wild sadistic fantasies; the energizing battle with Sonnenshine, the pure pleasure of intellectual play. A newly won adherent to the reality principle, he was no longer a myth-maker. Melancholy became depression. Sonnenshine wasn't altogether surprised. He interpreted Dunkelfarb's depression as mourning for a lost self, a lost persona, a lost set of defenses and a lost illusion. Analysis ineluctably entailed grief. He offered encouragement. A new, more real self would arise phoenix-like out of the ashes. The old had to die to make room for the new. Transition was always painful. Sonnenshine was aware that he felt guilt and offered more solace than good analytic technique would recommend. He knew he shouldn't feel guilty; he had merely done his job. Yet he did. He became less supportive, and Dunkelfarb came alive, raging at him with open fury. Sonnenshine was relieved. He thought, "We are on our way to a 'cure,' whatever that might mean." But that wasn't to be. At least not yet. Dunkelfarb's rages became uncontrollable. He threatened violence, even murder; his reality testing failed and Sonnenshine and his father became one. He fell into a psychotic transference—you are my father—rather than a neurotic transference—you remind me of my father. Then Dunkelfarb lost it—totally decompensated. Sonnenshine hospitalized him. The analyst felt greatly relieved. Brief psychotic episodes weren't all that unusual in true analytic work. Just as he had predicted, hospitalization provided the structure that allowed Dunkelfarb to reorganize and he left the hospital greatly improved after the second week.

Sonnenshine was confident that the analytic work would soon be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The crisis was over and Dunkelfarb had the resources to stabilize at a higher level of adaptation than his addicted, pathological old self had been capable of. Sonnenshine was looking forward to their session the following day when the phone rang. "Dr. Sonnenshine?" "Yes." "This is Detective O'Henry. You have a patient Dunkelfarb?" "Yes." "Hate to be the one to tell you, Doc, but your patient checked out last night. Craziest way of doing it I ever saw. He choked himself by swallowing an enema nozzle. The coroner might have labeled it as some weirdo stuff resulting in an accidental death, except your loony bird left a note. I'll read it. 'I'm going to reclaim my creative power by making my death a work of art. I'm going to do the impossible by condensing the oral and the anal—

not symbolically but concretely. It will be as great an achievement as squaring a circle. Give my love to Dr. Sonnenshine, signed Jeffrey Dunkelfarb.’ “Any thoughts, Doc?” Dr. Sonnenshine didn’t answer—he couldn’t—he had fainted.

Dr. Sonnenshine behaved oddly at the funeral. He stood looking at Dunkelfarb’s body in the open casket for a long time. Then he started speaking—not loudly, yet shockingly audibly. “Mr. Dunkelfarb, you did it to deprive me of a successful analysis. Your envy killed you. You had to make a mockery of our work together, to degrade and debase me. It was pure hatred that killed you. Transferential hatred of me. Really, your hatred of your father displaced onto me. You thought you were triumphing over me—over him—but no, you haven’t—it’s so sad all you did was to grotesquely destroy yourself.” One of Dunkelfarb’s relatives, fearing a madman had come to the funeral, said, “Please.” Sonnenshine started sobbing hysterically before he screamed, “Fuck you, you bastard! You did it to me,” as he ran out of the funeral parlor. When he got to the street, Sonnenshine realized that just as Dunkelfarb had provoked him to lose his analytic perspective in life, Dunkelfarb had provoked him to lose it in death. He was back where he was at the beginning of the analysis where he had cut off Dunkelfarb and been sarcastic with him and had retaliated for Dunkelfarb’s aggression against him. The analysis had been useless, worse than useless. Not only had Dunkelfarb regressed further than he ever had, so had Dunkelfarb’s analyst. Sonnenshine became aware of two mourners leaving the funeral parlor, staring at him. Continuing to stare, one said to the other, “Jeffrey sure had some oddball friends.” Dr. Sonnenshine’s decline began that day.

He found that his concentration, which if the truth be known, had been spotty for years, grew even worse. He was preoccupied, distracted, losing the thread of his patients’ associations. He thought of the joke about the old friends who meet on the street after a lapse of many years. “Hymie, I haven’t seen you for years. What are you doing these days?” “Abie, I became a psychiatrist, a psychoanalyst.” “*Oy vay iz mir!* How can you listen to people’s *tsouris* all day long?” “Who listens?” It was true. He no longer listened—at least not consistently, and when he did, he couldn’t hear. “Oh God—Dunkelfarb’s words again! Shit! I just can’t get him out of my mind. I’m becoming like the analyst in Dunkelfarb’s fantasy. Like him, it’s not the deafness that bothers me. I’ve been doing analysis so long I don’t need to attend to what patients say. Oh, Christ, stop this! This way lies madness! No, it isn’t not listening, not hearing; it’s not being able to hear with the third ear that devastates me. I’m losing contact with the unconscious. It grows dim, opaque, beneath my threshold of perception.”

Dr. Sonnenshine continued to decline. His hearing did actually begin to fail. Deafness was no longer a metaphor. He became more and more obsessive, more and more deeply depressed. He realized the “good work” with Dunkelfarb had been an aberration. The truth was that he had never been much of an analyst. Besides, analysis itself was suspect. Maybe even the managed care people and the critics were right. Freud was no longer a “climate of opinion.” And the present climate of opinion was too much for Sonnenshine. Inner doubt and public skepticism were too much. Sonnenshine fell even further apart—and always it was thoughts of Dunkelfarb. He began to neglect his appearance. His golden blond hair became disheveled. Streaks of gray gave way to solid gray. Everything about him grew shabby and disarrayed. Yet, just as with Dunkelfarb’s fictional analyst, his practice grew. He prospered as he became known as the “bohemian analyst,” attracting artists and writers whose narcissism and self-absorption appalled him. Yet his own absence during analytic sessions only increased the demand for his services among this clientele. An occasional “um-hum” was all he could still manage. There wasn’t much left of the renowned resourcefulness of Dr. Sonnenshine. He began drinking, stopping for a Seagram’s Royal Crown on his way home from the office. Soon he was closing the bar. He told himself since he drank only the best it couldn’t get him in trouble. He was shocked to find a bottle in his filing cabinet and another in one of his folders behind his notes—not that he took many these days.

Yet nothing stopped the obsessing. Now his anality, long relegated to manageable portions in his psychic life by his training analysis, flourished once again. He fantasized his patients in the throes of explosive diarrhea. He ruminated on his past sins, his acts of disintegrity, the earlier suicides in his practice, his clumsiness in bed, his inability to be heroic even on the rare occasions when he could have been. He ruminated that the deafness of his third ear was more an ethical than an intellectual or aesthetic failing.

Sonnenshine tried to reestablish his equilibrium by self-analysis, by reassertion of his professional identity. Always he came back to Dunkelfarb’s fantasy. Was Dunkelfarb’s fantasy transference, as Sonnenshine had thought? Was it a projection of Dunkelfarb’s stuff onto him? Or was it a projective identification—Dunkelfarb inducing his mental states in Sonnenshine? Or was it possession? Had Dunkelfarb taken possession of him like some sort of dybbuk? After all, was projective identification so very different from possession?

Sonnenshine’s professional self reasserted itself. That was superstitious nonsense. Possession indeed! Then, with blinding conviction the truth dawned on Sonnenshine. It was none of the above! No, it was reality! Dunkelfarb had seen through his disguises, his

persona, his defenses, and had seen him as he really was—a worthless fake. From then on, Sonnenshine’s depression became unremitting. He read and re-read the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition*—that doomsday book—that compilation of every possible mental and emotional disorder. What he read was the symptoms of depression—especially the self-accusations of the patient—the self-recrimination—the unrealistic self-evaluation—the self-hatred. Sonnenshine’s professional self told him that his identification with Dunkelfarb’s analyst was his depression talking—even if Dunkelfarb had seen something true, it was a partial picture—a distortion. He couldn’t possibly be so awful! But reading the symptoms of depression in the diagnostic manual was of no avail. Sonnenshine’s feeling self dismissed his professional self. “Dunkelfarb was right; he had my number to the most minute detail.” Moving as if in a dream, Sonnenshine once more reached for the diagnostic manual and flipped through the index under “P,” looking for possession—but there was no entry.

Sonnenshine considered antidepressants. He had had a patient recently who seemed to be doing better on Prozac. Dr. Sonnenshine had inquired, “Do you think Prozac is helping?” The patient replied, “Who knows? The stock market went up!” Sonnenshine’s stock assuredly wasn’t rising. No, an analyst couldn’t be on Prozac. Return to analysis? That was hardly possible. Sonnenshine’s opinion of his colleagues was even more disparaging than his opinion of himself. No, the best thing was whiskey. His bohemian clientele approved of his drinking, and as bad as his hangovers were, his drinking gave him some relief. At least he knew what Chivas Regal and Crown Royal did, but who knew what another analysis or psychopharmacology might do? Sonnenshine’s drinking reached a steady state, and his mood—though blacker than black—felt a little less black after the third drink.

Things went along in pretty much the same way until one afternoon Sonnenshine realized that he hadn’t heard a word of his patients’ discourse the entire day. His mind was exclusively on Dunkelfarb. Dunkelfarb’s voice had to be silenced. His usual six drinks didn’t even lower the volume. He could tolerate no more.

The obituaries didn’t mention Sonnenshine’s blood alcohol level. Nor did they quote the passersby who had heard the disheveled man crying, “Fuck you, Dunkelfarb!” as he stumbled in front of the truck. Rather they spoke of Emmanuel Sonnenshine’s many publications, distinguished teaching posts and prominent patients. The funeral was so well attended that hardly anyone noticed the absence of Sonnenshine’s wife and children. On the other hand Dunkelfarb’s demonically grieving widow beat upon the coffin in hysterical grief, crying out, “He restored my husband to sanity!” How much of her hysteria was

aggressive hatred of Sonnenshine, and how much bereavement for the death of the only man who had been able to return her husband—for however brief a period—from his manic world of illusion to reality was impossible to determine. She herself would not have known and the attempt to disentangle the conflicting strands of her feelings for Sonnenshine so dramatically expressed at his funeral was to be the subject of her analysis for many years.

Chapter 11:

Guilt

She looked like Elizabeth Warren: grandmotherly-professorial in her tweed suit and low-heeled pumps. She taught history in the senior honors course in psychology in a competitive entrance high school, something she'd been doing for twenty years. She wasn't your usual high school teacher. A voracious reader, an adjunct college instructor, a contributor to several textbooks, she had read and retrained more psychological and psychoanalytic literature than I had anywhere near mastery of. Although she was amiable enough, I found her somewhat intimidating. A widowed WASP with two grown children, she had remarried, apparently happily. She was approaching retirement. All in all, an accomplished quintessential New England (her birthplace) schoolmarm. She seemed quite at ease and at peace with herself, speaking fluently, confidently, and calmly. Approaching retirement a year or two away was stirring up old conflicts and that had brought her back to therapy. But she definitely didn't present as a troubled person.

So you can imagine my surprise when after the bio-intro phase of our first sessions she lapsed into silence for a protracted period and then said, "I murdered my husband." That turned out to be not exactly true, but I think it would be best if I let Muriel speak for herself. For the sake of readability, I've compressed several sessions into a continuing narrative, trying to retain the most emotionally salient aspects of her story.

"Well, not murder, but complicity in his death. Larry had had health problems for several years, none of them life-threatening, yet they did interfere with our very active lifestyle—not that either of us was athletic, rather we were into climbing, boating, snorkeling—that sort of thing. Larry had torn his rotor cuff in a climbing accident and we weren't at all sure we would be able to return to our old activities. Still recovering from his shoulder surgery, Larry suggested we go on a canoe trip. We had planned to canoe across a placid lake which was, however, known to blow up, turning its calm surface into serious waves, then camp overnight on the opposite shore and return, we hoped, the next day.

"It went better than we had dared hope. Larry was sore; he had to rest more than was desirable and to keep modifying his stroke, but he had done it. Driving home we felt hopeful—more than hopeful—really great. Then it happened. Larry woke up with severe abdominal pain. It ebbed and he went back to sleep—we ignored a clear warning sign and

then, exhausted, I did nothing to urge getting medical help. I was more than content to go back to sleep. Larry had had several similar episodes of less intensity but this time ignored this all-too-familiar pain so like what he had experienced during the past several weeks. He had gone to a doctor who dismissed it as gas pain, so when he woke up in the morning in severe distress I didn't take it seriously. Like I said, I went back to sleep. Larry woke me again and I finally called the doctor. Someone we didn't know was covering who minimized it, saying it was probably nothing but that we should go to the emergency room. I remember feeling annoyed. I didn't want to deal with another of Larry's health problems—his shoulder wasn't the only one—and once again went back to sleep. He woke me again—scared now—and instead of getting in the car and speeding to the ER, I stopped to take a “quick” shower, maybe five minutes, but that delay may very well have cost Larry his life. By then he had collapsed. By the time the ambulance that we then called arrived he was probably dead. If not then, then shortly thereafter in the ambulance. He had bled out from an intestinal ulcer. Larry may have died anyway—I'll never know—but I do know that I hadn't done all I needed to do to give Larry the best possible chance for survival. And worse, I had consciously thought, ‘Oh shit. Now he has something else, and I don't want to have to take care of a sick husband.’ I don't think I wanted him to die, but sometimes I'm not sure about that. I'm very happy with my second husband—I was happy with Larry too, and that for many years—and that happiness with my current husband exacerbates my guilt. I sometimes wonder if I would want Larry back now—and the answer is yes and no. It's an irresolvable dilemma. You're probably thinking—she has unusually persistent survivor guilt. I know all about survivor guilt. Besides teaching psychology I've been in therapy forever with Freudians, Jungians, object-relational, Kleinian and cognitive therapists. I don't think this is survivor guilt, if that means irrational guilt; no, I did (and didn't do) what I did and thought what I thought.

“But my main problem isn't with Larry's death and my complicity in it, if that's what it was. I've sort of come to terms with that. I think about it now and again, but not obsessively. No! It's guilt in general. I'm tormented by guilt. Not all the time; sometimes long periods go by when I'm free of obsessive guilt, yet it always returns and when it does it can be exquisitely painful. Let me give you another instance of guilt about how I treated Larry. Mostly I was loving, but then there was the time we were fighting and I drove him to his train. He was getting on, surrounded by people he knew, and I resumed the fight, screaming awful things and humiliating him. But that's not the instance I can't get beyond. Larry and I had had the worst and last among a very few disruptions in a long, happy marriage, which had finally begun to heal. I came home one day and Larry had bought me a

present with all that gesture meant. I rejected the gift, saying it was more for him than for me. I instantly knew that was a horrible thing to have said—I could see the pain in his eyes—and I tried to take it back, but it was too late. Larry wouldn't let me undo the harm I had done. I can't get by that one. It comes back again and again—a loving gesture of reconciliation cruelly and hurtfully rejected. That really sucks.

“I don't want to go into all the instances. I don't think that would serve any purpose at this juncture, but suffice to say I have done really awful things in my life. Let me give you categories rather than instances. I lied to my parents and stole from them—not as a child, but as an adult, although I can see acts of disintegrity going way back into my early years. I wasn't there when they needed me. I was a dreadful employee, irresponsible and in effect stealing from those employers by not performing, not doing what I was paid for. I didn't use my abilities as a student and registered a string of unnecessary failures. I've often been a poor friend. I could go on, but I won't. You get the idea. I've done a whole lot of shitty things, and I haven't even mentioned my decade or more of compulsive gambling and all that entailed in terms of lying, cheating and using people.”

[Therapist's thought: That one took me aback. The last thing I would have guessed about Muriel was that she had been a compulsive gambler. People—go figure.]

“A long time ago I had a boyfriend who told me I was the 'incarnation of evil.' He was out there and I dismissed his comment as coming from a nut or I thought I did because now I sometimes wonder if he was right.

“But I didn't come here to confess. I've done that in many formats. What I want from you is help in attenuating my guilt—although I know you can't do that—or at least making it less intrusive in my life. I don't mean to suggest that all that therapy hasn't helped. It has, and I'll tell you exactly how. Freud wrote that the hardest resistance for the analyst (and the patient) to overcome is resistance from the superego—the feeling the patient has that he or she doesn't deserve to get well—that she needs the illness as a form—a vehicle for—self-punishment. Compared to that resistance, the resistance coming from the id's desire for pleasure and instinctual gratification and the ego's resistance via its defense mechanisms and its desire to hold on to secondary gains is piece of cake. You're looking at me oddly, Doctor. I told you I know all the psychological stuff, both from teaching it and from being in therapy forever and a day. Let me continue. Freud was right. I know. Don't be put off by my talking therapy. It's not intellectualizing—it's part of who I am. When I was in Freudian analysis I read Freud, when in object relations therapy, Klein and Winnicott, Jung I just

couldn't read, and in cognitive therapy Ellis and Beck. I actually find that stuff helpful. Back to self-punishment and self-destruction. I did that for years—years and years. I don't do it anymore and I thank my therapy for that. What therapy didn't do was significantly reduce the guilt itself; I just don't act or act out on it and I know that isn't a small gain. I don't use my guilt as a stick I need to beat myself with. If I could get rid of it, I would. Of course you could argue that my guilt itself *is* a form of self-punishment. Perhaps that's true, but it doesn't feel that way. It's been a long time since I took joy in pain, yet I can't rule out some of that going on.

“Then there's getting off, on 'satanic grandiosity,' a phrase I got from my Freudian analyst—'I'm the *worst* person in the world' and taking a kind of exhibitionistic pleasure in beating my chest and tearing my hair. I get it, but I don't believe it applies to me. My old boyfriend's evaluation notwithstanding—I really don't think I can rival Stalin or Hitler in terms of evildoing—and I don't like displaying my multiple failures and wrongdoings—not even here in therapy. If there's any secondary gain for me, it's minimal.

“So what I got out of my Freudian therapy was the notion—that gradually seeped really deep into my soul—that I didn't have to react to my guilt with self-destructive behavior, incidentally, almost always also resulting in destruction to others. So by not acting self-destructively, I accrue a side benefit of not doing things that would only add to my burden of guilt. And that's significant.

“But I still struggled with guilt so I tried a Jungian. We worked hard at helping me embrace my Shadow side, incorporating it into Self. I got it. Acceptance and integration of all I was and all I had done would be healing and what I needed to accept and integrate included my guilt itself. And to some extent that has been helpful, yet it didn't quite do it either. My guilt continued to be a thorn in my groin, sometimes floating harmlessly in my panties and at other times pricking my flesh. [She smiled.] There's some material for you . . . in that image.

“I went on to an object relations theorist—a Kleinian. I tried to read Melanie, I just couldn't get through her—the bad writing—some of the worst I have tackled—put me off. But I stayed with the therapy. Maybe I had the wrong Kleinian, but when she told me that my trouble was that I wanted to piss and shit on the good breast, I quit. Again, I get it. If only I could accept my own aggression and mourn for the damage it has—I have—done, I could integrate the good and the bad within me and the good and bad in the world to reach what Klein called the 'depressive position,' an existential stance of greater maturity in

which self and object are experienced as wholes, not as polarities of good and evil. I don't mean to lecture at you, Doctor. I sort of liked the theory, if not the therapy, but I can't quite see how to apply it. Klein also wrote that the key is gratitude and that gratitude enables us overcome our envy and hatred of the good in others—historically the good breast. A corollary to this way of thinking is that part of my guilt was guilt for being envious and for hating. That's an important corollary and that spoke to me, and perhaps if I had had a more skillful Kleinian therapist I could have done more with it. But I did come away from my venture—or should I say adventure—with the Kleinian with the realization that not all of my guilt was conscious and certainly not all of the causes of the guilt were conscious. That gave me something to work on—not in therapy, but in life. I have looked, tried to look, under my conscious guilt to see what other things such as envy and hatred might be not only present but fueling my conscious guilt through an unconscious displacement. And I have also consciously striven to be more grateful, grateful for many things past and present, and that has really helped. It is not possible to feel guilt and gratitude simultaneously, at least not for me. I think this is a whole area I could usefully explore with you.

“Not wanting to give up, I tried a radically different form of therapy—the cognitive one. My cognitive therapist tied herself in knots trying to convince me that my guilt was irrational—disproportionate, unbalanced, in fact did not say but implied crazy. I really liked that therapist. She sincerely and desperately wanted to help me, but she just didn't get it.

“I *have* done horrible, evil, hurtful things and feeling guilty for having done them is not inappropriate, as long as it is not disabling, which it is not at this point in my life. I realize that I am ambivalent about getting rid of my guilt—I want to and don't want to. What I definitely want is for it not to hurt so much. All this is confusing. At one point I got pissed off and told the therapist that she was trying to turn me into a sociopath. We went back and forth on that one for a while.

“The other tack she took with me was to point out that during the past twenty years or so—especially since I gave up gambling—I was no worse (or better) than the average gal (or guy) and that in fact I had much to be proud of and she pounded away on her feeling that I should give myself full credit for my rehabilitation. My present life was a kind of reparation for past sins that should free me from the burden of guilt. Klein, too, had spoken of the necessity for reparation for damage to the good breast inflicted by envy and hatred as being the key to emotional health. I disagreed with none of this and indeed, not being able to undo the past, the best I could do was to do in the Twelfth Step phrase ‘do the next right thing.’ All good stuff, and the only fly in the ointment was that although my guilt was

attenuated, it still was very much present. No present action, however meritorious, can undo the past. ‘The moving hand having writ, neither your piety nor your wit can erase a word of it,’ says Omar Khayyam, and he is right.

“One aspect of cognitive therapy really turned me off—the implicit assumption that the cognitive therapist knows better than the patient—in this case me—what rationality is. That feels condescending to me and I never liked it. I’m not crazy and I have a pretty good idea of what’s up and what’s down, what’s reasonable (rational) and what is not. I concluded that the problem was structural—inherent in the cognitive therapy paradigm, so I didn’t look for another cognitive therapist after I terminated with her.

“While I was in that therapy I read, or tried to read—he’s difficult—Spinoza. Much of his philosophical system is an implicit anticipation of the *Weltanschauung* of cognitive therapy. One of the conclusions he draws from his deductive schema is that ‘remorse is a useless emotion,’ changing nothing and poisoning the present. Pure cognitive stuff. I don’t disagree with any of this. Remorse isn’t exactly guilt, but perhaps an element of it. I don’t usually think of myself as remorseful, rather as guilty, but this is a semantic quibble. The real problem here—for me—is not the message, but the application. Agreeing that remorse is a useless emotion doesn’t make it go away.

“Having tried so many varieties of therapy with mixed results, I decided to give it a rest and turn to religion. It was an immediate roadblock here—I am a non-believer. That seems to be congenital. It’s not a conclusion I draw—it’s not intellectual at all—rather it’s a gut feeling or rather the absence of one—I just don’t feel that there’s anything—person or force—that might reasonably be called God. So I decided to act ‘as if,’ as if I believed, with decidedly mixed results. Let me tell you about them. One of the real downsides of non-belief is the absence of a divine forgiver, a cosmic absolver. If the terrifying, angry God of the Old Testament and the equally frightful image of Christ the Judge, depicted in Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, is mercifully removed from one’s mental landscape by unbelief, that—for me—is altogether to the good. But the other side of the coin—that there is no one to give forgiveness—is truly horrible. At least that’s been my experience. A few times, for instance weeping while listening to Verdi’s *Requiem*, absolution seemed possible, but those moments—epiphanies if you will—didn’t last. There *is*, however, a kind of maturity entailed in having no Father to absolve—in that case all I can do is to take responsibility for—and that is not altogether a bad thing.

“Of course not having a God who punishes isn’t, now that I think about it, an altogether good thing. That’s because, by default, I have to become my own punisher, and I think I’ve done lots of that. But as I said, I don’t think I do that anymore. Now my guilt certainly punishes but isn’t motivated by desire for self-punishment—at least I don’t think so. That brings me from the Heavenly Father I don’t believe in to the earthly father. My dad wasn’t much of a disciplinarian. I remember he once slapped me across the face when I first cursed at him as a teenager, but that was so far out of character that I was utterly shocked. It just wasn’t my dad. I suppose I was being utterly obnoxious. My mom didn’t punish me much either—scolding, occasionally sending me to bed, and a very rare spanking, all normal, not particularly impressive or pernicious stuff. She was stricter with my brothers. If I’d been punished more perhaps I would have had less need for self-punishment as an adult—maybe—probably not—I just don’t know. At any rate I had neither a parent above nor a parent on earth who punished enough to alleviate my guilt. I remember my brother’s wife, known throughout the family as ‘the lunatic,’ as in, ‘He must have been out of his mind to marry that lunatic,’ chasing her then ten-year-old son around the house with a belt, screaming, ‘I’m going to beat the shit out of you.’ My parents were appalled, both by the vulgarity and by the threat itself. That sort of thing was definitely not their style. I giggled, but I was probably scared underneath. I was delighted when my cousin ran out the door and Aunt Crazy never did catch up to him.

“But my mother did sometimes use guilt to control me. I was a stubborn, willful, often disobedient child and my streak of disintegrity goes way back. I certainly could be utterly exasperating. When I was, Mother would sometimes say, ‘I could die from you.’ When she died young during my first year of graduate school, that came back to haunt me, and it must have played its part in my reaction to my husband’s death. Mother’s frustrated lament wasn’t a wise disciplinary technique. Without being overly confessional I should tell you more about that early streak of disintegrity. It took many forms—cheating in school, lying, changing my grades on a bad report card, blaming others, including the dog, for my misdeeds. I know that it’s senseless to berate myself for things I did as a child, and I don’t think I do that—at least not anymore—but those behaviors *did* plant seeds that blossomed into serious adult delinquencies. I don’t know where it came from. My parents were honest to a fault and without being preachy conveyed that following the Golden Rule was the way to live. I was—or became—a sort of *sui generis* delinquent.

“I should tell you more about my gambling—it got me in lots of trouble and led me to do many things that induced guilt. My parents played low stakes bridge and my father

occasionally played a more serious poker game but none of this was ever problematic. When I was in college my parents decided to vacation in Vegas—a sort of adventure for them. I joined them. They didn't like it and never went back. I did. It was magic from the very first moment I put a chip down. I think my gambling was just that—magic thinking of an almost delusional sort about winning big. It was the magic more than the possibility of winning that captivated me. There was an effortless, magical way to fulfill all my needs, all my dreams. The girls in my dorm—a few of them at least—played hearts for a nickel a point. For them it was a harmless recreation—not for me. I was a compulsive hearts player from the first hand I played. I was probably the only girl on campus who was a serious gambler, although some of the boys were. Then the trip to Vegas sealed the deal. From there out, I gambled whenever I had the means to do so and, significantly, when I didn't have the means. There was another factor that drove my compulsion. That was using it as a self-punishment. This was unconscious until after years of therapy I got it. The payoff was years of losing, not winning. When I read Freud's essay on Dostoevsky, which describes exactly that dynamic—in Fyodor's case a self-punishment for oedipal death wishes towards his father—I completely identified with the dynamic if not the particulars of Dostoevsky's case. It's a 'good deal,' all the thrill of the gaming table and punishment for that forbidden thrill. You can't beat that.

“My gambling continued to result in serial disasters for many years till my husband threatened to divorce me. I knew he meant it and I didn't want to lose him. So I stopped cold turkey. By then I had had oodles of therapy and gained some insight—I might even have quit without the threat. I don't know. At any rate I haven't gambled since—over twenty-five years ago—and I never missed it. Strange. I did try Gamblers Anonymous (G.A.) a few times but I didn't like it. The God stuff turned me off, I didn't care for the people, and it didn't seem very successful—just about everyone talked about their 'slips.' Years later I did have exposure to the Twelve Steps through friends in A.A. I'll get back to that—it was part of my acting 'as if' phase.

“In one of my favorite novels, *Man's Fate*, Malraux describes what's going on in the mind of a compulsive gambler. As he sits at the roulette table he feels the burden of self drain off and transfer to the little white ball circling the wheel. He is no longer responsible, no longer has to make choices. They will be made for him by the little white ball. He feels free, however delusional that feeling might be. When I first read that I instantly, totally identified. To not have to struggle or feel guilt for my choices would be wonderful, and in gambling I too felt 'the burden of self' transferred to the game. That dynamic too kept me

addicted, along with the thrill and the self-punishment. A witch's brew of gratification. It's a miracle that I stopped and never relapsed.

“Let me go back to religion. My parents were, as they should have been as descendants of New England Puritans, nominal Congregationalists. The wrathful God of pre-determination was not resident in our church, which definitely subscribed to a highly attenuated Calvinism, the emphasis on the attenuation, not the Calvinism. Jesus was rarely there either—not as a loving figure and not as a judge. It was Golden Rule stuff playing a major role in both the preaching and activities of that congregation. I was sent to Sunday School and was confirmed but none of it meant much to me. I liked the stories in Genesis and that was about it. When I was older, the girls used to giggle, saying that the minister had ‘wandering hand trouble,’ but that was with women, not children or adolescents if it was true at all. It might have been, since my mother once complained that he was too friendly. In any case what the minister did or didn't do with his hands wasn't a determinant of my unbelief. My parents never spoke of God or Jesus; so to speak, neither of them lived in my house. I never actually knew whether my parents believed, but my gut feeling was and is that they didn't. For them, church was a social thing and ‘good for the children.’ I don't regard them as hypocritical, rather as conventional, doing what seemed right to them as parents. My father was active in the social service activities of the church and that did seem meaningful to him. I wound up not far from what I imagine was my parents' religious stance. Okay stuff, but not of much use in dealing with guilt. If I didn't have God as punisher, I didn't have Him (or Her) as Forgiver either.

“Let me go back to my attempts to act ‘as if.’ I have done various things with my ‘as if’ experiments. As an adult I had, and have, many Jewish friends, mostly a-religious, cultural Jews. But a few were and are believers, active in their temples. I was curious, and several of them had invited me to attend their synagogue. I started going to services Friday night. I liked the music, related to most of the sermons, liked some of the people, yet didn't ‘come to believe.’ Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, intrigued me—and I began thinking that maybe the Yom Kippur ritual could be a vehicle to attenuate my gnawing, persistent guilt, so I paid for a ticket and attended Yom Kippur services with my friend and her family. I also fasted. Indeed, acting as if. The far-too-long services and to a lesser extent the fasting, sure felt like an atonement. Yet they changed nothing for me. The communal confession of sins did touch me—I could relate to most if not all of them, but it was too generic to be purgative. But the strongest barrier to leaving cleansed was my perhaps mistaken perception that for this congregation this was about atonement for ‘sin light’: yelling at the kids, being

rude to a neighbor, failing to return a borrowed lawn mower—hardly the sort of stuff that intermittently tormented me. From the demeanor of those all-too-respectable congregants, and from the blandness of the rabbi’s sermon, I got that impression. Perhaps if they had had a ‘fire and brimstone’ rabbi—if there is such a thing—it would have worked better for me. I tried again the next year but again felt they weren’t talking about my inner blemishes. Of course I may have been completely mistaken about what my fellow atoners were atoning for and what they were feeling, but nevertheless on an emotional level I didn’t feel part of that community and I didn’t think that had much if anything to do with my not being Jewish. After all, those old Calvinists were pretty Jewish, Harriet Beecher Stowe referring to her clergyman husband as ‘the old Jew.’

“I was once in a synagogue, now a museum in Prague, where a small whip used by the most religious Jews in the Middle Ages for self-flagellation on the evening on Yom Kippur was on display. Hardly a part of contemporary Reform Jewish life. I wondered if self-flagellation had been a part of the current Yom Kippur practice it would have worked better for me. I don’t think so. I’m not into physical self-torture—don’t care for pain—and I don’t see how that could have served as a substitute for mental, emotional cleansing. At any rate, that wasn’t an option.

“Maybe it had to do with pride. I had to be the worst person there. The others were atoning the trivial, I was atoning the genuine article. I don’t think that was what was happening, but again, I could be wrong. In any case, Yom Kippur was, on balance, a good experience for me. Yet it just hadn’t done it—hadn’t delivered the goods of peace of mind.

“So I decided to try another ‘as if’ strategy—I went to Catholic confession. I left feeling ridiculous. The priest just didn’t get it. I don’t think he believed I was much of a sinner and saying ten Hail Marys or something like that for being complicit in my husband’s death and a host of other horrors was even more ridiculous. I said them anyway, to no particular effect, and made no attempt to repeat the experience. I have found Buddhism—another of my as ifs—more helpful. I particularly relate to the non-theistic nature of Buddha’s original teaching. Popular Buddhism is another animal of not much interest to me. There’s a Buddhist story that I love that tells of a disciple pressing the Master for answers to metaphysical questions such as the existence or nonexistence of a transcendent God. Buddha remains silent. Finally the disciple asks, ‘Master, why do you not answer my questions?’ To which Buddha replies, ‘They make not for salvation.’ I find that liberating. I don’t need to believe anything in particular to find salvation. In my case that means freedom from guilt.

“What I find most helpful about Buddhism is its teaching of non-judgment and that non-judgment itself. What is needed is non-judgmental observation of whatever is passing through my mind, neither embracing nor rejecting it. And this includes guilt. This is a teaching of self-acceptance, an acceptance of whatever presents itself to my stream of consciousness. It is the internal side—aspect of—the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment. Although I don’t entirely buy non-attachment as a way of life, I do try to achieve this by practicing Buddhist meditation techniques. It helps me in spite of my being an erratic, inconsistent, and not very skilled meditator. It’s not dissimilar to following the basic rule of psychoanalysis: do not censure any thought or feeling that enters your mind, something I attempted in my prolonged analytic treatments. I sort of know how to do it. So give Buddha a gold star. He has definitely helped me. Nevertheless my old nemesis, obsessive guilt, keeps returning, albeit softened by Buddhist practice.

“I decided to try yet another ‘as if.’ I have friends in A.A. who’ve done very well and remain active in The Program. I already knew of the Steps from my brief exposure to G.A. and I decided to ‘do’ the Steps with one of my A.A. friends who became more or less a ‘sponsor.’ The idea of the paradoxical power of powerlessness is not too far from Buddhism and that wasn’t difficult for me to accept. I am indeed powerless to control my guilt. All I can do is to accept it as part of who I am. The Higher Power steps are more difficult for me so I translated them with the help of my ‘sponsor,’ trying to catch the spirit of those steps in secular language—more about letting go of the need to be in control than belief in a transcendent Other. That more or less worked and I went on to the fourth and fifth steps—the confessional ones—making that ‘fearless inventory’ and sharing it with another. I had done something similar many times in therapy with mixed results. Doing it in the Twelve Step framework was different and more effective. Again, it helped but didn’t cure. I flirted with joining The Program. I know from my friends that the sharing of guilt in the meetings in, so to speak, a community of sinners that is also a community of healers, is different from confessing to a clergyman or a therapist. I don’t have community in that sense. I’m not really a part of any collective. I have never been. There is something wrong here and I know it. It’s not only about having a place to share my guilt and to identify with others who are struggling with their guilt. It goes beyond that to the healing power of human connection. I keep thinking about doing something about my relative social isolation, but I don’t. At any rate, I didn’t become a Twelve Stepper. There is a Twelve Step slogan—as you probably know they have many slogans—which I sort of like and find helpful. It goes, ‘It’s all right to look back, but don’t stare.’ I’m afraid I do quite a bit of staring.

“So I really have tried everything and for the most part worked hard at it. Where does that leave me? In many ways where I began, with the crucial difference that I ceased to inflict punitive wounds on myself. Bill Wilson, the co-founder of A.A., wrote that we take what he called our ‘character defects’ all the way. Although we never get rid of them, what we can do is find better ways to deal with them. What could be viewed as ‘holding onto’ my guilt—it doesn’t feel that way though—is a character defect in Wilson’s scheme of things, and I mostly agree with that. You’ve probably read Freud’s great late essay ‘Analysis Terminable and Interminable’ in which he came from a totally different direction to essentially the same conclusion. As different as Wilson and Freud are in their understanding of—conceptualization of—the intractability of aspects of the human condition including guilt, they arrived at a very similar position. Thus Bill Wilson and Freud helped me not to have to feel guilty about feeling guilty. It’s not going to go away but that doesn’t mean I can’t chip away at this so potentially incapacitating character defect. And I do.

“I noted that I have done many positive, caring, generous things during the past two decades. My teaching in particular has enriched many lives. It’s made a difference and should balance the scales. Yet it doesn’t. I’m what has been called a Santa Claus Narcissist, getting off on being a bountiful lady. I get a lot of satisfaction from being productive and I know that I’m not being quite fair to myself in writing off my achievements as merely narcissistic gratifications, although they are that. The second half of my life has been an imperfect attempt at reparation among other things, and that’s good. The trouble with that is that the people I have hurt don’t benefit one iota from my helping other folks. An improvement, yes, and not a trivial one, but it doesn’t soften that recurrent core of guilt very much and it can’t because restitution is being paid to the wrong people. That’s probably too harsh a view, but there’s a lot of truth in it.

“Someone else who has helped is the theologian Paul Tillich, who draws a distinction between neurotic guilt and ontological guilt. That really speaks to me. Neurotic guilt—the Freudian kind where the savagely punitive superego beats you up—can be worked with and at least partly tamed—overcome. I think I’ve done that through therapy. Then there is Tillich’s ontological guilt that is built into being human. It is structural. Nobody can live without transgressing upon or without hurting others. I found reading Tillich helped at a deep level. I now think my guilt was threefold: part Freudian neurotic stuff, part indelibly human stuff, and part what I think of as ‘objective guilt,’ guilt proportional to harmful, hurtful acts I’ve committed. It gets confusing; I’m still trying to sort out what’s which and trying to change the parts I can, while accepting the rest.

“You must think that I’m lecturing you, intellectualizing instead of expressing feelings —talking all this theoretical stuff as a defense. I’m not. I’m using and feeling. Freud and Wilson and Tillich have played and still play a large part in my life. At the risk of convincing you that this is not the case, let me share my experience of yet another thinker who has helped me with my guilt problem: Erikson. Somewhere he makes the distinction between the ‘moral’ and the ‘ethical.’ The moral is the rigid, compulsive superego side that uses guilt as a whip for self-flagellation; the ethical is a rational evaluation of behavior, not self-punitive, but a guide to right action. Erikson has Emmanuel Kant’s categorical imperative in mind—‘act only in such a way that you could wish all acted that way’—in such a way that you would want to universalize your decision. That’s the philosophical version of the Golden Rule I learned from my parents. So I’ve come full circle. When I was in cognitive therapy I rebelled against what seemed to me scrapping the ‘ethical’ in order to free me up from the ‘compulsively moral.’ Erikson’s formulation gave me the space I needed to do what I could do to quiet that tormenting inner voice from my superego. It was a theoretical distinction that made a profound personal difference to me. St. Augustine wrote, ‘Love and do what you will’ and that speaks to me too. From Augustine’s perspective, all the actions that fill me with guilt were only possible because I didn’t love enough, or in the right way. I think—more than think—equally feel—that he is right. I can’t do anything about past failure to love but I can be more loving now and when I am, guilt recedes.

“After all that therapy and all that living and all that thinking and reading, I’ve come to this. I will always carry guilt; it can’t and perhaps shouldn’t be ‘cured.’ It helps to recognize that the obsessive part of my guilt is a character defect to be worked on in the knowledge that it will never be completely overcome. I need to accept that—or at least work on accepting it. Part of that acceptance is realization that reparation cannot be made. As far as possible I should live in the present, the here-and-now, and in that present try and do ‘the next right thing.’

“So my purpose in coming here—for you to alleviate my guilt—is an impossibility and something I no longer want now that I’ve talked it out with you. I don’t suffer from guilt all the time—mostly I’m pretty happy and content. That’s not so bad, and my guilt attacks are manageable, storms that come and go. Thanks for listening. I don’t think that I need or want any more therapy.”

I had come to really like Muriel and I regretted that she wouldn’t be continuing. I had to agree with her that her intellectualizing was suffused with emotional meaning. Perhaps I

was colluding with her defense, but I didn't experience it that way. I never felt condescended to or preached to by Muriel, nor did I feel that she was using her intellect and knowledge to play a power game. But she certainly didn't let a teachable moment go by—perhaps an occupational hazard of a professional teacher. As far as content goes, I couldn't add much of anything to her self-understanding of her 'character defect,' and I didn't feel that I had much to offer her. So I didn't treat her decision to terminate as a resistance and analyze it; rather I simply told her how much I had enjoyed working with her and wished her well. I did leave the door open and urged her to call me if I could be of greater service. She never did.

Several years later when she must have been approaching 70, I read that Muriel had been killed in an avalanche while hiking in the back country of Alaska. My fantasy was that she was feeling no guilt on that hike and that she wouldn't have been entirely unhappy going the way she did. I hope that was so.

Chapter 12:

The Prosthetic Amygdala

“Mrs. Hyman Dreck called for an appointment.” “Mrs. Dreck? You must be kidding, unless she’s crazy.” “I’m not kidding. She was very insistent. She wants to see you immediately. She wants you to fit her husband with a prosthetic amygdala.” Dr. Krenkwasser stared at his secretary as if she had gone out of her mind. “Prosthetic amygdala?” Nancy nodded affirmatively. “What is this routine? Isn’t it enough I have to listen to *mishegas* all day without your going around the bend?” “All I know is that Mrs. Dreck wants a prosthetic amygdala for her husband. I gave her an appointment for three this afternoon. Mr. Highboy canceled.” “Nancy! Why do you do things like this to me? Highboy pays whether he shows up or not! What do I need this lunatic for?” “You’re a psychiatrist, aren’t you?” “All right, I’ll see her, but if I hit the button, call 911 immediately.” Krenkwasser had been trying to fire Nancy for years. Only his certainty that she was unemployable elsewhere restrained him. Mumbling loud enough for Nancy to hear, he ruminated, “If this turns out to be trouble, I really will fire her this time.” Half amused, half curious, and fully furious, Krenkwasser entered the inner sanctum of his consulting room, flipped through the *Playboys* he found wedged between analytic journals, and waited impatiently for his first patient.

Krenkwasser’s concentration wasn’t what it once had been and by his fourth analytic hour he regularly had trouble keeping his mind on what his patient was saying, sometimes even interpreting the previous patient’s dream. Fortunately, patients took his totally off-the-wall interpretations as evidence of his brilliance and worked hard at understanding their analyst’s cryptic comments, but this degree of inattention was rare. Most of the time Krenkwasser quickly pulled himself back from his reveries and attended to the weeping or raging body on the couch. But not today. Krenkwasser just couldn’t get his mind off Mrs. Hyman Dreck and the prosthetic amygdala. He pictured her in many guises, finally settling on an image of a sexless, 200-pound, disheveled, near psychotic, coprophagic who didn’t have a husband. Perhaps she will turn out to be analyzable with the aid of a suitable dose of neuroleptics. As the day wore on, Dr. Krenkwasser thought less and less about Mrs. Hyman Dreck and more and more about the prosthetic amygdala. Could there be such a device? Could it be programmed to give the patient a simulacrum of a normal emotional life? Krenkwasser was fantasizing a Nobel when Mr. Hyperbland’s session came to an end.

Sitting through Hyperbland's hour was always torture; staying awake took prodigious effort. But not today. He hadn't heard a word of Hyperbland's continuing lament thanks to his obsessive fantasizing about the prosthetic amygdala. Krenkwasser's fantasy was cruelly interrupted by Nancy's nervous announcement, "Mrs. Dreck is here to see you." Krenkwasser thought, "Damn her, she's always buzzing at the worst possible time." Mrs. Dreck entered. She was nothing like the doctor's fantasy: young, pert, self-assured, sexy in a classy way. She was almost beautiful. Losing his analytically neutral equanimity that normally made it impossible to discern his state of mind, Krenkwasser's amazement was all over the room. What had this enticing creature to do with the tormented nut he had anticipated? Recovering, Krenkwasser moved into professional high gear. Objectively assessing the situation, he drew on his long experience to reflect that lunacy can be well packaged. Still thinking about the meaning of the call and of the woman standing before him, he greeted her cordially but not too warmly, as he did all patients. Although well-packaged lunacy was possible, it seemed more likely that this was a put-on of some kind. But why such a put-on? Wasn't such behavior symptomatic? But symptomatic of what? Fully engaged, Krenkwasser reached for a provisional diagnosis. Such a hypothetical formulation allowed him to integrate the often bewildering complexity of the data gleaned from an initial interview. Krenkwasser was as good as he was because unlike some of his colleagues he knew that such diagnostic formulations were hypothetical scaffoldings to be disassembled when their usefulness was superseded by the edifice of relationship. What happened in the room between the patient and analyst was real, not hypothetical. But for now, an organizing probe was useful. But which probe to use? Assumption of madness or assumption of strange eccentricity—or some capacity for bizarre humor serving some unconscious emotional purpose or merely some unconscious emotional need? Krenkwasser concluded that it was impossible to know. Did he need to? Better to simply listen for now? Mrs. Dreck, anything but self-possessed by now, was pouring out a litany of complaints about her unfeeling husband. It rambled and made little sense. No, active listening wouldn't do. She was unraveling before his eyes. How to center her, help her organize? "Aha!" thought Krenkwasser. "The name—get her off her husband—who knows if he even exists—and off the prosthetic amygdala, that psychotic stuff we can go into later—pull her into the room and into relationship by my commenting on her name."

Krenkwasser prided himself on making contact and his ability to bring his patient into emotional reality, into the here-and-now of relationship with him. He had to wait several minutes for Mrs. Dreck to pause long enough to get her breath to interject, "Mrs. Dreck, I'd like to learn a little more about you before we discuss your husband. Your name is a bit

unusual; it isn't perhaps a stage name? Or one you gave yourself?" Mrs. Dreck laughed. "Oh, no. It's my married name. Hymie comes from a long line of Drecks. I was very young when I married, still a student at Vassar. Everyone I knew told me not to marry him, that he was a *grubber yung*." The Yiddishism sounded strange in the mouth of this histrionic Seven Sisters sophisticate. "A *grubber yung*, crude as they come. God knows what attracted me to him." Krenkwasser's mind wandered to the story of Mollie meeting Rachel. "Mazel tov, Mollie. I heard your daughter was married." "Mazel tov? Some mazel tov! You should see the groom. So crude, such a *grubber yung*, such a *balagoola*. You know my Rosie, so gentle, so educated, so refined, so delicate, so pure. And she had to marry such a *grubber yung*. So crude is he that when he stepped on the glass to smash it, it was with such violence, such force, that my delicate, *edel*, refined, educated, pure Rosie almost miscarried." Krenkwasser trusted his unconscious; it hadn't gone to the joke for no reason. Had Mrs. Dreck married Hymie because she was pregnant? Returning from his reverie, Krenkwasser came in in the middle as Mrs. Dreck was discussing her fatal attraction to Hymie. "Yeah, I thought *grubber yungness* was toughness and crudeness strength; I mistook Hymie's crudeness for masculinity. I was raised in Westchester in a town where no one knew how to fart. Hymie had no trouble farting. I fell head over heels in love with him. He was the antithesis of the kind of faggy preppie my family wanted me to marry. To me he was an exotic. Hymie turned out to be as manly as a stone, as exotic as a pile of shit. The only thing he turned out to be good at was making money. I'm not sure how. I'm pretty sure his business is some kind of racket. He's probably linked in some way to the Mob. I didn't need the money anyway. My father made a fortune as a silent partner of his Wharton roommate. They manufactured votive candles. You can't have a mass without Candles from Finkelstein and Stasilone. Of course, my father's name couldn't be on the candles and I couldn't really say what he did. No wonder my parents wanted me to marry some straight-arrow proctologist. My father went to temple Rosh Hashanah to pray for the well-being of the Pope yet—to get more Catholics back in church to light more votive candles. My dad's a worm. Hymie is a *shtarker*.

Krenkwasser was reeling. Was this husband, if he really existed, a strongman for the Mafia? Was he in danger if he treated the wife? Her story was less and less probable. Perhaps she was delusional after all. Krenkwasser could feel waves of anxiety passing through his body; a gangster and a crazy—who needs this? I'll refer them to some marriage counselor I can't stand. Once again Krenkwasser pulled himself back into the room by centering on Mrs. Dreck's anality. Forcefully concentrating his mind to focus his thoughts on her material felt like tightening his anal sphincter. Was this a projective identification?

Was Mrs. Dreck's preoccupation with things anal inducing his comparison of focusing his thoughts to tightening his asshole? Was her anal fixation the key to understanding her behavior? Krenkwasser filed his thoughts on Mrs. Dreck's anality away for future use and tuned in on her increasingly frantic verbalization.

"My maiden name was Sadie Finkelstein. I couldn't go back to Vassar for my senior year as Sadie Dreck so I changed my name to Samantha. Now I'm Samantha Dreck." He tried to imagine what it must have been like to have been Samantha Dreck that senior year at Vassar. Such a feat of imaginative empathy was beyond him.

"I tried for years to get him to change his name to Derk or Perk or anything rather than Dreck, but Hymie is stubborn as an ox—he won't. He says he's proud to be a Dreck and he thinks it's funny and it's part of his borderline sadism, his exhibitionism and his narcissism." Krenkwasser noted the strange combination of attractively lucid casualness, vulgarity, and psychoanalytic terminology characteristic of her speech. He was surprised to note that he was enchanted by it. It never descended to psychobabble, but this was no psychoanalytic virgin. Samantha had been on more than one couch. She became more and more engaged as she related her failed attempts to get Hymie Dreck to change his name. Her indignation rose to a climax as she screamed, "Fuck him, fuck him!" for a full five minutes, before collapsing. Screaming was followed by weeping as she related humiliation after humiliation consequent on being Mrs. Dreck. Her sobs racked her body until the whole room seemed to shake. They stopped as abruptly as they started.

"Enough of that. Being Mrs. Dreck isn't so bad—I'm used to it. That's not what I came here to discuss. It's my husband's lack of feeling. He's dead. He never expresses anything. He's like a piece of wood. I can't stand his woodenness. It's like being with a corpse. I'm still in love with him—I'm crazy about him. God knows why; he's terrible, just horrible." She wiped away a tear or two, this time delicately. Krenkwasser wondered if there wasn't more feeling in those two tears than in the oceans wept over her appellation. He wasn't sure. She was so protean. Perhaps she was acting now.

"The other day we were making love; that is, he was fucking me. It was after that I decided he needed a prosthetic amygdala. I know about them, the amygdalas. I read *Scientific American*." There was something about the little-girl way she said she read *Scientific American* that touched Krenkwasser. It was the first human as opposed to professional or self-probing feeling he had had during the session.

“Anyway, we were in bed and then the whole thing started to shake. I screamed, ‘Bad dog!’ He was flattered; he thought I meant him, but I didn’t. I meant ‘Bad dog.’ Tiny, our dog, was climbing into the bed. I pushed Hymie off and rolled over onto my stomach to push Tiny down. And then . . .” She started screaming. Krenkwasser said, “And then?” The screaming, followed by wild weeping, continued. “And then?” “I was trying to push Tiny down—he’s a mastiff for God’s sake—he weighs 180 pounds! So there I was on my tummy, wrestling with Tiny, who was turned on and hot to go when Hymie got on top and started butt-fucking me.” No sound-proofing could contain Samantha’s piercing shrieks. “Butt-fucking me—the fucking bastard—while a 180-pound dog was trying to fuck us both. How could he do it? Only one way—he can’t feel a thing—at least not outside his dick! Didn’t he know I was terrified? No feelings!” Samantha settled into quiet crying. Wiping her eyes, she said, “That’s when I thought of the prosthetic amygdala. Hymie objectifies me. I was just a hole to come in. He didn’t even care what hole. Nothing about me or how I felt—not even acknowledgment that I felt—that I had feelings at all. How could he think about my feelings when he has none except genital ones? Oh, he makes me come if he can, that he understands; otherwise he’s an affective mute. Tiny has so much more feeling, although sometimes he’s caninistic like that night in bed when he got turned on by the smells. But he’s a very loving beast, not like my husband. I thought if only Hymie could be more like Tiny.” Dr. Krenkwasser thought of the patient who had a heart attack and died in his waiting room. His next patient more or less stepped over the body the EMS personnel were working on and insisted on having her session as usual, reflecting, “Why couldn’t that be my husband?” Samantha repeated, “Why can’t my husband be more like that wonderful, expressive mastiff? As I lay there crushed I reached down to give Tiny a paw job. I did it partly out of love; I knew Tiny was really fired up, frustrated and hurting. I wanted to give him release and pleasure. And partly out of fear—what would he do if he didn’t get relief? Hymie paid no attention as he went on butt-fucking me. They came at the same time. Tiny licked my face and went to sleep. Hymie didn’t even notice I was getting Tiny off. He pulled out and fell asleep too. I was so hurt, so hurt. How could he treat me like that?” Samantha dissolved once again into tears; this time the paroxysm was explosive. It seemed that her sobbing would never cease, but it did—abruptly and dramatically. She wiped her eyes on her Brooks Brothers sweater sleeve, smiled her most engaging little-girl smile and continued her story. “I was crushed. I just couldn’t stand feeling that hurt. And then it occurred to me that it wasn’t his fault. He didn’t have an amygdala—at least he didn’t have one that worked the way it was supposed to work. There is a circuit board, or a connection, or a ganglia, or something missing. Then I felt enormous compassion for him. The poor thing doesn’t have an amygdala. He can’t help it; it’s not his fault that he hurts me so

horribly. At first I thought about a transplant. Maybe Tiny's amygdala could be transplanted to Hymie—I thought he really is only a dog so why not? And then I thought Hymie should only be a dog, as lovable and loving as Tiny and I knew I could never sacrifice Tiny's affective life to give Hymie one even if it were possible. I started to despair again and then just as I was sticking some Vaseline up my butt-hole with my finger—it was so sore—I thought of you. I had read an article in *Scientific American* that referred to your work in trying to build a bridge between psychoanalysis and neuroscience. Then I felt a peace like the peace that passes understanding that the mystics talk about and I knew that you would build a prosthetic amygdala for Hymie and all would be well. Even the soreness disappeared and I don't think it was the Vaseline. Just thinking about you soothed my soul and my body. I felt completely relaxed—warm—as if I was floating in a warm, wonderful bath. Hymie was out cold and sharing my peacefulness with him seemed impossible in any case since being close to him felt abhorrent so I climbed on down to the floor and curled up with Tiny and slept the most wonderful sleep I had ever had. In the morning I called for an appointment.”

Krenkwasser's mind was reeling. This wasn't a person; this was a bundle of fragments. Nothing held them together. Too many styles, too many ways of expressing herself, too many emotions, and none of them was convincing. Or at least he was less than convinced. But who knows, maybe the husband and the dog and the bizarre name were real. Krenkwasser started feeling as fragmented as his patient. His head spun. Was she a *dreikopf*? Was she a multiple? Was she an hysteric? A psychopath? An actress? A con-woman? A deluded, terribly ill woman? All were possible. Krenkwasser needed to know which was the case, just as he really needed to know what made the patient tick. He realized that he was in danger of being enchanted by her—without being seductive, she seduced. He wasn't Krenkwasser anymore. He was the *dreikopf*, the multiple, the hysteric, the sociopath, the actress, the con-woman, the psychotic. He was falling apart. Consciously pulling himself together, Krenkwasser shook off his enthrallment and regained his professional identity. He dismissed his confusion, his state induced by his patient's fragmentation, and turned towards examining his countertransference, seeking a clue in it to his patient's true state. Few shrinks have Krenkwasser's capacity to understand patients by experiencing and understanding how he is reacting to the patient's behavior. Training, inborn talent and experience had given Krenkwasser an almost preternatural capacity for gaining empathic understanding by reaching into self. He didn't feel bewildered now. He was fully in possession of himself, but he was puzzled. His inward journey had come up with nothing except his moment of being touched by her little-girl voice. In a flood of insight he realized

why. There had been no emotion in the room; it was all hysterical, not play-acting, but shallow—an attempt to feel by someone who could not feel except through exaggeration and hysterics.

Using his renowned capacity for masterly confrontation, Krenkwasser translated his insight into an intervention that he hoped she would be able to hear. Abruptly pulling himself out of his reverie, he raised his hand to check her babbling about how wonderful Dr. Krenkwasser will build a prosthetic amygdala for her husband, a babbling he tuned out and said, “Samantha, I couldn’t feel your pain, and I don’t think you felt it either. I felt hardly anything during our session. Your hyperemoting is a desperate attempt to feel. It isn’t your husband that needs a prosthetic amygdala; it’s you. You came here to feel and asked me to magically help you by building an amygdala for Hymie. Samantha turned white. This time there was no doubt about the depth and reality of her emotion. Biting her lip hard she stammered, “You’re right.”

Krenkwasser was certain that something important had been achieved, that a therapeutic breakthrough had occurred. Samantha eagerly accepted his suggestion that she enter analysis. During the ensuing months Samantha was no longer hysterical or histrionic; she no longer spun fantastic stories that might or might not be true; her anal preoccupation was no longer in evidence. Her obsessive preoccupation with her husband ceased. She took responsibility for her actions, her state of being and such feelings as surfaced. It was a cure of sorts, but the patient was dead. There was little in the way of genuine emotion replacing the hyperemotionality of her first session. Krenkwasser used every therapeutic device in his extensive armamentarium—the truth being known, including many non-analytic ones—but it was to no avail. Session after session Samantha turned up cute as a button in a sweater and pleated skirt looking like Betty Co-ed in a forties movie. She talked easily and fluently, but about nothing of consequence. Krenkwasser wasn’t sure if he had cured her or killed her. He would have been hard put to give her a diagnosis—affable, related, functioning adequately—it was hard to justify continuing the analysis—now in its seventh month. Bored to distraction, Krenkwasser had decided to suggest a termination date when out of the blue, just as she was talking about picking out a new rug for her living room, Samantha asked, “Dr. Krenkwasser, will you build me a prosthetic amygdala? It’s true, I’m not unhappy and life isn’t so bad, but I’m not here, there’s no me—I’m a robot. I know feeling would help me, and I know that I can’t experience joy without experiencing suffering. I’m willing to chance it, so build me an amygdala.” She paused and then said “I do not want to

get to the end without having been.” Two barely perceptible tears slowly rolled down her cheeks.

Krenkwasser thought of Freud’s mordant comment at the end of his life when a visitor said of his reconstructed study in his London exile, “Oh, Professor Freud, it’s all here.” Freud replied, “*Ya, aber Ich bin nicht heir.*” Samantha was “*nicht heir.*” Krenkwasser was being himself—on familiar territory—in relating his patient’s experience to some bit of analytic lore. It was the way his mind worked. Then the wholly unexpected occurred—Freud was banished far beyond London—banished from Krenkwasser’s mind as if he had never lived, as a conviction emanating from his groin radiated upward until it pierced his entire body, that he was helplessly in love with Samantha Dreck. Loving in a way he had never been in love. In love with an intensity that dwarfed the love that he thought he had had for his wife. This was a love that possessed, tormented, consumed, encompassed, shattered. There was no precedent, no precursor, no intimation that such a love could be, let alone be his in Krenkwasser’s experience. He had known lust; he had known caring; he had known wanting to be with; but he had never known this ineffable state of being.

Krenkwasser reached deep within to regain possession of himself. The effort was futile. The best he could do was to fall back on his professional identity and analyze his falling in love. It was the tears, something about the two tears and the little girl pleading and the courage. How often he had tried to convince patients that there was something to be gained from revisiting trauma and working through pain—that it was worth it to give up defenses against experiencing it. How often did he try to persuade the reluctant that their feelings, no matter what they were, are good for them. More often than not, it was to no avail. Krenkwasser wasn’t sure he believed it himself and here was this lovely young woman solemnly asking to be taken on a journey to pain for the sake of living more abundantly. How could he not love?

Analysis might explain, but it changed nothing. Krenkwasser sat and stared as if beholding a beatific vision as he self-consciously became capable of once again perceiving what she said.

“Doctor, it shouldn’t be so hard. I’ve read that they are now implanting pacemakers to stimulate the vagas nerve as a treatment for depression. That must have something to do with the amygdala. You can do it. Give me a life, Dr. Krenkwasser. I beg you to give me a life.”

Krenkwasser rallied for the last time. Pulling himself away from his enthrallment to regain an analytic posture he said, “Samantha, in the very act of asking for a prosthetic amygdala you become the feeling person you want to be, so you no longer need a prosthetic amygdala.”

“Doctor, to feel that I don’t feel isn’t enough. Even feeling sad that I don’t feel isn’t enough. It’s insight with a bit of emotion attached, not a full affective life. I want more. I want a prosthetic amygdala.”

“You spoke of feeling like—that is being—a robot. Won’t having a mechanical device to enable you to feel leave you as robotic as ever?”

“No, Doctor. My new amygdala wouldn’t feel for me; it would enable me to feel, just like my glasses enable me to see, yet they do not themselves see.”

Krenkwasser was washed in such a wave of love that he feared he would literally dissolve. Trying a last time, he said, “Surely we could build on the sadness you feel at not feeling until you have a full range of emotional experience and expression.”

“I know in my gut that I can’t do it; my amygdala isn’t capable of doing it. My sadness and yearning exhaust its capacity. Listen to me. I know my only chance is a prosthetic amygdala. Please!”

Krenkwasser remained silent.

“Doctor, there is something else I should tell you. I’ve been taking cocaine. I get it from my husband, who has been taking it for years. My amygdala can’t even let me feel I’m not feeling without cocaine. I need to feel *something*, so I can’t stop using coke without a replacement. I beg you! Build me a prosthetic amygdala!”

Krenkwasser knew he was being blackmailed. But it didn’t matter. He had seen too many destroy themselves with drugs. He thought, I can’t let this wonderful, wondrous creature destroy herself. Incredibly, he heard himself saying, “Oh my darling, I’ll build you Xanadu. I’ll build you a prosthetic amygdala.” Krenkwasser hadn’t actually verbalized these thoughts, although he believed he had. What he actually said was, “I’ll try.”

In the ensuing months, Krenkwasser mastered all there was to know about the limbic system and the amygdala. He saw fewer and fewer patients, ceased attending professional meetings, seldom saw his family, slept little and worried much—all to no avail. There was no way knowledge of the microscopic anatomy of the amygdaloid body, as it is sometimes

called, could be used to make a prosthesis. Krenkwasser lost weight; his hair whitened; he sank into a depression. Samantha, on the other hand, who was by now addicted to cocaine, seemed to flourish. Her sessions revolved around her attempts to reassure him. The more faith she expressed in his genius the more responsible he felt. As has been often noted, in responsibility begins guilt. As failure after failure piled up, as one extravagant scheme after another for building the prosthetic amygdala proved illusory, guilt turned to self-loathing. Thoughts of suicide seldom left Krenkwasser's mind. Only the remote possibility that he could help Samantha sustained his life.

By now Krenkwasser's office was more of a laboratory than a consulting room. His few patients had to wend their way through a maze of wires, apparatus and chemical retorts. On the day he had decided that Samantha was better off without him, his one patient related how he had dreamt that Dr. Krenkwasser was an alchemist. Commenting that children attribute magical power to their parents that gets transferred onto the analyst, Krenkwasser dismissed the bewildered patient, who tripped on the emotionizer, one of Krenkwasser's failed attempts, and almost killed himself on the way out. Krenkwasser mumbled something about the insurance company as he slammed the door. Just as he was reaching for the poison, an idea occurred to him. My God, of course! Every first year medical student knows that the limbic system is called the reptilian brain. Reptiles have the finest amygdalas. Dummkopf! I don't have to build an amygdala, I can transplant one. All I have to do is find a way to attach a reptilian amygdala to the putamen and the tail of the claudate nucleus as well as to the neocortex of the frontal and temporal lobes. Of course I'll have to connect it to the hippocampus and hypothalamus. Six wires and some immune suppressants to prevent rejection and it's done. Krenkwasser grabbed the yellow pages and looked under "C" for crocodile. There was no listing.

A year later Krenkwasser's office was awash in vessels containing reptilian amygdalas. His savings had gone to exotic animal suppliers, but he had done it! There was a lizard with a rattlesnake amygdala who was just fine, and a rabbit with a Gila monster amygdala who was acting rather strangely, yet remained a rabbit. It was time.

Krenkwasser had noticed that the closer he got to his goal, the less he felt. Instead of feeling exhilaration, he was blah. Even his love for Samantha was more a memory than a reality. The only thing that mattered was his obsession—transplanting the reptilian amygdala into a human who was affectively challenged, as he started to phrase it. Krenkwasser began to wish that someone would give *him* a prosthetic amygdala. It was true that he had never been a feeling guy. He had always lived in his head, not his heart. His

analysis had helped, but not much. His love for Samantha had been an exception, but that had faded. It was almost gone. Yes. That's why he agreed to construct the prosthetic amygdala. It was not only identification with her and her unfeelingness; it was an unconscious wish and hope that he would cure himself. His identification with her had been wonderful; it allowed him not only to understand her, but to experience love. Yet what was that love? Was it not narcissistic in root? She was but a mirror in which he saw himself. No, he needed a prosthetic amygdala in the form of a reptilian transplant. Besides, how could he operate on her without a trial? So it was decided! He would operate on himself and install an alligator's amygdala.

The work with the engineers and machinists had been more arduous than the work on the neurochemistry of the limbic system. Still, in only six months the apparatus had been constructed. The helmet with the drills, the mechanical arms which would be programmed to install the amygdala so carefully dissected out of one of the baby alligators that lived in the bathtub, and could be programmed to make the six connections were a technological wonder. Krenkwasser allowed himself a modicum of pride.

With the alligator amygdala floating in sterile saline, Krenkwasser placed himself in the operating chair, injected himself with anesthetic and pressed the start button just before he lost consciousness. Two hours later, his wife, who fortunately had come to his office to serve divorce papers on the grounds of insanity, found him lying in a pool of blood with the baby alligators who had escaped from the tub gnawing at his extremities. Just as Krenkwasser regained consciousness in the intensive care unit, Samantha rushed in. Embracing him, she cried out, "Thank God you're still alive! Thank God you're going to be all right! And there's been even better news! I no longer need a prosthetic amygdala. Hymie and I stopped using cocaine and I'm all right, but he has post-cocaine abuse anxiety disorder so he's expressive as hell and constantly trying to please me. He's even willing to change his name. My life is unbelievably wonderful now! It was him after all; now that he's emotionally alive, I am too. We were on the wrong track. But that doesn't matter. You cared for me when no one else did and that got me through. Thank you for trying to help me. I'll always remember our work together. I hope your brain heals all right and the animal rights people aren't too tough on you."

Krenkwasser, suddenly overwhelmed with sadness, wept inconsolably at the follies and illusions of humankind. He, too, no longer needed the prosthetic amygdala, or, looked at from a different perspective, perhaps the prosthetic amygdala worked after all.

Chapter 13:

Therapy and Religious Conflict

Psychoanalysis from Freud's skeptical "The Future of An Illusion" and his theory of the origin of the primal Jewish belief in the Oneness of God in "Moses and Monotheism" to Heinz Kohut's openness to religious experience as a way to meet the human need for affirmation and for an object to idealize has sought to understand the central role religion has played in every human culture. The theoretical explanations of how and for what purpose religions evolve doesn't help very much clinically when the therapist (or analyst) is working with a patient who is trying to deal with a deeply emotional religious conflict between belief and non-belief or over which religion or theology to embrace.

I've tried to dramatize both these conflicts in a play about a remarkable woman, Edith Stein. As you read it, imagine yourself as Edith's therapist at each stage of her journey from Judaism to atheism to a life as a cloistered Roman Catholic nun. Her's was a journey through tormenting internal conflicts and bitter external ones. Suspending your own feelings about her successive beliefs and the actions that sprung from them, think about what interventions would have helped Edith at each stage of her evolution. Do you reflect, support, interpret, confront or all of these?

EDITH STEIN: A ONE-ACT PLAY IN EIGHT SCENES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Edith Stein

Saint Theresa

} played by the same actress

Edith Stein as a ten-year-old

Rabbi at Uncle Alexander's funeral, later Jewish spokesperson Augusta (Gustel) Stein, mother of Edith and her six living siblings Erna Stein, Edith's next-oldest sister

Rosa Stein, Edith's eldest sister

The Philosopher (successively David Hume, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Martin Heidegger)

The Suitor (successively Hans Biberstein, Fritz Kaufmann, Hans Lipps)

Edmund Husserl

The Pope (successively Pius IX; Pius XI, John Paul II)

Adolph Reinach, philosopher—friend and teacher of Edith

Anna Reinach, his wife

Richard Courant, mathematician and cousin of Edith

Chorus (successively Stein's family; young people at a dance at Breslau; philosophy students at Gottingen; doctors, nurses, and wounded soldiers at a military hospital; fascist students at Freiburg University; and nuns in a Carmelite monastery)

Note: The philosophers and suitors are distinguished by their dress; for example, Hume is an 18th-century gentleman and looks it, while Hans Lipps always wears his blue jacket. The Pope need only be slightly different in dress in each of his appearances, suggesting the Papacy hasn't changed that much vis-a-vis its attitude toward Jews.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

EDITH STEIN had a strong sense of place and the ways in which the landscape becomes the inscape, so the scenes and settings in which she lived her life should be made as vivid as possible. The easiest way to do this is by the use of projections onto a scrim or onto the back wall of the stage. Minimal props supplement the projected images, leaving the stage essentially empty. There should be a tension between the relatively detailed realistic background and the impressionistic, merely suggested props. For example, in the philosophical debate scene, the picturesque, almost gingerbread academic town of Gottingen is captured by a slide, while a few books, a table, coffee mugs, and so forth, convey an impression of the intense intellectual life of the town. Characters often debate on stage left, a bit askew from the projections and props on stage right.

SCENE I

Interior of a synagogue in Breslau, 1901. A funeral is in progress with the RABBI delivering the eulogy. He is wearing a yarmulke. There is a coffin in front of the dais (bima). The Stein family, including mother Augusta (MRS. STEIN), and ten-year-old EDITH, are listening to the eulogy. EDITH is simultaneously fascinated and frightened. The synagogue can be suggested and need not be too realistic. The important thing is this is a funeral and there's a eulogy going on.

RABBI: Alexander was a man of great business acumen, a hard worker and a devoted father and husband. He was a second father to many who relied on him for support, taking responsibility for those whom adversity had struck. He was as devoted to his business as to his family. His business reverses were the result of forces beyond his control. He was gentle, loving, a good man and a good Jew. He will be greatly missed, not only by his family but by the entire Jewish community of Breslau. For those who suffer his loss, there will be the consolation of memory, although there can be no filling the hole his death leaves. (Spot catches EDITH's face, which is pained, almost tormented. The RABBI drones on, barely audibly, continuing to praise the deceased. Finally, his voice becomes audible again as he says)

RABBI: And when the body returns to dust, the spirit returns to God, Who gave it.

(The mourners file out, MRS. STEIN holding EDITH's hand. She pulls it away and runs out.)

MRS. STEIN: Who would have believed he would kill himself?

FIRST RELATIVE: Gustel, once he entangled himself in his brother's business, he was sure to be ruined himself. There was no way out.

MRS. STEIN: The Lord never gives us more than we can handle.

FIRST RELATIVE: You're always saying that.

SECOND RELATIVE: With a gun, his brains glued to the wall. It was awful. (EDITH runs back in holding her ears; she has heard.)

MRS. STEIN: Enough, this is not for *kinder*.

(Stage at right goes dark. EDITH and RICHARD COURANT, in their mid-twenties, become visible stage left. EDITH is reasonably pretty but neither striking nor beautiful. RICHARD is short, has a prominent nose, and projects worldliness.)

EDITH (speaking to no one in particular, essentially in soliloquy although RICHARD is present): It was my first funeral. It seemed so empty, death so final. There was no consolation in the rabbi's words. They just made everyone feel worse. That's the way it always is at Jewish funerals. The more the rabbi praises the deceased, the more intense the loss becomes. There's nothing of faith in a personal life after death, nor any belief in a future reunion with those who have died. It is so sad; even when I was ten, I couldn't stand the sadness of death. I couldn't stand its unbearable finality—to never again see those we love—it's too horrible. (Pause; then to RICHARD, who has been listening

without identifying) Have you ever been to a Catholic funeral? There's no mention of achievements or of the reputation the deceased had won in the world. Called by its baptismal name alone, the humble soul, in all its poverty, is commended to divine mercy.

RICHARD: Edith, what's happened to my skeptical cousin? Ever since you turned fourteen you've agreed with me that it's all mumbo-jumbo—Catholic, Jewish—what difference does it make—no, it does make a difference—Judaism is a religion for adults.

EDITH: You mean it's a religion without hope.

RICHARD: I don't need that kind of hope.

EDITH: I do. Do you remember when Uncle Alexander shot himself and no one, not even Mother could understand it? How could she believe that God never gives us more than we can handle? No, not even Mother believed that then. It was the first time I was aware that she, too, could be in torment. I can remember that empty service so well, the secrets, "Don't tell the *kinder*," feeling the mystery with no one to share that feeling with; it was the first torment not only of Mother's but of my life. Of course, Mother suffered when Father died, but she hid it. She wasn't emotional about it. At Uncle Alexander's funeral her suffering was all too apparent—seeing her distraught was profoundly upsetting. Not having a father was just the way it always had been for me. Yes, I yearned—! wondered—and I'm sure I suffered too, but I wasn't aware of it—not conscious of being in pain. Not so when Uncle Alexander killed himself. That felt—felt—felt traumatic—like getting physically hurt—trampled by a horse or something like that—Mother's distress was very hard for me to see. If there was no consolation for her, how could there be for me? I didn't know it then, but that funeral—that empty, stupid, meaningless funeral must have made me realize I would never see Daddy. I couldn't make any sense of it. I had to understand why he put the gun to his head—over a business failure? Afterwards, after she admitted that it had happened, that Uncle Alexander had killed himself, Mother finally told me that it was because he took on too much trying to save his brothers. But that wasn't what I needed to hear. That wasn't the kind of explanation I wanted. Whether he failed in a foolish attempt to do an impossibly noble thing or he failed because of his own business ineptitude didn't really matter to me. What I couldn't and can't understand is why anyone would kill himself over money. That just doesn't make sense to me—at least not emotionally. But there is another way to look at Uncle Alexander's death that does make sense.

Have you ever noticed how prone Jews are to suicide? I believe that the inability to face and to accept the collapse of their worldly existence with reasonable calm is closely linked to their lack of any prospect of life in eternity. The personal immortality of the soul is not an article of our faith; all effort is concentrated on what is temporal. Even the piety of the pious is directed to the sanctification of this life. The Jew is able to endure severe hardship and untiring labor, coupled with extreme privation for years on end, as long as he sees a goal ahead. Deprive him of this goal and you destroy his vigor; life then appears meaningless, and so he can readily decide to throw it away.

That's why Uncle Alexander killed himself.

RICHARD: Edith, for God's sake, pardon the expression, you sound just like the anti-Semites. You almost make me wish I was observant—you just gave the best argument for practicing Judaism I ever heard. The sanctification of this life, what could be more desirable? The need for transcendence, the need to pursue an ideal—I subscribe to that and I find it in mathematics, in the disinterested search for truth, in the quest for the beauty of pure form, in the creation of that beauty.

EDITH: Yes, transcendence and the disinterested search for truth; that's a passion we share. And the quest for the creation of the beautiful—that moves me too. Yet it's too abstract, too rarefied and in the end it doesn't satisfy. And what about the grave—the eternal silence, the everlasting aloneness, the emptiness, the hopelessness of knowing we will never see those we love again. (Weeps)

RICHARD: "Edith ... Edith, why do you need this child's fable of an afterlife? Can't you see the nobility of accepting reality?"

(Stage left goes dark. Stage right is illuminated. The coffin is still in the projection of the synagogue. The chairs that had seated the mourners are now near the front of the stage along with a framed picture or two suggesting modest bourgeois comfort. This is the Stein living room. MRS. STEIN is talking to the ten-year-old EDITH.)

MRS. STEIN (Dressed in black, as she always is): I held you up to see Daddy when he went off for the last time, you were barely two. Oh Edie, every time I held you in my arms I felt he was still here. When I came home and got into bed with you, the pain evaporated. I didn't feel lonely as long as I had you.

EDITH: Mommy, why do you still wear black after so many years? You don't seem sad now. In fact, you never seemed sad.

MRS. STEIN: To honor him.

EDITH: What was he like? What's it like to have a daddy? I'll never know. (Cries)

MRS. STEIN: Edie, you have your brothers. Paul and Arno are like fathers.

EDITH (Strikes the table with her fist): It's not the same. (Thoughtfully) Daddy couldn't have been a very good businessman. You made the lumberyard a success. His dying of a heart stroke looking for lumber? Why did he let himself get so hot? And all the babies? You haven't had a baby since Daddy died. Why not?

MRS. STEIN: Edith, stop this. When you get your back up, you're impossible. How dare you criticize Daddy.

EDITH: He wasn't a good businessman! Everyone says you're the best businessman in Breslau. (Her anger vanishes) Do you still miss him? I can't even miss him. I never knew him.

(Pause: cries)

MRS. STEIN: (Embraces Edith): Oh Edie, sometimes you still look like you looked when you waved goodbye for all of us.

(Stage left goes dark. Stage right with the adult Edith and Richard is again illuminated.)

RICHARD: I sometimes wonder if Aunt Gustel was relieved.

EDITH: Don't be absurd. After all these years she still grieves whether she shows it or not. As far back as I can remember Mother insisted all of us children go to the shul on Yom Kippur for *Yizkor*—even after we became nonbelievers—Paul and Arno are middle-aged men who long ago left Judaism behind—but they still go for Mother's sake.

RICHARD: Your mother is all action. I'm not surprised she still gives orders to her grown children. She's not one for introspection.

EDITH: She never speaks of difficulties. And she didn't think that.

RICHARD: No, I suppose she didn't. I'm sorry, Edith, I didn't mean to hurt you. Your mother is pretty religious, keeps kosher, observes the holidays.

EDITH: I loved all that too. The beauty of the ritual; the sense of order and tranquility. But it didn't help, at least not in a way that would have counted. It doesn't supply any comfort when people die, has nothing to offer a child who never even knew her father before

she lost him. Now kosher and all the rest, all the stuff that's so important to Mother, doesn't mean anything to me. That makes me sad. But I can't believe what I don't believe... And all that Talmudic sophistry. I can't stand it. Ever since I stayed with Elsa and Max in Hamburg—they wouldn't even have a rabbi at their wedding—I haven't prayed. How old was I then? Fourteen. No, I haven't prayed since I was fourteen.

(Pause) Enough of this!

(Laughs) Life's too much fun to worry about religion. School is such a joy for me, such a joy.

RICHARD: I really enjoyed tutoring you in math for your entrance exam to gymnasium. When you came back from Hamburg you really regretted leaving school. You so wanted to go back.

EDITH: Thank God (they both laugh) I did. I'm so happy in gymnasium. For the first time I feel at home—that I am home. (Pause; both become thoughtful again)

RICHARD: It must be strange to have been born on Yom Kippur. Do you think about it on your birthday?

EDITH: I'm always afraid I'll miss a party if my birthday on the gentile calendar falls on Yom Kippur like it did when I was ten.... It does make me think. Mother believes I have a special destiny.

RICHARD: Aunt Gustel is wonderful—except for her superstitious side.

EDITH: Superstitious my foot. She took you in when your father was in one of his "crises." She's just traditional and there's something beautiful in the tradition—I just don't believe in God anymore so none of it makes sense—but there is something special about having been born on Yom Kippur. (Looks skyward) Mother's right. I am going to do something special. Achieve something great. Mother hates people who are puffed up—I'm not puffed up—yet I expect great things. When I put my mind to something I really want, I go for it. Nothing can stop me. Nothing. I don't know where the desire, the dream, comes from, it just wells up from the depths, and when it does there's no resisting it. Erna says I am just willful, but it's not just that, although I am willful. It's something else. (Again looking skyward) It's my sense of...of...of mission, my feeling that destiny calls me—I'm not sure to what—I will...I will satisfy my ambition—Perhaps be a psychologist and explain how our minds work...or, or a great philosopher.

(To herself) Don't get puffed up—(Struggles with herself, looks up once again, ecstatically) Yet I do have a mission—it's not puffed-upness—yes, it's ambition, yet it's also something outside myself, something out there calling—something calling me.

SCENE II

Set in the Stein apartment, as above. EDITH is about 20. There is a crowd of fellow students. Her brother ARNO, RICHARD, sister ERNA, suitor (HANS), and sister ROSA mix with the students, who are talking in an animated way. There is food and drink.

ROSA (to ERNA and HANS): Edith has so many friends. Always out—at the university , hiking, playing tennis, on holiday. All I do is work in the house. Clean, cook—I'm sick of it. I'm sick of being the family drudge.

ERNA (to ROSA): You're always complaining, especially about Edith. And yet you always follow her lead, baby sister or no. (Pause) Edie is a mystery. All that energy, that preternatural intensity. Her mind is like a razor. Always at the head of her class—math, languages, sciences, classics, literature, history—so serious, yet so joyous. As close as I am to her, I never feel I know her. She's a book sealed with seven seals. (Someone puts on a record. It is a waltz)

SUITOR (HANS) (to EDITH): Dance?

(They dance smoothly and well. ARNO cuts in, then RICHARD—HANS takes her back. EDITH. looks ecstatic. First they waltz. Then the record is changed to a foxtrot, then American ragtime. The students eat, talk, dance, laugh. EDITH and HANS are particularly animated and obviously attuned to each other. HANS lets EDITH go and starts talking to ARNO. RICHARD and EDITH move to stage left. Stage right goes dark.)

EDITH: I love to dance. Hans teaches me the latest steps.

RICHARD: You're different with him. Lighter, more playful.

EDITH: Oh. You have it all wrong. If Hans wasn't such a mommy's boy he would marry Erna. I hope she doesn't accept him. He can't take a step without his mother—goes on vacation with her, does everything with her. Erna would have a miserable life.

RICHARD: If Erna gives him up, he could be yours.

EDITH (Sharply): Richard, stop. I'd never compete with my sister. And I couldn't tolerate being second to his mother. Second to anyone's mother.

RICHARD: You are attracted?

EDITH: (blushes and stammers): Yes. People don't understand me. Don't know me. Even the family. They think I'm so serious, that I never think about love. (Emphatically) It's not so. I cherish in my heart the dream of a great love and a happy marriage. But not with Hans.

RICHARD: It doesn't hurt even a little that he prefers Erna?

EDITH (Long pause, in which she acts as if she were ignoring RICHARD and his comment; then, dreamily): I cherish in my heart the dream of a great love (Her voice trails off.

The dance music is again audible and several couples dance into the lighted stage left, past EDITH and RICHARD, and back into the darkened stage right. Edith turns serious. The vivaciousness in her face fades and when she turns to Richard she speaks with intensity.) Hans has a proper attitude towards sex. Otherwise I couldn't have him as a friend.

RICHARD: Edith, as dearly as I love you, there's a part of you that's too stern for me. Even at a party you won't take a drink.

EDITH: When I was a child, I saw a drunkard sleeping in the gutter. I never forgot it. I can still see him as if it were happening now. Don't you see? I don't want to lose a particle of freedom or risk my dignity as a human being. Drink does that to people—at least when they drink too much. I don't mind others drinking—like tonight—if they don't overdo—I just don't need it. I have just as much fun.

RICHARD: I think you do.... So Hans or any other guy— he has to pass your right attitude test to be a friend?

EDITH: Yes, if I have a certain feeling for him. (Catches herself—shakes her head as if to deny what she just said) I know you allow yourself some freedom in this area—that's okay for you—as long as I don't know about it! But it's not okay for men I care about or the men I go on trips with or the men I entertain alone. They must have the right attitude. (Pause, looks distressed.) Do you remember when I was fourteen and spent a year with Elsa in Hamburg? I told you how I lost my faith that year. Well, that wasn't the only significant thing that happened in Hamburg. Elsa's marriage was unhappy and

she told me much too much, all the details (blushes)—things a young girl shouldn't even know, let alone hear. It wasn't the way to learn those things. So much of it was painful instead of beautiful.

RICHARD: Elsa's telling you too much, too soon—that still affects you, like seeing the drunkard?

EDITH: No, not exactly, but I do insist on the right attitude as a condition of friendship. Love must be treated as something sacred, which it is; never crassly or vulgarly. Not that Elsa was crass or vulgar but some of the things she told me frightened me. I will always insist on the right attitude if a man wants to be my friend.

RICHARD: Edie, so serious again. Sometimes you make me forget you're one of the funniest people I know.

EDITH: I like to laugh. There can never be enough joy.... Did I ever tell you my earliest memory? I don't know why it comes to mind at a party—I was in the apartment in Kohlenstrasse—it's my only memory of that apartment. I must have been two at the time because we moved there soon after Father's death. I can see myself standing before a big white door, drumming on it with clenched fist and screaming because Rosa was on the other side and I wanted to get to her.

RICHARD: There's a wall—his attraction to Erna—between you and Hans. Maybe that's why it comes to mind.

EDITH: Walls—walls one can't penetrate.

(Stage fades; a projection appears of a wall. EDITH is on one side. On the other, a 40-ish man walking through a field.)

EDITH: Daddy! (Silence) So much separation—between life and death, between me and father, between my intellect and my heart.

RICHARD: Between your reason and your emotions, between your rationality and your mystical search, between the world as it is and the world as you want it to be.

EDITH: Between Jews and gentiles. I hate walls.

(Projection of father and field fades and is replaced with projection of a grille separating nuns and visitors in a monastery. That projection fades and is replaced by a projection of the walls

and barbed wire of a concentration camp. That projection fades and EDITH and RICHARD are once again visible.)

RICHARD: Enough of walls, let's waltz. (Dances her back into the party at stage right, which is once more lit. Students are animated as before.)

SUITOR (HANS): (Cuts in and dances ecstatically with EDITH) Like to play tennis tomorrow?

EDITH: Yes! I'll meet you at the court early. We'll have enough time for a set or two before the excursion.

FIRST STUDENT: Tomorrow we start our hike.

(Record stops. EDITH, HANS, ERNA and fellow students speak excitedly.)

SECOND STUDENT: First we'll go to the Schneeberg.

HANS: And stay in the sun high on the mountain.

ERNA: Then go to Karlsbrun.

FIRST STUDENT: With our knapsacks and climbing sticks.

SECOND STUDENT: With books.

THIRD STUDENT: We'll read poetry to each other.

FIRST STUDENT: We'll frolic and laugh.

SECOND STUDENT: With sandwiches and wine.

THIRD STUDENT: To the trail, to the mountains, to holiday joy.

EDITH: We'll dance all the way.

(The music starts again. EDITH dances once again with HANS as ERNA looks on jealously. Students walk off singing in march time. Scene ends.)

SCENE III

The philosophy club meeting at the university at Gottingen, 1913. The projection on the rear wall shows Gottingen at its most beguiling; its narrow gothic streets, its square with the famous statue of the Goose Girl, and the hills with their villas in the background. It's the

quintessential university town. In front of the projection of Gottingen is the students' seminar room. There are worn, comfortable couches and chairs, tables with many books, coffee cups, pipes, ashtrays on the tables, knapsacks on the floor. EDITH and suitor FRITZ KAUFMANN) are present. This suitor is intense, quiet, good-looking, very well dressed, reflecting his wealthy background. He can be somewhat arrogant, but he is unsure of himself.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Gottingen is thrilling. We philosophize all the time, do nothing but study phenomena.

EDITH: Ever since I encountered Husserl's Logical Investigations when I was at the university of Breslau I wanted to come here. Now it's happened. I feel transformed; the whole time I studied psychology and philosophy at Breslau I was happy, happy in a way I'd never been before—not that I'd ever been unhappy—but this is different. Everyone feels it, the whole philosophy club. Husserl has found a way to put the sciences—including psychology—on a firm footing—given them rootedness. His phenomenology opens the way to the truth. It is truly a method for getting back to the things themselves—the subsisting reality—and away from empty theorizing.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Fraulein, at the University of Munich I learned that "the things themselves" are always refracted through the categories of the understanding. We can never see the things in themselves. I told Husserl that.

EDITH: Fritz. You alienate everyone with your coxsureness. How could you speak to the Master that way? Fritz, I heard you weren't accepted in Professor Reinach's phenomenology seminar because of your attitude.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Reinach doesn't matter so much. I'll get in a seminar sooner or later.

EDITH: Fritz, you wouldn't have come here if you didn't have doubts about Munich neo-Kantian idealism, dissatisfaction with the notion that ideas are more real than things.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Reinach's seminar I don't care about. But I do care what you think of me.

EDITH (ignoring FRITZ's personal remark): Husserl encourages complete freedom of inquiry. It's not your ideas; it's the way you present them.

SUITOR (FRITZ, stiffly): Always correcting, always trying to make better.

EDITH (lightening up, laughs): I have my flaws too. I'll try not to be so judgmental. At least I'm not as sarcastic as I used to be.

SUITOR (FRITZ): I want to be your friend. You're so intense, so committed, such a seeker after truth, so sure Husserl has found the way—the method—

EDITH: Oh Fritz, he has! It's so exciting to be here. It's like having a vocation—like a religious vocation—sometimes when I'm pursuing phenomenological research, I feel ... I feel ... I feel like a nun—like one whose life is consecrated.

SUITOR (FRITZ): I hope that doesn't mean consecrated to chastity.

EDITH (stiffening and pulling back): I don't permit frivolousness about erotic matters. We can be friends, but only if you maintain the correct attitude towards sexuality.

SUITOR (FRITZ, clearly shaken): I will. I'll behave correctly as long as you permit me to be attracted to you. I don't know how to be jocular. I meant nothing.

EDITH: I know: Let's be friends; Fritz. For now, friends: (Stage darkens: EDITH in a soliloquy) He is handsome. I love debating with him. I love being with him. If he maintains the right attitude—perhaps, perhaps. (Stage lightens.)

SUITOR (FRITZ): Yes, friends, good friends.

EDITH: (thoughtfully): Fritz, are you sure? Do you know what it means to be my friend? I never let go. A friend is a friend always; I hang on with the tenacity of a bulldog; if you're my friend now, you'll be my friend forever. (They exchange intense stares; EDITH pulls back, and out of her need to create distance, says) Please, Fritz, for me, be more respectful of the Master.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Edith, I know he is THE philosophical mind of our time. That's what brought me to Gottingen. My quarrel is more with Reinach; Husserl has moved back to a kind of qualified idealism; it's Reinach who rejects all contributions of mind to the construction of reality. But this is trivial. What matters is the method. The rigor, the abandoning of all presuppositions, all prejudice, the radical opening up of self to experience, wherever that experience may lead and the painstaking and oh-so-careful description of that experience. It's the austerity, the purity, the beauty of Husserl's phenomenological approach that entrances us.

EDITH (rapturously, almost trance-like): Yes, the austerity, the purity, the absolute forsaking of all presuppositions. It opens the way to the solution of philosophical problems—to the truth about the real nature of things.

SUITOR (FRITZ): To share such a vision is very special.

EDITH (speaking past him, missing his reaching for her): To be in this place, in this time, with these people—is more than I ever thought possible.

SUITOR (FRITZ, wistfully, almost regretfully, in soliloquy. Spot on him.): How can it be that a purely intellectual vision generates such love in her while she hardly knows I'm here.

EDITH (once again aware of FRITZ): A friend in Breslau told me I've become far too critical. I hoped I would be less so here in Gottingen. I guess I haven't succeeded. But you know, many people without faith—at least without religious faith—who have exalted ethical standards—and I do have them—so easily think they are as perfect as the standards they believe in. I'm a little like that, but I really do know better—something I learned very painfully back at Breslau. But please, Fritz, the right attitude. I do so want to be your friend.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Yes, friends forever.

(Enter RICHARD and STUDENTS. They are arguing passionately.)

FIRST STUDENT: I don't see how Husserl has avoided winding up in the idealist camp. He hasn't! How is it different to deal with phenomenological analysis of the horizons of thought than to elucidate Kant's categories of the understanding? In both cases there's the mind structuring the objects of perception, thereby constructing reality.

SECOND STUDENT: No, no, no! Kant's categories are a priori necessities; purely logical justifications, nothing like Husserl's rigorous empiricism. He has no a priori conditions—he studies what is—the very nature of thinking, perceiving, doubting, judging, believing. His "things," therefore, are neither mental nor physical—they are what they are—not least a way to establish contact with reality as it is, not as we think of it.

FIRST STUDENT: No, no! As soon as he sets out to describe the process by which we think, judge, believe, love he is talking about the mind and its operations—not the things themselves apart from the way we process them—he himself has recognized this.

(STUDENTS continue debating with passionate intensity. Other STUDENTS join the debate. There is great excitement in the air. Their words can't be clearly heard but their intellectual passion can be felt.)

THIRD STUDENT: You're both wrong. The Master's great achievement is to have simultaneously refuted Hume's skepticism, showing first that it is the case with

mathematics, then the case of scientific thought in general, that the connections abide in the things—that there is nothing psychological in them, without falling into Kant's error of placing those connections in the mind.

FIRST STUDENT: True, but—

SECOND STUDENT: No, no, no. For mathematics, maybe but not for other modes of thought. (Debate continues, growing even more raucous; EDITH, already a bit apart from the other students, walks to stage left. Lights dim on stage right and center stage.)

EDITH: Sometimes I am confused by the Master's thought. (Enter PHILOSOPHER DAVID HUME).

PHILOSOPHER HUME: Edith, you lost your way in a maze of meaningless philosophizing. If a book isn't about matters of fact or relations of ideas it should be consigned to the flames. What happened to your skeptical intellect? Your critical facility? Phenomenology says much about nothing. Its need for certainty is a mistake. It goes nowhere.

EDITH: Don't you see, Husserl's found a way to the most radical empiricism? He has gone back to the things themselves. His own way has fulfilled your vision without falling into your skepticism.

HUME: I'm afraid not.

(EDITH returns to student discussion as stage right is again illuminated. Hume fades into darkness. EDITH becomes engaged in a discussion with RICHARD.)

RICHARD (to EDITH): As brilliant as Husserl's circle can be, they get on my nerves sometimes. The Master isn't like that at all. Calm, methodical, thorough, judicious, unemotional. He's a great man. *The Logical Investigations* rescued mathematics from becoming a branch of psychology, rather than a description of reality. He's had a profound influence on my understanding of mathematics.

EDITH: Do you lecture on his work?

RICHARD: No. I teach mathematics, not the philosophical foundations of mathematics. Yet his thought infuses the way I do math.

EDITH: The whole family, especially Mother, are so proud that you've been appointed lecturer here.

RICHARD: Yes, lecturer in the best mathematics department in the world.

EDITH: Mother wouldn't like you saying that. She thinks we should be modest about our achievements.

RICHARD: I know. She's always saying too much pride in self is sinful. Your mother is remarkable. Aunt Gustel can say things like that without sounding preachy. There's something about her—her sincerity perhaps, that makes me listen to her rather than reject—

EDITH (interrupting): Well, your ego isn't exactly small.

RICHARD: Smaller than it would have been if it wasn't for Aunt Gustel. She's been so good to me, taking me in after my father's bankruptcy—never saying anything when he was selling French postcards in the street—you wouldn't know about those.

EDITH (blushing): I'm not so naive.

RICHARD: Never alluded to my parents' quarrels. Helped me get those tutoring jobs.

(Arguing STUDENTS envelop them.)

RICHARD (to STUDENTS): Study *The Logical Investigations*. The more you read them, the more you appreciate their profundity.

FIRST STUDENT: They're like a well whose depths you can never fathom, yet its waters remain transparent no matter how deep you go.

(STUDENTS wander off for coffee and pastry, still talking enthusiastically.)

RICHARD (to EDITH): I see you're getting close to Fritz.

EDITH: Oh, I like him. I like him very much. His flaws come from growing up with so much money, and never having had to make meaningful decisions. He still has trouble deciding, deciding anything.

RICHARD: About you?

(EDITH, looking away from RICHARD, stares at the floor. She doesn't answer this. There is a pause.)

RICHARD: Is he orthodox like your friend Metis, the one who used to walk you home from university in Breslau?

EDITH: Metis? No, Fritz isn't orthodox. Eduard's orthodoxy was never a problem for me. When he came to the house, he would only accept an apple, in spite of Mother's keeping kosher—the house wasn't strict enough for him; I didn't care about that.

RICHARD: There seemed to be something between you. I wondered if religion was a barrier that prevented you from getting closer.

EDITH: Oh, no. Eduard is quite wonderful. I loved our discussions.

RICHARD: Discussions? Not him?

EDITH: He tried to turn it into a romance—I explained that we could only be friends and he accepted that. It wasn't his orthodoxy as such, it was his Talmudic logic chopping. I couldn't stand it—it repulses me—like the time he stood half in the house and half out on the Sabbath, holding my book bag. I said I was sorry I had made him break a commandment and he said he hadn't broken it, his feet were still in the house, and only carrying in the street is forbidden. That kind of thinking repulses me.

RICHARD: I thought you like him—like him a lot.

EDITH: I do. I wasn't repulsed by him, I was repulsed by the sophistry that's so intrinsic to the tradition. I hate that side of Judaism. Hate it with a passion. That honest, straightforward men resort to such nonsense because that's what they've been taught in the yeshiva nauseates me—disturbs me right down to the pit of my being.

RICHARD: Such strong language. You have such powerful negative feelings about Jewishness and Judaism.

EDITH: You don't?

RICHARD: No. I reject the religious part, but not the culture. I'll always be proud of my Jewishness.

EDITH: Don't think me anti-Semitic. That would be too horrible. It's not that. It's that there's something unsatisfying, unspiritual about Judaism; even if I believed, I would still feel empty. Jews never prepare for the future because they can't think about death—how can they when there's no belief in personal immortality?

RICHARD: Phenomenologists believe in an afterlife?

EDITH: Some do. Many of Husserl's Jewish students have converted.... I once asked Eduard to tell me about God. He replied, "God is spirit. That's all that can be said." God is spirit. What does that mean? Nothing. It's so abstract, so cold, so uncomfortable. I was so disappointed; I was so hoping that Eduard's orthodoxy would offer me something that might rekindle my belief. But no, just keep one foot in the door. It seemed I'd been handed a stone instead of bread.

RICHARD: The part of me that wants what religion supposedly offers finds it in mathematical research and ethical behavior. The beauty of the relationships; the elegance of the proofs; the insights into the structure of reality—that is worthy of awe.

EDITH: Yes, and I find it in phenomenological research.

RICHARD: I'm not sure I believe you. Part of you wants a kind of transcendence I don't require.

EDITH: You understand me better than anyone, except maybe Mother, but you're wrong. I've found what I want here in Gottingen in the Gottingen philosophical society. It's like being in love. Yes, yes, I'm in love, in love with phenomenological research.

(They both laugh and rejoin the arguing STUDENTS. Knapsacks are picked up and the STUDENTS take pastries with them; some take them for later; some are eating them as they walk out. As they walk off, they're still involved in their discussions.)

EDITH (to RICHARD): I'm going to stay and read. I feel peaceful in this room. When I was in gymnasium, I started reading Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*. Erna took it away from me, saying it would be bad for me. I'm going to read it now.

RICHARD: Tenacious if nothing else. No one ever stopped you from doing anything you wanted to do. You stay and read Arthur's apotheosis of irrationality in the Gottingen citadel of rationality. (EDITH smiles.) Stop at the apartment. Nellie will have some hot food to help you ward off the effects of Schopenhauer's pessimism. (Exits)

(EDITH sits reading intently, now alone. Enter PHILOSOPHER SCHOPENHAUER).

PHILOSOPHER SCHOPENHAUER: Edith, you're looking for reason in the cosmos, reason in man, when there is none. The only reality is blind striving, the primordial pressing of instinct for expression. The only possibility of escape from endless unconsummation, eternal frustration, endless seeking without ever finding, lies in aesthetic contemplation where subject and object become one.

EDITH: The world cannot be so.

SCHOPENHAUER: I'm afraid it is.

(Sounds are heard from the street. It is obvious that something momentous has happened as the shouting grows louder. FIRST STUDENT bursts in.)

FIRST STUDENT: The Austrian archduke has been assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. If the Serbs don't agree to Austria's demands there'll be a war. (SECOND STUDENT runs in.)

SECOND STUDENT: It's unbelievable. The Serbs refused Austria's terms! Austria has declared war to avenge the archduke's assassination. Germany declares today.

FIRST STUDENT: How can you read philosophy after the Serbs murdered the archduke? Don't you understand the Serbs have refused the ultimatum? We are going to war. (More STUDENTS burst in.)

OTHER STUDENTS (talk over each other in their excitement): We are at war. Russia will be defeated. Half the faculty has volunteered. The campus is emptying—everyone is signing up. We will never submit to Russia. Never!

FIRST STUDENT: Your cousin Richard's been called up.

THIRD STUDENT: Professor Reinach is volunteering. I asked him, do you have to go, Doctor? He replied, "It's not I **must**, rather, it's I'm permitted to go."

EDITH (steps away from STUDENTS to stage left, where she is spotted as stage right goes dark): All I ever wanted is here in Gottingen; to study philosophy, to devote myself to using Husserl's method to discovering truth, but what does any of that matter now? I have always loved Germany without being a fanatic nationalist—it offered me education—opened up doors for me—as a woman and a Jew. I must do what I can to defend the Fatherland. Reinach's attitude pleases me. So do his actions. They express my own feelings so well. I can no longer pursue a private life—not as long as the war lasts. All my energy will be devoted to this great happening. Only when the war is over—if I'm still alive—will I permit myself a private life again.

(Stage right is again illuminated)

FIRST STUDENT: Husserl's son, Wolfgang, is off.

SECOND STUDENT: Fritz Kaufmann has enlisted! The whole philosophical society is putting on uniforms!

EDITH: Student life is going up in smoke.

ALL: To the defense of the fatherland.

EDITH: I'm going home. I'll find a way to fight, too. Germany must triumph over barbarism. German culture must endure. The enlightenment we offer the world will not be destroyed.

SCENE IV

(A military hospital during World War I. A ward for the treatment of typhoid and other infectious diseases. In addition to typhoid cases, casualties of all sorts are brought in. EDITH is in a nurse's uniform. The other doctors and nurses on the ward are all in uniform. On the fringe of stage right is a recreational area for staff with coffee, mugs, liquor bottles, and a large German flag. EDITH is in the staff recreation area reading a letter. The sound of artillery is heard from a distance.)

EDITH (shocked): What? Not dead! Reinach can't be dead. No, he can't be. (Sobs) How horrible for Anna and Paula. They'll never get over it. A sister maybe, but never a wife. (Sobs harder) Such a loss—for them, for the Master, for German scholarship, for phenomenology. So many have gone and not come back—Wolfgang, barely eighteen—how can the Master bear it—and his wife—too horrible. Fritz at the front, Arno at the front. Richard in the thick of things from the first shot.

NURSE: Edith, come, more wounded are being brought in.

EDITH: More of my classmates are dead than alive. The philosophy club, so full of life and hope is no more and no more can be.

NURSE: Edith, come.

(EDITH sobs, then pulls herself together and goes to attend the wounded. They are brought in on stretchers, bleeding and mutilated. They are the students from the previous scene.)

SOLDIER (weakly): Kill me, kill me. Put me out of my misery. I can stand no more. (Screams and continues screaming)

DOCTOR: They had to cut out his intestines to get him off the barbed wire (SOLDIER continues screaming) He won't last long. (More screams; then they weaken and the SOLDIER dies.) (To EDITH, pointing at another soldier) Bandage that stump.

EDITH (while bandaging the soldier's stump and attending to other wounded soldiers; EDITH speaks as in reverie, completely unaware the soldiers she is attending—alternately, this can be done as a voiceover) Not Reinach. He was so kind to me when I was in despair over my thesis. It seems so unreal, so inconsequential now. But not then. I just couldn't get clarity. I couldn't gain insight into the problem. All was confusion. I couldn't stand that. Mother always said, "What one wants to do one can do." I believed that and I knew that it had to be true for me, but not this time with the thesis. When I blocked on my thesis, I couldn't get unstuck; I just couldn't do it. It was the first time my will power didn't work. I could no longer stand the excruciating struggle to clarify that I waged unceasingly inside me. I couldn't rest, I couldn't sleep. Becoming the great philosopher I had dreamed of being was beyond me. That realization almost killed me. I could no longer cross the street without wishing to be run over. When I went on excursions, I hoped I would fall off a cliff and never come back. I just didn't want to return. I would be dead if it wasn't for Reinach. (Cries more) Adolphe, you weren't even strictly speaking my teacher; yet you read my thesis and approved of it. You took me into your family, made me feel as if I had the capacity to philosophize once again. I was like one reborn. All my discomfort with life disappeared. People who hadn't engaged in creative philosophizing just couldn't understand why I was in such despair. I was so alone, so alone. Then you took me into your soul, your mind, and my despair turned into deep joy as insight clarified my thoughts. (Pulling herself together— angry at herself) How can I be so self-absorbed? My loss is minuscule compared to Anna's. Oh my God, to have lost a husband like Reinach! Who could bear it?

(EDITH silently attends the wounded as they scream and bleed. Exhausted, she walks to recreation area and collapses.)

NURSE: An officer who says he is your cousin is here.

RICHARD (walks in in uniform, carrying an electrical apparatus; embraces EDITH): You heard about Reinach? (EDITH nods. They sit in shocked silence until RICHARD continues.) Reinach's loss is immeasurable. He was a unique human being.

EDITH: I can't speak of his death. Not now.... I thought you were in Flanders....

RICHARD: I'm on special assignment for the general staff, developing a wireless telephone to use in the trenches. It could win the war—Edie, I heard you musing about Reinach saving you from suicide. Back in Gottingen, I had no idea of your mental state. How ironic it was that writing a thesis on empathy drove you to despair, believing that no one was capable of having empathy for you? Why didn't you turn to me when you were thinking of walking in front of those streetcars?

EDITH (drying tears and embracing him again): Richard, you tease even in the face of death. You always tease me. It is funny that studying empathy convinced me that I was beyond empathy. It helps to laugh—especially at oneself. ...so many deaths...so many. Reinach's is different. He was not only my friend, he was the future of phenomenology. All that we are fighting for is being destroyed. No, no, that isn't so, it just feels that way.

(EDITH turns away from RICHARD and returns to tending the wounded. He exits. She renders care calmly and efficiently. Her emotion on hearing of Reinach's death is now nowhere in evidence. The wounds are grotesque and the soldiers' suffering manifest. The stage darkens—the ward on stage left remains visible, but barely so, as the staff recreation area on stage left is illuminated. A party is going on. DOCTORS and NURSES are under the influence, some clearly drunk. There's much horseplay, with clear sexual implications going on. EDITH has joined the party. A DOCTOR is forcibly pouring liquor down a NURSE's throat.)

EDITH: This must stop! How can you behave this way in the midst of the sick, the wounded, the dying? A party celebrating the thousandth case of typhoid. The thousandth case! I can't abide it. (To the DOCTOR pouring the liquor down the NURSE's throat) How can you behave this way? I cannot and will not allow myself to be part of degrading ribaldry.

DOCTOR: Fraulein Stein, will you let up? Don't take things so seriously.

EDITH: Be respectful or I shall report you.

DOCTOR: Fraulein, my staff needs to relax. If you slept once in a while you wouldn't be so impossible. You're ready to collapse. Why in God's name won't you have a glass of wine? (The NURSE's bottom is pinched and she giggles. EDITH takes her in tow.)

EDITH: It is time to leave. (Drunken NURSE and EDITH go off, EDITH guiding the NURSE).

SECOND DOCTOR: Stein's the best nurse we have. Almost no training—what did they give these volunteers, a few weeks — yet better technically than the professional nurses. So kind, too, and yet such a prig. I don't know what to make of her. It's a war. All we see is death, jagged stumps, explosive diarrhea, rotting wounds. (Shakes his head) Get the women out of here—back to their quarters before Stein makes trouble.

(NURSES exit, DOCTORS pour more drinks. Stage darkens and the lights go on once again in the ward. EDITH is talking to the DOCTORS from the party and the head NURSE.)

EDITH (to DOCTOR): My insisting on standards in no way diminishes my appreciation of what you've done for the wounded and diseased.

HEAD NURSE: The typhoid epidemic is over.

ANOTHER NURSE: We haven't seen a case of cholera for months.

SECOND DOCTOR: The front is stabilized: Very few casualties are coming in. I don't know how we did it with the Jews malingering back home. All they care about is profits. They don't fight, they betray us. Malingerers. Malcontents.

THIRD DOCTOR: We'll win in spite of the Jews. At least on this front. Here the horrors of Verdun are spared us.

EDITH: I am a Jew.

SECOND DOCTOR (not in the least embarrassed): There are exceptions. I didn't mean all Jews. (Exits)

HEAD NURSE: Edith, you should go and leave along with the others. We don't need you now. Go back to your studies.

EDITH: No, I want to continue serving the fatherland. The war isn't won yet.

FIRST DOCTOR (who she had the encounter with at the party): Edith, you'll be recalled if you're needed. Now go home and use that mind of yours. At least with you out of here we can have some fun. (Torn between annoyance and respect for EDITH). Here you expose yourself to danger for no purpose. Returning to the university—that, too, is a war service, an expression of our German culture.

(EDITH is moved. She didn't expect this man to speak to her in a respectful way.)

EDITH (speaking in deep distress): Will anyone growing up after this war broke out be able to understand what life was like for us before 1914? Be able to imagine the security we assumed as a matter of course, or believe that our lives were built on an indestructible foundation of peace, on stability on secure ownership of property, on the assumption that our accustomed circumstances would last forever?

FIRST DOCTOR: Edith, the war will end with Germany triumphing and it will be the same again.

EDITH: No, it won't. And those who come later will not be able to imagine what it was like then. More than individual men have died.

HEAD NURSE: Doctor, I'm calling the staff together (DOCTORS and NURSES enter) so you can distribute the medals. (A NURSE holds up a German flag)

EDITH (ignoring the assembling staff): No, life will never be the same.

FIRST DOCTOR (Steps forward): Be that as it may, the German government recognizes the value of your work here. Please come forward. For your services to our German wounded (Pins a medal on her blouse; staff claps weakly, half-heartedly) Now go without guilt. If we need you, we will recall you.

EDITH: A medal. I didn't expect this.

FIRST DOCTOR: The other volunteers are being recognized as well. You have done magnificent work, but you should go back to your studies.

EDITH: I will go on leave, but I will return. (Walks away from doctors and nurses, who fade. EDITH is lit by a spot.) There is no going back. The war has changed everything. The world will never be the same, nor will I.

(End of scene)

SCENE V

Husserl's study at the University of Freiburg. It is comfortable, book-lined, welcoming, yet cluttered with papers everywhere. There is a door from HUSSERL's outer room into his inner study. There are loose papers, notes on the backs of envelopes and on scraps of paper. There is clearly something highly chaotic about the Master's way of working. The study is simultaneously ordered and confused. The pipe-smoking Master exhibits the same

contradiction. He is indeed magisterial, speaking with authority and certainty, yet distracted and self-absorbed. Those who feel reverence for him, including EDITH, have difficulty acknowledging and relating to his self-absorbed, disorganized side. ANNA REINACH, wearing a cross, enters, carrying manuscripts. She is tall, slender, and graceful as a doe. EDITH enters just after her.)

EDITH (embraces ANNA): It is so good to see you. I think of your suffering often. Adolphe was Extraordinary—it must be difficult—(tears up)—I miss him too. He gave me hope when I had none. Just before the war started I was in despair.

ANNA: I remember. You had the worst case of "student crazies" I ever saw. Adolphe knew how penetrating your thinking was and he knew that your work must reflect that. It was so like him to have faith in one who had lost faith in herself and to be able to communicate that.

EDITH: Faith, yes faith. Anna, you have faith. I lost mine in my fifteenth year. At Gottingen I met people like you and Adolphe—there were many others—who didn't let rationalistic prejudice stop them from believing. I no longer think faith is foolish—on the contrary, I admire it, especially yours—but I don't have it. When I heard Adolphe had died in combat, I didn't think I could stand the pain until I thought of what you must be suffering. I know you suffer, but you suffer differently—there is such acceptance, such peace, such equanimity radiating from you. The calm with which you go about your task as Reinach's literary executor, your courage—it awes me.

ANNA: Stop, you're embarrassing me. (Unconsciously fingering her cross) Edith, it isn't me. It's Jesus. My love for him gives me the strength you see—it isn't mine; it's his.

EDITH: Anna, you and Adolphe are—were—are—Jewish. I don't understand.

ANNA: I don't understand either. It's a mystery. Adolphe and I didn't convert out of convenience. We became Lutherans out of conviction. Just like the Master. Our Judaism never meant much to us—it didn't satisfy our spiritual needs. There was an emptiness. Christ makes me feel so full. I have such hope. Adolphe's life meant something, and I know that meaning endures. I know I will embrace him again. Edie, you must find your own way and I will respect it whether you are freethinker, Jew, or Christian. (EDITH shakes her head, strongly rejecting the last alternative.) All I can do is to thank God each day that Adolphe died a Christian.

EDITH: You don't grieve?

ANNA: Of course I grieve; sorrow sometimes overpowers me. Yet at the same time there's peace and strength to see Adolphe's legacy realized. In my deepest sorrow I am consoled. What you call my courage comes from Him. Edie, don't turn me into a preacher—Adolphe would laugh at that. Just let me be a witness—and what I am, not what I say—enough—your mother must be very proud of your passing the state examination. Now there's no barrier between you and the doctorate.

EDITH: Mother has deep faith, too.

ANNA: I remember that miniature challah she used to send you every Friday.

EDITH: When she heard I passed, she wrote, "As happy as I am, I would be even happier if you credited the One who made it all possible." I can't credit One I don't believe in and I know that hurts Mother. Her children are all either freethinkers or Yom Kippur Jews.

ANNA: Adolphe's death would have destroyed me without ... without ... I guess the best word for it is love. (Embarrassed—then angrily) Edith, your need makes me preach. (Turns away from EDITH and collects papers and manuscripts) (HUSSERL enters.)

HUSSERL: Anna, come in. I think I can print that article in the *Journal of Phenomenology*.

(The SUITOR, HANS LIPPS, enters—tall, handsome, wearing a navy blue jacket. HUSSERL and ANNA turn to greet HANS.)

EDITH: Hans! You're back safe. I felt so forlorn when you went to war. There was no longer any hope or possibility of catching a glimpse of you in that navy blue jacket you always wear. It was so much fun doing phenomenology with you. You brought such joy into my life when you spoke at the philosophy club. Reinach. Poor, poor Reinach was the best older brother a student ever had; you were like my twin. Two students journeying from psychology to phenomenology. And our excursions together, our walks through enchanted Gottingen, our rambles in the hills and woods.

SUITOR (HANS): Edith, your packages were perfect. Somehow you always knew what I needed and wanted and managed to get it to me at the front. What am I going to do if peace breaks out? Army life suits me and Rebecca as well.

EDITH: Rebecca?

SUITOR (HANS): Don't you remember my pet owl? I asked you to send some mice for her.

EDITH: (Laughs) I forgot her name. I did look for mice but there were none in the stores.
(Both laugh and look at each other lovingly)

SUITOR (HANS): Do you remember I used to write philosophy in dining halls and cafes? You teased me about it. Now I philosophize in the trenches. It works for me.

EDITH: Just don't get killed. I couldn't stand another loss. I couldn't stand losing you. (ANNA comes out of HUSSERL's inner sanctum. She is smiling. HUSSERL greets HANS warmly and they go into HUSSERL's private office.)

ANNA: The Master is going to publish it. (The two women embrace) I saw Hans go in. The two of you are so close. Adolphe used to wonder if there was anything....

EDITH: Oh, no. But we're such good friends. Of all the men friends I've had, I feel closest to Hans. And I never feel good enough for him.

ANNA: (laughs) That's exactly what he says about you. Are you sure it isn't more than friendship?

EDITH (hesitates, finally says) Yes.

ANNA: I've heard he has an interest in someone.

EDITH (obviously struggling with herself): I'm so happy for him.

(HUSSERL comes out, says goodbye to HANS, who exits after an inaudible word to EDITH.)

HUSSERL: Goodbye, Frau Doktor. (ANNA exits.) Edith, I was going to comment on your thesis work, but then you took so long about it that I can't remember what I was going to say. Perhaps you should choose another topic.

EDITH (agitated): I've no intention of finding some convenient project with which to get a doctorate. I want to prove to myself whether I am capable of independent achievement in philosophy.

(EDITH, for all her defiance, is completely crushed and she shows it. If she was ambivalently hurt by the news that Hans was interested in another, she's unequivocally wounded to the core by HUSSERL's comment.)

EDITH: Herr Doktor Professor, I will not abandon my work on empathy. Reinach thought I made a strong start.

HUSSERL: Oh, oh, yes, empathy. To be sure, a strong start. But you must expect more years of concentrated work. Empathy. You must read all of the literature. Objectivity is intersubjectivity; such is the structure of objectivity. Thus, objectivity itself is a kind of empathy or has empathy as its substrate. (Softening) You're exhausted. You need recreation before starting.

EDITH (angrily): Starting!

HUSSERL: You must suspend all judgment about the ontological status of empathy. Rather, you must examine it without presuppositions to describe what empathy is in itself. That is, you must be a phenomenologist in this work. Take some time off. Come for supper with the family and we will talk further. (Goes back into his inner sanctuary.)

EDITH: So much loss—Reinach, now Hans—what am I saying—Hans, don't—wait for me—the religious difference doesn't matter—we can overcome it—Hans ... The Master has left too—he has no interest in my thesis—he doesn't understand at all—I feel like I lost my father again.... Edith, you're getting hysterical—stop it—stop it—I'm not in love with Hans. Let him marry who he will and the Master's mood will change and he'll care and understand again, but not Reinach. He'll never be back, gone forever. FOREVER. (becoming agitated and confused) Hans won't be back either. The Master will never understand.... Start! What did he mean by start? Everything dissolves—I need something that endures—that's always there—that never leaves like Daddy, like peace, like Reinach, like Hans, like the Master's regard—and there is nothing. Anna has Jesus, forever and always. I have nothing.

(EDITH walks offstage, still shattered. Stage darkens. Then lightens. It is four years later, around 1920. We are still in HUSSERL's study. HUSSERL and EDITH are alone.)

HUSSERL: Edith, you have exceeded my expectations, worked without respite for four years. Your thesis is brilliant; your insight into the problem of empathy breaks new ground for phenomenology. The committee spoke with one voice in awarding you highest honors. (EDITH is deeply moved. HUSSERL moves away from her, looking at piles of manuscripts, random scraps of paper with writing on it, notes written on small pieces of paper that become lost amidst the general clutter.) My mind works at such a pace—I can't keep up with my thoughts. Look around—I have notes, notes, notes all in Gablesberger shorthand. Gablesberger is the tool of my creativity. But I get lost in the maze. Lost. My eyes aren't very good anymore. I can't see. I can't read this. I...I...I... I'm lost, Edith.

(He leafs through the notes, which are obviously chaotic.)

EDITH: Herr Doktor Professor, can I be of any help?

HUSSERL: Would you like to be my assistant, to help me arrange my notes and to prepare journal articles?

EDITH: Do you mean it?

HUSSERL: It never occurred to me till now, but if you're willing to learn Gablesberger....

EDITH: Oh, yes, yes, of course, Gablesberger. It won't take me long. I will master it.

HUSSERL: Start with my notes from 1904 and work your way through them until the present.

EDITH: I'm engaged? (HUSSERL shakes assent with his head and exits. EDITH dances across the stage in a state of high excitement. As she does, she is heard in voiceover) Engaged! Engaged is the right word. My head's spinning. This must be the way a young girl feels when she' s engaged. Yes, the Master and I, we feel as if we were just engaged. Yes, yes, engaged, engaged to the Master. This is pure joy, joy like I never thought I would feel.

(EDITH dances across the stage as it grows dark. When the lights come up it is two years later. HUSSERL and EDITH are sifting through a maze of papers, looking defeated. They are even more chaotic, piles and piles in disarray.)

EDITH: I can't prepare this for publication unless you help. What did you have in mind?

HUSSERL: I'm no longer interested in those concepts—those conceptualizations.

EDITH: Herr Professor, I've spent months—years.

HUSSERL: My mind has moved on.

EDITH (angrily): Such labor for nothing.

HUSSERL: I can't be bothered. Do what you want to with those, Fraulein.

EDITH (deeply hurt): I can't work this way. You give me assignments, ignore them when I complete them, won't answer necessary questions, attach no importance to my work. Your Gablesberger shorthand notes are incomprehensible. (HUSSERL glares at her.) Herr Professor, you don't understand. I'm trying to tell you that I can't organize these

without your help. They're too compressed, too elliptical, out of sequence—I can't tell what follows what.

HUSSERL (waves her off): Do as you will.

EDITH: Herr Doktor Professor, this is not possible. I have no choice but to resign.

HUSSERL: Yes, yes.... (His voice trails off. He goes to his desk and starts writing, preoccupied and resigned to her leaving.)

(Stage darkens and when it relights, EDITH is with RICHARD.)

RICHARD: So your engagement ended in a divorce without having been married.

EDITH: Don't tease. This is too painful. He's a great man. I'm still his friend. He's recommending me for a professorship. I so wanted to translate his notes, organize them and turn them into something accessible.

RICHARD: His early work on the foundation of mathematics was groundbreaking. For the rest

EDITH: Enough.

RICHARD: He has a new assistant, Heidegger.

EDITH: Martin? Martin is charming. I met him with his wife at the Husserls. With Reinach dead, Martin will be the Master's intellectual heir.

RICHARD: Edith, what's the matter with you? Heidegger is publishing works of the Master you edited, signing himself as editor.

EDITH: He's the assistant now. You'll see. Martin is going to be a major figure.

RICHARD: And you?

EDITH: I know my worth.

(RICHARD exits and the PHILOSOPHER HEIDEGGER enters.)

HEIDEGGER: The philosopher must elucidate the nature of human being there, the structure of our existence. Man is always embedded —there is no subject or object apart from that embeddedness. We are thrown into existence in an arbitrary time and place. We know not why—we are never at home—always alienated. We must find our way back

to Being itself, free ourselves from immersion in the individual things by living authentically, by experiencing Being towards death—Husserl hinted at this; yet he holds back, remains at the epistemological level. I move forward to the ontological. That is why I subtitled my book *Being and Time: A Phenomenological Ontology*. I take the Master's Method far beyond where he dares to go. And his disciples—they're midgets.

EDITH: Herr Doktor, you're delightful when you aren't discussing philosophy. All charm. I love talking to you and your equally delightful wife. When you philosophize something happens' your darkness comes to the fore. Yet you are profound. I shall continue to study your work. (Exit HEIDEGGER) Richard is wrong; Martin can put his name on material I edited; it doesn't matter as long as the Master's work is advanced.

(Scene ends.)

SCENE VI

(Stein apartment at Breslau. EDITH is lying on the couch, apparently in great pain. Her sisters, ERNA and ROSA, enter.

ERNA: Still suffering?

EDITH: Oh, Erna, I don't want to spoil your wedding.

ROSA: I've slaved for days. Everything is in readiness. Your wedding is going to be so beautiful—everything in perfect taste.

(EDITH attempts to repress it, then moans.)

ERNA (taking out her medical bag): Edie, let me give you a shot of morphine—it will stop the pain and you'll be able to sleep. Tomorrow you'll be a new woman. Hans wants you to promise to dance with him (prepares the hypodermic needle and injects EDITH)

EDITH (relaxing, the pain in her face vanishes): I do, I do, have I ever refused to dance with Hans?

ERNA: Sleep now. (Exits.)

ROSA: You're troubled in a way I've never seen. Is it the wedding?

EDITH: Don't be ridiculous.

ROSA: You're awfully fond of Hans. If it wasn't for Erna ... you had hopes.

EDITH: Never.

ROSA: Is it Richard's divorce?

EDITH: That makes me unhappy, yes—it's more—I can't talk about it—can't share it. Rosa, I may make a decision that will take me away from the family—not only geographically—inwardly. Create an estrangement, a spiritual separation. (Sobs)

ROSA: I've always followed you. I'll follow you in whatever path you take. You won't be alone.

EDITH: Rosa. (They embrace) (Enter RICHARD)

ROSA: I must go back to the preparations. (Exits)

RICHARD: Nelly has gone her own way.

EDITH: I know. She spoke to me.

RICHARD: You're so good. Everyone turns to you. I do. Remember the walk we took when I told you she was thinking of leaving?

EDITH: It seems so foolish. Her complaints. You still went out with your old friends as if you were still a bachelor. You spoke Yiddish to annoy her. Then the real reason—your friendships with other women.

RICHARD: You disapprove.

EDITH: You were so young when you married. Only 24. And Nelly—she's different from other people—it must have been difficult being married to her. It must be even more difficult to be without her.

RICHARD: I'm okay. It's you I'm worried about. Such depression, you're in such pain—what's going on? Is it losing Hans?

EDITH: Richard! Rosa just suggested that. Years ago I might have been interested. Now my only feeling is happiness for them both. There were so many barriers—his mother, the war, Erna's studies; now the way is open. I rejoice for them.

RICHARD: Understanding as always. Since I was little child and Aunt Gustel gave me a second home

EDITH (with self-mockery): It's better to be good than to be clever.

RICHARD (Laughs): Usually you say that seriously. You say it a lot, you know.

EDITH: It's true, Richard.

RICHARD: I'm not sure I know anyone—not even the Gottingen mathematicians—who values cleverness more than you.

EDITH: Oh, I like to be clever well enough—you believe it too, don't you—that it's more important to be good.

RICHARD: I suppose I do, but I have enough sense to never say it ... Edith, why are you so troubled? Is it me?

EDITH: No. Nelly was wrong for you. And you always manage to land on your feet.

RICHARD: Then what?

EDITH: It's something the family can't know. Not now. And I'm not sure—I'm tormented by indecision. Maybe I'll never know. It's the not knowing; this is something so private, such an inner struggle, a deep, deep inner struggle.

RICHARD: About?

EDITH: The time isn't right. I can't share it.

RICHARD: Not even with your confidant forever?

EDITH: You'll disapprove.

RICHARD: You don't judge me for my role in a failed marriage. Why would I judge you?

(EDITH struggles with herself. She wants to tell RICHARD, but she is afraid.)

EDITH: I may convert—may become a Catholic. Ever since I stopped praying as a teenager, something has been missing. Judaism is spiritually vacuous. I can't go back. I yearn for the peace, the strength, the serenity, the hope for eternity Anna Reinach has and it comes from Jesus, from her faith in Him. And there are others. Jewish friends, the Husserls among them—not Jews who converted for convenience, to advance their

careers—that makes me sick—disgusts me—the ones who converted out of conviction —they have been transformed. So many Jewish phenomenologists became Christians and are better for it.

RICHARD (almost coldly): Religion has no role in my life, but Judaism spiritually vacuous? What are you talking about? Anna Reinach's strength comes from belief in Jesus? How about your mother? Her faith—her Jewish faith—has carried her through storm after storm.

EDITH: Yes, Mother is strong. It's wonderful. Yet her faith is different—it doesn't have the depth of Anna's or of the many others I know. It is of this world (Her mind drifts) Then there's the day in the country when I saw the simple workmen following their foreman to mass. So trustingly, so simply.

RICHARD: Edith, this is romantic delusion. Do you have any idea what the Church is really like?

(Stage right, where EDITH and RICHARD are arguing, goes dark. The POPE, PIUS IX, appears, lit by a spotlight. He is standing full papal dress, preaching to an unseen crowd. His tone is vehement.)

POPE (PIUS IX): Back into their filthy holes. The Jews are to be returned to the ghetto. Its walls rebuilt. (Starting to rant) Back into their filthy holes.

(The spot goes out and RICHARD and EDITH are again seen.)

RICHARD: The Church has opposed every reform, every progressive movement in modern thought, liberalism and all its manifestations, free thought. It's been the enemy of the Jews always, everywhere. Conversion!

EDITH: Yes, from conviction.

RICHARD: Herzl proposed the mass conversion of the Jews at St. Stephen's in Vienna before he developed Zionism. He thought there would be no shame in mass conversions as there is in individual....

EDITH (interrupting): Herzl! Zionism disgusts me. We're Germans to the core. German patriots.

RICHARD: You mustn't do this. It would hurt Aunt Gustel deeply.

EDITH: I haven't decided. It isn't just that I don't want to hurt Mother, though of course I don't. The only time I defied her was when I went off to be a nurse with the Red Cross during the war. She vehemently opposed it but that was a case in which I was not going to defer to her will. And in a matter so basic to my soul as this, I must do what is right for me even if I do hurt her. Richard, leave me now. Erna's injection is taking hold. Let me sleep so I'll be fresh for the wedding.

(RICHARD exits. Lights fade. A projection of Bernini's statue of Saint Theresa in ecstasy appears on the rear wall. Better would be a large reproduction of the statue. Stage becomes dimly lit as EDITH emerges from a troubled sleep. She reaches for a book. EDITH should act this scene with her lines delivered in a voiceover.)

EDITH: I can't stand this torment of not knowing. Do I believe or do I wish to believe? I didn't know such agony was possible. I'll try reading myself to sleep. (Shifts through a pile of books and pulls one out) *The Life of Saint Theresa, Written by Herself*. This can't be an accident. (Opens the book and reads avidly.)

(Lights fade. When they go on again, EDITH has become the sixteenth-century saint and is wearing the Carmelite habit of the time. There is a bloody whip on the floor and blood on her habit. There is a plate of simple food—bread, water, and cheese—on the floor near her. EDITH as THERESA speaks intensely, even ecstatically at times.)

EDITH AS THERESA: God perhaps sends me so much sickness because I do no penance; His Majesty therefore supplies it Himself. He orders me to practice certain forms of mortification. (Whips herself; throws the plate of food forcibly away. It crashes against the wall.) My body seems to keep me in prison. My whole desire is to be alone, to speak only to those whose conversation is of prayer and matters of the soul. I yearn for solitude. It gives me such pain that I must eat and sleep—that I cannot escape these needs. I cry for poverty, to have only what is necessary (Throws more food away; whips herself again, goes on her belly, slithers across the floor towards the crucifix and then rises to her knees .) On the one hand, God calls me; on the other, the world flatters me. I prefer the most severe penitence to the agony of being recalled from the feet of the Savior. (Leaps to her feet) Oh, my God, how can I describe all Your compassion did for me by the battle You have waged against my ingratitude? (She becomes peaceful, then increasingly ecstatic as she speaks.) My soul, entirely beside itself and moved by the sweetest rapture, would like its voice to intone hymns of praise, that everything in it extols the superabundance of its happiness. (Swoons, regains consciousness and grasps her chest.) He requires nothing from me more than a simple consent to the graces He is

giving me and a full surrender to the will as divine wisdom. He may dispose of me as He does of his property. (Swoons, and again regains consciousness.) I am in rapture. I feel I am being carried away. My weak nature feels dread in this delightful moment. I am afraid. Happy, happy, a thousand times happy, the soul who God through ecstasy brings to knowledge of the truth.... I see Him hanging on the cross. I see Him transfigured in the Holy Ghost. My soul is carried away. My body too. My body follows the movement that no longer touches the floor. Is the devil deluding me? Or are my visions his work? No! I know for certain God never allows the devil to lure those that mistrust themselves and are prepared to endure a thousand deaths for a single article of faith. (Again transfigured by her passion) I see beside me an angel. (Turns to it, reaches for it) His blazing face belongs to the lofty choir made up of fire and love.... I see a golden dart in his hands, glowing like fire. (Clutches her heart) He pierces my heart with it. He pulls it out. He pierces my heart again and again, pulls it out again and again, yet again. I'm entirely inflamed with love of God. (ST. THERESA swoons. When she awakes, she is calmer, serene and in possession of herself.) I will pray night and day to be a constant support to those who save souls. I will live in a little house, clad in sackcloth, enclosed behind the walls, only occupied with prayer, and trying with my companions to serve the most Beloved.

(Stage darkens. When it is again illuminated, EDITH is herself, sitting on the edge of the bed, transfixed by the book in her hand. She puts it down and crosses herself. RICHARD enters.)

EDITH: All my doubts are quieted. I shall convert as soon as I can find a way of reconciling Mother.

RICHARD: She will be wounded to the core.

EDITH: I will feel her pain even more intensely than she and I will do all I can to help her accept the decision I have no choice but to make.

RICHARD: What happened to you during the night? What determined you? A few hours ago, you were undecided.

EDITH: I was looking for a book to read so I could sleep and miraculously, I picked up Saint Theresa's autobiography. From the first words I knew, I knew she was speaking to me. I spent the night reading, growing more and more sure until doubt disappeared. She was of Jewish descent—that helped. Yet that was almost irrelevant—it was the clarity with

which she elucidates religious experience—Catholic religious experience—and her passion.

RICHARD: Edith, it's her passion—it's kindled yours—inflamed your heart—integrated with your understanding that has the potential to make you even more extraordinary than you are. Don't give that inflamed heart to a church which has always hated us.

EDITH: I must.

RICHARD (Angrily): You know why Theresa was Catholic? Her grandfather would have burned at the stake if he didn't convert. That's love?

EDITH: It doesn't matter. She tells in clear, simple and sincere language the works of grace that God worked in her soul. She has the daring and strength of a man, natural intelligence, and heavenly wisdom, knowledge of human nature and a rich spirit's innate sense of humor, the infinite love of a heart tender as a bride's and kind as a mother's. I want to emulate her, to serve the Son of God as a Carmelite.

RICHARD (Yelling): Edith, no! This is mishegas.

(End of scene.)

SCENE VII

(Eleven years later—1933—HUSSERL's study in Freiburg as before. HUSSERL and EDITH are talking.)

HUSSERL: Our engagement didn't work out, Fraulein Stein, but that hasn't been a barrier to our continuing friendship.

EDITH: Oh, no, Herr Professor. I was afraid you would be angry when I quit. Not so. You never lessened your support or withdrew your friendship.

HUSSERL: Martin proved a fine replacement. He served me well.

EDITH: He deleted his dedication of *Being and Time* to you in the new edition.

HUSSERL: Well, with the new racial laws....

EDITH: You've been a Lutheran for forty years.

(Sounds of marching feet, cries of *Sieg Heil, Heil Hitler*, and so forth from the street. The street noises grow louder, drowning out the speakers and then recede.)

HUSSERL: As far as the regime is concerned, I'm Jewish. I've lost all privileges at the university. I cannot even use the library. All Jewish professionals have lost their posts. I'm an old man—my son died for Germany—for me it doesn't matter so much, but for so many others, students I've trained.... Martin holds my chair now. He is to be inaugurated Rector.

EDITH: He supported my application for a professorship.

HUSSERL: Complex man. In many ways my most brilliant student. I saw him as my successor —my most profound follower—now, now....

(EDITH and HUSSERL have been on stage right, which goes dark. Stage left is illuminated revealing Martin Heidegger on a podium delivering his inaugural address to students and others with Nazi armbands. The crowd can either be suggested or represented.)

PHILOSOPHER HEIDEGGER: The university joins the march of our people into its future history. The march inaugurated by the revolution, the ascendancy of the Fuhrer and of the Party. It's the wave of the future. The historical mission of the German *Volk* must be supported by the university, the *Volk* that knows itself in its state—in the Reich. The power to preserve, in the deepest way, the strength of the *Volk* is rooted in soil and blood. The university must be integrated into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and be joined together with the State. Up to now, research and teaching have been carried on at the universities as they were carried out for decades.... Research got out of hand and concealed its uncertainty behind the idea of international scientific and scholarly progress. Teaching had become aimless, hid behind examination requirements. A fierce battle must be fought against this situation in the National Socialist spirit, and this spirit cannot be allowed to be suffused by humanizing Christian ideas that suppress its unconditionality. Danger comes not from work for the State. It comes only from indifference and resistance. For that reason only true strength should have access to the right path, but not halfheartedness. University study must again become a risk, not a refuge for the cowardly. Whoever does not survive the battle lies where he falls. The new courage must accustom itself to steadfastness, for the battle for the institutions where our leaders are educated will continue for a long time. It will be fought out of the strengths of the New Reich that Chancellor Hitler will bring to reality. A hard race with no thought of itself must fight this battle, a race that lives from constant testing and that remains directed toward the goal to which it has committed itself. It is a battle to determine who shall be the teachers and leaders at the university. As Rector, I will work at the task that lets me best serve the work of Adolph Hitler!

(More *Sieg Heils*, wild applause. Stage left goes dark. We are once again in HUSSERL's study.)

HUSSERL: The situation is dark. I will fight in whatever way I can. (Shakes his head and turns to EDITH) Edith, your life is so busy since you converted. How long is it now?

EDITH: Eleven years.

HUSSERL: So many of my students have become Catholic—I should be canonized. (Laughs) Have you found the spirituality you sought as a Catholic? Has it brought you happiness?

EDITH: In a way. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it has brought me strength.

HUSSERL: I hear a certain sadness.

EDITH: Not about the Church. She has brought me to Jesus and to His love.

HUSSERL: Yet, yet, something is missing?

EDITH: Yes. From the time I read Saint Theresa's life I yearned to be a Carmelite. I still long. It is a longing that must remain unrequited. My spiritual advisers advise continuing with my present work. (Suddenly sobs) My mother still grieves my conversion. She's brave about it, even encouraged me to teach as a Catholic philosopher at the University of Breslau until the appointment was denied. Other members of my family still grieve. Fritz Kaufmann didn't speak to me for five years. Becoming a nun and leaving the world might be more than Mother could stand. Yet I want it to the depths of my soul. I want it and I know it is the right path.... It's not selfish, or not merely so. It's the best way I can serve others—to serve the world by leaving it.

HUSSERL: So much frustration. You longed no less for a professorship. I recommended you to no avail. Even Martin and I don't know how many others. All to no avail. German universities weren't ready for a woman professor of philosophy, and now as a Jewess by birth—it is completely impossible.

EDITH: I've been dismissed from my position in the teachers' college.

HUSSERL (Shocked): A Catholic woman teaching in a Catholic college? I thought your job secure. (Shaking his head.) This viciousness grows. Edith, do you not get satisfaction from your public career—from your lectures on education, from your work on women's

rights, from your broadcasts, from your invitations to speak abroad, from your philosophical work—your ongoing project to integrate Thomism and phenomenology, from your translations of the angelic doctor and of Cardinal Newman—from your consultation to the Ministry of Education?

EDITH: I've been dismissed from that.

HUSSERL: I see. It is all good yet it is not enough. Your heart remains unfulfilled. (There is a lull in the conversation. They sip tea and eat tarts.) Hans Lipps is visiting Freiburg. He is a widower now, you know, with two or three children. I've asked him to join us.

EDITH: Everyone is in Freiburg. My family—Mother, Erna, Rosa, Richard.

HUSSERL: Invite them for tea. (Enter THE SUITOR, as HANS LIPPS, still handsome but aged by experience in the war and by loss)

EDITH: Hans.

SUITOR (HANS): Edith.

(They embrace. HUSSERL exits. Each takes a step back; then their arms extend, and their hands are joined.)

SUITOR (HANS): I always feel so inadequate around you, so inferior.

EDITH (smiles): Just as I feel toward you.

SUITOR (HANS): Will you come back with me? (EDITH pulls her hands away; she is deeply moved)

EDITH (sadly): It's too late, Hans, too late.

SUITOR (HANS): Are you sure, you're so good with children.... I need you. I love you.

EDITH: No, no it cannot be. It is too late. (HUSSERL reemerges from the interior.)

HUSSERL (to HANS): It's so good to see you.

SUITOR (HANS): Herr Professor, your thought goes with me. You are present in every lecture I deliver.... I just stopped to see you—I needed to see you both once more (Turns to EDITH) You are sure?

EDITH: Sure.

SUITOR (HANS): Too late?

EDITH: Too late. (HANS puts on hat and exits.)

HUSSERL: You care deeply for him?

EDITH: I always have.... Herr Professor, I've decided. It's time for me to leave the world.

HUSSERL: And your mother? (Knock on door. EDITH's family: MOTHER, ERNA, ROSA and RICHARD enter.

HUSSERL greets them; offers cookies, tarts, and tea and they talk at the side.

MRS. STEIN: Freiburg is just as beautiful as I've been told. No wonder Edith loves it so. (EDITH is t the other side of the room, away from her MOTHER and HUSSERL.)

EDITH: I'm entering the order of Carmel.

ROSA: No! Not while she is alive. I've longed to follow you into the Church, but I will not as long as Mother is alive. She hasn't recovered from your conversion. Please, please. I've never opposed you in anything.

ERNA: This is cruel and selfish. Don't.

EDITH: I must. It is not my desire. It is God's. Richard?

RICHARD: Who am I to judge you? You were there for me during my divorce. I think it unwise. I don't share your view of God. But if you persist... nobody has ever talked you out of anything ... your mind is made up... I will try and reconcile Aunt Gustel. But know, Edith, she won't be reconciled. If you do this, you will break her heart.

(ERNA and ROSA continue pleading with EDITH. She is resolute and walks towards her MOTHER and HUSSERL.)

EDITH: Mother, I have something to tell you. (HUSSERL exits, leaving the family alone) I am becoming a nun, a Carmelite, a follower of Saint Theresa. I will be entering the novitiate until I enter the cloister.

(MRS. STEIN screams and falls to the ground. Her children pick her up, gather around and try to support her literally and figuratively.)

MRS. STEIN: You can't. This is madness. This is a repudiation of all I value, all I taught you, a rejection of my love.

EDITH: No, Mother, I love you. (reaches out toward her MOTHER, who pushes her away)

MRS. STEIN: Listen to reason. Jews don't reject the world. They remain in it and struggle to redeem it. You're rejecting not only my love but God's creation. Edith, please, please, do not commit this impiety. How will I be able to stand the thought of you locked up in a cell, fasting, doing penance?

EDITH (Desperately): Yom Kippur we fast—I was born on Yom Kippur.

MRS. STEIN: It isn't the same. (Reaching for something that will appeal to EDITH, she says pleadingly) Have I told you the story of the rich man who goes to the rebbe and asks him how to practice austerity so he can enter heaven? "Rebbe, how many days shall I fast?" "No fasting. You are to eat cakes and drink sweet wine." "Cakes and sweet wine? No austerities?" "Yes, my son. If you fast the poor will go hungry too. If you eat cake and drink sweet wine your happiness will overflow and you will give to charity so the poor will eat too." That's Jewish wisdom—Jewish wisdom—don't turn your back on it, Edie, especially not now with the decrees. (Sobs hysterically)

RICHARD: Aunt Gustel, Edith's path is not ours. I don't claim to understand it. I don't even attempt to. Yet I know that we must let her go, let her follow her own light to find what spiritual bliss she can.

MRS. STEIN: Never.

RICHARD: Aunt Gustel, look at it from a worldly point of view. Where is Edith, as an intellectual, spiritually inclined Jewish woman, to go within Judaism? Is there a yeshiva that would admit her, let alone welcome her? Is there a Talmud Torah that would engage her as a teacher? In shul she has to sit in the balcony. The Church, with its institutions, orders, nunneries, monasteries, give brilliant spiritual women a place. They will support Edith's scholarship and honor it. There is no Jewish equivalent. And a conventional Jewish marriage wouldn't work either. Yes, Erna can be a professional, practice medicine and have a family, but a professor of philosophy? And an iconoclastic one at that? I don't think so. Besides; that isn't a possibility either. No university will have her. And now she has been dismissed from her teaching job. She has no other place to go.

MRS. STEIN (Bitterly): She can come home.

EDITH (to RICHARD): Thank you. I know you detest my choice. That was true love. What you say is true, but none of it influences me. (to her MOTHER) I must do what I must do. Mother, give me your blessing.

MRS. STEIN: Never. (EDITH tries to embrace her; she is repulsed. EDITH exits. The family tries to comfort GUSTEL. She fends them off. They retreat to the side of the room. GUSTEL is alone now and she is picked up by a spot as she sobs and rends her clothes. As she sobs, she begins to recite the mourner's Kaddish) Yisgadal v'yisgadash sh'mei raboh....

(Scene ends.)

SCENE VIII

(The Carmelite monastery at Echt, Holland, 1938. EDITH walks across the stage in a bridal dress holding a cross. She enters the monastery and disappears into the building. She reemerges wearing the Carmelite habit. She is in her cell, which is bare, except for her books, small writing table, and a cot. There is a cross on the wall containing the crucified Jesus, showing His wounds. At her left is a grille, separating her from the world. EDITH is sitting and writing. ROSA enters, coming from the interior of the monastery.)

ROSA: Now that Mother is dead, I, too, could become Catholic.

EDITH: You blame me for not waiting.

ROSA: No. But I couldn't add to Mother's sorrow.

EDITH: In the end, she would write a few words at the bottom of Erna's letters.

ROSA: And we are together again. The Carmelite sisters are so brave to offer me shelter from the persecution. It is dangerous for them.

EDITH: I, too, endanger them all. For as far as the fascists are concerned, I'm still Jewish.

ROSA: Mother couldn't understand it at all. She told Jews and Gentiles alike, "How can anyone say we're not German? My parents gave up a lucrative business and relocated when Lublinitz became part of Poland after the plebiscite. They moved to be German, to stay German, although it cost them dearly. And I, their daughter, not German! Nonsense!" Oh God, what would she think if she saw us now hiding in a convent in Holland? It's better she's gone.

(EDITH hugs ROSA. They are quiet for a moment.)

EDITH (joyously): We're not merely hiding. You have followed me to salvation, to the love of Jesus. (ROSA exits. EDITH prays fervently.) Lord, lead my people to salvation. Bring them to believe in Jesus so He may return and in His second coming save the world.... Jesus, Mary, hear my prayers, and forgive me people for rejecting You. I dedicate my life to prayer that they too will see Your glory. Let my penance serve as an atonement for their sin. Please, dear God, forgive them. Please let my prayers pleadingly turned to You be efficacious. (ROSA reenters.)

ROSA: Richard is here.

(EDITH goes to the grille and speaks to RICHARD, who is on the outside.)

RICHARD: I've come to say goodbye.

EDITH: You're now a professor at New York University?

RICHARD: Yes.

EDITH: You shouldn't have returned to Europe. Leave while you still can. (RICHARD nods.)

RICHARD: Edith, it is hard to say this to you Your praying for Jews to be forgiven smells of Jew hating.

EDITH: How can you say such a thing? I love the Jewish people. My prayers are about spiritual matters and in no way diminish my love for my people. (RICHARD shakes his head) I am writing a book about the family—a book—I am going to call it *Life in the Jewish Family*—to show the Germans, I mean the German gentiles—that all Jews aren't Bolsheviks or rich capitalists, that we, too, love and hate and struggle like everyone else. I had to put it aside. My superiors ordered me to finish *Infinite and Finite Being*, my treatise reconciling the thought of Saint Thomas and the phenomenology flowing out of Husserl's work.

RICHARD: I am told it is an important philosophical work and your autobiographical book sounds fine, but that doesn't make up for your saying "The Jews brought it on themselves" after Kristallnacht. I love you but I hate that kind of thinking.... This isn't the time to quarrel ... *Infinite and Finite Being* is a major—

EDITH: Unfortunately, it cannot be published because of my Jewish background. It is finished, so I am again engaged in writing, in writing *Life*. Those who read it will not be able to

hate us—it will not be possible. It is such a joy to write it.

RICHARD: I think that wonderful, but not your prayers.

EDITH: You don't understand. I wrote to the Pope requesting an audience, so that I could persuade him to issue an encyclical enjoining Catholics to condemn the persecution and come to the assistance of the Jews I have tried to stop the hatred.

(Stage left, with the convent grille separating RICHARD and EDITH, goes dark. The POPE, [PIUS XI] appears on stage right.)

POPE (PIUS XI) (to an unseen assistant): This Jewish nun cannot be given an audience. She has no understanding of the political situation or of the needs of the Church. Find a way to mollify her—her voice could be an embarrassment. No private audience. Offer her attendance at a group papal blessing, a large group. And send her a papal medal. I do not wish to speak to her.

(Light on POPE fades and RICHARD and EDITH appear once again. He tries to put his hand through the grille.)

EDITH: It is not allowed. (RICHARD withdraws his hand.)

RICHARD: I know you will say I don't understand and I don't, and I know you will never leave your order so it doesn't make much sense to tell you what I am thinking—nevertheless I am compelled. Edie, you believe that you are motivated by love and that is partially true, but it isn't the whole story. There's such anger in what you did to Aunt Gustel, to the entire family (EDITH starts to interrupt)—hear me out. (EDITH slumps over and remains quiet)—in your belief that the Jews have sinned by rejecting Jesus—yes, cousin, no matter how much you deny it. And the craziness of torturing yourself—what you call mortifications—what's the one you wrote me about—the mortification of the eyes—not looking at things that give pleasure—that makes no sense except as a rejection of the spirit of Judaism—it's just another expression of anger. And never having known the joy of sexual union. To die without fully experiencing your body—that, if anything, is sinful. No wonder you can't accept death. Edie, what happened to your desire—what did you do with it? You were so fully alive when you were young ... it's about death, isn't it? It's always been about death—about your father's death in the heat in that field and his never returning to you. The resurrection your Jesus offers you—it's a delusion, a promise of reunion with your Daddy that will never be—oh Edith, I'm so sorry, I'm being cruel—it doesn't matter why you're a Carmelite—what does

matter is the hatred you show to our people even as we are being systematically destroyed. Edith, stay in the convent, fulfill yourself as a nun; just stop praying for the Jews to turn to Jesus.

EDITH (struggles with her feelings; she is at first stung—hurt and angry—then progressively calmer and more sure of herself as she speaks) No, you don't understand. Don't understand at all. Do you think that I am a fool—that I don't know the pleasure the body can give, don't know that I have a stubborn, rebellious streak that is driven by anger—don't know that self-abnegation can be a form of lust—don't know that the Church's promise of eternal life is what drew me to Her? Of course all that is true, just as the social reasons you gave Mother when I told her my decision are true. But they err in not recognizing that my core motivation is my vision of the truth and the love—both directed toward me by God and hopefully emanating from me—that flows from that vision. Self-abnegation and mortification as expiation—expiation of the sins of us all—an expiation which is an imitation of Christ—is not lustful. It is a manifestation of love.

Richard, that stubborn—I would say faithful—side of me you see as only angry—doesn't allow me to turn away from what I believe to be true so I cannot stop praying that my people will find salvation in Jesus but I can—and I will—serve my people in another—a more worldly—way by finishing my book. Even minds distorted by irrational hatred will be touched by it, if that be God's will and I pray that it is. Richard, God will punish the Germans for what they are doing to the Jews and I pray for that, too.

Let us not part on a note of acrimony—we have been friends for too long.

RICHARD: No. Let's not part: with any tension separating us. I heard you and you heard me—that is what matters, not that we agree on everything.

EDITH: Yes, that is what matters—matters especially in this dreadful time.

(RICHARD again tries to put his hand through the grille.)

EDITH: It is not allowed. RICHARD: Farewell.

EDITH: Go with love.

(RICHARD leaves and EDITH returns to her cell. She falls on her knees and prays before the Jesus on the cross. ROSA enters.)

ROSA: Fritz Kaufmann is here.

(EDITH returns to the grille. SUITOR [FRITZ] is on the other side.)

SUITOR (FRITZ): I'm leaving Holland. I've been fortunate. I have an appointment at the University of Buffalo.

EDITH: Go, go at once, Fritz.

SUITOR (FRITZ): I'm worried about my family. It is not easy to get them out.

EDITH: You didn't speak to me for years after my conversion. We are friends again. Yet I still don't know what's in your heart.

SUITOR (FRITZ): Love, Edith. I cannot follow you, yet I understand. I rejoice that you have found what you have so long sought.

EDITH: Fritz, you must give up all cleverness, become like a little child to enter the kingdom of heaven.

SUITOR (FRITZ): I take your words with me. Goodbye, Edith.

EDITH: Farewell, dear Fritz.

(FRITZ exits. EDITH returns to her cell. Stage goes dark. When it becomes light again, ROSA is running into EDITH's cell.)

ROSA: The Germans have invaded Holland. God knows what will happen to us.

EDITH (prays): Jesus, Mary, Saint Theresa, protect us all.

(Stage goes dark. When it lights up again, it is 1942. EDITH, ROSA and the nuns are praying —it is a service. Gestapo men in uniform march in, pushing aside the grillework.)

GESTAPO: Stein, Edith.

NUN (correcting him): Sister Benedicta.

GESTAPO: Stein, Edith, Stein, Rosa, come with us.

(GESTAPO men grab EDITH and ROSA and push them through the door, as the nuns cross themselves. They are shocked and dismayed. Gestapo men flank the sisters, who hold hands and walk towards the entrance to Auschwitz on stage left. This is a projection, with barbed wire, lights, and a sign on the arch over the entrance reading "Arbeit Mach Frei.")

POPE [JOHN PAUL II] and JEWISH SPOKESPERSON, who was the RABBI in the first scene, enter. GESTAPO men walk ahead and disappear through the gates of Auschwitz. The POPE is on one side of the women, JEWISH SPOKESPERSON on the other. They argue increasingly stridently, acting as if EDITH and ROSA don't exist.)

EDITH (to ROSA, arm around her): Come, we go for our people.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): I studied her writings when I was a student of phenomenology. Not only brilliant, she has been transmogrified by the light of faith, luminous, sanctified, a martyr of the Church. The Council has certified the performance of a miracle. The child in Boston for whom there was no hope recovered when the parents prayed to Edith. There is no barrier remaining. She is to be beatified, recognized as Saint Edith to whom prayer is appropriately addressed.

ROSA (to EDITH): Do you know it is Tisha B'Av?

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: There's no sense in which she was a Catholic martyr. Edith Stein died simply because she was a Jew—one of the six million, and for no other reason.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): Not so. The Catholic bishops of Holland publicly condemned the Nazi measures against the Jews of that country—their pastoral letter was read from every pulpit—some Protestant churches joined the protest. The German authorities retaliated by ordering the arrest and deportation of Catholic-Jews, Edith and Rosa among them. She died directly as a result of the bishops' action.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Not so. She was killed because she was Jewish, having played no role in any pastoral letter. Incidentally, this is the only instance you could cite when the Church confronted the exterminators. Disgraceful—your Church professes love. Well it did nothing—stood by, saying its rosaries—or as was frequently the case, actively supported and encouraged the murderers.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): She performed a miracle.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: A bogus one, even if one concedes the existence of miracles. (Angrily) You're trying to Catholicize—even universalize—the Holocaust. Yes, many others died, but the policy of racial extermination is targeted solely at the Jews.

POPE: (JOHN PAUL II): Many Catholics died; many stood witness.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Far too few.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): The investigative process is over. By the authority invested in me—I will proclaim her saint—there's nothing you can do to stop it, and even if you could try, you would still have no right to interfere in the affairs of the Holy Roman Church.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: I thought your infallibility extended only to matters of faith. Apparently not so when you will something strongly enough. I have a right to protest the exploitation of a Jewish woman's death to glorify and exculpate a guilty Church.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): Canonization is an evidentiary process.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Like your attempt to canonize Pius the Twelfth in spite of his complicity?

POPE (JOHN PAUL II) (Angrily): He did all he was able to do. He's a saint, even if the political climate prevents our continuing on the path to his canonization. It will happen with whatever delay.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Disgusting revision of history to justify the actions of the Church.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): I've done more for the Jews than any other....

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Unfortunately, that is true; none of that justifies rehabilitating Pius the Twelfth or canonizing Edith Stein—the Church's sanctioning of the building of a Carmelite monastery adorned with a huge cross near the gates of Auschwitz is outrageous.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): It has been withdrawn.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: Only in the face of worldwide opposition.

POPE (JOHN PAUL II): Say what you will, she is a saint. Just as she was Catholic and Jew, here canonization is an act of reconciliation between the children of Israel and the Church.

JEWISH SPOKESPERSON: More sophistry.

(They shake their fists at each other as their angry voices gradually fade and they are lost in the shadows. EDITH and ROSA are vividly spotted. They are squeezing each other's hands.)

EDITH (Firmly, clearly, and assertively): We are going to our people.

(They pass beneath the "Arbeit Mach Frei" sign and disappear into the darkness. The gate and its sign disappear. Above the gate a projection reads "Weissen Mach Frei." It, too, fades, and is replaced by a projection reading "Leibe Mach Frei" and that disappears into the darkness. There is the clang of a closing gate. Curtain.

THE END

Psychotherapy and Death

I have been practicing psychotherapy for well over thirty years, and with increasing frequency I have lost patients (especially but not exclusively long-term ones) to illness and death. Of course I can interpret such sudden or not-so-sudden departures as resistance to the treatment. What better way to avoid dealing with painful, troubling, or conflictual issues than to completely and permanently remove yourself from the treatment that raises them. But such interpretation, as common as pointing out resistance (avoidance) maneuvers to patients in psychodynamic psychotherapy is, will do little, or to be more precise, no good, since the patient in this case can't hear it unless, an unlikely event, I get into doing séances.

There are of course situations that are so unendurable that death is literally caused by psychic pain and the necessity of flight from that pain, but that is not a common occurrence. So interpreting death as a resistance and/or as an act of aggression against me—"damned if I'm going to let that pain in the ass therapist get to me—I'll fix him by checking out"—in extreme cases by suicide, generally by more unconscious acts of spite—is not only not feasible because of the patient's absence—it would be unlikely to get through and be effective even if the patient could still hear it.

To be more serious, therapists who lose patients they're attached to or at least have strong emotional ties to, often suffer unacknowledged and unprocessed grief. Like anyone who suffers a loss, they need to mourn, and the structure of their profession gives them little space, license, or opportunity to do so. I would strongly urge therapists in this situation to get some help for themselves in personal therapy, supervision, or some form of peer support. Of course the death of a patient is not only a loss in itself of a meaningful relationship—and perhaps a significant source of income (hard to acknowledge that one)—it surfaces past losses and brings to the foreground one's own mortality.

So much for the therapist's need to mourn. Far more salient is the psychotherapy patient's need to deal with losses—past and present—and to complete (if anyone ever completes) mourning for those losses. In my considerable experience (personal and professional), failure to mourn is a major contributor to psychopathology, especially, but not only, to major depression.

When I was teaching I would tell my students, “You are studying to become professional mourners,” and have them read Chekhov’s great short story “Heartbreak.” In it a lonely St. Petersburg cab driver has lost his only child. During a long day, he tries to share his grief with his boss, with his fellow drivers, with his friends, and with his passengers. Nobody wants to listen. Finally, back in the stable, he unhitches his horse and tells him, step by step, of his child’s illness, last days, death and funeral. In the horse he has finally found a living creature willing to listen to his grief. Twenty-first century Americans are no less impatient with others’ grief than nineteenth-century Russians, so I would then turn to my class and say, “You are the horse.”

Religion also provides a structure and opportunity for grief. Judaism in particular displays great psychological and emotional wisdom in its carefully structured, ritualized series of steps through the grieving process, each step taking the mourner further away from preoccupation with his or her loss. That process takes the mourner from total immersion in his or her grief in the context of familial and communal support to return to the ongoingness of life. This process includes an eleven-month period of daily recital of the *Kaddish*, a prayer for the dead. After this initial period of acute mourning, it provides ritual opportunities, such as the *Yizkor* (memorial) service on Yom Kippur and other major holidays, which allows for revisiting one’s dead and expressing and further processing feelings induced by the absence of the departed. Other traditions have their own ritualized forms and structures to help those who suffer loss to experience that loss and then move on.

Judaism prescribes a whole set of mourning behaviors intended to surface feelings and express them, but it no less importantly prescribes an end to mourning. As the Preacher who finds voice in Ecclesiastes says, “There is a time for everything under the sun.” In effective psychotherapy something very similar occurs. Persuading or encouraging the patient to move towards the end of mourning, or better, the end of “acute” mourning, is tricky. Who knows, or has the chutzpah to claim to know, when another person’s mourning should end. Nevertheless, therapists need not only to help their patients mourn, sometimes for long past, poorly processed losses, but to help their clients out of the pit of unending grief and return to full participation in life.

For those who believe in an afterlife, religion offers solace that psychotherapy does not. Then again, I have treated more than one patient who lived in dread of the hell fires. So there is no free lunch; everything has a down side. Like many psychotherapists, I do not believe in an afterlife and need to be sensitive to my patients’ belief systems and the emotional significance of those belief systems, which are often powerful forces in their

lives. So the therapist must be careful not to demand too much, either in the direction of going deeper into grief in order to fully experience it, or in the direction of renunciation of that grief.

This brings me to the central tenet of this essay; it is my experience that long-term psychotherapy patients who are intensely involved in the process inevitably come to believe that the therapist can or should be able to convey immortality on them. This belief is usually un- or semi-conscious; patients are ashamed of or in denial of such an irrational belief. Nevertheless they often hold it. Patients have been known to say such things as “I know this sounds ridiculous but it occurs to me that you can protect me and keep me alive forever. That’s totally stupid and I don’t really believe it, yet the thought reoccurs. I guess that’s a good reason to stay in therapy. And you have helped me become capable of really enjoying my life, so you have an obligation—I know this is ridiculous too—to keep me around.” I think that we (that is, patient and therapist) are ahead of the game by articulating such “irrational” aspirations and attributions of such power to the therapist. Such attribution is inevitably followed by the disappointment and rage that accompanies the growing suspicion that the all-powerful therapist shares too much in common with the Wizard of Oz. This process of disillusionment recapitulates the patient’s (and the therapist’s) traumatic disillusionment with the parents once thought to be omniscient and omnipotent when we discover that they cannot protect us from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or from death. The situation is made even worse by the fact that we would not have to confront mortality if our parents hadn’t conceived us and brought us into this “vale of tears.” Indeed, this is a set of powerful reasons to be angry, in fact enraged. Of course there is another side of it, in which one can feel gratitude for having been brought into the world, but I believe there is always a complex mix of feelings around having been conceived by one’s parents.

Once all this surfaces and is in the room, there is a great deal of work that can be usefully done with it, both by examining the patient’s “irrational” expectations of the therapist, and behind the therapist and in his or her shadow, the parents. The given and perfectly apparent reasons for children’s (including adult children) anger at their parents may at bottom be anger that in the end those parents cannot protect them. This insight transforms a child’s anger to something that can be worked through rather than destructively and/or self-destructively acted out.

Religious patients have particular difficulty accepting the reality of this dynamic. They can’t believe that they can be so “blasphemous” as to attribute qualities and powers that “should” be attributed to God to their parents and therapists. Nevertheless they do.

When a patient who has never brought up any of these concerns continues to express ongoing irritation with and disappointment in the therapist (me) and the treatment is stalled for no apparent reason, I sometimes raise the possibility that this radical discontent is at bottom anger at my inability to deliver the “ultimate” goods. I put it something like this: “This may be silly but it has occurred to me that your anger at me stems from my having turned out to be so much less powerful than you hoped I would be. Even if you aren’t aware of it, at some unconscious level, you wish that I was strong enough to protect you from ‘the ill flesh is heir to’ and from your ultimate demise. I know that is hard to admit because it feels so infantile and unreasonable, yet it may be true—that’s just the way we humans operate.” This often bombs, but not always and when it resonates it opens up vast territory for psychotherapeutic exploration.

In his 1937 essay “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” Freud attributes the “failure” of psychodynamic therapy to its inability to “deliver the goods,” in this case, to grant the analysand’s wish to become androgynous, to have and enjoy the libidinal prerogatives of both sexes. Freud here had the dynamic right (the impossibility of granting our powerful wishes that make demands that reality cannot meet), but he had the content wrong. These days, with sex change operations and the softening of gender roles, hermaphroditism or at least androgyny, doesn’t seem so impossible, but the underlying wish to be so powerful, or to have a protector so powerful that death can be defeated, cannot be fulfilled. Frustration, disappointment and rage are inevitable.

In his 1920 essay titled “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud postulates a “death instinct” so that death is not something inflicted from the outside but something coming from the inside, something intrinsic to the being of the organism, in this case the human organism. This is a move from passivity to activity. Death is no longer something imposed on us but something we seek, however unconsciously. This echoes the seventeenth-century philosopher Spinoza’s injunction that “freedom consists of choosing necessity.” Freud’s theory may be a form of whistling in the dark—an assertion that what is feared is really what is wished for and that at bottom, we desire to return to the state of *quietus*. For some, this is a comforting thought.

That brings us back to “Psychotherapy and Death.” My conclusion: a worthwhile therapy importantly enables mourning (and its end), including mourning losses long past and never really dealt with, and vitally includes mourning for our own inevitable decline and death. It also surfaces real, albeit irrational, beliefs in the power of others, such as parents, therapists, and their symbolic substitutes to grant us omnipotence, omniscience and

immortality; and to work through those fantasies, wishes, and beliefs, hopefully leading to an acceptance of our own ultimate powerlessness, and to acceptance of the limitations of our seemingly magically powerful helpers. This can only happen after we have become aware of the magic we attribute to them. In working through disillusionment with our therapists, when they prove to be far less powerful than we wish them to be, we also come to terms with the ultimate powerlessness of our parents who we once believed to be omnipotent. And this working through allows us to be less angry at therapists and perhaps more importantly at parents, as we come to accept their humanity, finiteness, and limitations. And in doing so we begin to come to terms with our own fragility and powerlessness, and to reach some sort of acceptance of the course we will ineluctably follow.

As I told my students, good therapists are first and foremost (albeit not exclusively) professional mourners, who help us grieve for the inevitabilities of our lives.

Intermezzo I

Edith Wharton

The New York Stories of Edith Wharton, a paperback, is marvelous. With the exception of *Ethan Frome*, I've never been a fan of Edith Wharton the novelist. But the short stories are something else. Tightly composed, brilliantly plotted, crystalline and transparent, they seem effortlessly written and certainly effortless to read.

It is only after putting them down that you realize how rich they are and how much is contained within the compression of the telling. Wharton knew how to tell stories in such a way that you don't want to stop reading them. They stay with you. The clarity of the prose works paradoxically like an x-ray, revealing unexpected depths beneath what at first appears to be all surface. With the exception of a few spots where she is overly influenced by her friend Henry James in a failed attempt at nuance and interiority, and a few stories in which there are one too many O Henry twists, the stories are minor masterpieces.

Wharton's range is limited for the most part to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Wasp upper-class life, yet it is no less universal for the particularity of the setting. She is utterly masterful in bringing to life the streets of New York and the rooms in which her characters' lives are lived. She not only enlivens places and persons, but brings a whole society into the reader's consciousness almost as if he or she had lived in it with all its beauties and limitations.

For all the wealth and power of the class she depicts, there is almost always an abyss beneath the seeming security: abysses of emotional torment, emotional deadness, terrors of slipping into genteel poverty or worse, illness and death. Her themes are of entrapment, deceit, abandonment, treachery and despair. Only occasionally do we see the healing qualities of kindness and art. She is unexpectedly capable of being side-splittingly funny. Sometimes her humor slips into an otherwise tenebrous tale and other times permeates an entire story.

The collection opens with "Mrs. Manstay's View," an early story with a setting uncharacteristic for Wharton. It is a tale of an aging, impoverished widow living in a boarding house. (Wharton, while not overtly a feminist, was particularly attuned to the vulnerability and relative powerlessness of women, even in upper-class Wasp society at the turn of the century.) Mrs. Manstay is in the abyss—emotional as well as financial—that threatens so many of Wharton's characters. The view from her house is the only joy in Mrs.

Mainstay's otherwise bleak existence. When that view is threatened, the story turns tragic and ends heartbreakingly.

"Journey" tells of the claustrophobic experience with an initially sick, later dead husband, from the wife's point of view. It is one of Wharton's best, albeit the most terrifying in its evocation of the dead's entrapment of the living, as the wife, a long-suffering caretaker, now is faced with being ejected with the corpse in the middle of nowhere if her husband's death is discovered. Whether read as metaphor or as a singular experience, "The Journey" is bone chilling.

On the other hand, "The Other Two" is hysterically funny, the "other two" being ex-husbands of a much-divorced woman. Here Wharton is as close to satire as she comes, making sport of a now mindlessly permissive society. In earlier stories, written when divorce was still a disgrace, the down side, at least for a woman, of leaving an intolerable, even abusive, marriage makes all too clear the cruelty of a too-rigid social structure. But here Wharton is making sport of an early "beautiful people" set and she does it superbly.

The last story in the collection, written when Wharton was 73, "Roman Fever," a tale of deceit and sexual betrayal, tells of a seemingly genteel reunion of two American newly widowed "old friends" on the terrace of a Roman restaurant overlooking the Forum.

The twists and turns of the dialogue don't allow you to put it down. Wharton kept her powers to the end.

George Eliot

During the summer I like to go back to the nineteenth-century classics. This year it was an old friend, George Eliot.

Rereading *Middlemarch* was quite an experience. There is no question that, at times, it is a slog with its density, complexity, multiple-layer plot and rich array of characters. It is also leisurely, having originally been serialized, the Victorian equivalent of a long-running soap opera. Given its format, it's hardly surprising that it occasionally bogs down under the sheer weight of Eliot's ambitions. And I repeatedly felt like strangling her overly idealistic heroine. All that having been said, *Middlemarch* is simply wonderful.

I have never been taken with *Adam Bede* (too much dialect to wade through) or with that old high school reading list requirement *Silas Marner*, but I love *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot's "Zionist" novel (there's a street in Tel Aviv named for her) with its intriguing Jewish mystic Mordecai, troubled heroine Gwendolen Harleth, and Daniel himself, searching for identity and meaning and finally finding it by embracing his newly discovered Jewish roots and indeed conceiving (pre-Herzl) of the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland. When I first read *Middlemarch*, the machinations of the provincial gentry of the English countryside seemed far less interesting than the rise of a nascent Zionist consciousness in an English aristocrat, as he thought himself to be before discovering his Jewish origins. Not this time around. Without diminishing the greatness of *Daniel Deronda*, *Middlemarch*, which preceded in Eliot's oeuvre, transcends it.

By the time we finish reading it, we know everything about Middlemarch: its surprisingly complex social structure, its secrets, its values, its place in and relationship to the ongoing flow of English history and politics, the impact of the evolving conceptualizations of society, economy and metaphysics of nineteenth-century philosophy, the interface of the relatively static Middlemarch with the technological and ideological dynamism of Victorian society.

In her early historical novel *Romola*, Eliot weighted the narrative down with too much information. She didn't make that mistake in *Middlemarch*. Her deeply layered, multifaceted vision of the social, historical, political, ideological, and even medical and scientific nexus in which Middlemarch is embedded is integrated into the story. The authorial voice that conveys much of this amazing array of insights becomes a character in

the narrative, rather than a hectoring voice. After reading *Middlemarch*, you know England in a way you never knew it before.

And the characters! Dorothea, insufferable as she can be, elicits our sympathy and understanding. In the end, as a woman who has no better outlet for her enthusiasm, passion and intelligence, she is deeply moving. Eliot's feminism is muted, but all the more powerful for its understatedness. We experience Dorothea's plight as emblematic of the restraints on a certain kind of woman in that time and place. We don't need to be lectured; rather we come to understand what it must have been like to have a first-rate mind and a deep desire to live meaningfully in a context that allowed so little opportunity for expression of those potentials. We feel what it must have been like for Dorothea, even as we want to scream at her for making the choices she does.

Even Casaubon, her desiccated scholar-husband, tyrannical, even cruel as he can be in the end seems pitiable in his emptiness and the meaninglessness of his life work, "The Key to All Mythologies." He, too, is seen from the inside, and because he is we feel for him.

There are at least a dozen other characters portrayed in depth who elicit our interest, pity, compassion, curiosity and even love. They, too, are experienced contextually, externally and internally as we turn the pages.

One is Lygate, the medical pioneer who tries to bring the new science to Middlemarch only to stumble on his own materialism and greed, marry a vain and shallow woman, and wind up not coming even close to living up to his potential. He, too, elicits our sympathy. Rather than judge him, we come to know how life forces us to make less than perfect choices.

Ladislaw is another of Eliot's seekers for meaning. Something of a dilettante, he, too, never quite fulfills himself as the artist he sets out to become. Eventually, he finds another life, not without meaning, but again, the kind of compromise that life so frequently forces on people, partly as a consequence of their own character and partly as a consequence of circumstance.

Even the minor characters, approaching Dickensian caricature, are memorable.

Eliot has magnificent narrative gifts. And although no one thinks of her as a great humorist, Eliot can be laugh-out-loud funny. It may take her a while to get you on board, but once she does, *Middlemarch* approaches being a page turner. It becomes difficult to put

down as you can't wait to find out what happens next to so many people you've come to care about.

Middlemarch isn't easy, but the trip is worth the fare.

Iphigenia and Isaac

The great nineteenth-century critic and poet, Matthew Arnold, wrote a famous essay on the Hellenistic and the Hebraic as two roots of Western civilization. This article speculates on how this polarity plays out in the arena of human sacrifice.

In the Greek story King Menelaus' wife Helen has been abducted (with varying degrees of complicity, even willingness, depending on which version you read) by Paris and is now in Troy. The Greek fleet, under Agamemnon, sails for Troy to avenge Menelaus and bring back Helen. The fleet becomes becalmed and Agamemnon is told that only by sacrificing his daughter, Iphigenia, will the gods, or in this case the goddess Artemis, once again let the winds blow and the fleet get to Troy. Agamemnon does so. Subsequent Greek myth and drama take different views of this murder, some seeing Agamemnon as a tragic figure who must sacrifice his beloved daughter for the sake of a transcendently important purpose, the reclaiming not so much of Helen as of Greek honor. Others see Agamemnon as a heartless egotist acting out of raw ambition and the opportunity for self-aggrandizement. Euripides portrays Iphigenia as heroically accepting, indeed embracing, her destiny. In some versions she actually survives. But she is not usually seen as a heroine, accepting being sacrificed for the sake of Greece; she is more often portrayed as a piteous, pathetic victim of, variously, necessity, destiny, the gods, and male egoism. The feminist writer Carol Gilligan sees her as a paradigmatic figure exemplifying the powerlessness of women who are sacrificed in one way or another to male needs. But in every account it is a god who demands her sacrifice.

Whatever the portrayal, Iphigenia dies. The fleet sails under Menelaus' brother Agamemnon and as we know, the Greeks, after long struggle, subdue Troy, capture Helen, and return home.

When Agamemnon reaches Mycenae, his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus, lie in wait. They murder Agamemnon in his bath. The chain of blood vengeance continues as Agamemnon's son, Orestes, returns to slay his mother and her lover. The Furies pursue Orestes and it seems like the chain of murder begetting murder in an endless sequence of blood vengeance will continue till the end of time until Athena intervenes, tames the Furies, and establishes the Areopagus, the Court of Justice, that replaces justice by vendetta with the rule of law. Aeschylus's trilogy, the *Oresteia*, tells the whole tale. Incidentally, you can see the Areopagus, the hill on which the Justice Court was established, if you visit Athens.

So the ultimate meaning of, and in a sense justification for, Iphigenia's death is that it sets off the chain of events going far beyond the repair of Greek honor, or the fulfillment of Agamemnon's ambition, or the return of Helen to her husband, Menelaus, a chain eventuating in the establishment of impartial, impersonal judgment. But that does not leave Iphigenia any less dead, dying a terrifying death at the hands of her own father. And the gods—did they know how it would turn out? Did they act from capriciousness? All we know is that the will of the gods cannot be altered by men. Nothing in any of the stories suggests that Iphigenia's death in any way brings about the end of human sacrifice by the Greeks.

How about Isaac? Born to the childless Sarah at age 90, the beloved son of Abraham's old age, he is a miracle from the beginning—a divine gift. Now God demands he be sacrificed and Abraham, the same Abraham who challenged God when He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, asking, "How can the God of justice kill even one innocent man?" and "Must not the God of justice be just?"—acquiesces in this mad demand without protest. What are we to make of Abraham's passivity and willingness to be complicit—more than complicit—the main actor in the murder of Isaac? Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his deeply loved, miraculous son to the "higher" value of obedience to God is held up as an exemplification of holiness for all generations. To love God as Abraham loved God becomes a religious ideal. But how is Abraham different from the psychotic who hears God's voice tell her (it is usually a "her") to kill her child or children, and acts on it? This happens infrequently, but with some regularity. We convict such people of murder or put them in insane asylums. Of course, the counterargument is that Abraham heard not voices, but the Voice of God.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in *Fear and Trembling*, calls Abraham a "Knight of Faith," in contradistinction to the "Tragic Hero." The tragic hero fails because of an intrinsic flaw; the Knight of Faith's actions are equally tragic, but they come not from a flaw, but from a virtue, perfect faith. In Caravaggio's painting of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, to be seen in Florence at the Uffizi, Abraham seems more filled with blood lust than with faith. He is truly murderous. Caravaggio, being a murderer himself, perhaps understood Abraham's motivation at a more unconscious level than did Kierkegaard. The Isaac in this painting is utterly terrified.

Kierkegaard goes on to ask, "Is there such a thing as the teleological suspension of the ethical"; (i.e., do "higher ends" justify, indeed necessitate, suspending the ordinary ethical obligations and judgments?). In this case, it is the biblical injunction to not commit murder

that is suspended for the sake of a higher end, obedience to God. Living at the end of a century during which millions died under some variation of the rubric “the teleological suspension of the ethical,” it is hard to take this seriously. Unfortunately, many do.

Of course in the biblical story we have a literal *deus ex machina* as the angel substitutes the ram and Isaac lives. But at what cost? Was Isaac irredeemably traumatized? He was the most passive of the patriarchs, and some *midrashim* (commentaries) present him as retarded. As a result of this experience of terror at his father’s murderous intent? Perhaps. Nevertheless, Iphigenia dies and Isaac lives. The Greek gods do not relent; the Jewish God is merely testing the fidelity of his servant Abraham, and never really intended Isaac’s death.

One way Jewish tradition has exegesized the story of Abraham and Isaac is to allegorize it as a story of the end of human sacrifice. Child sacrifice was ubiquitous in the ancient world; the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) is one site of such child slaughter, and many commentators have maintained that the horror of pagan religion and rites in the Torah is about distancing the Israelites from just such practices that they themselves must have practiced at an earlier period in their history. Yet there is nothing in the Abraham and Isaac story itself to suggest that human sacrifice should cease. Indeed, we read in the much later *Book of Kings* that various wicked kings burned their sons.

In the final analysis, sailing for Troy or proving the depth of trust in the wisdom of God’s commandments seem equally fatuous reasons for killing or being willing to kill. Neither Agamemnon nor Abraham is even vaguely worthy of emulation, or at least so it seems to me.

Eric Kandel

Eric Kandel's *In Search of Memory* combines Proust's evocation of the power of memory in *Remembrance of Things Past* with the lucidity and power of Bertram Russell's best scientific writing in his *ABC of Relativity*. It is a remarkable achievement. Kandel is a Nobel Prize winning neurobiologist who followed an involuted career path that took him through a mastery of Hebrew acquired at a Brooklyn yeshiva to the academic rigor of Erasmus High to a history major at Harvard to a decision to become a psychoanalyst that led him to talking his way into NYU Medical School without having met most of the pre-medical requirements. At NYU he became fascinated with the search for the molecular basis of memory, a fascination that moved him away from a clinical, psychoanalytic career, although he returned to Harvard for his psychiatric residency. Instead, he became one of the leaders in the development of a new science of the neurochemistry of learning and memory. In the end, he pulled it all together.

In Search of Memory is simultaneously a magnificent account of the historical development of our contemporary understanding of the brain and nervous system, a social history of that science including his own role in that history, a psychoanalytic investigation of the influence of the past on the present both in his own life and in history, and a preternaturally clear exposition of our present understanding of how memory works at the cellular, neurochemical, genetic, and systemic levels. Kandel has no false modesty and conveys his conviction of the central role he himself played in creating that understanding. But the man is no egoist; he clearly enjoys giving credit to his predecessors, colleagues, collaborators and students. Far more saliently, he projects his sense of excitement, his enthusiasm, his exuberance and indeed his joy in the quest for knowledge through research, and his aesthetic, indeed spiritual, pleasure in that knowledge.

Kandel not only projects this rich tapestry of profound emotion encompassing his deeply felt awe and wonder, gratitude and reverence for the disinterested search for truth that is science at its best, and awe at the remaining mystery; he also takes you inside the intellectual process that made manifest these truths. Kandel is in love with "what is" and the ability of science to reveal that reality. Further, he makes us, his non-scientist readers, feel all of that too. You not only learn a great deal from a master teacher in reading *In Search of Memory*, you are inspired by it to something akin to religious emotion in response to what you have learned.

It is fitting that Kandel received his first honorary degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He himself says that he was astonished that such an institution would have knowledge of his work, let alone wish to honor him for it. For me, the Seminary's act of honoring Kandel says something very positive about Judaism and reminds me of all I value and like about being Jewish. It being Passover as I write, I cannot but reflect that one of the central tenets of Judaism is to remember and indeed remember a traumatic event, namely that we were slaves in Egypt. Freud too emphasizes remembering and re-experiencing previously repressed traumatic memories and it can be no accident that this preeminent discoverer of at least some of the physical basis of memory started out studying Hebrew, the Torah and Talmud as part of a Jewish education and then started his professional career as a psychoanalyst. The Jewish Theological Seminary knew what it was doing when it honored Kandel.

Kandel starts his unique blend of memoir and scientific exposition with a searing traumatic memory. It is 1938 and he is a 9-year-old Jewish child living in Vienna where his parents own a toy store. He has long yearned for a blue remote-controlled car, when lo and behold, it is given to him by his parents. The child's innocent joy in the car as it runs around the apartment under his control is contagious. It is perhaps the happiest moment of his childhood. But this is the eve of the Anschluss, the German annexation of Austria. In the morning comes the pounding on the door, the arrest of his father, the family's eviction from their apartment, and the Viennese rapturous welcome of Hitler. The Kandels ultimately escape to America, but they were among the very few. Kandel's gratitude towards America and its academic institutions suffuses his book, as does his rage at the virulent Austrian anti-Semitism that his memory keeps intact. Kandel's scathing condemnation of Austria's more-than-willing participation in the Holocaust, and subsequent denial of that role, is powerful and is strongly reinforced by his encounters with ongoing anti-Semitism in post-war Austria.

Kandel's scientific breakthroughs were made possible by what he calls "scientific reductionism," which allowed him to study memory first at the cellular and later at the molecular level in a sea snail, called *Aplysia*, whose neural circuitry is sufficiently simple for Kandel to have demonstrated how the basic learning paradigms of sensitization, habituation and classic conditioning are "remembered" by the growth of synaptic connections, that is, by structural changes, in those circuits.

Kandel later elucidated the molecular chemistry of that structural change, allowing him to account for short-term memory. Later in his career, using mice as his model animal, he

was able to show how short-term memory is transferred to long-term memory by the synthesis of new protein in a process controlled by genes, the crucial step being the “turning on” of the requisite genes in a complex, exquisitely delicate sequence of biochemical events. Their elucidation is an awesome achievement. Kandel makes very clear the communal, international nature—across time as well as across space—of that achievement. This openness to contributions from men and women of many cultures, many countries, and many periods of history is the antithesis of the fascistic, racial nationalism from which Kandel and his family fled.

It is characteristic of the man that he describes his “colleague” the *Aplysia* as a handsome and accomplished animal, and that he features a picture of *Aplysia* wearing the Nobel Prize in his book. Equally characteristic is his being so moved when called to the Bima (podium) by the Chief Rabbi of Vienna while in Vienna at the invitation of the Austrian president to convene a symposium on Austria’s role in the Holocaust that he cannot speak. Although happily married to a distinguished sociologist and a successful parent, Kandel is acutely aware that his obsession with scientific research has its cost. When he tells his now adult son that he was a B+ father, the son replies, “That’s true, Dad, but you are not taking into account grade inflation.” By incorporating his son’s ironic response, Kandel casually exposes himself as humanly flawed. That basic humanity, along with his brilliance and scientific audacity, runs throughout this fascinating account of one of the greatest achievements of twentieth and early twenty-first century science.

Kandel’s mini-biographies of some of the great neuroscientists and his ability to place them not only scientifically but culturally gives his book a novelistic feel. Humanist and scientist, the man and his book are of the same cloth. And just as you can’t help loving the man, you can’t help loving the book.

The Durrell Brothers

The Durrell brothers could hardly be more different as writers. Lawrence's dense, sometimes almost impenetrable tetralogy, *The Alexandria Quartet*, makes a vivid contrast to brother Gerald's delightful page turner, *My Family and Other Animals*.

Elaborate literary structure versus spontaneous memoir; humorless seriousness versus sidesplitting hilarity; treacherous conspiracies versus almost silly youthful playfulness; heavy versus light; reverent complexity versus utter simplicity. It is hard to imagine two literary works more at odds, unlike in tone, style and feel than these works by the two brothers; Yet there is an odd sort of commonality; each is attracted to and writes about exotic times and places; each, in his own very different way, is a master storyteller, and each gets to the inside of human experience, albeit with individually unique technique. And Lawrence appears as a character in Gerald's book.

The Alexandria Quartet was a sensation when it appeared in the '60s. Purporting to mirror the structure of space-time, the first three volumes, *Justine*, *Balthazar*, and *Mountolive* tell the same story over roughly the same time interval from three different perspectives. *Clea*, the last volume, which brings us back to Alexandria after a passage of many years, represents time. I'm not sure that Durrell's framework illuminates very much or significantly adds to the meaning or significance of the tetralogy. The great strength of the work is its characterization: there are at least a dozen fully developed, unforgettable characters. Even the minor characters are memorable.

And the setting: the evocation of Alexandria on the eve of World War II, with its intrigue—sexual, political, economic, ethnic, religious and national—is compelling. It is impossible to say if *The Alexandria Quartet* is more “about” the political realm or “about” the private world of the soul. Or is it “about” their intersection or interaction?

And what about Durrell's post-modernist technique? The reflections of mirror in mirror and into yet another mirror as the narrator relates the story as seen in one or another diary or journal. We are drawn in until it is as if we are lost in a hall of mirrors of a carnival crazy house. Or as if, as it sometimes occurs, we are literally lost in twisting alleys of Arab Alexandria.

Finally, in the third volume, *Mountolive*, we get straightforward realistic narrative, but that too raises as many questions as it answers. Like all good mystery writers, Durrell builds

sufficient suspense to keep you on the edge of your seat. Yet even at the end of *Clea*, the fourth volume, the mystery remains.

Durrell is a master at “tone painting,” evoking marshes, lakes, streets, houses, neighborhoods, and the city itself in such a way that sheer aesthetic pleasure becomes the end and we, the readers, hardly care about what “happens.” Yet we do and do deeply. Creating these twin, dialectically related poles is no small trick and is the essence of his genius as a novelist. One could accuse Durrell of what Edward Said called Orientalism, the Western creation of an exotic East that serves our own power needs.

The fully developed characters in the *Quartet* are English, Jewish, Greek, or Copt, but not Arab or Moslem. Although the Alexandria of the novel is a city in an ostensibly independent Egypt, the *weltanschauung* of the novel is colonial.

Does that spoil it for the twenty-first century reader? Not for me. Yet I could not escape awareness that the novel, for all its verbal, psychological and technical pyrotechnics, is, in a sense, anachronistic. And Justine, the femme fatale, also seems, in this post-feminist era, something of an anachronism. What exactly is her power? How does it relate to her powerlessness? Questions Durrell does not raise, but we do.

And a small quibble—Durrell’s vocabulary. Looking up word after word and not finding them in my dictionary, I got annoyed with what felt like showing off.

Durrell himself would probably say that his monumental work really is about “the austere, piteous face of Aphrodite,” the instinctual irrational force of love. And that force, being intrinsically mysterious, of course, there can be no final answers to be given to the “why” of human motivation.

That brings us to *My Family and Other Animals*. It is a memoir told from the perspective of a 12-year-old English boy whose family moves on the eve of World War II to the Greek island of Corfu. Gerald is a nature writer of the first rank. One of the pleasures of reading him is his painstaking eye for landscape and his profound knowledge of the biological and ecological. And he has every bit as much skill as his more illustrious brother at bringing exotic characters to life. As the boy wanders around the island, he collects strange specimens—human and animal—and brings them home to his unflappable mother and aghast siblings as water snakes recuperate in the bathtub, magpies decimate the household, including a prize manuscript of Larry’s, and scorpions rest in matchboxes.

My Family and Other Animals is one of the funniest books I have ever read, and its sunny good humor, overflowing joy at the abundance and absurdity of life, and sheer exuberance delight.

Rabinowitz and Cirillo

American literature has returned again and again to iconic male pairings: Deerslayer and Uncas, Ishmael and Queequeg, Huck and Jim, Rabinowitz and Cirillo.

Rabinowitz and Cirillo? I have to admit their relationship is not as well known as the others and Alan Rabinowitz's excellent memoir, *Jaguar*, is not in the same class as *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Moby Dick* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Nevertheless, it is utterly intriguing, beautifully written and quite compelling.

A New York Jew, Rabinowitz's journey from being a severely stuttering child and an adolescent who was taunted and made an object of derision to becoming a world-renowned field biologist is truly remarkable. He went from being virtually speechless to being the voice of the, if not speechless, then inarticulate creatures of the wild. He became a spokesman for all the life forms we are endangering or have already destroyed and for the preservation of the wild. His crowning achievement to date was the establishment of the Coxcomb Jaguar Preserve in Belize. Rabinowitz, who went on to study and protect tigers in Burma and snow leopards in Nepal, might not agree.

Jaguar is the story of Rabinowitz's struggle to understand jaguar behavior, biology and, so to speak, culture, both in a disinterested pursuit of scientific knowledge and a highly interested goal of protecting them and assuring their survival. Jaguars are magnificent, powerful, beautiful, graceful and mysterious.

The book isn't only about jaguars—it is a highly compressed autobiography, a sensitive account of present-day Mayan life, a history of Belize and an examination of the relationship between man and nature and between Western man and indigenous peoples. These complex themes are woven together seamlessly. They are not presented didactically or sequentially. Rather, they are made integral to a narrative, and Rabinowitz is a terrific storyteller.

Having recently spent time in Belize where among other adventures I got to pet a jaguar, I was utterly intrigued by Rabinowitz's take on both the cats and the country. His account of conflicting needs and conflicting values is nuanced, characterized by ambiguity and by recognition that sometimes even ecological choices have adverse consequences.

Just as Rabinowitz was “the other” as a child on the streets of New York, he became once again “the other” in the Indian villages of Coxcomb. His complex relationship with

Cirillo is, among other things, an attempt to cross a cultural divide, and it is only partly successful. Cirillo is a Mayan with a family, a life grounded in an ancient set of folkways, and is in many ways more mature than Rabinowitz. He is initially utterly puzzled by Rabinowitz's desire to protect jaguars, animals he experiences as dangerous predators who threaten the cattle and other domestic animals in his village. At first, working for the strange gringo is just a way to make ends meet. But he evolves, comes to share Alan's drive to save these magnificent cats, winds up prospering in Belize's growing tourist business. There is some loss here, Cirillo becoming less, or at least differently, Mayan, as he acculturates into a mainstream English-speaking world.

As in the previously mentioned literary pairings, Rabinowitz is the "civilized" one, Cirillo the "primitive" one. But this is ambiguous, to say the least. Cirillo knows far more than Alan Rabinowitz about surviving in the jungles of Coxcomb and the two men are in turn competitive, cooperative, impart knowledge to each other, fail to comprehend the other's world, cruelly tease each other, and ultimately come to love one another.

Rabinowitz knows that his impact on the life of these descendents of the magnificent Mayan civilization is not altogether benign. Neither is his impact on the jaguars.

A Victorian poet said, "We murder to dissect." When one jaguar breaks off his canine teeth struggling to escape the trap Rabinowitz and Cirillo have set so they can radio-collar him, Alan tries to save him, treating his wounds with antibiotics before releasing him. But the broken teeth become infected and the jaguar returns to die, literally in Alan's arms as Alan sobs uncontrollably.

He feels that he has indeed murdered in order to dissect. He knows that he must trap and collar jaguars to learn more about them so he can argue convincingly for the preserve; yet he cannot shake his guilt. Rabinowitz has sufficient literary skill not only to individuate members of an alien culture, he individuates the jaguars also. And there is no way he can do that without becoming intensely involved emotionally.

There is a sadness about life in the Coxcomb jungle. Both men and cats suffer horribly from parasites. In the rainy season, all becomes mire as roads are swept away and jungle trails are obliterated. The highly venomous fer-de-lance snake is everywhere. (Rabinowitz relates the harrowing death of one of Cirillo's friends from a fer-de-lance bite—an unnecessary death resulting from a "snake doctor" removing him from the hospital.) Life is gloriously abundant, but death is equally omnipresent.

It is clear from Rabinowitz's account of his relationships with several women that the wounds of his childhood have not altogether healed. Yet what a courageous instance of turning excrement to gold. Belize's jaguars are living the life they were meant to; the Indians, although displaced from the preserve, have reestablished themselves under better conditions, and we know more, not only about jaguars but also about the many other species he has studied.

I highly recommend *Jaguar*, particularly if you are into cats.

Benevolence and Betrayal

Alexander Stille's *Benevolence and Betrayal* is a minor masterpiece. Stille's book is subtitled "Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism," and his evocation of time and place, achievement and aspiration of the Jewish communities of Turin, Rome, Genoa and Ferrara is nothing less than remarkable.

So is his ability to induce emotion—not only the almost unbearable sadness concomitant with his often tragic accounts of brutality and murder, but just as intensely feelings of anger, rage, admiration, pride and sometimes wonder and gratitude in response to acts of sublime courage and compassion. He is able to compress social, political, cultural, religious and economic history into tapestries, depicting four separate communities and five unique families.

The first family we meet is the Orazzas of Turin. The Turinese Jews had moved from the ghetto to social, economic and military prominence in two generations. They produced a large percentage of the 50 Jewish generals in the Italian army during World War I. They were strongly nationalistic, fiercely proud of being Piedmontese, being Italian, being Jewish and having participated in the Risorgimento—the movement that produced a unified Italian nation.

The Orazzas were bankers who owned villas as well as town houses, and were frequent guests at the court of the Savoy kings. Like most Italian Jews, after the Risorgimento forces defeated the Papacy and tore down the last ghetto walls, they felt completely integrated into Italian society, and indeed they were.

In 1910, a Jew became Prime Minister of Italy with no anti-Semitic opposition. Along with most of their social class, they were avid supporters of the Italian war effort in World War I, were fearful of the unrest and left-wing agitation after the war, and were early supporters of fascism.

A significant number of Jews were part of Mussolini's Black Shirts in the 1922 march on Rome. Mussolini, who had a Jewish mistress and was initially pro-Semitic, welcomed their support and raised one of his Jewish followers to cabinet status.

There was no stronger supporter of Italian fascism than Ettore Orazza. He founded and edited a Jewish fascist newspaper that denounced Zionism and the small Italian Zionist movement, and later, when fascism turned on its Jews and enacted the racial laws of 1938-

39, blamed Italian anti-Semitism on this “disloyal” Jewish minority. Ettore believed that anti-Semitism would vanish if all the Jews were as patriotic as he.

He died of a Gestapo bullet in the back of his head. Stille makes this tragic, and in some ways pathetic, figure understandable and even sympathetic by taking us within the culture that produced him and making us experience the impossible choices facing the highly assimilated Jews of Turin after 1938.

Unlike the Orazzas, the Foas, another highly assimilated Turin Jewish family, were vehemently anti-fascist. The Foas saw and supported a liberal democratic Italy that had succeeded in incarnating the best of the French Revolution. Vittorio Foa became leader of a clandestine anti-fascist movement with a disproportionately large Jewish representation.

He was jailed not as a Jew but as an opponent of the regime. A supporter of a succession of lost causes, after the war he became a far-left member of the Italian Senate. The Foas survived the war by a variety of stratagems.

The Jews of Rome were different. Overwhelmingly poor or marginally middle class, they continued to live in the old ghetto from which they had only recently been released. Often the victims of viciously anti-Semitic popes, they were the most repressed and vulnerable of Italian Jews. They tended to be the most traditional and the most religious.

After the collapse of the Italian army and the German occupation of northern Italy, the Gestapo demanded that the Jewish community pay a huge ransom in gold to avoid deportation. The community raised the ransom, aided by “ordinary” Catholics who came to the synagogue and contributed their gold. However, the Gestapo went back on its word and launched a roundup in the ghetto on October 16, 1943. Thirteen hundred Roman Jews were deported, the vast majority of whom died in concentration camps.

Stille tells the story of Rome’s Jews through the DiVeroli family, relatively prosperous merchants, most of whom survived, some with the aid of nuns and priests who hid them, at great risk to themselves, in convents and churches.

Hollywood has missed a natural in not picking up Stille’s story of rescue to Switzerland through an underground railway based in Genoa. He calls it “The Rabbi, the Priest and the Aviator.” The rabbi was Riccardo Pacifici, a saintly, courageous scholar. Before the racial laws he worked for non-Italian Jewish refugees in Italy and later continued his work secretly. Almost unbelievably, he wrote two works of biblical criticism while ministering to

a congregation under assault, running an underground refugee organization and fleeing the Gestapo. He frequently put his life in jeopardy and in the end lost it.

His collaborator, Don Repetto, a Catholic priest, survived the war after he went underground. Don Repetto was honored at Yad Vashem as a righteous gentile.

The aviator, Massimo Teglio, was the most remarkable of the trio. A Jewish Errol Flynn, he had been a stunt pilot before the war. Teglio was a friend of some of the highest ranking fascists, a forger of identity cards, a daredevil who slept in the German Embassy to escape arrest, picked up hitchhiking German officers as a cover, passed himself off as a Vatican diplomat, shipped contraband goods on German transports and saved literally thousands of lives.

Stille's last story is of the Schoenheits of Ferrara. The Jews of Ferrara had a long and distinguished history under the Ducal family d'Este until a pope conquered Ferrara and forced the Jews into a ghetto where they remained until the mid-nineteenth century. Ferrara's Jews then quickly flourished once again, The city had a Jewish mayor until 1938. The Schoenheits were middle-class salesmen and merchants. Franco Schoenheit was also the cantor of the synagogue.

Like so many Italian Jews, the Schoenheits simply couldn't believe that the horrors of Nazi Germany were possible in Italy. Caught by the Gestapo and Italian fascist police, the Schoenheits were deported to Buchenwald. They survived, but their memories of the camp, described in all its sadistic horror in Stille's book, never left them, and they will never leave you.

Travel

Chapter 15:

Cycling to Montauk

It was definitely counter phobic. Going into what I feared most with as much bravado and denial as I could muster. It simply wasn't true that I was a year older and that the island had gotten longer. And I was going to prove it.

So I started out from my Manorville home, first heading out the North Fork to Orient Point as I do every year for my birthday.

But something was different this time. The spring had been cold and wet, preventing me from getting into very good shape, and my usual buoyant confidence was notably absent. Thoughts of decline and death swirled around in my head. I told myself this is asinine; be grateful that you are doing this at all, albeit somewhat more effortfully.

By the time I got to the Southold Sound Beach and dismounted for a swim, the gloom had largely lifted. Yet I couldn't help but note how young the lifeguards looked and I wondered how many generations of guards had come and gone as I continued to stop there annually en route to Montauk.

Leaving the water, I felt a surge of energy. Stopping for a strawberry pickup at a farm stand I endured a long lament by the farmer about how poor the quality of the crop was this rainy spring, and indeed, the berries weren't very good.

I ate them anyway, and before I knew it the Orient Point ferry came into view. Relaxed by now, I swam once more and reflected upon what was now obvious, that my earlier preoccupied down mood was a direct consequence of the loss of a lifelong friend, and all that brought up about the inevitability of the end.

Bicycling back to Greenport against the wind was tough. I detoured off Route 25 into the Village of Orient. That was lovely and less difficult. Then back into the wind to the Shelter Island ferry. Greenport resurfaced my thoughts of loss as I remembered my psychiatrist friend from there now struggling with aphasia following a stroke. I pushed those thoughts out of my mind as I absorbed the beauty of the crossing.

On Shelter Island I added ten miles to my journey by meandering off Route 114, going for an even hundred. I love cycling on Shelter Island but those hills are not easy. I found

myself gearing down, which I don't usually do, got momentarily depressed and then shook it off. "You fool, you're so lucky to be doing this at all, in whatever gear."

But by then an unwelcome novelty, not present in earlier trips, entered my experience, namely, severe leg cramps. I was really worried that they would stop me, but I pushed on.

Then Sag Harbor and ice cream. A definite lift. Leaving Sag, fog and mist became increasingly problematic as I got closer to Amagansett and the ocean. Going the long way through the woods on Swamp Road, visibility diminished exponentially and I arrived at Montauk Highway deeply discouraged.

I was getting chilled too. I almost gave up, but the sugar surge of the bottle of juice and the warmth of a cup of (herbal) tea strengthened my resolve.

I struggled over Hither Hills into Montauk Village. By then, the twilight was deepening and the thought of pedaling on to the Point in the dark and fog seemed crazy. I debated and finally thought, "What the hell. I'm not going to stop now," and left the village for the empty, hilly seven miles to the Point. As I started on that last leg, I had the happy awareness that the cramps had left my legs. Nevertheless, it was definitely spooky, not to say dangerous, and those final hills are really steep, but I got there.

Exhilarating as the sight of the lighthouse beam was, I could hardly see it. That had never happened before. Wiping my lenses once more, I cycled past the lighthouse into the parking lot where my ride back home would be waiting. Then a letdown. I looked at my odometer and it registered only 98 miles. Damn! I knew I was being ridiculous, but I couldn't shake off my unreasonableness.

I know that it's the journey and not the destination that matters, and that the trip was about the experience, not about proving something. And I believed it—sort of. Yet when I found the solution, making a decision to ride two more miles when I got home, I felt absolutely elated. So I added those two miles, winding up at 100.5. Counter phobic? You bet. Who cares—some forms of insanity are self-validating.

Chapter 16:

Denali

Denali, meaning “Great One,” is both a mountain and a park. Mt. Denali (McKinley) towers 20,000 feet above the tundra. This summer two lives were lost climbing it. As much as that summit spoke to me, I knew that three weeks on the mountain, climbing with a full pack, and an unavoidable technical stretch, were beyond my capacities. So I compromised on a three-day trek on Ruth Glacier at 5000 feet. That proved to be more than exciting enough.

My wife Sara and I first spent eight days on a tour sponsored by the Penn Alumni Association. We were initially disappointed when the promised small boat tour of the fjords in Kenai National Park with their calving glaciers and breaching whales had to be curtailed in the face of fifteen-foot waves and fifty-mile-an-hour gusts. We did cruise Restoration Bay, visiting sea lions and seeing bald eagles, but it just wasn't what we came for. Things looked up after that as we rafted by a grizzly lunching on a salmon in the Kenai River and then spent two days in a rustic lodge accessible only by boat on Skilak Lake. Deep in the wilderness, mountains rising on all sides, it was magnificent. We hiked up the tundra above the ridge overlooking the lake, calling “Yo bear” all the way lest we startle a grizzly. Then on to Denali Park. In that first week of September we hit the Alaskan fall colors perfectly. I'd never seen such vivid ground color, its saturated sparkling reds in harmonious tension with the yellow-oranges of the leaves below tree line. The vastness of Alaska overall, and of Denali in particular, mountain *and* park, is awe inspiring. So much unspoiled earth, so few people, so many animals living out their lives without human interference. If Seward, the town from which we were supposed to sail past glaciers and observe sea life, let us down, Denali more than made up for it. Our luck in encountering wildlife was phenomenal: grizzlies, moose, caribou, coyotes, beavers, and a lone wolf who emerged from the forest, loped past our park bus so close I could have reached out and petted him. And then the awesomely powerful grizzly digging up a ground squirrel nest with rapier-like claws serving as a bulldozer powered by her massive muscles, as Junior lackadaisically waited for Mommy to serve lunch. We hiked in Denali too, topping a ridge above the tree line, transversing tundra, and observing caribou on the adjacent ridge. Then the long drive out of the park.

Sara headed north to Fairbanks to visit with a friend while I took the train south to Talkeetna, the only town in America to vote Green in '04. A throwback to the sixties, it collects the odd, the overtly crazy, the adventurous, and a wild assortment of creative types longing to escape “lives of quiet desperation.” The jumping-off point for expeditions to the summit of Denali and other even more difficult peaks in the Alaska Range, Talkeetna is said to be “a great drinking town with a climbing problem.”

I was met by Joey, my guide, driven to the Alaskan Mountaineering School, outfitted with mountain boots, parka, mittens, goggles, insulated pants, ice axe, expedition-weight socks and gloves—the works—and hustled off to the air strip. My train had been significantly late and having enough light to set up camp was fast becoming an issue. Joey was not the most articulate guy in the world, but he appeared to know what he was doing, having led several climbs to the top of Denali that summer and having brought down bodies of climbers that didn't make it. He told me that he had worked in an outward-bound-type program and that he wanted to get an MSW. But it was clear that that wasn't happening any time soon. The plane—a four-seater—didn't seem much larger than the model airplanes I had built as a kid. I was nervous—never the most comfortable flyer—and rather phobic around heights. But once we gained altitude I relaxed, and having made the commitment decided to enjoy the experience. The weather conditions were marginal and it wasn't certain we'd be able to land. Talkeetna is 300 feet above sea level and we would land at roughly 5000. We climbed much higher and then swooped down to survey Ruth Gorge, an 8000-foot defile solidly filled with glacial ice, once again gained altitude, turned a corner so close to a mountain I fantasized I could touch it, and landed on Ruth Glacier proper—the part above the gorge. Quickly organizing our gear on sleds, we headed up a saddle above the “runway” and set up camp in deep snow superimposed on the ice of Ruth. Watching the plane circle as it rose from the gorge and turned toward Talkeetna, I felt thrilled and frightened simultaneously. We didn't expect to see that plane or any living thing with the possible exception of lichens and a raven or two for the next three days. Although the Alaskan days were already getting shorter we had a few more hours of visibility (it was 7 PM) as we dug a snow kitchen and a snow bathroom for the CMC (Clean Mountain Can), which would return with us, leaving Ruth undefiled. There was no wood at that height, but we did have a propane stove for cooking. It was a foggy, misty twilight, and we just made it before landing would have been unsafe. We were wearing so many layers of clothing that it was difficult to estimate the temperature. Additionally, I had an Ensolite sleeping pad and an air mattress between me and the ice. My best guess is that it was in the mid-20s during the day and the mid-teens at night, but it might well have been much colder.

In the morning I was fitted up with climbing harness, ropes, snowshoes, carabiners, and a Jumar, a device that can be slid up a rope but not down. Joey was a good teacher, but a fifteen-minute crash course on glacial travel and crevasse rescue just didn't do it. All I remembered was to drop my pack if I went into a crevasse, and to fall on my ice axe and bury it in the ice (if I could) if he fell. I was feeling none too competent as we started toward Ruth Gorge, Joey in the lead eighty feet out at the end of the rope. Things got more interesting after we crossed the landing area, but we still couldn't see a great deal of the peaks forming the "Don Sheldon Amphitheater," named for a legendary bush pilot, which was the site of our camp. Some of those peaks rose a sheer 5000 feet above the amphitheater. We almost got around a pointed rock formation that would have put us in the gorge but Joey thought the crevasse danger was too great—you could see them all over the place. You don't worry about the ones you see. It's the ones you don't see that constitute the risk.

So we turned around and retraced our steps to our tent without incident, this time with me in the lead. Joey had tested the route with "wands," thin willow probes, and I simply retraveled his steps. Since we were wearing snowshoes, there was no difficulty following our tracks. By the time we got back to camp we had been gone about three hours. After grabbing some quick energy food, we talked about what to do next. Above us, at the top of the saddle, was a nunatak, a small outcropping where the bedrock beneath the glacier breaks the surface, forming a stony island in the surrounding sea of ice and snow. This one had a cabin on its peak known as "Mountain House," that had been built by Don Sheldon. The outcropping was perhaps ten stories high. Leaving our snowshoes behind, we climbed up the saddle to the berdschurnd, the gap between ice and rock, stepped over it and scrambled up loose rock to the summit cabin. It had somewhat cleared and we got good views before heading down. By then my fears had receded and I was having a really good time. Once again I led, since Joey was much less likely to set off a rock slide threatening the man below, in this case me, than I would have been. I had really enjoyed the scramble and descended without difficulty. Crossing over the berdschurnd, now walking on the glacier, I felt proud of my new skills. I had no awareness of any danger lurking. Then I took another step and without warning the snow-ice beneath my feet gave and I was in a free fall as I fell into a crevasse. Fortunately, one of my feet hit a snow or ice ledge and that, combined with the rope snapping taut, stopped me. Fifteen feet above my head I could see a hole. Crevasse are generally pear shaped. I was still in the tunnel-like apex of the pear when I stopped falling, but the widening of the abyss in the body of the "pear" was just beneath my

feet. Had I gone further down, I would no longer have been able to touch the walls of the crevasse.

I was not injured, yet a twenty-foot sudden drop abruptly brought to a halt does shake one up. Nevertheless I remained “icy” calm and started calling, “Joey!” No answer. Not so good. Again, “Joey!” No answer. Even worse. My third call got a response. A moment later I saw his face peering into the crevasse. Joey, who of course had to protect himself from joining me, moved back a few feet. He began to talk me through the steps I needed to take to escape. “Drop your pack.” The pack was roped independently and could be retrieved if and when I was retrieved. “Use your ice axe and boots to get finger and toe holds. Start pulling yourself up.” Now increasingly confident that I would get out, I was even calmer and followed Joey’s instructions as best I could. Between his pulling on the rope and my struggles I was out surprisingly quickly. I can’t really be sure of that because it was so hard to gauge time down in the crevasse. I could have used the Jumar or a “prusik,” a knot that works similarly, that I had practiced tying that morning. I don’t know why Joey didn’t suggest that, or why we had left our crampons back at the camp. I suppose that the trek to Mountain House was regarded as safe and indeed it would have been in July when the snow was stronger. But it was no longer July. In any case, I remember coming up fairly smoothly, exerting as much effort on my own behalf as I could while simultaneously saying to Joey, “I can’t do this alone. Can you keep the tension on the rope?”

Once out, I crossed back onto the nunatak, rested for a while, put my pack back on, and followed Joey, who was now in the lead, across to the glacier a few yards below the crevasse. “Follow my footsteps.” I thought I was doing just that when bang I was in again, this time only one leg, almost up to my crotch. But that was deceptive. It wasn’t like post holing in soft snow. I was in a kind of plug at the top of a crevasse, perhaps an extension of the one I had gone in earlier, perhaps another one, and that plug could give at any moment. I was bent like a hinge, part of me in the crevasse, part sprawled across the glacier. I struggled to free my leg, at first without deep concern. Then as I realized I just couldn’t get my leg free, the adrenaline surged in a way it had not in my first fall and no matter what I did I couldn’t seem to extricate the leg. I was tempted to move into a vertical position but that threatened a plunge God knows how far. Joey had stayed at the end of our 80-foot rope, shouting, “Use your ice axe.” I did, but to no avail. It seemed the more I chopped the more stuck I got. “Try rocking.” I did. Again, no dice. As much as I wanted to I remained afraid to bend my human hinge till I was vertical, which would have given me a much better chance of freeing my leg. What if I went further down? If Joey was following the standard

technique, by then he had buried his ice axe in such a way that it would serve as an anchor. And I was securely roped, but none of that felt comforting. Not knowing what else to do, I put every ounce of my strength into pulling my foot out of the double-shelled mountain boot. No go! Then, with a surge driven by desperation and fueled by adrenaline, my foot came free. Thank God I hadn't laced either inner or outer boot properly. Of course now I had no boot with which to transverse the glacier back to camp. Frostbite was a distinct possibility.

Very cautiously and at considerable risk to himself, Joey advanced toward me, tightening the rope as he came until on his belly he was able to reach in and retrieve my boot. At about 5 o'clock we were back in camp. For the first time since we had landed on the mountain it was now clear and sunny. We were in a "window." Several planes landed, letting tourists walk across the airstrip for ten or fifteen minutes. You have no idea how much I wanted to get on one of these planes.

After the second breakthrough I lost all confidence that we could safely trek the glacier. I hadn't felt that way after the first plunge. We had a satellite phone and I asked Joey to call for a pickup. I wanted out. Joey urged me to spend another night on the glacier as we had planned. So I let him talk me out of it. Definitely a mistake. My heart sank as the last tourist plane took off.

At the end of summer the "snow bridges" concealing the crevasses were soft and unreliable. We really shouldn't have been up there at that time of year. Neither should only two of us been trekking across the glacier. It is well known that a minimum of three people are needed to efficiently and safely execute a crevasse rescue. Besides, we were too low. Had we landed at the Denali base camp on the Kehalia glacier at 7500 feet, the colder temperature, while guaranteeing nothing, would have made a crevasse fall much less likely. And as I said, if it had been Joey who had gone in I'm fairly sure I could not have gotten him out. Alaskan Mountaineering School is, in many ways, a great outfit, but this trip wasn't one of their better moments.

After dinner it clouded over, fog rolled in, and when I woke to pee it was snowing to beat the band. The window had closed. Throughout the day we had observed "point releases," kind of mini-avalanches that threw stones and ice in our direction. Joey assured me that they had no chance of reaching us and were no danger. Yet as the weather deteriorated they occurred more frequently and came increasingly closer to us. They had been unnerving enough; now in the darkness came the virtually continuous roar of more

distant major avalanches. Yes, the window had truly closed. In the morning it was a near whiteout. We restricted our movements to the landing area. I don't know if Joey would have led a more adventurous exploration, but between the poor visibility and the crevasse risk I had no desire to go any further. In retrospect, I regret not having been more adventurous. However, I'm here, and perhaps I would not have been had we explored further in a virtual whiteout. Now feeling really trapped, I became increasingly anxious. Several times we saw patches of blue, but it was a tease. The next morning it was still snowing. We had to dig out the tent several times—another hazard—climbers have been known to be trapped in snow-laden tents. Finally, late the following morning, the sky finally cleared, we radioed down, hastily broke camp and I, at least, almost cheered when the ski plane came into sight. The previous night we had hoped to escape during another brief window, but by the time that plane arrived the window had closed. This time we took down the tent, got our gear onto the two sleds and pulled it down to the landing strip, watched as the plane landed, got our gear aboard, mercifully forgetting the noxious CMC, and then climbed in ourselves. But we weren't home yet. Although the pilot had made several passes with the plane's skis to flatten nearly a foot of newly fallen snow, it was not certain we could take off, but we did, getting a splendid view of the now visible Denali as we flew through Ruth Gorge. An hour later we landed. Talkeetna isn't exactly Paris, but it might as well have been as far as my joy at being there. When we got back to the climbing school, I was greeted with, "Would you like a blueberry muffin?" It was a great muffin, but it seemed odd that no one asked anything about the vicissitudes of the trip. A few hours later I was eating a salmon dinner in the first-class dining car of the Alaska railway en route to Fairbanks and a reunion that I hadn't been any too sure would occur with my much-loved wife Sara. We had used our satellite radio while we were trapped on the mountain and I had spoken to Sara several times, assuring her that this was the last time I would separate from her to go off on one of my crazy adventures. Fortunately, she didn't take me too seriously. But for a 71-year-old guy with a seriously arthritic ankle, it was quite an experience. Looking back on it, I now see my strong anxiety during the day of more or less enforced idleness in the claustrophobic tent during the snowstorm as a post-traumatic stress reaction.

Having no other diversions to break my claustrophobic feelings as we hung out in the tent during the severe periods of the storm, I borrowed Joey's copy of David Roberts' terrific book, *On the Ridge Between Life and Death*. Diverting it may have been, but reading of climbing fatalities, terrifyingly deep crevasse falls, and climbers suffocating in snow-buried tents did nothing to decrease my anxiety.

The area used for landings was fortunately quite large, and regaining our saddle camp by struggling uphill through the deepening snow was a workout. That relaxed me. But the periods of inactivity, combined with my post-traumatic flashbacks of falling and of then looking up toward what seemed (in the flashbacks) the inaccessible rim of the crevasse, took their toll. I was getting more and more antsy knowing that mountain storms can last for days, and increasingly anxious to see Sara. So the sweaty climbs up and down the slope above the runway really helped. The glimpses of mountains through the swirling snow had an eerie beauty and I tried to regard the rumbling of the distant avalanches and the sounds coming from the not-so-distant point releases as musical accompaniment to an adventure. And I did momentarily succeed in converting the emotional (fear) into the aesthetic—but an hour back in the tent and I was as uptight as ever. The “frozen” emotions that left me so calm—and so functional—during both falls now cascaded in avalanches of their own.

In reality, we were in no real danger. We were warm, dry, and had plenty of food and fuel. I was reacting not so much to the admittedly uncomfortable sense of being trapped on the mountain as to my unexperienced fear of being trapped forever in a crevasse. My calm was highly functional and may indeed have saved my life as I was able to systematically follow Joey’s instructions and work my way up as he pulled me out. But other feelings were there, as evidenced not only by the flashbacks I had had hanging out in the tent during the storm, but by their persistence even after I returned to the “lower 48.” They have now vanished.

Would I do it again? Of course. Who would want to miss the mystery and beauty of Ruth Glacier and the amphitheater? Besides, you can’t live forever.

Chapter 17:

Ocean and Rock

Stepping naked out of the bathtub with freshly dyed blue feet, I danced as enticingly as I could. Yet, alas. I had no more success in eliciting a response from my female than that other booby who had inspired my dance.

He, unlike me, is renowned for courtship dancing, a spectacular exhibition of which I was fortunate enough to witness on the Galapagos island of North Seymour.

He, of course, is a blue-footed booby. He tried so hard to no avail and I felt sorry for him. Then Sara said of Mrs. Booby, “Poor thing, she already has two eggs. What does he expect from her?”

The Galapagos Islands, as Darwin famously noted, are about sex and death, the twin pillars of evolution. Here, in the isolation of habitats, Darwin first saw clearly the fruits of natural selection and gained insight into the process.

The islands are also starkly beautiful, utterly fascinating and teeming with life. Sara and I were privileged to spend eight days and nights on a small catamaran cruising the Galapagos. There was sea kayaking, followed by snorkeling, followed by hiking on one of the islands, more snorkeling and then a long kayak back to our catamaran. It was sort of like being in a summer camp on steroids, with activity piled on activity.

The wildlife was beyond belief. Having no fear of man (or woman), sea lions, sea turtles, giant tortoises, iguanas and a bewildering variety of birds, including the aforementioned boobies and the incredibly majestic frigate birds, pelicans, penguins (yes, on the Equator) and flamingos could be approached without them running or flying off. Basically they ignored us, projecting perhaps a bit of contempt. The exceptions were young sea lions who not only didn't flee, but swam all around us, playing and blowing bubbles.

The snorkeling was awe inspiring, revealing worlds hitherto unknown to us. The colors and sheer abundance of the aquatic life were not only aesthetic but spiritual experiences insofar as they induced awe and wonder.

Sara got to swim with sea turtles and I encountered a reef shark who was a little too interested in me. I could only hope that he had read his personality profile—“harmless”—

and that he had had a good lunch. After what seemed like an eternity he finally swam off.

One day we detoured to join a pod of dolphins who swam with, under and around our ship, the Galapagos Vision. The islands themselves were surprisingly different from each other. We hiked, botanized and birded on six of them.

The trip was as much an intellectual as a physical challenge. Our guide imparted so much information that it was impossible to absorb and retain even a significant portion of it. What remained was a new appreciation of the infinite complexity of life; its awe-inspiring potential for adaptation; and the violence and beauty of the never-ending cycle of birth, life and death.

Somehow it made it convincingly unlikely that I would be an exception, and there was some comfort in knowing that I was part of a vast pattern, one aspect of which is mortality.

Chapter 18:

In Praise of Yak Dung: Practicing the “Art of Happiness” on a Trek in the Himalayas

As alluring as Everest was and is, we almost didn't go—and, I have to admit, there were times along the way when I almost wished we hadn't.

When we landed, Nepal was on the verge of civil war and Katmandu the scene of daily clashes between police and protesters. Emptied by a strict curfew, the city's streets were deserted and its stores shuttered. We stayed as close as possible to the airport and felt, if not endangered, depressed by the gloom of the city and its downcast inhabitants. Without having explored it we flew out of Katmandu on an 18-seater the next morning. The plane cut between mountains that seemed as if you could touch them and plunged, stomach flippingly, down air pockets before landing in Lukla (which means *sheep pasture*) on a short strip ending in something like a runway truck ramp. We disembarked, loaded our *dzos*—cow-yak hybrids used as pack animals—and started walking.

Things didn't exactly look up after that, either, at least not at first. After walking through one solid day of rain, which started about an hour after we left Lukla, followed by 40 hours of driving snow as we twisted up and down precipitous trails overlooking thousand-foot gorges, criss-crossed by narrow, swaying suspension bridges, set vibrating by yak trains, we found ourselves sitting around a cold stove, shivering in a dank lodge at over 14,000 feet in Dingbouche. We were far above the tree line, so a wood fire was out of the question. This tiny Himalayan village, now somewhat enlarged by tea houses and lodges catering to Everest trekkers, seemed the incarnation of the dismal. Dingbouche was icy, muddy, populated more by crows and dzos than by people, and getting colder by the second. The thought of spending the night that cold was terrifying us when—almost miraculously, it seemed—our luck changed.

A maiden entered the dining room of our lodge with an armful of yak dung and a jar of kerosene to start it burning. Before long the stove blazed and we relaxed. Yak dung not only burns hot, at lower altitudes it saves the forest and at the higher ones it makes trekking tolerable. So ecologically sound, available, inexpensive, and vital, I offer yaks and their hybrid relatives who carried our gear, and provided cheese and fuel, my unstinting praise. To yaks and all they produce, I say, “Three Cheers!” (My niece and traveling companion,

Ariel, more pragmatic and anticipating the evening repast, asked, “Do you wash your hands before dinner?” as the young woman crammed the stove with the yak dung.)

After a day of acclimating to the altitude, we did some serious climbing and arrived at the last settlement of any size, Lobuche. The steep ascent into Lobuche follows the terminal moraine of the Khumbu Glacier. The moraine consists of rocks, often boulder-sized, which have been pushed down by the movement of the glacier.

By now we were at 16,000 feet, and while we weren’t sick, we weren’t exactly sea-level normal either. The previous day, our guide Sherap had advised a climber/hiker to let his wife take him back down. He wasn’t doing well at all and reluctantly agreed. Later we saw a Japanese man, who looked more dead than alive, being led down on an unwilling horse being pulled by two Sherpas. It made one think—as did the monuments we had passed on the way to Lobuche in memory of trekkers who had died in these mountains.

But such doubts faded as we sank into deep sleep in the lodge at Lobuche. Sherap woke us at 4:00 a.m. to drink “bed tea” before starting the climb to our goal on this trek, Kala Patar (which means *Black Rock*), the 18,200-foot mountain that faces Everest and the other giant peaks. A kind of bump on the south face of the 26,000-foot Pumori, Kala Patar’s summit was reputed to offer spectacular views of Everest. From there, we would be able to see the summiteers’ tents as well as the Khumbu ice floe where most Everest fatalities occur.

But we weren’t there yet. When we started, at 5:00 a.m., it was bitterly cold. I stopped being able to feel my fingers until I put on another layer of gloves and slowly defrosted them. The water in Ariel’s camelback was frozen solid. My teeth ached from the frigid air each time I inhaled too rapidly in an attempt to stay oxygenated. Every step was treacherous as we constantly struggled to stay on our feet.

I should mention that I had been having major problems with an arthritic left ankle, and I now wore a brace inside my boot. I lived in constant fear that my boot would wet through, as it had during our earlier downpour, and ruin the brace, leaving me to descend on the back of one of those reluctant horses.

Once the sun melted the ice, we were walking uphill through a river, or what felt like one. Finally we reached solid soil and rock. We crested a ridge looking down into the terminal moraine of the Khumbu ice floe coming down from Everest and at the village of

Gorek Shep. Looking upward we could see the glacier-covered faces of Nuptse, Lhotse, and Ama Dablam as well as Kala Patar, dwarfed from this angle by the height of Pumori.

Kala Patar is a deceptive mountain. Because the other peaks are so much higher, it looks easy from a distance. It is also characterized by a series of false summits, making you feel at some points like you will never make it to the top. As we gained altitude we walked back into hard-packed and slippery snow, making me wish that we had crampons. To make matters worse, clouds dominated the sky and we feared getting to the top only to be cheated of a close-up view of Everest.

Then with the suddenness of a curtain rising on a stage, the clouds lifted, revealing Everest in all its majesty and glory. I thought of the City Opera production of Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron* in which Moses climbs a hill upon which a curtain rises revealing the Promised Land.

My impatience made me want to run to the top, but of course I couldn't; we were above 18,000 feet by then. But I got there, turned towards the peaks at the top of the world—Everest, Nuptse, and Lhotse—and started to weep.

When conditions along the way threatened to make reaching Kala Patar impossible, we would experience disappointment and despair until Ariel rallied and said, "*Dayeinu*," which means "It would have been enough," referring to each of God's miracles on the way to Sinai. In this case it meant that what we had already experienced would have been "enough," even if nothing further had been possible. And in that "*Dayeinu*," our depression lifted and we found the strength to continue.

It had been a tough, tough climb, a test of endurance, commitment and determination. Reaching Kala Patar felt like a spiritual victory, and insofar as it was about the overcoming of self and very real fears, it was. That overcoming was paradoxical, requiring both will and surrender, ego and egolessness. My response to the outward magnificence was no less powerful, and somehow inner and outer became fused.

My pace on the descent was frustratingly slow. The cold and wet had left me with a chest cold that was rapidly turning into bronchitis, my lips were cracked and blistered from the sun, and my "good" right foot was badly swollen. But we made it back.

The Katmandu we returned to was a different city. The King had given in and announced a referendum on the continuation of the monarchy, and you could feel a sense of liberation and joy throughout the city, mirroring our own emotional state as we sat around

the hotel pool, awaiting the flight back to New York and a reunion with my beloved wife, Sara.

For a guy with a morbid fear of heights, I hadn't done badly. I'm not sure how I did it, but I do know that the doing changed something. During the trek I had read *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama, and I returned feeling that some of that art had become part of me.

Chapter 19:

Babu Climbs KIBO

Originally this was going to be a trip to Everest base camp. Then my nephew, Tom, about to receive his MBA from MIT, suggested Kilimanjaro. Only later did I learn that climbing Kilimanjaro was an elite MBA “thing” and that the summit was likely to be crowded with recent Wharton grads. But I didn’t know that then, so I consulted with my intrepid adventure companion, niece Ariel, who had shared treks through Bhutan, Nepal and India with me. Thrilled by the thought of seeing Africa and climbing to its 19,300 roof she instantly signed on and Kilimanjaro it was. The spring of ’05 was, to say the least, eventful. Almost five years after Ginny, my companion over thirty years of intense, mostly joyful life, died; I was remarrying on May 15th. June ninth we would leave for Africa. Somehow the trick was to be fully present in the moment—experiencing whatever that moment was—frantic wedding preparations, individuating the ritual, experiencing shifting, tumultuous emotions of joy, fear, doubt, love, guilt, you name it—all in a bewildering kaleidoscope, the crystallization of certainty and finally the glorious day of the ceremony itself, the brief honeymoon on Shelter Island, and then preparation for Africa without losing the uniqueness of each moment by telescoping and foreshadowing. Somehow it all worked out and I was able to be “there” as each “there” unfolded. Sara, my new wife, was marvelously generous, giving me leave to fly to Africa so soon after our marriage. But the separation would be brief—provided I survived—since Sara would join us in Arusa, Tanzania, the night we got off the mountain, and we would all go on safari.

The flight to Kilimanjaro International Airport with a stopover in Amsterdam was itself uneventful, albeit interminable. We landed after nightfall, cleared customs, met Alan, our exceptionally able guide, and drove off in the dark toward Arusa National Park. Tossing and twisting on the gutted jungle road through the park seemed adventure enough. Cape Buffalo, notorious for their unpredictability, crossed in front of us and various unidentified denizens of the dark checked us out. It was downright scary and we hadn’t even left the Land Rover. Traversing the same territory two days later in daylight, it seemed utterly benign. Some primitive fear of the unknown had evidently been operating.

After being stopped by heavily armed rangers at a checkpoint, apparently because there was some sort of communication glitch about our party entering the park, we waited

seemingly endlessly as radio calls about us went back and forth. Finally we were cleared and reached our camp. Exhaustion superseded all other feelings and we quickly fell into deep sleep. We awoke to a scene of utter delight. Mount Meru, Kilimanjaro's 14,000-foot neighbor, loomed above us, its snowcapped summit a counterpoint to the lushness surrounding the camp. We spent the morning getting to know Alan and some of the rest of the crew, checking equipment and learning more about the glories and risks of the climb we were about to undertake. In the afternoon we took a warm-up hike, accompanied by an armed ranger, now perceived as a friend instead of as an ominous mystery figure. The ranger was mostly protection against Cape Buffalo, particularly isolated males, who can be very dangerous. But you never know, it was also possible we would encounter a leopard suffering from a sleep disturbance that diverted him from his usual nocturnal habits—and it was lunch time. We did see buffalo in the distance, but not leopards. Instead, we were rewarded by an encounter with a herd (if that is the right word) of twenty or more giraffes. These amazing creatures demonstrated no fear of us and came quite close. Their grace and fluent movement belied their apparent ungainliness. In actuality, they were anything but ungainly in spite of their architecture. Although the choice is well nigh impossible, if I had to choose, surprisingly the giraffe—and we were to see many more—became my favorite African mammal.

Very well fed by a multi-coursed barbecue around a blazing fire with Mount Meru glittering in the moonlight, we felt ready for Kilimanjaro that night. Eager anticipation and underlying anxiety competed with each other but anticipation was definitely dominant.

In the morning we could hardly stand taking time for breakfast before we took off for the “main event.” We drove about two hours past giraffes and buffalos and colobus monkeys until we reached the Kilimanjaro National Park Registration Office, which is situated in a classic African village. Impatient to start, yet enjoying the colorful panorama of an agricultural village, we survived the slow-moving wheels of the park bureaucratic machine. Finally registered, we climbed back into the Land Rover, drove another hour and then slipped on our day packs and started moving through the forest. We soon stopped to meet our crew—30 porters for 3 people. Feeling like the last of the imperialists, we set aside our liberal consciences and enjoyed these Massai and Chagga tribesmen with their varying command of English and acquaintance with urban Western ways. They proved truly remarkable in their endurance, spirit, and care taking. They were to carry food, fuel, cooking equipment, tents, sleeping bags, a dining room tent, tableware, a toilet tent, oxygen, pressure bags for altitude emergencies, water, ice axes and who knows what else up 13,000

feet from our base camp at 6,000 feet to the top. They did it with grace, joy, friendliness and enthusiasm. They were not only porters; they were educators, companions and ultimately friends.

Alan, our guide, was something else: vastly knowledgeable, masterly in his command of the physical, medical, logistic, zoological, botanical, aesthetic, ecological, geological and anthropological data necessary to safely, meaningfully, consciousness-expandingly climb Kilimanjaro. We, each of us, felt completely safe and secure under Alan's tutelage. We were to climb the hard way, approaching the peak from the west, following the Lenosho River to the near vertical Western Breach, then spend a night in a crater at 18,500 feet before ascending Kibo and reaching Uhuru Peak. By far the most strenuous and difficult approach, it offers the major advantage of more time to acclimatize to the increasing altitude. Considering the difficulty and height, this is a perfect route to go "poli-poli," "slowly-slowly," as Alan repeatedly enjoined us to do. Altitude sickness is a serious business. I was to become all too familiar with its mild to moderate incarnation, as was Tom. Its more serious manifestations, cerebral edema and pulmonary edema, can be fatal and indeed, many die each year on this mountain. The Lenosho route, extraordinarily difficult as it is, is paradoxically the safest approach and it gave us the best chance of not being among the 50% of trekkers who fail to make the peak. The best protection against mountain sickness is poli-poli and hydration, that is, to go slowly and drink. There is also a drug, Diamox, which increases the oxygen-carrying potential of red blood cells. Although controversial, Alan recommended it and Tom and I used it. Ariel, being allergic to sulfa compounds, which include Diamox, could not take it. Instead, she used herbs and coca tea and suffered the least from the effects of altitude. You never know.

There are five distinct ecological zones on Kilimanjaro: Forest, Heath, Moreland, Alpine Desert and Ice Cap. The boundaries between the zones are stark and sudden, almost as if someone had drawn a line on a map. No transitions. Step across an invisible line and you are in a different world. There are actually two peaks at Kilimanjaro: Mawenzi, which is slightly lower but unclimbable except by the most skilled and well-equipped mountaineers, and Kibo, which culminates at Uhuru—Swahili for freedom—Peak. Naturally, we ascended Kibo. Starting from the west we missed the spectacular saddle between the peaks.

The first day's trek through the Montane Forest, although steadily up (we were to gain 3,000 feet, putting us at 9,000 feet at the end of the day), was not difficult. The forest was fascinatingly teeming with birds and monkeys. The black and white colobus monkeys with

their amazing thickly-haired tails are acrobats of the first rank. We'd already met some in the national park, but their abundance in the forest was a different experience—one of great beauty and amazing grace. The numerous blue monkeys, on the other hand, were distinguished by their flamboyant blue butts. Although we no longer had an armed escort we were told that the Cape Buffalo were common in the forest, as were elephants—also not necessarily friends, especially mothers with calves and lone bulls—and leopards. By now my attitude towards leopards had completely changed and I was possessed with an avid desire to see one. As we walked, I would call out, “here kitty, kitty, kitty” from time to time, alas, without a response. Later when Alan and I spotted a serval “garbaging” in our camp of the night, Ariel decided to promote the serval to a little leopard so Uncle Jerry could have a leopard experience. Well, maybe not quite, but a serval *is* a wild cat and a close relative.

Our camp that night was shared with several other parties and a park ranger, but it nevertheless felt simultaneously peaceful and wild. It was also quite beautiful. Tom had a brief spell of nausea, including throwing up, but quickly recovered and nobody thought much about it. Considering that everything and the means to cook it had to be carried on someone's back, the food was extraordinarily good. For the most part it would have passed muster in a first-rate restaurant. Our only complaint was the backless stools around the table in the dining tent. Balancing as you eat is disconcerting.

The next morning, the trek turned serious. We soon left the forest zone and entered the heath zone, to be followed by the moreland. Foliage became sparser and smaller and its nature changed. There was less color and fewer flowers. The air became increasingly chilling and downright cold when the sun went behind a cloud. The soft forest floor was replaced by rock and the climbing became increasingly difficult. Finally we crested the Shira Plateau, the remnant of a volcano that collapsed a millennium ago. We still had a long way to go over the ridge and down into the Shira floor before stopping for the night. Ariel and Tom went ahead, but I was badly fatigued and went poli-poli with Alan, which gave us a chance to talk and me an opportunity to learn about the indigenous culture or should I say cultures. Alan, although urbanized and living in Arusha, is a Massai. That afternoon he told me, and the next day Tom and Ariel, about his life and the life of his people. Alan told us about the tension between tribalism and urbanism and the ways in which his generation, while transitioned away from the tribal, tried to hold on to as much of the traditional as possible. This living with a foot in two worlds was perfectly exemplified by his having met his wife in an Arusha discotheque, yet having to pay the bridal price of a goat to his future father-in-law before he could marry her. He also spoke of the tension between the

overwhelmingly Christian-Animistic mainland and the overwhelmingly Moslem island of Zanzibar. Alan, like most of our crew, would be perfectly happy to see Zanzibar separate. Alan told me about the Massai circumcision rites in which pubescent boys of 13 or 14 are publicly cut in front of the entire tribe—men and women—and how any signs of reacting to the pain instantly discredited the boy who reacted. We later came upon a group of boys on their circumcision day dressed in strikingly colored robes who indeed showed no signs of pain or even discomfort. He also told us that a woman cannot refuse to leave a disco with a man who wants her, and that she has little say in who she will eventually marry. He also said that sleeping with other men's wives was perfectly acceptable.

Alan also told us about female circumcision, which for the Massai means incision of the clitoris without damaging the labia and that his wife had been circumcised by her mother at a very early age. He said he preferred women whose clitoris was intact, although this was culturally deviant. Ariel, Tom and I had difficulty with female genital mutilation and did not see it as an acceptable folkway of a different culture. Tanzanians themselves are moving away from the practice, but slowly and inconsistently. Alan also told us of extra-legal punishment meted out to misbehaving delinquent young men, who after three warnings, are carried off "far away" and given "seventy whips." He also told us about festivals of various sorts, about Massai and Chagga weddings, and spoke extremely lovingly of his own family, as did our crew of theirs. Although the tribal differences would be striking and meaningful to their members, from our vantage point the Chagga and Massai cultures seemed very similar. Alan and other crew members also emphasized the lack of tribal animosity in mainland Tanzania in contrast to surrounding countries in which genocide and mass murder have occurred. All expressed pride in the peacefulness and cross-cultural mutual respect within Tanzania.

After what seemed like weeks rather than hours, we spotted that night's camp still far in the distance. Reluctantly, I gave Alan my daypack, our pace accelerated, and we reached camp. We were now at 11,300 feet. That night I became quite ill, suffering from projectile vomiting and explosive diarrhea, all reactions to the altitude. Tom fled our tent as the zipper jammed and I heaved inside it. Although I didn't get much sleep (our marvelous crew quickly cleaned the tent), I felt better in the morning and managed to eat and drink, both vital if I was to continue. That day we walked for 5+ hours across Shira Plateau and up its east face until we reached Fischer's Camp at 12,950 feet! Fischer's Camp is also known as Shira II. We were really feeling the cold in spite of multiple layers of clothing. It was June 14th, my 68th birthday. Ariel had a cupcake she had carried all the way from New York;

Tom, a card, and to my amazement the crew, led by Gotfried, who had learned to love Western classical music singing in his church choir, entered the dining tent with a cake replete with lit candles, singing happy birthday in English and Swahili. It was truly a birthday like none other and I couldn't have felt better. Not so three hours later. I awoke far sicker than the night before. Soon the toilet tent, my shoes and God knows what else were disgustingly gross. Ariel heard my distress and came out to help me. I was just too sick to care what she saw or didn't see. Finally, I cleaned up and fell asleep. Once again our remarkable crew rendered the scene of illness fresh, odorless and without blemish.

In the morning I was weak but no longer ill, having dosed myself with copious amounts of Imodium and Pepto-Bismol. I was not to become ill again, but I didn't know that then. At breakfast I said I couldn't take another night like the previous one and that if I got sick again I would have to go down. Ariel got angry at me and told me not to be so negative. It was only later that I learned that Alan had already announced that he would have to send me down if I got sick again. I guess Ariel just didn't want me to miss the peak.

That day we hiked for seven hours against a strong, steady wind up across a boulder-strewn landscape of increasingly steep ascent. We were not even in the Alpine zone and it was freezing. I forced myself to eat and drink and I kept everything down, but it wasn't easy. It required constant effort to go uphill against the wind. Finally, we reached Lava Tower, a 300-foot lava plug projecting from the side of the mountain. We camped in its shadows at 14,310 feet. I was greeted by cries of "Babu, Babu, good job, Babu!" Babu means grandfather or respected elder. It is both affectionate and respectful. The crew was responding to my seven-hour struggle after two nights of illness. I had to admit I felt I had indeed earned the appellation of "Babu" and I suspect that I will go to my grave thinking of myself as "Babu." At that point I knew I was going to make it and I felt really good about myself. I had lost most of my fear of the altitude and the only thing that worried me was fear of the cold. We were given water bottles filled with boiling water to put in our sleeping bags and that helped, but God, it was cold.

We had been able to see Kilimanjaro almost from the beginning. But during the last few days we were able to see Uhuru Peak clearly. Our sightings of Kilimanjaro were paradoxical. When we first saw it, it seemed so far away that reaching it seemed impossible. Yet, as we got closer and we were able to see more detail of its slopes, climbing to its summit with its sheer walls seemed even more impossible. So as we got close, and indeed intimately close to Kibo, we had the greatest difficulty imagining that we could ascend it. "Formidable" was an understatement and "daunting" a minimization. When I stuck my head

out of the tent that morning, I was awestruck by the mountain's preternatural beauty and seeming inaccessibility. Even if we could climb it, the cold seemed an insurmountable barrier. My awe wasn't quite strong enough to stop the shivering.

As I emerged from the tent, I thought that I must be hallucinating. I saw or thought I saw a jogger in shorts and polo shirt pass through the camp and continue up the mountain. But he was no hallucination. In 1993, another lunatic jogged up, only to wind up in the hospital for five days. He survived—barely—and this one was apparently trying to beat his time. As we continued up the mountain we kept looking for the body, but we never found it. Doubtlessly, he had gone around rather than up the Western Breach and taken an easier route to the top. We soon put the insane jogger out of our minds. Tom was really sick, having had a night much like my worst night. He wanted to go down. Alan and Ariel tried to talk him out of it. We had a short hiking day ahead of us to give us more time to acclimatize and Tom would probably be able to recover. But Tom had had it and couldn't be persuaded. Alan sent him down to an emergency jeep road with his assistant, Auguste. We felt badly for Tom, but soon we were too concerned with our situation to give him much thought. Auguste quickly caught up with us, having gotten Tom to his rendezvous with his emergency vehicle and then more or less ran back up to where we were. His pace amazed and still does.

Ari and I continued to the Arrow Glacier Camp at 16,000 feet. There had been cabins at this glacier camp until they were wiped out by one of the frequent avalanches at this site. Knowledge of our vulnerability had surprisingly little effect on us. That afternoon we climbed part way up the Western Breach and then returned to camp, following the mountaineer's wise adage, "Climb High, Sleep Low."

From our glacier we could clearly see the Western Breach, which appeared virtually vertical and unclimbable. Our brief experience on the Breach didn't make it seem any more doable. We spent a freezing night literally listening for avalanches. Awakened at dawn, we ate breakfast in the dark and cold and started on the toughest day of our lives.

Perhaps you have seen the IMAX film, *Kilimanjaro*, or its video version. If you have, you have a radically underestimated conception of the difficulty of the climb albeit the climbers in the film had taken a different route. The IMAX film also errs in not showing the "team," without which nobody can climb Kibo. Neither the video nor our itinerary gave us any idea of what we would be up against.

Bitter toe- and finger-numbing cold; the threatened frostbite; the near vertical, icy, rocky, unstable surfaces to climb; the constant possibility of avalanche, especially in the lower part of the Breach; scrambles over rock ledge after rock ledge, each leaving us breathless and exhausted; foot-wide traverses with hundred-foot drop-offs ready to break bones; snow-covered treacherous rocks and ice fields and glaciers on every side. It was definitely a case of false advertising. The itinerary described the Western Breach as a “non-technical” climb—you could have fooled me. Although it was true that we didn’t use ropes and pitons, there was no way we could have descended without them. Once committed, there was no choice but to continue to the top, and it was far from certain that we could get there.

Alan had assigned Gotfried, my birthday serenader, as Babu’s special watchman, and Auguste, who had raced back up the mountain after guiding Tom to safety, as Ari’s mentor. They had opposite weaknesses. Gotfried, when he wasn’t humming Bach chorales, crowded me too much, making me feel incapable, while Auguste, whose English was marginal, virtually ignored Ariel. At one point he left Ariel sitting in a spot especially feared for its avalanches while he charged ahead. Fortunately, Alan saw where Ariel had stopped and yelled at her to get moving. Gotfried’s hovering, annoying as it was, had its uses. At one point I slipped, more from exhaustion than anything, as I pulled myself up the rock face. If Gotfried hadn’t caught me, I was in for a rapid descent with unknown consequences.

The higher we went, the steeper became the ascent. By the time we could see the crater rim clearly there seemed to be no way to get to it. I remember asking Alan, “How do you know which way to go? There is no path.” But Alan didn’t need a path. And without him we would have had no chance of making it. As we came closer to the rim, each scramble and body pull required minutes of deep breathing to recover. We were now above 18,000 feet and the available oxygen was less than 50% of that at sea level. The only thing that had gotten better was the temperature. The sun had long teased us, appearing about to shine on us, but never doing so, even as we looked at the brightly lit Arrow Glacier Camp nearly 2,000 feet below us. But finally the sun did reach to our level and we unfroze. Ariel had suffered much from the cold, and I feared her feet would be frostbitten; I hadn’t exactly loved the temperature either. Now that danger was past, all we had to do was not fall over whatever precipice we were on at the moment and pull ourselves over yet another ledge. Finally, I saw that the end of the path to the crater rim was only yards away and with a burst of energy reached it. I could see our camp, readied by those incredible porters, in an eerie other-side-of-the-moon setting, probably not more than ten minutes away across the flat

crater floor. But I was so at the end of my resources that I didn't think I could make it. Fortunately, I did—then collapsed. Ariel had enough energy left to play on the glacier, but I just sat in the dining tent drinking tea. We had climbed 2,500 icy, vertical feet, going from 16,000 to 18,500 feet. I guess I had a right to my collapse. Alan took our pulses and mine was 84, Ariel's quite normal, so we were in no danger of severe altitude sickness.

The hot food somewhat revitalized me, and given that our altitude almost always takes away appetite, just taking in adequate nutrition became a life-or-death matter. I was surprised at how hungry I was. That was a good sign. That night was our coldest. Even the hot water bottles froze before long. Ariel and I slept in the same tent for warmth and the combined body heat worked fairly well. Unfortunately, Alan had told me to double my dose of Diamax, which is a diuretic, and multiple trips to pee interrupted both our sleeps. Yet considering that at 18,000 feet sleeplessness is also a symptom of altitude, we got a reasonable amount of rest.

That rest allowed me to appreciate the strange, otherworldly beauty of the crater and its surrounding glaciers in a way I hadn't been able to during my exhaustion of the previous night. Getting out of the sleeping bag in the freezing dawn was tough. I was dreading the final ascent, but it proved easy. Unlike the more or less vertical Western Breach, the final 900 feet was beautifully switchbacked. Ariel gave me an hour lead so we would get to Uhuru summit together and we did, with our crew urging us on. The summit was thrilling. It was 8:15 a.m., Saturday, June 18th; it was our seventh day on the mountain. It was a crystalline clear day with bright sun that had rapidly warmed the bone-chilling air we had had to contend with when we left the crater. We had even removed a few layers. We were far above the cloud cover, looking down thousands of feet at the fleecy white rolls blanketing all of Africa below us. Surrounded by ice fields and glaciers, we looked into a world we had never known. We were on the peak of the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free-standing mountain anywhere in the world. It was a landscape primeval and pristine, wondrous and extraordinarily beautiful. I was suffused with feelings of awe and wonder. Ariel and I embraced and kissed first each other, and then the famous Uhuru Peak sign somewhat incongruously draped with Buddhist prayer flags. Joy, intense feelings of gratitude and an egoless sense of accomplishment overwhelmed me. I thanked God, the universe and the people whose love had given me the strength to overcome fear of cold, height and oxygen deprivation and reach my goal. Ariel prayed for all of Africa and I recited what I could remember of the *Shehechyanu*, the beautiful Hebrew prayer thanking God for bringing us to this day. Amazingly, we had Uhuru—the peak so appropriately

named Freedom on Tanzania's Independence Day—all to ourselves, the small group that had been there when we had arrived having left. We took it all in, absorbing aesthetic and spiritual nourishment with the avidity that a starving man brings to a meal. We knew we couldn't hold onto it in the sense of possessing it, yet we wanted to make what we were experiencing a part of ourselves forever. I think we succeeded in this in a sort of egoless identification with the sheer wonder of Kilimanjaro and of the climb and of the human bonds of love that had brought us to this place.

We stayed about a half hour. Then starting to feel dizzy from the lack of oxygen we started down. Besides, we had “far to go before we slept.” To be precise, 9,000 feet down to our camp for the night. I guess Frost (in more senses than one) was on my mind, at least unconsciously, because later as I descended, I thought that my experience was the obverse of Frost's speaker who was, “one acquainted with the night.” I was one “acquainted with the light”—the light of morning on Kibo. The fact that I too have some acquaintance with the night only heightened the glory of that light.

Just as we started down we heard an enormous crash. Turning towards it we saw tons of ice dropping from the Southern Ice Field Glacier. It was an all too vivid reminder that the world beneath us and its follies such as the pollution that causes global warming hadn't ceased to be. That reminder was sobering, but not fatal to our exhilaration.

You see more walking down, and the ever-changing landscape below us continued to inspire and thrill. When we reached Stella Point, a sub-peak that offers a stunningly beautiful view of the descent to the tree line, we stopped, rested and enjoyed. We also finished the cow-shaped cookies (the cow being Sara's totem animal) that she had given us to eat on the summit. I carried them along with some chocolate for energy on the summit and a miniature portrait of her up the mountain, so in a sense Sara climbed it too.

Then Ari and Auguste went ahead as I continued down with Alan and Gotfried. The going was very tough now in loose scree at ridiculously sharp angles. Alan advised digging my heels in, and that helped, but evidently my pace was still too slow so Gotfried started helping me by holding my arm. Nobody noticed that my poles were too short for descending and that didn't help either. At times I felt like a prisoner being dragged to my execution. In general, Gotfried's help didn't feel good. Whatever role my counter-dependence was playing, in retrospect I am sorry I agreed and gave in to Alan's pressure to accept the help. He was concerned to make camp before dark. It took something out of the whole extraordinary day. On the other hand, a 9,000 foot descent after a 900 foot ascent at

19,000 feet was at the limit of Babu's physical capability, and Gotfried had had his moments, such as singing "Amazing Grace" in Swahili.

It was a very long day, leg killing, knee stressing, but fascinating as we went from zone to zone across those map-like lines until we were once again in the forest. Finally at very last light we got to camp. Unbelievably, members of the crew had descended another 5,000 feet to the road and brought fresh supplies back up, so we had a fresh fish dinner.

In the morning, the crew serenaded Babu, and Ari and I went off with "Good job, Babu" ringing in my ears. This time I refused help, remembered to adjust my walking sticks and did just fine albeit now through forest, not on loose scree. But it wasn't easy. The descent remained very steep as we went down another 4,500 feet. That last day was the only day we had rain, but it wasn't hard and we didn't mind at all. Monkeys and birds reappeared but alas, no leopard appeared to send us off. Perhaps they were all visiting their legendary ancestor on the mountain top in the "Snows of Kilimanjaro."

The road was nearly washed out so we had an extra mile or two through the mud until we gratefully spied the Land Rover. After a delightful picnic lunch at the gate of the park with the entire crew, this time with chairs with backs, we sat for awhile and then drove to the Moivaro Coffee Plantation, replete with hot water and showers, Tom, delightful cabins and beautiful gardens. After hours of soaking we reassembled for dinner, Ari and I feeling triumphant. I'm not sure what Tom felt, but he seemed okay with having gone down. Being served in luxurious surroundings felt great after eight days of trekking, cold, and Wet Ones baths. Clean clothes did wonders. Just as dessert was about to be served, in walked my wife Sara, fresh off the plane. It was a joyous reunion. In the morning we all left on safari and a week of baboons, elephants, giraffes, rhinos, jackals, wildebeests, zebra, monkeys, warthogs, hyenas, lizards, hippopotami, and each other. And then there was the lioness, one of six, who after withdrawing her bloody face from the guts of a wildebeest, wiped it with one gigantic paw and turned towards Sara, affixing her in her gaze, clearly contemplating dessert. But that's another story.

Chapter 20:

Dogsledding in the Yukon

Having read Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and *To Build a Fire* preparatory to embarking on a six-day sled dog trip into the wilderness of Canada's Yukon Territory, I cast around for a suitable book to take with me. Like almost everyone, I'd seen the film version of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, but I had never read it, so into the sled it went. Largely set in the frozen landscape of the Urals and Siberia, it seemed the perfect choice. The real Yukon by day and the fictional Siberia by night resonated with and enhanced each other.

Looking down at the icebound peaks of northern British Columbia and the Yukon as Air Canada took me a thousand miles north of Vancouver, I wondered what on earth I had gotten myself into. I was picked up at the Whitehorse Airport by Mary Walden, who knits canine booties by day, but unlike Penelope, need not unravel them by night since the dogs do that for her. I was driven 20 miles into the bush to the Waldens' home where I met their 18 adult Alaskan huskies and five utterly lovable 12-week old puppies. The next day we drove further into the bush and husband Blaine and I hitched up our teams and then plunged down a steep incline onto a frozen lake. The week before had been -35 degrees, but there was no turning back now. We soon passed a herd of caribou and a solitary First Nation (i.e., Native American), gun slung over shoulder in pursuit of the caribou, but judging from the wolf tracks we passed, he was not the only caribou hunter in the neighborhood.

Looking out on an expansiveness and openness of nameless lakes and mountains I had never experienced before, it seemed a good idea to say a prayer for the sled dogs, since I was utterly dependent on them. They were nothing less than great. Attitudinally they were much like the "innkeepers" that in many ways they were—affable, welcoming, related yet separate, friendly yet reserved and clearly bonded to their "parents," Mary and Blaine, in a way they were to no one else. Somehow they knew that their public and private lives required demarcation. Their career choice couldn't have brought them more satisfaction and there was nothing they loved more than running.

Blaine was much the same—thrillingly competent, vastly knowledgeable, intimately related yet always his own man, left wing in his politics and strongly committed to the spiritual value of preserving the wilderness, a reader and thinker and quite clear which species came first—it wasn't mine. He was a first-rate teacher and a wonderful cook. I did

think that he was excessively worried about the “heat wave,” meaning that the week I was out it didn’t go below zero, because it was too warm for the dogs.

This was definitely not dude ranch stuff—I was running my own team, having harnessed and hitched them, just as I was to feed and take care of them, steering the sled through the torturously twisting, rising and falling forest trail that we entered at the end of the lake. Somehow there was always a steep turn at the bottom of a hill, and I tipped over with the sled more than once. Going uphill, I was expected to assist the dogs by running behind the sled and pushing. If I didn’t, they would look back at me reproachfully as if to say “no slacking.” Watching the trail, the dogs, the traces and the potentially decapitating branches simultaneously took intense concentration and the sheer physicality of what looked like a passive sport was astonishing.

Emerging from the forest onto yet another frozen lake, we encountered “overflow,” water pushed through cracks in the ice by the weight of the snow that threatened wet boots and freezing feet. Remembering that London’s protagonist had frozen to death after just such an experience, my heart pounded until we were running once again on snow. Twenty miles later, we started up a steep ridge and just as it seemed certain that I would plunge back down to the lake, sled, dogs and all, we arrived at the cabin. This time the team, who are well trained and understood many commands, all of which they obeyed except “whoa,” actually stopped. After drilling through two feet of ice on the lake, hauling water up the steep slope to the cabin, stoking the wood stove and devouring a dinner of spaghetti and mooseballs, I lit a candle and returned to Siberia from the Yukon.

Dr. Zhivago is magnificent as an epic tale of the convolutions that Russia experienced during the failed revolution of 1905, World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution and the civil war that followed. It has grandeur, sweep and power as Pasternak brings to life the experience of Russians from every social class during these upheavals. He captures the horror, the idealism, the bitterness of the loss of hope and the gritty reality of those years. You come to understand what it meant to be Russian in the nascent Communist state of the twenties and thirties in a way you never will from reading history. Pasternak was surely emulating *War and Peace* in his tale of Russia before and after the revolution.

Some of his characterizations are flawed; yet we come to care deeply about Yuri and Lara. I wept when he died and she disappeared into the gulag. Pasternak’s humanism, mystical exultation of life, and condemnation of cruelty justified by theoretical goals are especially moving, knowing how dangerous it was for him to express such ideas in the

Soviet state. The contrast between the torment of Russia and the serenity and peace of the Yukon made me all the more appreciative of being there. After a week of traveling back and forth between the Yukon and Siberia, I put *Dr. Zhivago* back in my sled and started up a high pass, eerily beautiful with its mountains on each side, as we crossed a frozen tarn and then dropped down a thousand feet, the dogs running flat out until out of nowhere a truck was in front of me. I had reached the Alcan Highway and was back in “civilization”—sort of. Except for the solitary hunter, we had seen no one. The dogs had had their usual lunch of frozen whitefish, but Blaine and I had none. But then, driving up in her truck was Mary with, of all things, lox, cream cheese and bagels. Who would have guessed that first-grade bagels were baked in Whitehorse?

What do I conclude from all this? Mush and read *Dr. Zhivago*.

Chapter 21:

Poetry in Stone

I proposed doing the Snowman Trail in Bhutan’s Himalayas. My wife countered with “Have you lost your mind? That’s the hardest trail in Asia. If you insist I’ll have to have you committed.” So we looked for a compromise—and found one—Peru’s Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, which had the additional advantage, besides being doable, that Sara could participate too. She wouldn’t trek the Inca trail itself, but would take the train to Machu Picchu and meet me there. We added a visit to the Amazon to our itinerary and flew off to Lima.

Lima has a reputation as a gateway city to be traversed as quickly as possible before the muggers and impoverished urban sprawl overwhelm one. But that wasn’t our experience. We loved Miraflores, the suburb clinging to the Pacific Coast, where we stayed; the spectacular seafood restaurant far out on the pier where formidable breakers crashed throughout our meal; and the “baroque light” architecture of Lima’s historical core that was both beautiful and, with its Moorish influence, exotic.

The remnants of pre-Inca civilization found throughout the city anticipated our experience in the Andes and when we returned to Lima our “first hand” experience of these complex ancient civilizations made our visit to Lima’s superb Archeological and Anthropological Museum all the more meaningful.

The next day we flew to Cuzco, the one-time Inca capital, now heavily overlaid with Spanish incursions. Therein lies a problem. Cuzco is 11,000 feet up and there was no transition, no chance to acclimate. Sea level, then 11,000 plus feet. Both of us experienced altitude sickness. Sara almost fainted in a tour of a cathedral. But Cuzco is equipped—a nurse reeling an oxygen tank appeared seemingly from nowhere, and yet another tourist was revived. My symptoms were more gastrointestinal, and in retrospect were more bacterial than oxygen deprivation driven. I too recovered, but not completely until we returned to the States and I did a course of a drug called Flagel. It wasn’t a serious indisposition but it sure didn’t make the rigors of the Inca Trail any less rigorous.

Cuzco has charm, beautiful public squares, fascinating colonial architecture, magnificent natural surroundings and hordes of impoverished beggars ostensibly offering

goods for sale. The Church of San Blas, reached after a difficult climb to Cuzco's artist quarter, has the most incredible, exquisite nuanced wood carving I have ever seen. The indigenous artisan had created a seamless synthesis of Incan cosmology and Christian theology in his full-relief depiction of the three realms of human existence. His figures are as individuated in his chosen medium as Dante's are in his. San Blas was sort of a Latin American St. Francis, deeply invested in the natural world and its inhabitants. Definitely my kind of saint. Unfortunately, Sara got woozy again, and we returned to our hotel.

Four-thirty the next morning, I left a still shaken wife and headed for the start of the Inca Trail, a three-hour bus ride away, with my new "family." The oldest of my new relations was less than half my age and the rapport between us, especially after they got stoned each night, was less than perfect. But I reined in my curmudgeon side, and they came to admire my fortitude and persistence.

We left the bus at kilometer 80 of the Cuzco-Machu Picchu Railroad and started trekking. I was violently sick once again when we left the bus and it was an all around rough start: drizzling, foggy, steep, rocky, and unrelenting. Long Island had had a cold, wet spring, which meant that I was in poorer shape than I usually would be at that time of year. Sick, depressed at my slow progress, and discouraged, I toughed out day one. Eric, our leader and guide, was displeased at my slowness. When I finally arrived at our first night's camp it was well after nightfall. Eric had sent some porters to find me and a young guide in training to carry my pack. Immediately upon our arrival Eric announced that he was sending me back to Cuzco in the morning. I knew that wasn't happening, but I was furious and deeply hurt. When I joined the "family" at dinner they were stoned off their gourds and deeply immersed in a scatological discussion appropriate for three-year-olds, and that didn't delight me either. There was another side to the "family" that was simply young that could be cheerful and encouraging. Nevertheless, we were not a good fit.

Having made it clear that going back to Cuzco was out, Eric reluctantly assigned the delightful Adent, our assistant leader, to "babysit" me and my porter, and the next morning I started out an hour ahead so that my pace would not impede the other trekkers. The second day of the hike was a totally different experience. The sun came out; I "found" my hiking legs, my pace accelerated, my depression lifted and I surged ahead. The first day there was little to be seen given the mist and fog. Now the immediate landscape and more distant snowcapped surrounding peaks dominated by the 23,000 foot Mt. Veronica were magnificent. For me the hardest aspect of this part of the trek was forcing myself to look down to make sure of my footing rather than gazing up at the mountains. We were gaining

altitude rapidly, eventuating in the 14,000 foot “Dead Woman’s Pass.” In spite of having to rebound from yesterday’s 11-hour heavy duty hike, I crested the Pass without difficulty. Advent, whose native language was Quechua, repeatedly declared, “You are strong man, Jerry,” and boy, did that feel good after Eric’s efforts to send me to the glue factory—or wherever. As we were enjoying the Pass Eric and the “family” arrived. Two of them celebrated by “mooning” the universe, an event immortalized on film shared at that night’s dinner. Then Eric took the group off on a side jaunt to which I was not invited. When I met them again I told Eric that I was very pissed off about that but he stonewalled me.

Once again I went ahead. We had a thousand foot descent followed by a climb to yet another pass, then another descent before ascending a third pass before dropping to the second night’s campsite. It would be another 11-hour day.

There were extensive ruins adjacent to that second campsite and Eric was at his best speaking on the Incas, their civilization and their architecture that evening.

The vast scope, and what looked to be finely chiseled agricultural terraces, the perfect integration of storehouses, homes, palaces and temples, and the awesome setting combined to induce feelings of aesthetic and spiritual plenitude and fulfillment. I felt gratitude, awe, and a paradoxical simultaneity of serenity and intense aliveness. All this was enhanced by having the site essentially to ourselves. And this was just in anticipation of the mystical mystery of Machu Picchu itself.

The family was apparently overwhelmed too. At least they needed to break the mood by passing around the photos of bare butts waving in the air at Dead Woman along with the soup. Being in a very good space, I was amused. But I wasn’t amused when our well-lubricated Princeton graduate, the oldest (30 perhaps) of the family, announced to Advent, who had a 15-year-old daughter, “I do mothers and daughters.”

It was very cold that night—not cold like Kilimanjaro or Everest base camp that I had done previous years, but pretty damn frigid, especially with a not very good sleeping bag. Nevertheless, I mostly slept, and felt strong the third morning. It would be a different kind of day, mostly down (Machu Picchu was at 8,000 feet) into the “cloud forest,” not a jungle rain forest but luxuriantly tropical nonetheless. The cloud forest was punctuated with wild orchids and blazingly colored vegetation I could not identify. The snowcapped mountain background stayed with us and the contrast was dazzling. A multitude of natural denizens supposedly inhabited the cloud forest—unfriendly reptiles, felines and amphibians—but fortunately, or unfortunately, we didn’t meet them.

I should say a word about the trail itself. Every couple of hours I would have to pinch myself to remember that I was walking on a 600-year-old pathway in perfect repair, perfectly drained, ingeniously routed, following graceful contours, going through tunnels carved through the rocks, providing optimally spaced steps for ascent and descent and always aesthetically triumphant in its thousand-mile mosaic. The Incas were engineers of genius, but even more, they were artists, primarily in the medium of stone, who turned the utilitarian into a microcosmal representation of the macrocosmic architectonic of the universe. As you walk the trail, you step on earth and on heaven each time you put a foot down. Such simultaneity is transporting.

On the third evening we returned to “civilization”—sort of. The camp site nestled close to a bar and set of “cold” showers, and for the first time we had significant company. In spite of its reputation our experience of the Inca trail had not been one of hordes crowding every step. Quite the contrary. Now a “few” more folks didn’t bother us. Our camp looked down at the raging Urubamba River thousands of feet below. Our third and final dinner was less raucous and joyfully celebratory.

We rose at 4:00 a.m. to get to Machu Picchu’s “Gate of the Sun” at daybreak. The Gate of the Sun rarely has sun at dawn and it made no exception for us. Nevertheless our arrival was thrilling. We had started in the dark on a narrow section of the trail that shadowed a cliff edge, where a misstep would be the end. It got easier when it got light enough to see the very real perils, but nobody slowed down. I had taken my day pack that weighed 25 or 30 pounds back from my porter as I felt stronger (leading to another argument with Eric), but this morning I returned it so I could move faster.

Meanwhile, Sara had left Aguas Calientes, the town below the Machu Picchu site, to which she had traveled from Cuzco by train and taken the half-hour bus ride up to the site. She then started walking towards the Gate of the Sun, taking the Inca Trail from its terminus in Machu Picchu. We met at the halfway point—Sara weeping as she ran toward me. We embraced and Adent wept too as the “family” applauded. The aged one had won their respect and I think that they were genuinely moved by the visible love between us. So Sara joined the family and we turned towards Machu Picchu. Eric was terrific as an educator and the knowledge we gained greatly enhanced the day and a half we had to assimilate the magic, mystic quality of the site. It is a sacred space, each and every stone, terrace, structure, wall, step, field and void suffused by a spirituality that was palpably experiential, an experience not easily expressed in discursive language, but utterly real. Whatever it is that is “out there” quickly gets “in there,” into one’s blood, and nerves and

synapses—into one’s guts and muscles, and it resonates. You can feel the energy flowing—around you within you, between you and “It.”

The magic started early for us. As we descended from the fog-dampened Gate of the Sun, the veil slowly lifted. The mist burned off the uniquely configured mountains, and the Urubamba slowly revealed itself. The immensity of the sacred city became apparent; each component of an unbelievable mosaic assumed preternatural clarity and utter individuality even as its interrelatedness to all that encompassed it became equally clear. One experienced each stone at Machu Picchu as did Blake his “universe in a grain of sand.”

Machu Picchu is truly poetry in stone. The meter and the rhythm and even sometimes the rhyme are fully expressed in the Inca’s chosen material. The beauty of the craftsmanship alone staggers and elevates. The way the stones are articulated brings tears to the eye, and beyond the craftsmanship is the syntax, the meaning, as the Incan *Weltanschauung* finds representation in the design, in the architecture, and in the landscape architecture. And all of it done without the wheel, without mortar, without written language, and essentially without machinery. Long before Mies van der Rohe, the Incas discovered the beauty inherent in the dictum that “form should follow function.” Machu Picchu is all about—not about, rather is—form following function. There is no distance between the utilitarian and the aesthetic, the practical and the beautiful.

Then there are the multiply layered integrations of each stone into the mosaic of which it is a part, the integration of the parts into the whole, the integration of the humanly created with the divinely created, the integration of a complex theology into a symbolic representation, and the integration across time of the spiritual experience of an ancient people with the spiritual experience of twenty-first century humanity.

Machu Picchu is also about dynamic tension—the tension between its components at every level: between the areas of the site, between the natural and the humanly created, between the finite and the infinite, and between the material and the spiritual. The vastness of the ancient city framed by the roughly trapezoidal forms of Machu Picchu and Hunya Picchu mountains and facing towards a seemingly infinite regress of Andean peaks induces yet another dialectic: that between solid substance and the void. The Incas echoed those trapezoids in their windows, especially in their most sacred buildings.

One feels infinite echoes in the vastness of the site. The exquisiteness of the stone work is proportional to the sacredness of the building it forms, culminating in the high art of the Temple of the Sun, where the Incas made their astronomical calculations. Looking down

and across the site and to the Andes beyond, I thought that architecture must be the primal art form and mother of all the other arts. The construction of shelters must have been one of the first achievements of early man and once they had shelters there was a natural inclination to decorate them, giving birth to the art of painting, and these early buildings must have served as a place for storytelling and dance. So architecture gave birth to literature and music.

Nothing better captures our experience of Machu Picchu than having witnessed the birth of a llama in a field several terraces below the Temple of the Sun. As the mother struggled to get her newborn on his feet, an “aunt,” or perhaps a friend, ran over to help her. Somehow the Incan practice of human sacrifice seemed far less relevant to the meaning of Machu Picchu than this new life, and our being witness to its coming into being.

After Machu Picchu we spent a night in the sacred valley between Agua Calientes and Cuzco in a hacienda once stayed in by Simón Bolívar, liberator of South American from Spanish domination, now converted into a hotel. Its gardens were beautiful beyond my powers of description. The next day we went white water rafting on the Urubamba, returned to Cuzco re-experiencing the effects of being once again at 11,000 feet and then flew to the Amazon.

A more complete contrast with our experience in the Andes would be hard to imagine: a four-and-a-half-hour ride up an opaque, raging, tropical river to a jungle lodge, arriving as twilight faded. Barely off the only slightly upgraded dugout canoe with an outboard motor that served as a boat, we took a night walk through the jungle. George, our jungle guide, was a native. His first language was Aymara. He was a self-taught speaker of Quechua, Spanish and English. He also had acquired an in-depth scientific knowledge of the ecology of the Amazon basin. This didn't mean that he necessarily took very good care of us, as when he wandered off leaving us to slog through a swamp by ourselves. And that following an encounter with a snake whose bite was characterized by George as having “No antidote! Next level!” as he pointed to the sky. Nor did I entirely trust his advice. For example, he suggested that it would be okay to swim in the Tambopata River with the warm and cuddly caimans (smallish crocodiles) since it was only caiman mothers who were aggressive. When I asked who else lived in the river I was told electric eels, stingrays, and a little fish that enters bodily orifices and eats his way back out. I replied that I would swim later, thank you.

The jungle was utterly fascinating: fantastically colored parrots and macaws—hundreds of them—eating at a clay lick, trees that took five minutes to walk around, poisonous frogs,

snakes and God knows what else. We saw a jaguar paw print a few dozen yards from our cabin, but sadly we didn't see "Jaggy," as we decided to call him, in person—though perhaps I should say in cat. Puerto Maldonado, the frontier town we flew into, lacked only Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet to perfectly match my romantic anticipation of a jungle outpost. Its frontier ambience was manifest in its unpaved streets, its outdoor market where local produce was sold next to the cell phone booth, which was next to the jungle bird booth as people haggled in Native American tongues, and in its sleepy river port. There were photos of Che Guevara everywhere. We seemed to arouse no interest. It was so different from Cuzco with its countless badgering beggars. The only problem in Puerto Maldonado was the motorcycles and motor scooters, which were not inclined to stop. Public transportation was a covered cart powered by one of those motorcycles and much fun to ride in.

Then it was over. Another night in Lima, the archaeological museum, and the long flight home. Sara had done great and I hadn't done badly either. There were so many things to take with one, but perhaps the one that resonated most profoundly was the Inca trinity of snake (or serpent) whose realm is beneath the earth, the puma whose realm is on the earth, and the condor whose realm is above the earth. Sara attributed her fortitude in climbing from the bus stop at Machu Picchu up the Inca Trail to her rendezvous with me to having gotten in contact with her "inner condor."

Believing in reincarnation, the Incas believe that one goes from the puma level to the higher realm of the condor, abiding there for however long, then descending beneath the earth to the serpent level, where reincarnation occurs and life again thrives among the pumas.

This is the only version of an underworld I know of where the underground is not a place of punishment or exile, but a place of fructicity and renewal. Whether as model of the cosmos or model of the mind, this is powerful; it is beautiful, and it is a sustaining vision.

The ubiquity of trinities in human mythologies and cosmologies makes me wonder if we don't have some inchoate sense of the triadic nature of our own bodies derived from the three embryonic layers of endoderm, mesoderm and ectoderm, which we then project outward onto the universe. Be that as it may, the landscape architects of Machu Picchu, expressing their version of the trinity, created a work of genius. It's impossible to know whether it was the vision of one mind or even of how self-conscious the layout was. Whatever the case, the genius is there. The Incas carved their trinity into their architecture,

and they did it with infinite refinement and beauty. So Machu Picchu isn't only poetry in stone, however wonderful that is; it is philosophical profundity—utterly without the pretension such profundity risks—in stone. Poetry, philosophy, theology, or architecture—it makes no difference—because the Inca stones express it all and that is the miracle of Machu Picchu.

Intermezzo II

Portrait of a Turkish Family

Irfan Orga's *Portrait of a Turkish Family* was a literary success and something close to a commercial one when it was first published in England in 1950. Since then it has faded into obscurity. I encountered it browsing in a bookstore on Istanbul's Istiklal Caddesi. Once Istanbul's Fifth Avenue, it is now a densely packed succession of cafés, discos, restaurants and tourist-oriented shops. Though not so fully fallen into obscurity as Orga's memoir, its fate has some parallels to that of the book I discovered there. In their respective ways, both street and book are simply wonderful. Each evokes the sadness of transience and the inexorable mutability of lives, cultures and cities.

I was in Turkey on a honeymoon, albeit one that preceded the marriage. Sara and I had been looking for books about Turkey long before we boarded the KLM plane that was to take us to Istanbul via Amsterdam. With the exceptions of Lonely Planet's and Frommer's guides to Turkey, we had failed to find anything that satisfied. Sara tried a highly regarded contemporary Turkish novelist said to be in line for the Nobel Prize, but his syntax proved to make Proust look like a disciple of Hemingway. Then we found *Portrait*. It is both accessible and emotionally gripping. We came as close to fighting as we were to do on the entire trip, competing for possession of our single copy. Neither of us could put it down. At any rate, if one of us did put it down, the other one grabbed it. Needless to say, *Portrait of a Turkish Family*'s current obscurity is anything but justified. There is sadness in its publishing history that recapitulates the sadness of the author and protagonist's life.

This memoir spoke to me on two very different levels of immediacy: (1) that of historical discontinuity, the sea-change of a society impacted and imploded by the outbreak of World War I, that finds all too eerie an echo in the attack of September 11, 2001, and our response to it and (2) that of physical immersion in the milieu, the very streets, sights, sounds, buildings and vistas the author so evocatively re-creates in prose. That is, we were staying in the Sultanahmet, the ancient quarter of Istanbul with its exquisite, aesthetic and spiritually moving Blue Mosque, the Hagia Sophia, with its echoes of Byzantium retained, if not integrated, into its later Islamic self; the twisting warrens, exotic shops, frenetic marketing and sheer amassed human density of the Grand Bazaar; the mystical beauty of the Sea of Marmara as its gulls glide upward to circle the minarets of the Mosque; and the double-layered Bosphorus simultaneously flowing from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, even as it flows from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. That is the setting of Orga's memoir. As I walked the streets of Sultanahmet I could see the little Irfan walking from the

security, warmth and joy of the childhood paradise that was his home down to the shore or the Marmara, hand tightly held by his beloved grandfather on his way to a coffee shop and his morning hookah. I too took the ferry Irfan had taken up the Bosphorus to the fishing village where Irfan's uncle's farm beckoned with just as much allure as the garden of his home. So too could I feel the infinite sadness of the loss of all this as I walked other, not so attractive, Istanbul neighborhoods to which Irfan's family was forced to flee after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. I hope I am not overrating Irfan's work because of the congruity between read narrative and lived experience. I do not think that I am.

If Joyce's *Ulysses* is, among other things, a love song to Dublin and Durrell's *Quartet* a love song to Alexandria, *Portrait of a Turkish Family* is a love song to Istanbul. It is also a story of unremitting loss—for the family, for the protagonist, and for the society it so magnificently, so lovingly, yet never sentimentally recalls. The fulcrum of that loss and that destruction was the Great War, the war everyone thought would be over in six weeks. Irfan's childhood home, a traditional wooden Ottoman structure, with a walled garden sloping down to the sea, must have been resplendent with its rich carpets, elaborately carved furniture, playrooms, quarters for the servants and a stable for the horses that pulled his grandfather's phaeton. It was a world in which every whim could be, and usually was, gratified. But it was not to endure. Business reverses, even before Turkey entered the war, initiated the family's decline. Grandfather died before his sons, Irfan's father and uncle, were drafted, only to die in the trenches. Fire swept through the neighborhood, destroying the house, and the slide became a free-fall into poverty, hunger and unheard-of behaviors. The utter failure of the crumbling Ottoman Empire to provide anything like meaningful support to its war widows and orphans only deepened the family's sense of aloneness and abandonment.

Irfan's depiction of the Istanbul slum they moved into is no less vivid than his depiction of an idyll of a paradise lost that opened his book. And that is equally true of his description of his later life in a horrendous state-supported boarding school, of the family's gradual emergence from poverty, and his experience after the war in Harbiye, Turkey's elite military academy.

But *Portrait* isn't only about destruction and devastation; it is also about the human response to them. A response that called forth hitherto unimaginable capacities for adaptation, resiliency and creativity, especially by the women—mother and grandmother—who managed to find opportunity, new freedoms and potential for growth amid the desolation. But this is not a facile tale of people overcoming adversity; on the contrary, the

cumulative effect of loss of husbands, children, home, lifestyle and an unselfconscious inner world that assumed safety, security and permanence proved to be more than could be mourned. And in the end, after all the struggle, parts of which were quite successful, the shadows returned and overwhelmed the protagonist and his ambivalently, yet deeply loved, mother.

When World War I broke out the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, said, “The lights of Europe are going out.” Nobody believed him—at least not the politicians or the generals. But the artists did. Orga’s book is just as much part of the literature of the “Lost Generation” as *A Farewell to Arms*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or the war poems of Wilfred Owen. In the end, Orga’s lost-ness cannot be transcended. Yet how he fought, so hard and on so many fronts for that transcendence, a fight never more evident than in the writing of his memoir, written in English not many years after immigrating to England in the 1940s.

Orga is not only effective in bringing to life a remote time and place; his depiction of characters is equally luminous. The loving grandfather, the eccentric uncle, the haughty grandmother, the far more self-possessed younger brother, the courageous, ultimately rebellious and finally deeply depressed mother, the family servants and a host of minor characters all step off the page and into our hearts. Etched with vividness driven by guilt and ambivalence, Orga’s mother and his relationship with her are central to his life and to his narrative. Married at thirteen, a mother at fifteen, a compulsively embroidering “ornament” largely confined to her husband’s home and garden until 1914, locked in perpetual warfare with her autocratic mother-in-law, she takes off her veil, saves the family from starvation, manages to procure an education, albeit in a Dickensian setting, for her sons and launches Irfan on a military career in postwar Turkey, only to succumb to mental illness. His grandmother—autocratic, rigid, entitled and impossible—is also resourceful, indomitable and somehow admirable. These are complex, nuanced, multi-dimensional characters engaged in equally complex relationships.

Portrait of a Turkish Family works not only on the personal, autobiographical and familial levels; it is also an account of the transformation of Turkey from the theocratic center of the Ottoman Empire into the secular state created by Atatürk and of the deeply conflicted feelings this transformation induced—all of which could hardly be more relevant to contemporary events.

This memoir ends in an afterword by Irfan's son recounting his father's failed marriage in England, his deepening isolation in spite of literary success, and his growing bitterness and depression. It is as if he had become his mother—a pathological identification driven by guilt—by the feeling that he had abandoned her. He is fully conscious of his “hate,” his rage at her, while only dimly aware of the depth of his love. It is a terribly sad end to a wonderfully told story; it is as if Freud's “repetition compulsion” proved too strong for all that creativity, adaptability and courage to overcome. As I put down *Portrait of a Turkish Family*, I felt tears running down my cheeks.

Life of Pi

Having started out to find a tiger, or better yet tigers, in Nepal's Chitwan National Forest during my second trip to Asia last spring, I wound up finding one in Yaan Martel's marvelous novel *Life of Pi*. My encounter with Richard Parker, the tiger of Martel's fable, wondrous as it was, didn't quite compensate for Nepal's Marxist insurgents blowing up the control tower at Chitwan's airstrip just as we were about to depart New York. "We" were my intrepid honorary "niece" Ariel, with whom I had hiked the high passes of the Himalayas the year before, her parents, and my fiancée Sara. I was all for going to Chitwan anyway—there being an alternative airstrip from which we could complete the trip by Land Rover—but my companions flatly refused and suggested Thorazine and a straitjacket for me, while I insisted that avoiding possible abduction by the Maoists at the cost of losing an opportunity to cuddle up to a real, live, wild Bengali tiger, or at least getting a close look at one from the back of an elephant, was too high a price to pay for mere security. I'm still a little angry that "we" made such a sensible decision to change our itinerary. So, in the event, I had to settle for a fictional tiger—but then I'm not quite so sure that he really is fictional. The ontological status of Richard Parker is one of the central issues, and one of the most intriguing questions, raised by *Life of Pi*.

The previous year the outbreak of SARS nearly stopped us from visiting Bhutan, while avalanches, a hail storm at 16,000 feet, and a demented, aggressive yak made our stay there problematic. This year all we had to contend with was a flair-up of a ten-year-old rebellion, an attack by an infuriated rhesus monkey, and the roads of India. Crossing the camel-congested, moped-infested streets of the "pink city" of Jaipur by threading through its maze of cars, trucks, and surging, milling humanity proved far more dangerous than any rebel, storm, or wild animal could possibly be. And the occasional elephant pushing through this maze didn't make crossing any easier.

But India had its compensations: the not-to-be-believed glories of Delhi's Imperial Hotel, the majestic simplicity of Mogul architecture, the tear-inducing spirituality of Ghandi's cremation site as visitors scatter flowers in his honor, and the never-to-be-forgotten sight of the sun rising on the Taj Mahal.

Pi was born in Pondicherry, which had been a French enclave in British India, where his father was a zookeeper. Born the son of an agnostic, non-practicing Hindu, Pi came to be not just a practicing, believing Hindu, but simultaneously a practicing Christian and a

practicing Moslem. My exposure both to India's Moslem heritage and its Hinduism during my trip made me all the more receptive to Pi's need for multiple particularities—of ritual, liturgy and theology—in his search for a transcendent, universal spirituality.

Nepal deepened that receptivity. The absence of tiger visits notwithstanding, it too had its aesthetic and spiritual allures—Buddhist temples, a “living goddess,” and a Hindu temple where we witnessed a cremation. Then came our return to Bhutan as we thrillingly flew past Everest and transitioned from a predominantly Hindu to a predominantly Buddhist culture. This time it was for a “cultural” trek, not quite so rugged, but no piece of cake either! Sara, the most urban of the party, did herself proud. Adventures hardly rivaling those of Pi, but adventures nevertheless, featuring encounters with many creatures, with variegated cultures, and with the manifold glories of nature that put me into a state of mind to enter into the interior world of Pi.

One of the high points, literally and figuratively, of our return to Bhutan was a visit to the Tiger's Nest—an ancient Buddhist monastery hanging seemingly by nothing 2,500 feet up a sheer cliff wall. We climbed through a twisting, steep path to the apparent peak only to find that we then had to descend a perilous path into yet another precipitous gorge before our final ascent to the monastery. It was a thrilling ascent. Westerners are seldom afforded access to this most sacred of Bhutanese shrines. The Tiger's Nest is so called because the founding saint of Bhutanese Buddhism flew there on a tiger's back in his quest to subdue a demoness. Here the mythological, the symbolic, the poetic, and who knows, perhaps the actual, fused into a narrative that has transformative power. So too with Pi and his tiger.

To say that *Life of Pi* is a philosophical or metaphysical or religious novel is to fail to do it justice. It is all of these things without being in the least abstract, academic, heavy-handed or preachy, but it is predominantly a story—a narrative and a compelling work of art. Much as the raft carrying Pi and Richard Parker across the Pacific floats effortlessly on that sea, Martel's profundity floats effortlessly in his narrative virtuosity. There are few adventure stories better told than *Life of Pi*, and Martel's novel is first and foremost a tale of shipwreck and survival against daunting odds. Pi has to survive not only the sea and its vicissitudes, but the proximity of his raft-mate, a full-grown tiger. Pi, originally named Piscine Patel, after a swimming pool in Paris, quickly becomes “Pissing” to his schoolmates. Fleeing ridicule, he reinvented himself as Pi. But Pi, the irrational number, doesn't actually exist; it is rather conceptual, the unarticulable ratio of diameter to circumference. So Pi's very name makes us ponder the nature of the real, one incessant motif underlying the surface narrative. Pi's religious development—his search for meaning, love and significance—seems intrinsic

to his very being. There is a hilarious scene in which Pi and his parents encounter his three religious mentors, none of whom knows of the existence of the others. Their consternation, condemnation of the others' religion and insistence that Pi can't possibly be what he so clearly is—Hindu, Christian, Moslem—is unforgettable. Among Martel's other stellar qualities as a novelist, he is very, very funny. In this novel, many layered themes abound. Related to, yet separate from its religious concerns, is its motif of loss—for Pi, of home, family, and familiar culture—and the means by which human beings, in this instance Pi, deal with loss.

After Pi's father's zoo fails, the family embarks for Canada, taking the animals with them. Their ship mysteriously sinks. Having lost his family, Pi is left only with a hyena, an injured zebra and an orangutan—not to mention the tiger, Richard Parker, who soon dispatches the others. Pi's fight to survive unfolds and we are caught up in a dialectic of the bounded versus the infinite, belief versus skepticism, and interdependence versus the sheer Otherness of the other. All of this is exemplified in Pi's relationship with Richard Parker. They cannot be more different, a ferocious carnivore and a vegetarian mystic; yet neither can survive without the other. So they have to find a way to coexist, and Pi's ingenuity in making this possible is one of the delights of Martel's story. Pi comes not only to identify with the tiger; he comes to love him and tells him so. Yet Martel's animals—their natures—are never sentimentalized. Part of this lack of sentimentality is manifest in the boldness and baldness with which Martel deals with human and animal aggression, and with the amoral power of nature. There are no simplistic answers; mystery is primordial and Martel does not attempt to explain it away.

We indeed have no choice but to love the nature here incarnated by Richard Parker that surrounds us and to find a way to be successfully interdependent—symbiotic—with it if we are to survive. Yet, as much a part as we may be, we remain apart. A paradox and a mystery not only to Pi, but to all of us. We can do no better than to contemplate and wonder.

Pi is aware of the improbability of his story and offers an alternate explanation of his survival. But it is a far less interesting story, one characterized by “dry, yeastless factuality.” His relationship with Richard Parker and their mutual survival makes a “better story.” Pi tells us that God is in the “same boat,” so to speak. A world with God makes the better story. I'm not so sure about that, but I am not so unsure either. Pi's better story justification of religious belief, and by extension, of belief in the redeeming quality of art and creativity, echoes William James's pragmatic justification when he asked what is the “cash value” of belief.

Pi is that rare protagonist, an utterly lovable, delightful and delighting innocent, who never cloy, is never saccharine, and is never maudlin. He is a novelistic creation of the first order. No less rare is a novel “about” love that actually induces love in the reader without making him bilious. And as for Richard Parker—I hope to meet him one day in the Mexican jungle he disappeared into after Pi finally landed his raft. Parker never looked back, never acknowledged the bond between man and tiger. Poor Pi—his love, if not unrequited, was unacknowledged—and you can be sure that I will chastise that self-centered tiger for hurting Pi so deeply when I finally find him.

Moshe Halbertal's *Maimonides* [\[1\]](#)

I am partial to deeply learned scholars whose erudition is matched by their literary skill. Moshe Halbertal is such a scholar.

I recently attended several lectures devoted to the work of Maimonides, which inspired me to read Halbertal's *Maimonides: Life and Thought*. I found it a difficult yet rewarding endeavor. I had previously attempted Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* only to put it down even more perplexed, and his great law code, the *Mishneh Torah*, would not be my cup of tea. Halbertal requires concentration, yet he is lucid and quite readable. He creates a strong structure, which is exceptionally well and logically organized. These are exactly the traits he attributes to his subject's *Mishneh Torah*. In spite of the complexity of his material, Halbertal is a pleasure to read. Time and again I was struck by the beauty of a sentence, a paragraph or even an entire section of his exposition. Further, Halbertal's *Maimonides* is not only an intellectual tour de force; it is deeply moving. Let me share some of what I learned from him.

Maimonides was a Renaissance man before the Renaissance: legal scholar, physician, judge, politician, spiritual and communal leader as well as a major figure in Saladin's court. And, according to Halbertal, he was a writer of exceptionally beautiful prose in both Arabic and Hebrew.

Halbertal sees Maimonides as traumatized by the destruction of the Andalusian world in which he grew up, of Jewish-Arab collaboration and mutual respect that was the substrate of an extraordinary flowering of poetry, philosophy, and science. At the height of the "Andalusian moment," the Jews were not only tolerated as "people of the Book," *dhimmi*s, as required by Muslim law, but highly valued as co-creators of a magnificent culture. Jews not only participated in the general culture, they used this historical moment—this cultural space—to create a distinctly Jewish body of poetry and philosophy, all the while producing glosses and commentary on halakhic (i.e., Jewish) law. Then it all came crashing down. The Almohads—fierce Berber fundamentalists—invaded from North Africa, and there were no longer any gardens in Spain. Perhaps the pre-Almohad Andalusia was not quite the paradise it became in memory, as witnessed by Maimonides' great predecessor Yehuda Halevi, leaving Spain for the Holy Land at the end of his life. In any case, Maimonides never lost his nostalgia for Andalusia, always referring to himself as "the Spaniard." He missed both the Arab-Jewish synthesis and the rabbinical cultural leadership to which he was an heir.

Unfortunately Andalusia illustrates two recurrent historical patterns: the destruction of a seemingly successfully integrated Jewish community and the degradation of a high Islamic civilization, which manifested itself in many different places, by fanaticism.

Forced to flee with his family while still in his early teens, Maimonides was a homeless refugee, going from one North African community to another for many years. Finally he arrived in the Holy Land, but couldn't make a living there. So once again he became a wanderer until in a sort of reverse Exodus he arrived in Egypt, settling in the Cairo suburb of Fustat, where he spent the rest of his life. Somehow, in what must have been less than propitious circumstances, he managed to write his first significant work, his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. But, the impact of the dispersal of the Jews of Andalusia never left him and became one of the emotional sources of his preoccupation with theocratic unity.

Quickly, and at an early age, Maimonides became the leader of the Egyptian Jews, although he stepped down from formal leadership after only a year. However, he remained the go-to guy. Additionally, he acquired a reputation across the Jewish Diaspora and was soon writing responsa (legal opinions) to Jews across the Sephardic world and even beyond to Ashkenazic communities. Simultaneously, he became physician and advisor to Saladin's vizier and quickly became a major figure at the Moslem court.

Halbertal emphasizes Maimonides' self-image as a savior (not a messianic one) of what he thought was a Judaism in precipitous decline. This decline was political, theological and social, and he set himself the task of restoring Judaism to its former spiritual glory and its unique place among religions and their cultural expressions. Halbertal also emphasizes Maimonides' supreme self-confidence (his enemies would say chutzpah) flowing both from his position as heir to a rabbinic dynasty and his awareness of his own brilliance and exceptional abilities. I would also see his self-concept as the force that would elevate Judaism from its degradation as what a psychologist would call a "reaction formation," a turning of his helplessness as a refugee and as an exile into its opposite—one who has the power to act as a supremely self-confident spiritual-intellectual leader.

He did so by writing his great law code the *Mishneh Torah*. According to Halbertal, who is in a position to know, it is a wonder of organization, comprehensiveness and clarity. Halbertal repeatedly calls the attention of the non-Hebrew, or for that matter the Hebrew, reader to the beauty of its prose. One does not usually look for aesthetic pleasure in reading a legal treatise, but apparently this one provides it. Even more important than its architecture and its exquisite Hebrew prose is its unambiguity. Maimonides' goal in writing

the *Mishneh Torah* was to provide an easily accessible—not only to Talmudic scholars but to lay readers—exposition of The Law. To do so, he ignores all the tangles of Talmudic commentary on commentary and responses to those commentaries, and simply decides the correct interpretation of each and every legal crux and states it in a language that does not allow for alternatives. There is no ambiguity in Maimonides' law code.

According to Halbertal, Maimonides was completely successful in meeting his goal. It took him ten years to write it and the *Mishneh Torah* is, unbelievably, the work of a single author who had to achieve mastery of the endless tangles of halakhic discussion and made choices as to what the law is (Maimonides doesn't so much argue his case but rather simply states his conclusions), and then laying those conclusions out in a clear and logical way, all of this while practicing medicine, writing responsa and exercising communal leadership. Alone, he achieved something comparable to Justinian's codification of Roman law, or Oliver Wendell Holmes's summary of English-American common law in his book of that title.

Halbertal tells us that Maimonides experienced the efflorescence of halakhic byways to be isomorphic with the dispersal of the Jewish people. The endless Talmudic twists and turns, often leading to confusion and disputes as to what the law actually required, were more evidence of the decline of Judaism. The *Mishneh Torah* was an attempt to counteract the elegiac gloom that apparently stayed with Maimonides as a substrate of his unbelievably active life. With its completion and what Maimonides expected would be its universal acceptance, the decline of Haskalah would be ended. Historically that's not what happened, certainly not in the Ashkenazic world and only to a limited extent in the Sephardic one. But the *Mishneh Torah* did have a huge influence on the *Shulchan Aruch*, written in the seventeenth century by Joseph Caro, another lawyer-mystic. Heavily indebted to Maimonides, this legal code remains canonical and binding on the Orthodox right down to the present day.

Maimonides then suffered the most catastrophic loss of his adult life. His brother David drowned in the Indian Ocean while on a trading mission to Asia. David was the great love of Maimonides' life. He was also the sole support of the family. David played many roles in Moses' life as disciple, friend, confidant, and in some ways, son. (Maimonides, who married late, did have a son, Abraham, to whom he was deeply attached, but this was long after David died.) Maimonides wrote that David undertook perilous journeys so "I could study," and sank into a profound depression, beyond normal mourning, that lasted many years, that was no doubt driven by, or at least exacerbated by, guilt. And this in spite of

Maimonides having written that excessive mourning was contrary to nature and that its antidote was acceptance of the natural order that decreed that all that lives must die. He found no solace in his own advice. The psychoanalyst might say Moses' prolonged and incapacitating collapse was a failure of his "manic defense" against being consumed by a melancholy that was always residual beneath the fantastic productivity and exuberant self-confidence.

David's death not only affected Maimonides' emotional life, it profoundly changed his life on a practical level. Now he had to support not only himself and his family but David's widow and son. He did so mostly through his medical practice, but he also assumed yet another role, that of merchant. Though he didn't go on trading missions himself, he saved what he could of the family business.

Then came another blow, the destruction of the Jewish community of Yemen—it had been an independent kingdom—by another rise of Muslim fundamentalism and fanaticism. This time Maimonides responded with action in the form of a letter to Yemen in which he gives a halakhic opinion that martyrdom is not required of Jews. Citing Deuteronomy to the effect that one should "Choose life," he ruled that in the situation of forced conversion, the alternative being death, a Jew should outwardly conform and live to return to a Torah-informed life as soon as he could. Some of his biographers believed that Maimonides himself may have temporarily converted during his years of wandering across North Africa. Halbertal emphasizes Maimonides' empathy for the devastated Jews of Yemen. Maimonides' thoughts on martyrdom are of a piece with his disapproval of asceticism, which he saw as contrary to nature. You can see the Greek influence—mediated by Arab writers—here in the idea of "nothing too much," or in an alternative formulation, Aristotle's injunction to strive for the "Golden Mean."

This brings up Maimonides' attitude towards sexuality. He definitely was not one of the world's great lovers and his attitude towards women (in one of his responsas he gave a husband permission to beat his wife who was not performing her household duties) is appalling to the modern mind. We do not even know the names of Maimonides' wife or mother. Influenced by both the Arab and Jewish patriarchal societies in which he lived, in this regard he did not transcend his time and place, remaining inalienably medieval.

But Halbertal writes that Maimonides' libidinal life was vital, strong and highly determinative of who he was. Although there is no reason to believe that Maimonides didn't enjoy sleeping with his wife, scorning asceticism and nowhere suggesting that sex is sinful,

degraded or animalistic, his libido was primarily expressed through sublimation. The strongest love of his life, with the possible exception of his brother David, was his love of God. That love could be and in his case was transformative, and for Maimonides, love of God was the goal of Jewish life. In Halbertal's telling of it, to see Maimonides as a cold intellect, devoted to abstraction, is mistaken, and, to the contrary, there is strong emotion driving both his legal and philosophical writings.

So Halbertal's Maimonides is not a cold, or at least not exclusively a cold, legalist—quite the contrary. He tells us of other evidence of Maimonides' empathy in a letter that he wrote to a convert to Judaism whose rabbi treated him as a second-class citizen. Maimonides excoriates the rabbi and tells the wounded convert that he is as much a Jew as any other. Being Jewish is not a matter of heredity. Its only determinant is acceptance of the Torah as a foundation for one's life, and in the letter he does all he can to raise the convert's self-esteem.

Slowly coming out of his depression, Moses finally left his bed and resumed his busy life. He complains about the demands of his practice in a monumental kvetch. He complains of both fatigue and lack of time to study or write. Nevertheless he manages to write a whole library of medical texts. Moses considered medical practice a spiritual act, since one can't pursue the spiritual without physical health. Here he follows his philosophical mentor, Aristotle, in pointing his patients towards sound minds and sound bodies. Maimonides the doctor would have done well in California, for most of his prescriptions were lifestyle changes: diet, exercise and a kind of cognitive therapy to raise self-esteem; it probably didn't hurt the Moslem side of his practice that his elixirs all contained wine, normally forbidden to these patients. In fact, Maimonides was a consistent advocate of moderate drinking—again, “nothing too much.” Especially on the Sabbath, again according to the good doctor, one should eat and drink well.

Among his voluminous medical works is a treatise on the treatment of hemorrhoids and one on the treatment of impotence. He successfully treated one of the vizier's sons for the latter complaint. Maimonides' treatment for impotence was rubbing the uncooperative member with an unguent composed of crushed fire ants. Most would prefer Viagra.

That brings us to Maimonides' philosophical masterpiece, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Written during his late maturity, in his fifties, it was intended for his disciple Joseph “and those similarly situated.” That is, it was intended for an educated Jewish elite bedazzled by Greek philosophy, particularly by Aristotelian thought as rendered by Arab translation and

interpretation, who wondered whether such philosophical thought could be reconciled with Judaism. This wasn't just an intellectual conundrum; it was an intensely painful emotional issue. *The Guide* is an attempt to answer this question.

Some, following the University of Chicago political philosopher Levi Strauss, have seen Maimonides the legalist and Maimonides the philosopher as virtually two people, the philosopher having a disturbing, subversive mission, some of which undermines traditional Jewish, and indeed, any religious belief. Halbertal rejects this view, seeing the philosophical prelude to the legal code, as an anticipation of *The Guide*, and comes down on the side of those who think there's only one Maimonides. I wondered how that applies to Halbertal himself, who is both a professor of law at New York University and a professor of philosophy at Hebrew University. Additionally, he shares Maimonides' first name. There must be a strong identification here and our author's assertion that there is only one Maimonides is also an assertion that another Moses, he himself, is also integrated in spite of his many coats.

Back to *The Guide* itself. There is no doubt that it is written for an elite. Maimonides tells us as much and unlike the clarity and lack of ambiguity he strove for in his legal code, the philosophical work, apparently intentionally, lends itself to many interpretations. Additionally, Maimonides tells us that it has a secret, esoteric message, accessible only to the philosophically trained. Nor did he, unlike his desires in respect to *The Code*, want the work to have wide distribution. He did not get his wish in this. *The Guide* was translated almost instantly from its original Arabic into Hebrew and not much later into Latin, in which guise it had a strong influence in the Christian world, in particular, being a major influence on Thomas Aquinas. It was also burned—by Jews in Provence—setting an unfortunate precedent for the burning of the Talmud in the next centuries.

What was all the fuss about? There is much that is heterodox in *The Guide*. It starts with Maimonides' critique of religious language in the Bible and elsewhere. Maimonides deconstructs sacred language, replacing its literal meaning with allegorical and metaphorical interpretations. Here he continues a long philosophical tradition of preoccupation with language going back to Plato while simultaneously initiating something radically new that anticipates the twentieth century philosophical school of language analysis. Maimonides' language critique has radical consequences: prophecy is no longer the word of God, but rather the prophet's creation by his imagination in an unconscious process, which he reports as God's voice speaking to him. It is the prophet's long spiritual preparation that makes his insight possible, an insight that the prophet projects onto God.

Heaven and hell no longer exist in any literal sense, and God neither rewards nor punishes. Prayer does not move Him nor do rituals affect Him. Maimonides' allegorization of religious language is closely tied to his de-anthropomorphizing God. His God is not only incorporeal; He has no human attributes whatsoever, and certainly has no emotions or thoughts. When the Haggadah tells us that God stretched out a mighty hand, it is not an anatomical statement as God doesn't have a hand, nor is He angry, sad, happy or in any other feeling state. Further, He is unknown and unknowable. The only thing we know about God is that He is One, and without limits of any kind. But we do know what He is not—not a body of any sort and utterly without multiplicity. Maimonides' monotheism is unconditional. This approach later became known as “negative theology,” a theological school that asserts that we can say what He is not but not what He is. In fact, Maimonides tells us that the highest form of prayer is silence, quoting the Psalms to the effect that “Silence is praise to You.” Halbertal quotes the twentieth-century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in supporting Maimonides to the effect that “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” So what, if any, is the purpose of prayer? For Halbertal's Maimonides, prayer has two functions. The first is a communal one, that is, it reinforces order within the polity; secondly, it transforms or at least has the capacity to transform the one who prays. It is this inner transformation of consciousness that is most important to Maimonides. It eventuates in an identification with the object of prayer, that is, God.

I wondered, if we can know nothing of God, how do we know what He is not? Halbertal and presumably Maimonides offer no answer. However, Maimonides does make an exception: God's “speech” to Moses at Sinai. As far as I could tell, Maimonides doesn't explain this lapse into anthropomorphism, nor does Halbertal. And this is a pretty crucial exception since God “dictates” all of the Law to Moses in the theophany on Sinai.

I also wondered about Maimonides' almost obsessive focus on the Oneness of God. Surely, it has its roots in the Shema, the basic statement of the Jewish faith, and in the strident monotheism of the ambient Islamic culture, and of course monotheism had served to distinguish the Jews from the polytheists they so often lived among. But it seems to me to have psychological roots as well. Maimonides, for all his supreme self-confidence, had deep fissures—multiplicities—within him. There are splits between the dogmatist who wrote *The Thirteen Articles of Faith* (to be found in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*) that he insisted every Jew must believe and who strenuously maintained that not one word can be added or subtracted from the Torah, and the proto-Enlightenment skeptical philosopher who in many ways anticipates Reform Judaism; and between what Halbertal calls the “intellectual radical

and the social conservative.” And then there were the external multiplicities induced by the dispersal of Jewish communities and the central meaning of the Law becoming lost in halakhic disputes. So Maimonides’ radical monotheism must have been, whatever else it may be, a projection of his wish for integration of the contending forces within him, and the wish for cultural unification of the politically and ideologically dispersed Jewish communities of his time.

After Maimonides’ deconstruction of Jewish religious belief and practice, I wondered what was left. Why “worship” this incorporeal, utterly Other, unknowable God whose very attributes, if any, are shrouded in mystery? This is not a form of pantheism. On the contrary, Maimonides’ God is transcendental, not immanent. According to Halbertal, Maimonides would have given two reasons addressed to two different audiences, the masses—what Spinoza called the “Multitude”—and the elite. For Maimonides, who made a distinction between the rational commandments that can be deduced by the human mind independently of Revelation, and “necessary” commandments that are not rational—the Laws of Kashrut, for example—that can only be known through Revelation, there is only one truth, but one known by different means.

In the seventeenth century, Spinoza, who has been waiting in the wings, will take Maimonides’ distinction between rational and necessary truths to its logical conclusion. The necessary truths become merely the laws of the ancient Jewish commonwealth, which no longer exists, and hence have no force. So there is no obligation to follow them. And several centuries later, Reform Judaism will take essentially the same stance.

For the masses religious practice and belief assure social solidarity. They are “necessary” for the functioning of a well-ordered state. For the elite the purpose of religious practice is knowledge and a kind of purification that readies its practitioners for a movement from “fear of God to love of God,” eventuating in an experience of awe, wonder, gratitude and acceptance. This is not mysticism but something close to it.

Another strikingly modern aspect of *The Guide* is its disbelief in miracles and the sacralization of the natural causal order itself. The miracle is not to be found in miracles, but in the world itself and the order embedded in it. For Maimonides, the highest form of worship, at least for the elite, is the study of science and the scientific investigation of the natural world. In the philosopher’s journey from fear to love, he frees himself from fear of death.

To understand how he does this, we need to turn to Maimonides' belief about the "life to come." According to Halbertal's exposition, the wicked person completely identifies with things of the body, so when that body ceases to exist, nothing is left and the wicked one goes out of being along with his body, while the enlightened person (my characterization) identifies with his Reason and the objects of that Reason, the "Intelligibles." In a major lapse Halbertal fails to explain the nature of the Intelligibles. At first I took them to be something like Plato's Eternal Forms, but later thought of them as the architecture embedded in the Universe that can be discovered by the use of our reason. This is a more an Aristotelian formulation, probably more congenial to Maimonides. Halbertal does not make it clear whether or not the emotions—awe, wonder, reverence, and possibly humility and love—induced by knowledge of the Intelligibles, are also eternal and continue into the life to come. In any case, this does not seem to be belief in personal immortality, though it does explain to Halbertal's satisfaction how the philosopher, identifying with that which is eternal, comes to cease fearing death.

Maimonides' critics, during his lifetime and down to the present day, have wondered where this leaves the ordinary Jew who leads a moral life and follows the Commandments, but doesn't particularly identify himself with his reason, or seek to contemplate the Intelligibles. Halbertal raises this question, but offers no answer to it.

That brings us to the question of Creation, a much vexed subject in Maimonides' time. The Orthodox position in both Islam and Judaism is the belief that God created the universe out of nothing. To say that He didn't is to put limitations on Him, while His omnipotence knows no limit. The contrary position held by Aristotle, Maimonides' philosophical mentor, was that God created the world out of pre-existing material, or in Plato's version created order out of a primordial chaos. This point of view holds "nothing can come of nothing." Officially Maimonides stood by Judaism's traditional belief on this point, but Halbertal isn't so sure. He sees Maimonides as more agnostic here, holding that neither position can be proved so we are free to believe that God created out of nothing.

Maimonides makes a distinction between Will and Wisdom. Lacking nothing, God has no Will, but He does have Wisdom. The world was not created by God's non-existent Will, but by virtue of God's Wisdom. That would seem to imply that the universe is eternal, but given that God is not a temporal being, the question of "when" God's Wisdom manifested itself in that universe becomes meaningless. The philosopher in his own way has the task of moving from Will to Wisdom in emulation of God. A critic might maintain that all this is mere logic chopping that contradicts Maimonides' insistence that we can know nothing

about God. But Halbertal clearly does not feel that way. On the contrary, he seems to agree with Maimonides that God's Wisdom and Loving Kindness are evidenced by the order and beauty of the universe.

Maimonides' critics raised doubts as to whether or not he believed his own Articles of Faith, particularly the one about belief in the resurrection of the body. Maimonides defended himself, asserting that he did believe in this article. Nevertheless, Halbertal has his doubts, suggesting that the articles were intended to achieve social cohesion and are binding on the masses, but not necessarily on the philosophical elite, who do, however, according to Maimonides, have to adhere to the 613 commandments dictated at Sinai. The Orthodox continue to believe that every Jew, philosopher or not, must subscribe to all of Maimonides' articles. In reference to Maimonides' writing of the Articles, Halbertal points out that hitherto, Judaism had been a religion of actions, not beliefs, and implies that Maimonides here is being historically regressive. However, Halbertal makes no judgment. For this reader, however, the dogmatic side of Maimonides seems dangerously close to an anticipation of religious totalitarianism, and stands in such striking contrast to his progressive side that those who came to see Maimonides as two distinctly different religious teachers seem to be upon the right track.

Returning to Maimonides' understanding of the function of prayer, which is no longer for the purpose of gaining goodies from God, one of its most salient purposes is the inducement of *humility* in the one who prays. Humility is a trait not usually associated with Maimonides. His lack of humility is evidenced among other ways in the violence of his polemics, in which he regularly calls his opponents "ignoramuses," "fools," and "idiots." On his more enlightened side, Maimonides, the strikingly modern psychologist, advises us that we must express our resentments lest they turn into hatred. This could have been written by Freud, or perhaps by Dr. Phil.

Halbertal ends his *Life and Thought* with four readings of *The Guide*: the skeptical, the mystical, the conservative, and the philosophical. He refuses to choose among them, maintaining that this openness only enriches our experience of *The Guide* and that Maimonides himself may have intended the ambiguity and multilayering. Additionally, Halbertal believes that on any reading the philosopher comes to experience awe and wonder, as opposed to fear, as he comes to experience God's Loving Kindness as manifest in the natural world (the Victorian poet who spoke of nature red claw and fang would disagree) and tries to emulate this divine Loving Kindness. So the true philosopher is one who tries to understand by his pursuit of science and to love. The philosopher and indeed

every Jew in his own way has the task of moving from Will to Wisdom in emulation of God.

So Joseph and “those similarly placed” need no longer be perplexed: the pursuit of (Aristotelian) science is a Jewish religious obligation, and belief in God’s creation of the world out of nothing is not contrary to reason, and the aspiring philosopher is free to believe what he wishes in regard to the question of creation, but he *is* required to observe all of the Commandments, a practice that serves as a kind of spiritual training regimen that is a necessary prerequisite to attaining Wisdom. So there is no contradiction between being a practicing Jew and being a philosopher.

Be that as it may, Moshe Halbertal’s brilliant exposition convinces his readers that the adage, “from Moses unto Moses there was none like unto Moses” is true.

Note

- [1] Although Maimonides in his Jewishness is radically particularistic, he is also universal. The issues he raises about language, belief, emotion and the nature of the good life are issues that any philosophy must deal with and the answers he gives are worth pondering from the perspective of other traditions and belief systems.

Lincoln

There is something endlessly fascinating about Abraham Lincoln. The rise from obscurity and poverty, the self-transformation from an almost totally uneducated rustic into one of the great masters of English prose; the man who journeyed from sharing the most vicious prejudice of his milieu to being the apostle of an ever-widening tolerance; the superbly canny politician, cautiously barely leading public opinion, who became one of the most decisive of our leaders; the business-oriented Whig politician fighting for “internal improvements” and a high tariff who defended the rights of free labor; the man of sorrows staving off depression with an endless stream of humorous stories; the tragic figure who lost his early love, Ann Rutledge, and lost two dearly loved young children; who had to manage an increasingly mentally ill wife; and had to contend with searing guilt over the unbelievable slaughter he led his country into; and whose life ended in a pool of blood from an assassin’s bullet.

He has inspired some of the best work of our greatest artists: Whitman’s magnificent elegy “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed,” Frederick Douglass’s (one of his fiercest yet most thoughtful critics) eulogy at the unveiling of a Lincoln statue a decade after his death; Daniel Chester French’s haunting sculpture in his memorial; Edmund Wilson’s great chapter on him in *Patriotic Gore*; and Aaron Copeland’s beautiful “Lincoln Portrait.” Then there are the debunkers and the demythologizers, ranging from historians seeking a more balanced assessment of his life to the rage animating the Black Panthers’ “Lincoln was a honky.” Yet all who come to mock stay to pray—or at least to admire.

The Columbia University historian Eric Foner is among the warts-and-all school of objective demythologizers. Nevertheless, he too winds up among the admirers. His *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* is a wonderful book. Accessible almost to the point of being a page-turner, its readability is deceptive. It’s all too easy to read past the density and vast richness of historical detail and specificity without absorbing it. So in this sense, the fluidity of Foner’s prose works against him. His is a book that needs to be read slowly and thoughtfully, for what it tells is oddly and paradoxically simultaneously familiar and shocking.

Foner wears his erudition lightly and expresses it fluently, allowing us to meet a fascinating range of characters, famous and obscure, including the abolitionists Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison, politicians of all stripes and beliefs, generals and

soldiers on both sides of the conflict, as well as the writers, reporters and editors who so deeply influenced the public opinion that in many cases determined the course of events.

The degree to which slavery, with its subtext of rabid racism, which permeated white consciousness, North and South, and was central to and indeed largely determinant of American history, is so sharply documented in *The Fiery Trial* that it becomes indelible. The “slavery question” dominated the political history of the United States from the very beginning, shaping the Constitution itself; determining the short-lived Missouri Compromise, soon superseded by the Kansas-Nebraska Act; motivating the Mexican War; generating the furor over the Fugitive Slave Act and the Dred Scott Decision; and ultimately leading to secession and the war itself. Reading Forner’s book, it becomes clear that the tension between the Declaration (Lincoln’s lodestone) and the reality of human subjugation could not be sustained and that in that contradiction lay the inevitability of the horrors of the Civil War. Forner documents in excruciating detail the institutional barriers to African-American participation in the “pursuit of happiness,” exemplified by such statutes as Illinois’ (Lincoln’s adoptive state) Black Laws even as he makes us aware of the free black achievement—both individual and communal—against daunting odds in the North and even in parts of the South. Few of us know of the existence of black newspapers, journalists, other professionals, craftsmen and businessmen in pre-Civil War America. *The Fiery Trial* makes us aware that in spite of the legality of slavery in the District, the free black population of Washington was hugely varied in terms of wealth, education and vocation. Forner makes no less clear the horrors of even free black life with its manifold deprivations and restrictions. I was left with a newfound respect for the achievements of so many of the black slaves, some of whom went from servile degradation to heroic, self-respecting ferociously combative soldiering virtually overnight.

Back to Lincoln. Caught between the abolitionists (who held the moral high ground), demanding immediate emancipation and enfranchisement, and the need to keep the slave-holding border states in the union and in the war; between the demands of the “radical Republicans” for redefinition of the war aim from preservation of the union to the extension of liberty and freedom and the practicalities of fighting a war; and between his own innate caution and pragmatism and his “better angels,” Lincoln somehow managed to negotiate his way through an almost impossible field of contending forces and values to achieve the “rebirth of freedom” he spoke so eloquently of at Gettysburg. Lincoln always hated slavery, yet put preservation of the union foremost, even as he vehemently fought expansion of slavery into the territories until he overcame his reluctance to act and signed the

Proclamation and later backed the thirteenth amendment ending slavery in the United States.

As Forner makes clear, the story of Lincoln and American slavery is the story of an imperfect man deeply marked by the prejudice of his time and place who somehow continuously grew and finally reached a sort of self-transcendence rare in anyone, let alone an ambitious politician. And that inner transformation transformed America.

Philip Roth

At 75, Philip Roth is obsessed by death. In his magnificent and courageous novel *Everyman*, he explores territory rarely if ever visited by art—the experience of incessant and ineluctable decay as one ages, eventuating in death.

Goya does this visually in his late work, but I know of no other work of literature that conveys the inner, lived experience of the triumph of entropy over the life force.

Roth does this in the context of a godless, indifferent cosmos experienced by his disbelieving protagonist as offering no comfort and no continuity beyond the grave.

Pascal looked out into a universe transformed by the new instrumentation of the seventeenth century and cried out, “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread,” and makes his famous wager, putting his money on God.

Roth’s people are never so dramatic, nor do they embrace faith. And that, to my mind, gives them a heroic dimension. Further, Roth is a master of gallows humor and his late books, grim as their subject matter may be, are funny, and what better response to the abyss than laughter?

Roth followed *Everyman* with *Exit Ghost*, in which he brings back his alter ego Zuckerman, now impotent and incontinent following prostate surgery, as he tries to return to life and live in the city after decades of living as a recluse in the Berkshires. Zuckerman’s struggle is inspiring, but in the end it fails. He returns to solitude, yet something has changed—perhaps it is acceptance. But even if there is something hopeful in Zuckerman’s accommodation to reality, one doesn’t put down *Exit Ghost* whistling.

Everyman and *Exit Ghost* are also importantly about failed relationships and disconnection from the nexus of intergenerational loving bonds. One wonders how Roth’s characters would fare in the gloom if they were more connected, if not to God or to the universe then to some form of human solidarity.

In a more recent effort, *Indignation*, Roth turns back to working-class Jewish Newark, New Jersey, and adolescence. But his young hero is no less doomed than his aging intellectuals. In a quintessential absurdity, Marcus Messner dies, so to speak, of a panty raid at a provincial Midwestern college in the ’50s. The panty raid leads indirectly to

confrontation with the traditionalist dean of students, expulsion, losing his draft deferment and a horrible death in the frozen wastes of Korea from a Chinese bayonet.

The immediate cause of the expulsion is Marcus's refusal to apologize for paying a substitute to sign for him at compulsory chapel. Marcus is standing on principle in his confrontation with the dean, but all that gets him is dead.

The absurdity of his death—and life itself—is compounded by the circumstances of Marcus's arrival at Winesburg College. He had been attending a Newark college where he was a natural fit until his father became obsessively—almost insanely—fearful for Marcus, stalking and hounding him unbearably until he fled father and Newark for an alien world of fraternities and ivied quadrangles. Roth's economy of means in *Indignation* is nothing less than remarkable. He evokes two utterly disparate environments, the world of Marcus's father's culture and the world of Winesburg College, utterly convincingly. And he puts all this in the context of a historical moment, evoking America's consciousness in the 1950s.

Not only does Roth get the places and era right, he gets the people right also. The characters: Marcus's parents, the dean, the college president, the troubled young woman who initiates Marcus into sex and his callous classmates stay with you. They may, Marcus excepted, verge on caricature and stereotype. Yet Roth somehow, almost magically, makes them multidimensional, complex, full bodied and fully individuated. The reader comes to admire the depth and three-dimensionality of what at first appeared thin characterizations. In 200-plus pages, that is no small feat. And then there is Roth's narrative gift. He is a magnificently skilled storyteller.

Although the reader knows that *Indignation* is going to end tragically, it is nevertheless hilariously funny. The humor is both situational and flows from Marcus's ironic take on people, cultures and life. Roth allows, unlike the other two books, for an afterlife of sorts. It is an afterlife reminiscent of Homer's dim shades. It consists solely of memory, but has no potential for action or for sensation. And those memories, at least for Marcus, are ones tormented by guilt and regret. Not a hell of a lot to look forward to.

There is an aspect of Roth's genius that moves me deeply. That is his meticulously detailed, loving depictions of how the world works—literally. He has an unfailing grasp of how crafts, and techniques that are integral to those crafts, transform nature into the humanly useful. Roth doesn't talk about it, but he makes you feel the love that invests technique, so that both his descriptions and the activities described are suffused with eros. And Roth's implicit statement of the integrity that comes with the mastery of production is

utterly unsentimental. We smell the blood and gore of Marcus's father's butcher shop even as we admire the passion that goes into doing it "right."

Roth shares this sensibility with his almost exact contemporary John Updike and both are anticipated by and indebted to Melville's great account of the process of producing oil from blubber in *Moby Dick*. Not only do you need literary skill of the highest order, but you have to know so damned much to be a decent, let alone a great, novelist. Roth has both the skill and the knowledge.

Philip Roth's latest book, *Nemesis*, is a minor work, a late addition to his extensive oeuvre or at least it seems so on first impression. Yet for a reader of my generation who grew up fearing polio, *Nemesis*, set during the polio epidemic in 1944, packs a wallop. It evokes a nearly forgotten, yet indelible, emotionally searing aspect of growing up in the '40s and '50s. And boy, does Roth know how to evoke those long-forgotten fears!

The characters, including Roth's protagonist Bucky Cantor, are mostly one-dimensional, almost stick figures. Yet they grow on you and they stay with you. How Roth pulls this off eludes me. Perhaps it has something to do with his love for the Jews of the Newark in which he grew up. This very idealization contributes to the one-dimensionality of many of the characters, even as it paradoxically makes them memorable. If the characterization in *Nemesis* is weak, the narrative is not. Roth is simply a great storyteller, and few writers possess his ability to bring alive a time and place and set of circumstances. His evocation of Jewish Newark is accomplished with stringent economy. Roth's uncanny knack of making place and time leave the page and enter the reader's consciousness using very few words is reminiscent of a great draftsman's ability to render a space using similarly few lines.

This is a novel in which nostalgia is infused with terror. An oxymoronic synthesis it may be; yet it works as literature. Works in the sense that we come to deeply care about what happens to Bucky Cantor, the impossibly idealistic playground director who leaves plague-ridden Newark to seek love (and safety) in a Poconos summer camp. Like Conrad's Lord Jim, who never forgives himself for jumping ship, Bucky is wracked with guilt as boy after boy he left in miasmatic Newark is struck by the mysterious, implacable disease. This guilt ultimately drives him to a tragic renunciation.

On another level *Nemesis* isn't about the effects of an epidemic on a Jersey city and its Jewish community. On this level it isn't a genre novel at all. Rather, it is a meditation on the brute facticity of life, the utter contingency of events and their effects on people, the luck of the draw (or lack of it), and the backdrop of the abyss that is ineluctably concomitant with

the everydayness of our lives. This vision is presented by an author who does not soften it with any form of religious consolation.

Nemesis, which initially seemed an annoyingly shallow late work by a great author, winds up engaging and moving, and leaves the reader thoughtful and more than a little shaken. After reading *Nemesis*, it is hard to deny that in some sense we humans are ultimately helpless. *Nemesis* is definitely worth reading, if for no other reason than to enjoy Roth's skill in making a horror story such a pleasurable reading experience.

Prayers for the Dead

Every culture prays for its dead. Judaism's vehicle for doing so is a prayer known as the Kaddish, literally the sanctification. Its meaning and the meaning of the ritual in which it is incorporated has long been a favorite subject for textual commentary. Leon Wieseltier has added his voice to this ongoing dialogue. His 1998 book *Kaddish* is obsessive, pedantic, infuriating, circuitously repetitious, and at times emotionally constipated. It also is quite wonderful. In a strange, crazy way, it is a page turner.

Wieseltier, the son of Holocaust survivors, was raised in Orthodox Brooklyn, receiving an in-depth Jewish education. As an adult, he became the literary editor of *The New Republic* and a secular intellectual. When his father died, Wieseltier returned to Orthodoxy, at least insofar as to commit to saying Kaddish—in an Orthodox shul—three times a day for eleven months. This led him to investigate the origin, meaning and customs surrounding the Kaddish. The result is *Kaddish*, which is both a prodigious work of scholarship and a personal memoir. For much of the book the personal narrative is unsatisfying, with Wieseltier's father and his relationship with him remaining shadowy and insubstantial.

While his absorption in the historic, philosophical and theological is vivid and engrossing, that is not to say that Wieseltier's exposition of his emotional reactions to text, customs, services, and meanings are not moving. Wieseltier succeeds in evoking strong emotion in the reader when he focuses on his own feelings and conflicts about prayer, tradition, belief and ritual, even as he ironically fails to make his father live. He also conveys brilliantly the emotional complexity of grief.

Perhaps there is an inevitability about Wieseltier's greater success in relating his emotional journey through ritualized mourning than in evoking his "real relationship" with his father, as he himself comments on the necessarily narcissistic nature of grief. And the book's ending—the unveiling of his father's stone—is powerful and disturbing. Wieseltier's repeated references to Jewish martyrdom from the Crusaders' murderous path through Europe to the Holocaust are equally disturbing.

The Kaddish originally had no connection with death. It was a short prayer of no privileged status in the liturgy that was said following a period of communal study or prayer. Apparently, originating in the Babylonian academies, this use of the Kaddish survives in modern services. It is said after the Justification of the Judgment ("the Judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether"). This association with the

Justification made the Kaddish a natural vehicle for the acceptance of loss. It was only after traumatic loss—the mass murder of the Jews of the Rhineland by the Crusaders—that the Mourner’s Kaddish came into being. Wieseltier points out that not only is the Kaddish not about death, it isn’t even a song of praise of God. Rather the mechanism for working through acceptance of loss is more subtle; what the prayer asks for is “that He be praised” etc.) that is, it asks for a change within the consciousness of the mourner—not of God—that allows praise, a praise that entails acceptance.

In this way, the Kaddish is similar to the opening of one of the central prayers in the liturgy, the Amidah, that asks, “Let my lips be open so I may praise Him.” In places Wieseltier questions what kind of God would need or want such extravagant praise, and suggests that we need to praise more than God needs to be praised. At the same time, he is aware of the denial implicit in this act of submission and acceptance.

There is a later tradition that associates the mourning with God Himself, who is the one who mourns. Wieseltier traces every interpretive thread through many centuries and diverse places till meaning is layered on meaning. But the dominant tradition associates the Mourner’s Kaddish with a legend allegedly relating an experience of Rabbi Akiva.

In the legend, the rabbi encounters an old, stooped man, burdened by a huge bundle of faggots and when Akiva asks how he happens to be staggering about with a huge burden, the man tells him that he is dead and is being punished because in life he was a tax collector who exempted the rich and squeezed the poor. Akiva asks, “Is there no way you can be relieved of the punishment?” The man replies, “If I had a son who would stand before the congregation and say ‘May the great Name be blessed’ I would be released. But alas, I had no son although my wife was pregnant when I died.” Akiva finds the son, teaches him the prayer, and the son goes to the synagogue and recites it, whereupon his father is released from Gehenna (hell). From there it’s a short distance to the son’s recitation of the Kaddish—now the Mourner’s kaddish—in expiation of the father’s sin. Thus, traditional Jewish men have been known to introduce a son to a friend as “my Kaddish.”

But, according to Wieseltier, the rabbis would have none of it. In a variety of places and coming from a variety of traditions the responsa (religious ruling) uniformly maintained that each soul is responsible for itself and that the son cannot add to the father’s merit and ameliorate or attenuate the sins of the father. *But* the fact that the son is reciting the Kaddish is evidence that the father had merit—the merit accruing to him from having raised such a

pious son. The saying of the Kaddish does not act as a plea for mercy; it is evidence that mercy is deserved.

What about the superstitious side of all this? For example, there is the custom of prolonging the Sabbath prayers so sinners don't have to return to Gehenna (they get Sabbath off).

Wieseltier doesn't believe in a world to come, nor does he believe the Mourner's Kaddish expiates the deceased's sins, not even in the rabbis' sense that the son's piety is evidence of the father's merit. As he says, "My father is dead, not guilty." Yet he clearly feels that this year of ritualized mourning had great value. The nature of that value is not altogether clear. But some of it is. It returned him to community and it structured his grief. That very structure enabled the flow of emotion and working through of that emotion, and it provided a sanctioned step-down of the intensity of his grief.

Wieseltier is very clear that the rabbis of whatever interpretive school enjoined both mourning and the end of mourning ("for all things there is a season"). But Jewish tradition also recognizes that there is a sense in which mourning never ends. Witness *yahrzeit* (anniversary of a death) observations. And his clearly stated belief that "when you're dead, you're dead" does not lessen his conviction that he was doing something important.

During my training analysis, many years after my father's death, I decided to say Kaddish for him, something I had not done when he died. With a belief system similar to Wieseltier's, albeit without his religious background, I, too, was surprised to find that the saying of Kaddish was such a profoundly meaningful experience. It functioned in some ways as an exorcism, enabling me to get my aggression out front and progress with my life. But it had many other meanings, including being an act of love.

At one point Wieseltier concludes that the emotional fruits of saying Kaddish are less important than the moral one—to fulfill a duty—to meet his obligation to his father and his religion. He goes on to say that in the long run it is easier to do the right thing than not to. I concur.

At the end, Wieseltier settles on the conviction that the dead don't live on, but the tradition does. And if saying the Kaddish keeps not souls but the tradition alive, and however tarnished with obsession, superstition and sometimes pernicious anachronistic nonsense that tradition may be, its survival is of supreme importance, and any act that sustains it is equally important.

It is perhaps a paradoxical conclusion, given the author's belief system, yet somehow it feels very right. Any book that forces you to think and makes you feel is worth reading. *Kaddish* is such a book.

The Russian Revolution

Last summer, before my trip to Russia I started reading up on that vast enigma. Being acquainted with many of the Russian classics, I was interested in the historical and cultural but for whatever reason came to focus on the Russian Revolution. What a story! Against all odds a minuscule band of revolutionaries overthrows the most powerful autocracy in the world. And what a cast of characters: Father Gupon, leader of the doomed 1905 march to petition the czar for reform, who turns out to be a police spy; Vladimir Lenin, highly cultured bourgeois gentleman, brilliant scholar, dogmatic Marxist theorist, and eventually ruthless dictator; Leon Trotsky, son of Jewish landowners in the Crimea, first-rate writer and journalist, something of a dandy, victorious general in the post-revolutionary civil war, lover of Frieda Kahlo, opera and literature, loser of the power struggle with Stalin, to be murdered in his Mexican exile by Stalin's agents; and Kerensky, classmate of Lenin (his father was principal of their high school in the remote provincial town where they grew up), who becomes the first post-czarist leader, only to make possible the triumph of Bolshevism by failing to withdraw Russia from the endless bloodshed of the first World War.

The story fascinates and resonates, not only for its intrinsic interest, but by its becoming a template for so many attempts to move from traditional, radically inegalitarian, repressive, authoritarian structures to some form of modernity. It gets played out across the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Let me share my reactions to some of the things I've read.

The American leftist journalist John Reed wrote a firsthand account of the October Revolution that brought Lenin to power. (There were two Russian revolutions: the first toppled the czar, installing a provisional moderate government, first under a Russian aristocrat and then under Kerensky; the second brought about the Bolsheviks' "dictatorship of the proletariat.") Reed's book, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, has been continuously in print since 1919 and it is not hard to see why. It is compelling—all Reed's journalistic skills are at work and the events described are fascinating. Reed's conveying of the confusions and contradictions of those days is masterful, as are his depictions of Lenin and Trotsky as they seize power. We learn that well-dressed crowds attend the opera even as the "soviets" (literally councils) violently—sometimes murderously—take over. These incongruities seem particularly characteristic of the Russia that had had relatively liberal reformist governments that simultaneously launched pogroms to divert popular discontent with the regime. Although Reed's narrative is marred by too many characters, too many places, and

too many factions, sometimes confusing the reader; his personal story is marvelously told in Warren Beatty's film *Reds*.

Bertram Wolfe's *Three Who Made a Revolution* is a classic. It has sold over half a million copies. The introductory chapter that surveys Russian history, relating that history to geography, culture, and personalities, is simply marvelous. Compact, enlightening, and enjoyable, it makes clear the continuities (and discontinuities) between Soviet and Czarist Russia. Wolfe makes the similarities crystal clear. I found the rest of the book—essentially biographies of Lenin and Trotsky (Stalin gets short shrift)—fatally marred by Wolfe's compulsive diversions to argue with Soviet historians and to reject their tendentious accounts of events in numbing detail. Wolfe's scholarship is prodigious, yet all in all, his book is not a good read.

That brings us to Robert Service's trilogy of biographies of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Service's material is utterly engaging. His mastery of vast realms of historical, biographical, and political material is awesome. The problem is that Service knows too much and tries to tell too much, losing the reader in mazes of fractional party disputes as well as inter-party disputes—and by too many characters who appear without explanation or context. Although the biographies were published by Harvard University Press, they have obviously not been competently copy edited and multiple errors, repetitions, and awkwardnesses mar the text. The best of the three biographies (*Lenin*, *Trotsky* and *Stalin*) is the one of Lenin.

In spite of these criticisms, Service does an enormous service (to engage in a bad pun) by demythologizing the founders of the Soviet state and giving us more balanced pictures of these founders. He is particularly good on Lenin, making it clear that Lenin was a ruthless centralizer, an advocate of terror (both Lenin and Trotsky were great admirers of Robespierre and criticized the Paris community of 1871 for its lack of ruthlessness), the sponsor of a new secret police, and no friend of tolerance or liberal democracy. Stalin, though infinitely worse, was no anomaly. Service gives a more balanced picture of Trotsky, who was often idealized by the American left. It is true that Trotsky was relatively more humane as well as highly cultured, yet he too was a supporter of state terror and judicial murder. Ironically, before the Revolution, Trotsky supported himself writing for mainstream newspapers (as Marx did writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*), and after his exile lived on the royalties from the American editions of his works.

The literary critic Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* is in another class. This is literature, a sweeping intellectual history of Marxism from the early nineteenth century to

Lenin's return to Russia in the "sealed train" provided by Germany in hope that he would take Russia out of the war (he did). Wilson's compact biographies of Marx, Engels, and the anarchists Bakunin and Kropotkin, and the rest of the cast, as well as his exposition of their thoughts and theories, are simply wonderful. *To the Finland Station* is a great book. Published in 1940 during Wilson's leftist period, the book is diminished by its too uncritical, sometimes idealizing, portraits of Trotsky and Lenin. Wolfe and Service provide a needed corrective. Nevertheless, *To the Finland Station* remains utterly compelling reading.

If you too are interested in the Russian Revolution, what would I recommend that you read or see? The film *Reds*, Wolfe's introductory chapter, Service's *Lenin*, and Wilson's intellectual history.

To the Lighthouse

When I first read Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* I hated it. Too precious, too Bloomsbury, too constricted by hothouse Oxbridge academic insularity. To readers unfamiliar with pre-World War I British philosophy, large chunks of it make no sense. And worse, it was another tale of an Edwardian dowager preparing for a dinner party—Clarissa Dalloway's dinner party was more than enough for me. The protagonists, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, are more than a little ridiculous (possibly Woolf herself is also having some fun with them and intends to be at least partially humorous) and they have too many children, making it almost impossible to keep them straight. Between the children and the house guests at the Ramsay's summer seaside home where the novella is set, I was lost. And since none of them were of much interest, I didn't really care. Definitely a "chick read." Not a potential source of aesthetic pleasure for a curmudgeon like me.

But I persisted and eventually did a 180. Not that any of the above comments aren't true, but they ceased to matter. The children and house guests sort themselves out, the impossibly self-centered Professor Ramsay comes to have a certain nobility and his quest for truth, however tarnished by ambition, becomes moving. His all-too-loving wife comes to seem not fatuous and foolish, but rather representative of the human potential for kindness, for love, and for caring. Although there is no overt social criticism of sex roles or class distinctions in *To the Lighthouse*, it is implicit, and both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are, to some extent, victims of those constraints. But *To the Lighthouse* is not social commentary; it is poetry. My realization that although *To the Lighthouse* is written in prose it must be read as poetry was the fulcrum that allowed me to reevaluate it. The rhythm of Woolf's prose-poetry matters, as it resonates with the rhythms of the surrounding sea and of the rotating light of the lighthouse itself. Each is ever changing and ever the same. One of the house guests, lower-middle-class Lily Briscoe, who keeps house for her elderly father, is also an artist and her quest for a balance in her painting, for realization of a vision, becomes emblematic of all human striving for something transcendent. That transcendence can be found in the seemingly mundane. For example, in Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party—now not seen as banal but rather as an aesthetic triumph and a representation of the possibility of human happiness—the happiness inherent in any sort of perfection becomes apparent.

At the dinner party we are given a glimpse into the future, the future in which Prue, one of the Ramsays' children, dies in the war. There is also a foreshadowing of Mrs. Ramsay's sudden, inexplicable death. There is nothing sentimental in Virginia Woolf's vision of the

possibility of human nobility in philosophical inquiry, in householding, in art, in personal relations, and in relations with nature because it is always informed by awareness of tragedy and of death. One wonders if the centrality of the sea in *Lighthouse* doesn't anticipate Virginia Woolf's suicide by drowning on the eve of another world war, the first one, casting such deep shadows over the seeming security of family and work in the Edwardian world she depicts.

Then there is the lighthouse itself. What does it represent? Why the transcendent importance of getting there? On one level, it is about a father keeping a promise to his children, about a mother sending gifts to the sick child of the lighthouse keeper, about reaching out to a brave sentinel, as a way of thanking him for his protection; yet on another level it is about none of this. Rather, it is about human striving to find and make contact with the light. When Mr. Ramsay and his party reach the lighthouse even as Lily Briscoe completes her painting, we are deeply moved. Somehow we, too, may be capable of transversing the boundless sea and reaching the lighthouse.

Reading *To the Lighthouse* takes work and its joys are not readily apparent. But they are there and the effort is worth it. So to speak, reading *To the Lighthouse* is itself an instance of going to the lighthouse.

Self-Discovery

Chapter 22:

A Secular Faith

Both the High Holy Days and the tragic events of September 11th have, as they have so many people, forced me to look inward, to contemplate what, if anything, has ultimate value, and what, if anything, has sanctity or is sanctified, what, if anything, makes life worthwhile, and what, if anything, is worth dying for. As a secular humanist with a strong, albeit ambivalent, love for aspects of Jewish tradition, and having during the past year developed a yet more ambivalent flirtation with God, or more accurately flirtation with belief, this year of loss, mourning, pain and of, I think, growth has necessitated a reexamination of self, belief, behavior, relationship, values and a long-cherished skepticism which I continue to believe has redemptive value. As the great jurist Learned Hand said, “The spirit of liberty is the spirit that is not too sure that it is right,” the antithesis of the mindset of the terrorists. Parenthetically, it is crucial that in this suddenly prayerful moment in our history the unprayerful people who reject faith outright, and are more consistently secular than I, feel completely at home and are made to feel an integral part of the nation at this time of coming together.

All of this has been confusing, but staying with confusion with all of its attendant anxiety is far more preferable to grasping some dogmatic certitude to quell that anxiety. Nevertheless, I no longer feel confused. I continue to be ambivalent about many things but that is not necessarily confusing. Rather, it may reflect the complexity of reality and our—at least my—limited ability to comprehend that complexity.

I have come to accept the ultimate mystery of Being and of life and to feel, at times consciously and strongly, at times subliminally and vaguely, awe and wonder before that mystery. Further, I have come to believe, a belief experientially founded, that by endeavoring to put myself into a state of receptivity, I can access sources of strength which are transpersonal, which do not come from ego or from consciousness, whether that source be the unconscious repository of loving human relationships, the unconscious precipitant of human experience over the ages, the healing forces within, the anabolic forces of the universe, the voices of other people or the work of a more traditional transcendent god I cannot know. I do not believe it is the latter, but I cannot know that. But knowing the source

does not seem very important to me; the phenomenon does. It is a faith of sorts, one I have never had, and I am very grateful that it is in my life.

I have come to experience the power of prayer, both private and individual and communal and traditional, and again it is the experience not the existence or nonexistence of a recipient that seems important to me. I do not believe that prayers are “answered.” Nor in the existence of “revealed” truth, or that morality is dependent on religious beliefs. It is the humility, the openness, the receptivity, the willingness to experiment with new unfamiliar and sometimes frightening actions, thoughts and feelings, and its use as a vehicle for expansion of love—for life, for the cosmos and for other people—that is what gives prayerful experience its value to me. If any certainty has crystallized out of all of this, it is the sanctity of love. Socrates had it right in his magnificent meditation on Eros in Plato’s *Symposium* when he praises the divine Eros which first manifests itself in sexual passion as the force that in the end unites us with, or has the potential to unite us with, all of reality.

All of this has been evolving over considerable time within me. September 11th revealed, lucid in a way it never was before, a belief long nascent in the spiritual nature and supreme value of the core American beliefs articulated by the greatly flawed Jefferson and the less flawed Lincoln, by Whitman and Emerson, Thoreau and Martin Luther King, by our best voices, political, philosophical and aesthetic. It is America, not as a nation-state, but as an idea—an ideal—a vision towards which we as individuals and as a collective community, continually strive. It is a vision that tries to give institutional structure and social-political reality to the best of the enlightenment with its anti-authoritarianism, belief in tolerance, insistence on the worth of every human being, and pragmatic stance that the worth of an idea, an ideal, a social policy or a political institution is determined by experience not by antecedent dogma, and finally that free men and women are capable of self-determination. If there is anything sacred in life it is, for me, that set of beliefs. It matters that Jefferson, slave holder that he was, wrote the Declaration, not *Mein Kampf*, and that Lincoln wrote the *Gettysburg Address* and the *Second Inaugural*, not the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

We have done many horrible things as a nation, slaughtering the Indians, enslaving the blacks, supporting repression and totalitarian governments because it was thought to be in our short-term interest, and we have a long history of blind moments of xenophobia and repression from the Alien and Sedition Acts, to Know Nothingness, to the Palmer raids, to the Klan, to McCarthyism, and we continue to have an indefensibly skewed economic distribution and other inequities, but we always in the end judge the moment by the idea, or

set of ideas, that is the true America. The best of our leaders have always known this and it is the central tenet of my secular faith. As an idea and as an ideal it cannot be destroyed. Although I believe that we must learn from and respect the struggles of men and women in all times and places to come to terms with the Mystery and to live their lives, I do not believe that all cultures are equal. Only the West has developed science, at its best a disinterested pursuit of truth based on evidence, and democracy, with its implicit belief in the sanctity and potential for wisdom of the individual. These are ideas worth living for and dying for. As Justice Holmes said, "Democracy, like all of life, is an experiment. . . ." May that experiment continue open-endedly forever.

As for meaning; I find no lack of meaning in life. I do not generally experience it as a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Yet I know the abyss of meaninglessness is real and that I mustn't repress those moments when it surfaces. What Jung called the "shadow" must be integrated. For me that meaning isn't given from the outside but is created by us. I find meaning in work, in love, in beauty, in creating, in playing and in community. That part of my faith is a humanistic one.

So my secular faith turns out to be a mixed bag with many components: belief in transpersonal, immanent sources of strength; in the sanctity of love and in the healing power of relationships; in the high value of skepticism and critical thought; in the necessity of participation in community; in the transforming power of openness to awe and wonder at the majesty and mystery of existence, cosmos and self; and finally in the spiritual nature of American democracy as idea and ideal and of the perpetually failed, ever-enduring struggle to actualize that ideal.

Chapter 23:

My Patients Grow Old

I've been practicing psychotherapy for well over thirty years. Most patients' engagement in therapy is time limited, everything from three or four sessions to address an acute issue to several years of intensive introspection—seeking insight and self-transformation, but a few stay for many years, even decades. They are of two sorts: those struggling with serious mental illnesses requiring ongoing therapy, and those often quite well integrated, productive, sane souls who find having a safe place to explore, experiment, and find support valuable, so they stay in therapy. I see more of those who are in the latter category. But all the long-termers share a common trait: they grow old or at least older, and some have the temerity to sicken and die. Not a nice thing to do to your forever therapist.

To be an effective therapist you need binocular vision: a detached objectivity that can bring into clear focus pathology, quirks, and hang-ups and the ability to empathically identify with patients' "stuff," whatever that may be. Great psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan famously said, "We are all more human than anything else" and he was right. So I should be able to identify with whatever the—now not patients, but fellow humans—are struggling with. And indeed over the years I've identified—found within myself—fear, anxiety, depression, despair, frustration, rage, grandiosity, the wildest of fantasies, self-hatred, a sense of futility, conflict internal and external, compulsiveness, obsessiveness, and unbridled, unrealistic ambition. But "aging," both its objective manifestations and the concomitant terror that accompanies realization of waning powers? "No way, José."

So I watch my patients grow gray, if they have anything to grow gray, develop facial lines and see them grow deeper, become weaker, more unsure of themselves, perhaps unsteady on their feet or tremulous; lose libidinal power or worry about or actually manifest cognitive slippage. But all that has nothing to do with me. At least that's what I tell myself. After all, I still bike long distances, swim into the waves, kayak miles and write reviews. Okay, my patients serve as mirrors for all the ills (mental and physical) that flesh is heir to *except* aging. In that regard I just don't see myself in them. Then I remind myself that the cemeteries are filled with previously healthy people, but it doesn't help. Those ingrate patients age before my eyes, but not me. Then I tell myself that hubris is indeed dangerous and that pride comes before a fall, but once again those words of wisdom don't really touch

me. The problem is the damn patients who keep aging. Sometimes I wonder if I should tell Mrs. Smith, with whom I have struggled through so many issues over so many years, that I need her as my memento mori. Surely it would be healthier to be in contact with my own fear and with the reality of my aging. But what does my denial have to do with Mrs. Smith, who surely isn't in my office to be my memento mori? And indeed what does all this morbidity have to do with me? Nothing. Then I remind myself that the Bible notes, apropos of King Saul, "how the mighty have fallen" and I wonder if that might apply to me. Nah, no chance.

Not only do the patients I have grow older, the few new ones that come along tend not to be spring chickens themselves. Having decided that on my side I must accept some responsibility for my dilemma, I have resolved to only accept patients who promise to grow younger.

So what do I conclude? No! The problem can't be on my side—it's all the patients' fault—no matter what I do they insist on growing older.

Me identify with such an unpleasant process? Not likely!

Chapter 24:

No One To Kvetch To

The self-described atheistic Jew Sigmund Freud famously queried, “To whom shall I address a complaint?” He did so in a letter to his friend and disciple Lou Andreas-Salome, while undergoing a series of disfiguring, indeed incapacitating and mutilating, surgeries for cancer of the mouth and jaw.

As another atheistic Jew, I strongly identify with the man who asked the question, although happily, not with the man suffering a progressive, painful, fatal disease. In fact, at the risk of alerting the evil eye, I have nothing special to kvetch about at the moment.

In “Spiritual Envy as a Countertransference” (see above), I adumbrated the downsides of non-belief. But the absence of a cosmic receiver of kvetches was not among them. Looking back, it was only lack of imagination that led to that omission. For kvetching to the Most High is an inextricable part of Jewish tradition, and the loss of that possibility is a very real and very distressing concomitant of disbelief.

This loss is doubly distressing. As is manifest in Freud’s *geshrei* it is frustrating. There is no sense in complaining to an indifferent universe, and it is alienating not to be part of a familiar, venerable tradition. Let’s look at that tradition.

Abraham started the whole thing when God insisted on destroying Sodom and Gomorrah in spite of the possibility that just and blameless men may have lived there. Abraham is just as insistent as God, but in the opposite direction, proclaiming that even if there are only ten righteous men in Sodom they must be spared the punishment to be inflicted on the many unrighteous, putting his complaint in the characteristic Jewish form of a question: “How can a just God be unjust?” Unfortunately, Abraham didn’t complain of the arbitrariness and irrationality of God’s demand that he sacrifice Isaac.

A few generations later, we read of the insistent kvetching, here referred to as “murmurings,” of the Israelites wandering in the desert after their escape from Egypt:

“There weren’t enough graves in Egypt? So You had to bring us here?” Although the recipient of these kvetches is manifestly Moses, he is merely a spokesman for God, so we may reasonably construe the murmurings as kvetches addressed to the Almighty.

The Hasidic Rebbe Levi-Yitzhak of Berdichev actually put God on trial on Yom Kippur, crying out, “Today is Judgment Day. David proclaims it in his Psalms. Today all Your Creation stands before You so that You may pass sentence. But I, Levi-Yitzhak, son of Sarah of Berdichev, I say and I proclaim that it is You Who shall be judged today. By your children who suffer for You, who die for You and the sanctification of Your name and Your law and Your promise.” Now there is a complaint on a truly heroic scale.

Then there is Rabbi Emil Frankenheim, long-time professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, who gave up on complaining to God about His absence at Auschwitz and decided to believe in and to continue practicing Judaism in order “to not give Hitler a posthumous victory.”

Elie Wiesel, somewhat similarly, decided that while there can be no answer for God’s silence, it is nevertheless essential to continue to ask the question. Levi-Yitzhak, Frankenheim and Wiesel are all deeply serious kvetchers who, unlike Freud, continued to believe that there is Someone to kvetch to. But there are advantages to Freud’s position—naturally also expressed by a question. It eliminates the irresolvable dilemma of how an omnipotent, benevolent God could have created a world so saturated with evil. The free will dodge that evil came into the world because God gave man free will is just that—a dodge. Did man’s free will create the HIV virus, the mutability of cells into malignancy, or tsunamis? Clearly not.

“It is what it is, so just suck it up” is hardly satisfying, yet it may have the virtue of being true. And if there’s loss in not having anyone to complain to, there is also gain. It is a stance that puts responsibility on us to “change the things we can and accept the things we cannot,” without wasting our intellectual resources trying to explain the inexplicable or using all our emotional energy in futile protest.

Of course we can kvetch to our therapists—better than nothing but hardly a substitute for God. Nevertheless, it sure would be wonderful to have Somebody to kvetch to—a recipient of my complaints, trivial and profound, ranging from that rained-out vacation to unrequited love, to genocide.

Chapter 25:

Thoughts on Mortality

The other night I dreamt that my wife was mad at me because I arranged to be buried at Bide-a-Wee pet cemetery. The idea pleased me. The “day residue” of the dream was a discussion of burial plots. My wife laughed and said I was going to the dogs when I told her the dream, but I defended my choice. My earliest memory is of a strange dog licking my ice cream cone and my crying because he, not I, was getting to eat it, yet being unwilling to deprive him of it. As T.S. Eliot famously wrote, “In the end is my beginning.”

Be that as it may, Bide-a-Wee means abiding (staying) a while, encompassing both the staying and the leaving, so mortality was clearly on my mind. As I healthily approach my seventieth year, the inevitable really does indeed seem inevitable and of course our discussion of burial plans made it seem even more real.

For all my attachment to Jewish culture and traditions, and my appreciation of some forms of ritual and practice, which I sometimes find deeply moving, the high value I place on participation in community, and my conviction that certain religious emotions such as awe, wonder, humility and gratitude are intrinsic elements of maturity and psychic health, I remain essentially a non-believer, at least in a traditional god. I could perhaps concede some form of sacredness to immanence, to the notion that the mystery of the totality of things should induce something akin to worship, but that immanence is not, for me, a person, or an actor, or a force to be propitiated. I certainly don't believe in any form of personal immortality. So for me death is a cessation of consciousness, the ceasing to be as a sentient being, the big smash that simply ends everything. We can have no experience of nothingness (Heidegger's dictum that “the Nothing nothings,” notwithstanding), its closest simulacrum being going under deep anaesthetic. Perhaps there is no better expression of the inner emotional response to eternal nothingness than Lear's lament—“Never, never, never, never, never” –as he contemplates his daughter Cordelia's lifeless body.

The Roman poet Lucretius in his meditation *On the Nature of Things* long ago said that since death can be no possible experience there was nothing in it to be feared. I had always heard Lucretius to be whistling in the dark, although I did not disbelieve his stance on death. Lucretius also believed that men fear death primarily because they fear punishment in the afterlife, a fear cultivated and exploited by those in power as a means of social

control. His explication of the nature of things is intended to vanquish such fear. I imagine there are few who haven't at some time or another dreaded retaliation in some form (even if consisting of nothing more than "meeting" those we have wronged in life in the hereafter) for malevolent deeds, real or imagined. Perhaps what goes around does come around. In any case, Lucretius doesn't deal with the dread of ceasing to be, he simply denies it, and indeed there is something to be said for the notion that non-being cannot be a bad thing since we would have no experience of it. But human beings have mostly not felt that way.

Homer evidently was one such, putting words that mean essentially that any form of life and consciousness, however horrific—his example being isolation on a tiny barren rock for eternity—is preferable to non-being, into the mouth of Odysseus.

The problem of the secularist confronting death has rarely been addressed in literature or philosophy, a notable and courageous exception being Philip Roth's novel *Everyman*. Roth's book is depressing, stark, and not altogether successful as a work of art. Its protagonist is a man with no strongly meaningful relationships, goals or ambitions, so it's hard to identify with or learn from his experience. Yet there must be few who have not sometimes felt the sense of meaninglessness and emptiness experienced by Roth's protagonist. Nevertheless, it may be the case that the encounter with death is somehow different for the non-believer who is imbedded in a nexus of meaningful and loving connection. Is there a clue here to the best that can be done with the brute facticity of death?

Dylan Thomas offers us yet another perspective when he enjoins defiance: "Do not go gentle into the good night. / Rage, rage against the dying of the light." And indeed rage is an ineluctable response to the narcissistic injury inflicted by the universe's indifference to our ceasing to be, and some form of protest would seem to be healthy. John Keats "half in love with easeful death" is at the opposite end of the spectrum of human responses to mortality. At the moment, I am not in contact with either of these polarities, but I suspect that I will embrace them both before the journey ends.

Let me return to the personal. When I was in my twenties I suffered severe panic attacks that took the form of certainty that death (by stroke or heart attack) was imminent. I remember protesting in a near-hysterical state that "I can't die now; I'm not in a state of grace." I don't know where the Catholic notion of grace came from, but it was there. I don't feel like that now, yet I am all too aware of "sins" of admission and of commission that hurt, sometimes grievously, others and indeed myself. As time grows shorter, I can't help but wonder what form of reparation, if any, is possible and further wonder how to work

through my now greatly attenuated, but still intermittently present, feelings of guilt and shame. I certainly don't wish that every day was Yom Kippur, but not always and not even often I find that Jewish religious ritual does help.

The great developmental psychologist, Erik Erikson, spoke of eight stages of life, each characterized by a dynamic struggle between two possibilities of realization. In his discussion of the final stage, he characterizes the polarity as senile despair versus final integrity, the key component of final integrity being affirmation of the lifestyle one has lived and "acceptance of the one and only life that has been possible." I find that beautiful and deeply moving, but I'm not convinced that its realization is possible. Perhaps Erikson's final integrity is best viewed as an idea to be striven for, not as a developmental demand and here too is a clue to approaching the dilemma posed in this essay.

The Buddhist notion that attachment is the cause of suffering, and correlatively that non-attachment ends suffering offers yet another clue. This too is moving, beautiful and profound. Yet I have mixed feelings about Buddha's insight. A strong part of me values passionate attachment and is not at all sure that the pain such attachment brings is not a good trade-off for the intense aliveness such passion promotes. Like St. Augustine who prayed, "Free me of my lust, but not yet," I'm not ready to "let go" in the manner enjoined by the Eight Fold Path, but I do see that may well be a task—with the potential for liberation—down the path.

In his exquisite essay "On Transience," Freud, another Jewish non-believer who famously asked, "With whom can I register a complaint?", tells us that "Transience value is scarcity value in time," that is, that the very brevity of life, "the passing away of all things," makes both life and all the glories of nature, art and love just that much more precious. I believe this to be the case and indeed there is comfort here and wisdom in the suggestion that we fully relish each single moment. There is a counterpoint here between Buddha and Freud that suggests that intense attachment need not be self-defeatingly narcissistic if that attachment also allows for, and indeed in some sense celebrates, mutability.

Freud's essay was occasioned by a walk in the mountains with the poet Rainer Maria Rilke during which Rilke laments on the transience of the beauty surrounding them. Freud responds that yes the bloom of this spring will die, but it will return next spring and that the state of mourning his friend is in will come to an end. There's something key here, namely that we need to mourn both for our own transience and the transience of all we love, always in the realization that mourning, however painful, does come to an end.

The philosophers and theologians have given us contradictory advice on how to relate to death. By far the most prevalent, the mainstream view, is that *memento mori*, reminders of the brevity of our lives, are salutary—from a traditional theological point of view because they remind us to repent and to live more innocently before it is too late—from a secular point of view like Freud's because it makes us more appreciative of the now. The opposite view is nowhere better expressed than in Spinoza's injunction that "The free man thinks of nothing less than of death." I believe that both camps possess wisdom. There is a time to focus on transcendence including our own and there is a time to put it out of mind and plunge exuberantly and unselfconsciously into life.

So what do I conclude from all of this? I'm afraid nothing especially original. Someone once said, "Clichés are clichés because they are true," and that seems to be the case. Here are the clichés I put my money on. The "bourn from which no man returns" is indeed a mystery and the best way that I can deal with that mystery is to experience and feel whatever emotions—terror, fear, anger, sadness, and maybe acceptance that that experience induces; to try and make whatever reparation possible for wrongs committed and to not add to their weight; to live as fully as intensely, as appreciatively, and as lovingly as possible in the moment, in the "now"; to identify with the ongoingness of the universe, with its mystery and beauty; to identify with those who will go on living who elicit my love and concern and to contribute what I can to their struggles; and finally to strive for an acceptance of the entire life cycle including the end, which entails my ceasing to be. As Spinoza notes, "Freedom is the acceptance of necessity," a hard dictum but a liberating one.

Does all this help when we "feel" feet walking on our graves? Who knows? Perhaps.

Chapter 26:

The Rack of This World

At the end of *King Lear*, his loyal servant Kent, speaking over Lear's body, says, "He hates him / That would upon the rack of this world / Stretch him out longer." After having uttered the most powerful articulation of the finality of loss: ". . . and Thou'lt come no more / Never, never, never, never, never!" in all literature, as he holds the lifeless, hanged body of his daughter Cordelia, Lear expires, finally escaping the "rack of this world."

This raises a profound question: Is the world a rack on which men are tortured? Is life a succession of pains terminating in death? Many men besides Kent have thought so.

Lear, who spent much of his life as one of the torturers rather than one of the tortured, has finally achieved insight into the human condition and himself. At "fourscore and more," turned out by the two daughters he favored, Lear wanders naked and defenseless through a relentless upheaval of nature.

Looking inward he says, "Poor named wretches, wheresoe'er you are, / That by the pelting of this pitiless storm, / How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, / Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you / From seasons such as these? Oh, I've ta'ken / Too little care of this! . . ."

If Lear, angry, tyrannical, self-centered, and impulsive, can become capable of such empathy there's hope for all of us.

At this point in the tragedy, the play is ennobling, rather than inculcating despair. Lear goes on to manifest a profound self-recognition: "I am a very foolish, fond old man." No longer suffering the self-deception consequent on regal power, he knows who he is.

Israel Baal Shem Tov, living in a time of persecution and cruelty, was another man all too aware of "the rack of this world." Yet he chose to fight sadness with joy.

"The man who looks only at himself cannot but sink into despair; yet as soon as he opens his eyes to the Creation around him, he will know joy."

After his epiphany in the storm, Lear does not know joy. But he undeniably no longer looks only at himself, and when he experiences himself and Cordelia as two birds singing in

a cage, he does know joy.

But it is to be of no avail. Sigmund Freud, one of the world's all-time experts on pain, spoke of man's helplessness before nature, disease and the malignity of his fellow human beings. Freud regarded the last as the hardest to bear, since we find it so difficult to accept the inevitability of the injuries we experience from other people. But Freud tells us that they are no less inevitable in the sense of being necessary as part of the causal sequence of this world.

And indeed, the causal sequence of things makes no exception for Lear because he has gained self-recognition, the capacity for empathy, and the potential to love. His now beloved, reconciled daughter, Cordelia, is murdered and Lear dies of his grief. The world is rack indeed.

King Lear takes place in a pagan world, whatever Shakespeare's personal beliefs may have been, and Freud, of course, was a non-believer. So the worldview of the play and of the founder of psychoanalysis is importantly different from that of the Baal Shem Tov who, of course, was a believer. For him, as rack-ish as the world may be, there was always the awe-inspiring beauty of the Creation—a creation formed by an omnipotent, benevolent God.

But Lear isn't Shakespeare's only rageful old man. At the end of his career he created Prospero, the magician-protagonist of *The Tempest*. Prospero, too, achieves insight and self-recognition when he relinquishes power. "But this round magic / I here abjure . . . I break my staff. / Bury it fathoms in the earth / And deeper than ever plummetts sound / I'll drown my book" (of magic).

The Tempest, unlike *Lear*, doesn't end tragically. Prospero's daughter Miranda marries, presumably happily, and he goes into retirement, although he does tell us that "every other thought will be of my grave."

So is the world the rack Kent, witnessing Lear's agonized death, thinks it to be? In my own experience, it mostly hasn't been. But the story isn't over yet, so who knows? In the meantime, I'm going biking.

Chapter 27:

Dayenu, Genug, and “More”

A large part of my professional life has been devoted to the psychological treatment of addiction. One of my books on the subject, *From Slavery to Freedom: Therapeutic Strategies for Treating Addiction*, was inspired, in part, by the Seder narrative. The Twelve Step programs (AA and its offshoots) describe alcoholism and addiction in general as “the disease of more.” So it wasn’t surprising that at this year’s Seder I couldn’t help thinking that “*dayenu*” (meaning it would have been enough) was the cure for addiction. And indeed it is.

Dayenu is a Hebrew word, a song sung at the Seder, and a concept. Gratitude is implicit in *Dayenu*. To feel deeply, powerfully and joyfully that “it would have been enough,” here referring to each of God’s miracles, is indeed the antithesis of “more,” and an antidote for limitlessly craving “more.” Our entire *Weltanschauung* is one of “more.” Industrial capitalism can only survive through perpetual growth, and that growth must proceed regardless of consequences to the environment, natural and cultural. Such growth is fed by artificially induced demand and manipulatively created need. That too is the antitheses of the spirit of *dayenu*. It also stands in sharp contrast to the Bhutanese king’s declaration that he is “more interested in the gross national happiness than in the gross national product.”

Dayenu also stands in counterpoint to the “*Genug*” of Bach’s magnificent cantata, “*Ich habe genug*.” “*Genug*” means enough, so “I have enough” would seem to be in the same spirit as *dayenu*, but it is not. Here, what the singer has enough of is life and a yearning for “sweet death” and union with the savior. It is suffused with weariness and a readiness to let go. Although there is an underlying gratitude here too, his thrust is distaste, even disgust, for this life and a yearning for another one. Bach captures here a human potentiality, an existential stance, no less profound than *dayenu* and just as intrinsic to being fully human. Resignation and renunciation have their part to play in emotional growth, but I’ll take *dayenu* anytime. Perhaps here the difference between Jewish this-worldliness and Christian other-worldliness is exemplified. The spiritual practice that speaks most loudly to me is meditation on *dayenu*—neither empty chasing after that which cannot fill the inner emptiness because there can never be enough, nor, at least not yet for me, having had enough and being ready to depart.

Chapter 28:

Transcendence in Bhutan

If you told me in March 2003 that Buddhist prayer flags would be hanging in my backyard and that I would find them not only aesthetically pleasing but spiritually meaningful, I would have been not only incredulous but dismissive. A rationalist subscribing to such superstition? No way. But after 10 days of trekking in Bhutan's Himalayas, plus several days visiting temples, monasteries, *stupas*, and *dzongs* (historic fortresses now used as monastic training schools), I not only look at my prayer flags with deep satisfaction, I meditate focused on *thangkas* (religious paintings), wear a protective red thread, and finger worry-beads made of wood of the Bodi tree (the same type of tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment). Bhutan was truly a transformative experience.

The trip started out incredibly pressured. There were reports, patients, students, and lectures, not to mention inoculations, medicines, equipment, and clothing to be procured. The stress of preparation was compounded by fears of SARS, terrorism, and the Iraq war. Should we cancel?— *we* being myself and my “niece,” Ariel, the daughter of my oldest friend from undergraduate days. Thirty-five years my junior, Ariel never made me feel inadequate or antiquated when she surged ahead. Beautiful, resourceful, delightfully intense, passionately open to new experience, she was the ideal traveling companion. In the days leading up to the trip, Ariel's mother alternated between near-hysteria and vicarious excitement. In the end, the latter won out and we departed with her, still-fearful, blessing.

The majesty and grandeur of the Himalayas must be seen to be believed. The descent into Paro, location of Bhutan's only airport, was magnificent. I felt as if I could reach out and touch the mountains. After clearing a rigorous SARS screening, we stepped out of immigration and met Palden, our wondrous guide—a magnificent expositor of his culture and of his country's natural wonders, an opener of doors of all sorts, high-spirited, funny, knowledgeable, and highly protective. We always felt safe with Palden, and given some of the places and situations we would encounter—a hailstorm at 16,000 feet, a mad charging yak, and a second 16,000 foot pass with precipitous multi-thousand foot drop-offs in deep snow—that was no small boon.

Palden drove us to the Gangtey Palace Hotel, which amazed us with its magnificent painted and carved wood, its frescoes, and its stupendous views of distant snow-covered

peaks. As the afternoon waned, we drove to an ancient Buddhist temple, where Palden cajoled the caretaker into opening its locked doors. Seeing the objects of veneration and religious wall paintings within, all lit by other-worldly diffused lighting, was deeply moving. When Palden prayed to Guru Rimpoche, the Tibetan saint who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, we joined him, genuinely sharing in his experience of the sacred. When the monk blessed us with holy water, we did feel blessed.

Om mani padme hum became our mantra. It all felt natural, organic, integrated, and right. Yet I was also aware of the superstitious side of the culture, and was amazed that the veneration of relics, worship of saints, monks pledged to celibacy, a view of life that holds that all is suffering and that non-attachment is the route to happiness, had such strong appeal for me. When I encounter their equivalents in the Christian West, they leave me cold. I think my reaction had much to do with the absence of coercion or of religious persecution by Buddhists. Buddha's "middle path" has as its goal happiness and lacks the self-hating and life-denying characteristics of much Western asceticism.

Our second day we climbed 2,500 feet to the Tiger's Nest monastery, which hangs on the edge of a 1,000-foot sheer cliff. This is magical architecture. The climb is exquisitely beautiful. Two thirds of the way up is a tea house, where we sat in the caressingly warm sun before finishing the ascent to contemplate the astonishing beauty emanating from the monastery's integration of nature and art.

That afternoon, we visited Paro Dzong, which contained a monastic school for boys aged 7 to 12, complete with a fearsome discipline master, whip and all. To our surprise, the second he left the room, the spitballs started flying, punches flew, and the scriptures went unattended.

The next day we started trekking, accompanied by eight horses, two mules, two horsemen, a cook, and his assistant. The horsemen sang folk tunes as they worked and walked. The head cook kept his distance as befit his high status. Above 10,000 feet, yaks, not the most amiable of beasts, took over.

That first day was easy enough—a pleasant meander past fields and farmhouses, people coming out to greet us, the assistant cook humming along with a hot lunch on his back, cows and dogs everywhere—until we crossed a river and started climbing more steeply. By the time we arrived at camp, seven miles later, I was maxed. As the sun set, the horsemen rounded up their grazing charges and tethered them nearby lest they provide a meal for wolves or jackals.

The second day was a 13-mile continuous up-and-down challenge. Our camp that night—more than 11,000 feet up—was near a “communal hut,” a rough stone building with a fire pit used by nomadic herders. Yaks, rather like cats rubbing against the furniture, scratched themselves against our tents as we put on layer after layer against the cold.

On day three, as the sun climbed we stripped to shorts and t-shirts and headed for base camp at Jhomolhari, the sacred mountain. This was perhaps the most beautiful campsite I have known. The towering snow-clad mountains; the romantic ruins of the *dzong*; the frayed prayer flags, becoming one with nature as they disintegrated; the yaks, the dogs, and the trail to Nyile La; the 16,000-foot pass we were to climb—all came together as if composed by a great painter.

The next morning we started for Nyile La. The altitude made for a tough, slow climb. I had to stop every 20 yards to catch my breath. The top was loose scree and very steep. As I peaked, I was exuberant. Tears ran down my face. Ariel wept with joy and emotion. No sooner had we raised our hands—not in hubris, but in gratitude—than black clouds rolled in, followed by hail, thunder, and the sound of distant avalanches. There was no place to hide. The hailstones grew to golf-ball-sized. It was two hours before we walked out of the storm, and another three before we reached the tiny village of Lingzhi.

It rained that night, which meant it was snowing in the passes. We were between two 16,000-foot passes, with no other way out. I woke up several times that night, fearful of what sounded like continuous avalanches—actually the rushing river we were camped next to, as I saw in the morning,

During a rest day at Lingzhi, we explored the village and its cliff-top *dzong*. It was occupied by one monk, who admitted us to his meditation cell where there was a poster, used as wallpaper, of a large-breasted nursing mother feeding her infant, inscribed in English, which he didn't understand, “Breast feeding builds strong teeth.” Regardless of the incongruity of the picture, the room and the monk projected centeredness, calm strength, and serenity. While we explored the *dzong*, Palden went ahead to reconnoiter. Returning to camp, he reported that a herd of yaks had been driven over the pass and, fortunately for us, had trampled down the snow.

Still, it was an extraordinarily difficult climb. I had to stop every other step to catch my breath, but we persevered and reached the snow line. From there on there were precipitous drops at the edge of the narrow, slippery trail and precious little oxygen. When prayer flags

greeted us at the top, I experienced an emotion hitherto unknown to me. A mixture of awe, gratitude, at-oneness and exhaustion. It stayed with me.

The last two days of the trek held ample challenges of their own. We followed a river whose towering cliffs on either bank were reminiscent of Sung landscape painting.

Our last day we were climbing a sharp rise on a narrow trail that fell precipitously to our right when an out-of-control adolescent male yak charged over the crest, hell bent on trampling us or tossing us down the precipice. At Palden's frantic urging, we scrambled up the slope on our left. It was a close call. Moments later, two yak herders appeared, futilely in pursuit.

Finally, we came out on a lumber road, which ended in a village with a small general store. Far above, there was a monastery from which monks descended to buy Coke. A wondrous covered bridge, intricately carved, flying prayer flags in all stages of being, led to the monastery. We crossed to be treated to a show by dozens of langur monkeys. We had made it, and the monkeys were congratulating us.

The next morning we were driven to the capital, Thimphu. That night, we had a wonderful dinner with Palden's family and the next day paid our last temple visit. A festival was in progress and children were being brought to be blessed. The lama came out and tied a protective red cord around our necks, poured holy water over our hands, and sent us on our return journey safeguarded from SARS and those aspects of Western culture that would attempt to undermine our serenity.

We drove back to Paro and in the morning, Palden took us to the airport. As we parted, he gave us gifts from his sister and then a gift from him—Buddhist prayer beads that he put around our wrists. The three of us wept; our sadness at leaving Bhutan was palpable and strong. Then Ariel and I strode toward customs and the West.

Epiphanies fade, yet I remain more open, more receptive, and more in contact with the mystery, the mutability, and the sacredness of all things.

About the Author

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