Psychology

Psychotherapy

Why are we so depressed when all we have to worry about is: acid rain, problems of African-Americans, AIDS, the plight of the aged, alcoholism, Al-Qaeda, Alzheimer's disease, loss of effectiveness of anti-biotics, asbestos in school buildings, the possibility of asteroids striking the earth, attention deficit syndrome, avian flu, the balance of payments, the budget crisis in state and national government, burglaries, cancer, cell phone radiation, child abuse, cholera epidemics, chronic fatigue syndrome, cholesterol, cigarette smoking, bleaching of coral reefs, corruption in government, crack babies, crime in the streets, crop circles, cystic fibrosis, the day-care crisis, decay of infrastructure, depletion of fossil fuels, destruction of neighborhoods by city governments, destruction of the rain forests, dirty bombs, drought, drug abuse, dysfunctional families, earthquakes, the crisis in Eastern Europe, the Ebola virus, the education crisis, endangered species, energy crisis, fetal alcohol syndrome, international financial crisis, fire ants, global warming, heart disease, herpes, disappearance of honey bees, housing prices, human spontaneous combustion, Huntington's chorea, being overrun with Latin American immigrants, inflation, killer bees, the Middle East, El Niño, La Niña, lead poisoning of children, Lime's disease, mercury poisoning from dental fillings, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, the national debt, nuclear proliferation, disposal of nuclear and poison-gas missiles, oppression of minorities, osteoporosis, ozone depletion, Parkinson's disease, pesticides in our food, physical abuse of women and children, the plight of the homeless, PMS, pollution, potential loss of life's savings, potential loss of life's work due to computer problems, poverty, power line radiation, racism, radon gas, bankruptcy of real estate mortgage lenders, recession, rising sea levels, SARS, sexual abuse of women and children, starvation in Ethiopia, Kurdestan, and elsewhere, superstorms on the sun, terrorism, Third World overpopulation, the trade deficit, traffic congestion, tuberculosis, unemployment, diseases and birth defects caused by prolonged use of video display terminals, plight of Vietnam veterans, plight of Iraq War veterans, waste disposal, the world running out of fresh water, welfare abuse?

Why don't we feel better, considering that we have: alchemical hypnotherapy; Amanae; aroma therapy; art therapy; aura-balancing therapy; behavioral therapy; behavior modification therapy; bibliotherapy; Bodynamic Analysis; body-oriented therapy; bonding therapy; Breema bodywork; co-counseling; cognitive therapy; cognitive behavioral therapy; cosmology therapy; couples therapy; dance therapy; deep muscle integrated bodywork; deep tissue body therapy, Breema style; divine counseling; drama therapy; dream therapy; drug therapy; dynamic therapy; EMDR; energetic repatterning; existentialist therapy; family therapy; fireplace therapy; firewalking therapy; Freudian psychoanalysis; Gestalt therapy; group therapy; history therapy [which consists in simply reading about the daily lives, in previous centuries, of people in the patient's social class]; Holotropic Breathwork; horticultural therapy; the Huna Course; Hypno-Dharma Facilitation; hypnosis therapy; holistic breath work; holistic hypnosis therapy; Ericksonian hypnosis therapy; Hellerwork; humanist hypnotherapy; transcendental hypnotherapy; inner resource counseling; integral counseling; integrative bodywork; Intensive Journal therapy; Jungian therapy; lithium, Lomi bodywork; lymphatic drainage therapy; massage therapy; menstrual cycle therapy; movement therapy; multi-dimensional massage; music therapy; Neuro-Linguistic Programming Core Transformation; oxygenesis; pastoral therapy; phototherapy; play therapy; primal therapy; Prozac; rational therapy; redecision therapy; Reichian therapy; neo-Reichian therapy; Reichian bioenergetic bodywork; rebirthing; reflexology; Reiki accupressure massage; relaxation therapy; Rolfing; Rosen Method bodywork; Rubenfeld synergy method; sandbox therapy; scent

therapy; scream therapy; sex therapy; SHEN Physio-emotional Release Therapy; subliminal therapy; telephone counseling; Trager bodywork; transpersonal counseling; Twelve-Step Programs, Valium, vibrational healing; whisper therapy; will therapy; Zentherapy; and Zoloft?

The logic of psychiatry: if the patient gets better, that proves that psychiatry works; if he doesn't, it's because he didn't try hard enough.

This logic is essentially the same as that of the priest: if the believer's prayers are answered, that proves the power of God; if his prayers are not answered, it is because he wasn't deserving.

"[Philosopher of science Karl] Popper has criticized Freudianism for claims and predictions which, though perhaps comforting or suggestive in one way or another, are...largely unfalsifiable. For example, an orthodox psychoanalyst might predict a certain kind of neurotic behavior. When the patient doesn't react in the predicted way, but in a very different manner, the analyst may attribute the opposite behavior to 'reaction-formation'." — Paulos, John Allen, *Innumeracy*, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1990, p. 69.

"...the failure of psychologists at the present time to emancipate themselves from metaphysics, and to coordinate their enquiries, is principally due to the use of symbols such as 'intelligence' or 'empathy' or 'subconscious self'..." —Ayer, Alfred Jules, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Dover Publications, Inc., N.Y., 1952, p. 152.

Psychology, like all the humanities, is a means of officializing opinions and feelings. Most women go into psychology because it is a way of officializing their nurturing instincts. (Consider the likely popularity among women of a school of psychology based on Nietzsche's ideas.) Similarly, the appeal of business management for most women is that it officializes their natural instincts for socializing (meetings are approved coffee klatches, etc.).

One sure sign of officializing is the naive belief — almost universal among psychologists and psychotherapists — that to give something a name is somehow to know more about it.

Why are women so much better at psychology than men? There are two reasons: (1) Because for almost all of the five million years of the human race, women have been in a subordinate position. To survive, they had to know what their masters had in mind, and (2) Because, being in charge of child rearing, they had to be concerned about what their children were feeling.

" 'See that bird?' [my father] says. 'It's a Spencer's warbler.' ... Well, in Italian, it's a *Chutto Lapittida*. In Portuguese, it's a *Bom da Peida*. In Chinese, it's a *Chung-long-tah*, and in Japanese, it's a *Katano Tekeda*. You can know the name of that bird in all the languages of the world, but when you're finished, you'll know absolutely nothing whatever about the bird. You'll only know

about humans in different places, and what they call the bird. So let's look at the bird and see what it's *doing* — that's what counts.' (I learned very early the difference between knowing the name of something and knowing something.)" — Feynman, Richard P., *"What Do* You *Care What Other People Think?*", W. W. Norton & Co., N.Y., 1988, pp. 13-14.

But it is not true that, knowing only the name, you know "absolutely nothing whatever" about the bird. At the very least, you know that the bird has been observed by others sufficiently often that it has been given a name! Furthermore, in many cases, from the name you know something about it — if you know the Latin name, you know its genus and species. Finally, if you know the name, you know how to go about finding more information about it. All of which is a long way indeed from "absolutely nothing whatever"!

On the other hand, "the idea that if you cannot *name* something, you do not *know* it, is false. The act of articulation, of naming and describing, often sets up artificial parameters and draws borders around knowing that devalue what cannot be verbally defined." — Adolphe, Bruce, *Of Mozart, Parrots and Cherry Blossoms in the Wind*, Limelight Editions, N.Y., 1999, p. 23.

"One of Freud's closest friends, a surgeon named Wilhelm Fliess, invented biorhythmic analysis, a practice based on the notion that various aspects of one's life follow rigid periodic cycles which begin at birth. Fliess pointed out to Freud that 23 and 28, the periods for some metaphysical male and female principles respectively, had the special property that if you add and subtract appropriate multiples of them, you can attain any number. Stated a little differently: any number at all can be expressed as 23X + 28Y for suitable choices of X and Y. For example, 6 = (23 times 10) + (28 times -8). Freud was so impressed with this that for years he was an ardent believer in biorhythms and thought that he would die at the age of fifty-one, the sum of 23 and 28. As it turns out, not only 23 and 28 but any two numbers that are relatively prime — that is, have no factors in common — have the property that any number can be expressed in terms of them." — Paulos, ibid., pp. 68-69.

What is appalling is not that Freud had so little knowledge of mathematics, but that his integrity as a scientist (and a scientist is what he always claimed to be), was not even great enough to make him ask a mathematician about the phenomenon that Fliess had pointed out.

"As Havelock Ellis said..., to the Master's indignation, Freud was not a scientist but a great artist." — Johnson, Paul, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, Harper and Row, Publishers, N.Y., 1985, p. 6.

"Darwin was also unusual as a scientist in his extreme respect for, and attention to, negative evidence. In the *Origin of Species* he devoted a whole chapter to 'Difficulties on Theory,' which in later editions was expanded into two chapters...In his *Autobiography*, he commented on how he followed, throughout most of his life, 'a golden rule' of immediately making a memorandum on

any fact that came to his attention that was opposed to his theories. He did this because he knew how easy it is to forget such negative instances...

"[Another] feature of Darwin's genius was his ability to tap the collective resources of the scientific community and to enlist other scientists as fellow collaborators in his own research projects...What Darwin did as an adult was to institutionalize, in his correspondence and other research activities, a method of constant self-improvement by dutifully listening to others — a proclivity that his sisters had encouraged throughout his childhood...

"...contrast...psychobiography the Darwinian way and psychobiography done the way that Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts have typically tried to carry it out. Freud once commented, based on his own personal experience, that people who have been 'favoured by their mother[s] give evidence in their lives of a peculiar self-reliance and an unshakable optimism.' [Darwin's mother died when he was eight.] If it is true that styles of scientific thinking are even loosely tied to styles of childhood attachment, then Darwin and Freud could not have been more different. Although both were revolutionary personalities, Darwin was unusually concerned about personal error and was modest to a fault. He also erected a new scientific theory that has successfully stood the test of time. Freud, in contrast, was tremendously ambitious and highly self-confident — a self-styled 'conquistador' of science. Yet he developed an approach to human nature that was largely a collection of nineteenth-century psychobiological fantasies masquerading as real science. He also oversaw the development of a highly protected institutional mechanism for perpetuating his ideas that succeeded in doing just that — at the expense of open peer criticism and error correction. Freud's legacy to the discipline of history has been at best questionable and at worst a disaster." — Sulloway, Frank J., "Darwinian Psychobiography", review of Bowlby, John, *Charles Darwin: A New Life*, in *The New York Review of Books*, Oct. 10, 1991, p. 32.

The reasons why *all* the psychotherapies are intellectually bankrupt can be spelled out in a few pages — and *were* spelled out in the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the truth here is not exciting at all — nowhere near as exciting as the falsehoods — or, rather, as the art (literature) — which the profession calls "theory". The few thinkers on the scene knew that sometimes the truth is simple and dull; the rest clung to their faith in the ancient superstition: "Whatever is terrifying, awesome, the stuff of dreams, and, most of all, whatever keeps slipping out of our grasp, whatever needs constant re-interpretation, *must* be true."

"Man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Genealogy of Morals*, section XXVIII.

Psychiatrist: "What are you feeling now?"
Patient: "I don't know."
Psych: "What do you feel like doing?"
Patient: "Hitting something."
Psych: "Why don't you?"
... And on it goes, this 50-minute exercise in bad faith, at the end of which the patient slinks out, thinking, "What good am I if I can't even express my own anger? God, do I need therapy!"

Socrates actually employed *two* methods as a teacher. The first one everyone knows about: it consisted of his using questions in order to guide his listeners to understanding what he wanted them to understand. The second one almost no one knows about — or, at least, almost no one recognizes as a method: it consisted of his often playing the fool. The second is usually explained by saying that it was his way of getting his listeners to utter their opinions and prejudices without inhibition, so that he could then show them their errors.

Playing the fool is an extraordinarily effective aid to teaching, whether of students in school or children at home or patients in a psychotherapist's office, because it offers something far more valuable than mere knowledge, namely, self-confidence. But no modern teacher would think of employing it, because, particularly in college and graduate school, it would suggest the unthinkable, namely, that the professor might have uncertainties about the subject matter he is supposed to know everything about, may have a sense of humor, may — worst of all — sometimes be on a level no higher than that of his students. Unthinkable to today's grim, upward-toiling, academic careerist.

In psychotherapy, too, playing the fool can be effective with some patients, e.g., those who have all their lives suffered from an overwhelming sense of inferiority. If their life has so far consisted in going from a pair of tyrants who were never wrong, to laboring for four years under a whole variety of tyrants who were never wrong, to then becoming the employee of a string of tyrants who were never wrong, these patients may have something like a moment of Zen enlightenment when they confront someone who seems to be often at a loss as to how they should solve some of the problems confronting them. (The patient, in such a moment, often notices a strong, unforgiving contempt in him- or herself for this pathetic creature who *doesn't know the answer.*)

Of course, playing the fool can be a hollow ploy, sooner or later sensed by the patient, who, whether he or she admits it or not, feels instinctively that there is nothing more repelling than a know-it-all professional pretending that he doesn't know it all. So the question is, how can a therapist play the fool honestly? Perhaps by doing nothing more than letting the patient suspect the truth: that the therapist really has no theories worth a damn, that he has felt as bad as the patient now does (if that is, in fact, true), and that all he can do is try to help the patient in the way the patient wishes he would.

Modern therapy: An attractive blonde with a Master's in Family Counseling gets a group of lonely, middle-aged singles together, provides coffee and cookies, shows an interest in their problems, and then tells them they're in such bad shape because they don't know how to *communicate*, don't you see? Communication is the basis of everything! And then of course once we've got that licked, we'll have to look at our fear of success — that's why we're not getting what we want out of life: because we don't want to, we're fighting it! And in this roomful of friendly people, with the smell of coffee and with the lady at the front of the room who makes us laugh and who is just one of us, why it's all so clear, of course! All we have to do is work on our communication skills and our fear of success.

And then the poor souls troop out into the night, back to their empty apartments and dead-end jobs and their aging faces in the mirror, and in a few days wonder why oh God why can't they master communication skills and conquer their fear of success which is the only thing standing between them and happiness?

Probably the most insidious act of bad faith on the part of psychiatrists and psychoanalysts is the pretense of being merely a disinterested presence, a mirror which does nothing but help the patient come to know who he or she is. This disgraceful piece of humbug was also employed by many gurus in the seventies and eighties: "I do nothing! *You* are the one who controls your life!" Probably not one in a thousand of the poor innocents in those audiences wondered if devising and promoting a human growth program in which hundreds of eager participants paid several hundred dollars each to come to a series of meetings whose every activity is pre-planned and controlled by a carefully trained staff — if the man who runs such an enterprise can fairly be said to "do nothing".

It takes no small amount of psychological sophistication to recognize this pretense when it occurs, *and*, more important, to recognize the real thing when *it* occurs. Because one human being can, in fact, be a mirror for another, but only as a friend (and not all friends are capable of doing this). Such relationships cannot be professionalized; the mere attempt to do so immediately converts them into what they were not.

Psychotherapists, gurus, cult leaders, human growth peddlers, priests, evangelists — the hope pushers of our time.

"A touching, even heart-rending scene on Mission late Fri. afternoon — a tow truck hauling away an illegally parked Acura, its burglar alarm beeping bravely, if in vain. Reminded me of the parakeet that was pounced upon one December by a hawk. As it was being borne off to its doom, the tiny bird kept squeaking the only words it new: 'Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas...'" — Herb Caen, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 8, 1991, p. B1.

There are psychotherapists who make a practice of barely acknowledging their patients when they meet them on the street or in other public places, because they feel the therapy relationship is different from all others, and, in particular, is not a friendship. This continues even after the patient has concluded therapy; these therapists believe that if a patient feels inclined to inform the therapist of some progress the patient has made in subsequent months or years, the reason must be that the patient is still living for the therapist's approval, and therefore such communication must be discouraged. The therapists who do not have these views tend to be those who do not have M.D.'s or Ph.D's. Their lower status in the psychotherapeutic community, and their ignorance of much of the theory taught to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts (which is not theory at all, but ideology) make them far more willing to deal with their patients as equals, and to bring to them the vital, the essential, news that no one, neither parents nor therapists, really knows what's best for the patient.

You can always judge a psychotherapist by his attitude toward the overcoming of the psychological wounds of childhood. The mediocre, i.e., the typical, therapist, believes that, with the right techniques and sufficent effort and commitment, the patient can overcome anything, and

therefore that if he doesn't, it must be because he doesn't really want to. The better, and much rarer, therapist, knows that the Serenity Prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous expresses the essence of the matter:

"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."

At a panel discussion of his then recently published book, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (1984), Jeffrey Masson, who had several times expressed his low opinion of psychotherapy, was asked by a member of the audience what he recommended instead. He replied: "Friendship".

Newcomers to a particular psychotherapy often ask, "Does it work?" The correct reply is, "For whom?" Many therapies have done wonders for the therapists who practice them — have provided these people with a purpose in life, often a good income, a recognized place in the community, an improved sex life, and an opportunity to become famous through lectures and books. Certainly therapy works!

The truth about many, perhaps most, books on overcoming depression by other than pharmaceutical means, is that what enabled the author to overcome his or her depression was not the techniques recommended in his book, but writing a book about them and having it published and read by others. Being recognized as an expert in itself solves many problems (although experts are the last to admit this).

Just as we always hear about the wonders of science from those who create it, who give it to the world, and very seldom from those who have to receive it (e.g., workers on assembly lines and in chemical plants, people tending machines, people dying from one form of pollution or another), so do we seldom hear about the benefits of pyschotherapy except from psychotherapists, whether via books or expensive seminars or TV programs. If you're in the driver's seat, therapy, like science, is a magnificent adventure, calling on the mythology and religion and philosophy and literature of the entire human race. Every person is unique! So many to help! So much to do!

And certainly one of the most disgraceful exercises in bad faith in our time is that of the famous middle-aged leader of this or that human growth movement who, having just fallen in love and married a multimillionaire, writes a book announcing that, after a lifetime of searching and struggle, she has at last found the real source of happiness, and it is simply this: that we must go it alone and believe in ourselves and love ourselves as we are.

Even worse are the psychotherapist-professors:

"If it is true that people get the government they deserve, then it is equally true that they get the spiritual leaders they deserve, and this bunch of overpaid, overprivileged, overprestiged hypocrites says more about the nature of the American soul, in particular, the middle- and upper-class American soul, than volumes of cultural analysis.

"These fucks believe that you can take the high road to wisdom, namely, by letting upper class institutions do the dirty work for you: all you have to do is spend the first thirty years of your life

doing the Right Thing for the Right People and you too can get on the gravy train and write books about the meaning of life and about how suicidal despair is really creative, don't you see! And fear of death is creative! Yes, indeed, these torments produce no end of books from those who observe them day after day at $150 an hour from their little seats of I'm-really-just-like-you power.

"And if the lives of their own families are worse chambers of horrors than those of many of their own patients? Well, if one is driven to *help people*, don't you see — if one is enormously talented and intelligent and one has gone to the best schools, well, sacrifices have to be made.

"And being *extremely* well-read — not merely in the literature of their profession but in the great literature and philosophy of the entire world, and having tenured positions at the very best of the best universities — well, surely such extraordinary individuals *must* be qualified, if anyone is, to talk about the modern existentialist dilemma — man's fundamental isolation (at all those conventions and at the weekly card-game with world-famous professors and doctors and business leaders); the fundamental lack of meaning of life (six month waiting list for new patients; always at least one patient attempting suicide when they go on their annual vacation to Switzerland...graduate seminars, the women students just unable to stay away...). The fact that damn near all the great existentialist thinkers and writers were nothing if not outsiders, loners, misfits, anti-institutional, anti-university haters of *playing it safe*, well, they were the pioneers, and it is up to these smarter, wiser, newcomers to carry on their great work.

"I want to say to all the therapy patients of Silicon Valley and Boston and New York City, 'Aren't you *ashamed* to be so desperate that you are willing to learn the meaning of life from slick operators like this? You should be spitting in their faces; you should *much rather* want to blow your brains out than put your life in the hands of shits like this.'" — S.f.

The Education of Psychologists and Psychiatrists

"*Psychological explanation* — To trace something unknown back to something known is alleviating, soothing, gratifying and gives moreover a feeling of power. Danger, disquiet, anxiety attend the unknown — the first instinct is to *eliminate* these distressing states. First principle: any explanation is better than none. Because it is at bottom only a question of wanting to get rid of oppressive ideas, one is not exactly particular about what means one uses to get rid of them: the first idea which explains that the unknown is in fact the known does so much good that one 'holds it for true'. Proof by *pleasure* ('by potency') as criterion of truth. — The cause-creating drive is thus conditioned and excited by the feeling of fear. The question 'why?' should furnish, if at all possible, not so much the cause for its own sake as a *certain kind of cause* — a soothing, liberating, alleviating cause. That something already *known*, experienced, inscribed in the memory is posited as cause is the first consequence of this need. The new, the unexperienced, the strange is excluded from being cause. — Thus there is sought not only some kind of explanation as cause, but a *selected* and *preferred* kind of explanation, the kind by means of which the feeling of the strange, new, unexperienced is most speedily and frequently abolished — the *most common* explanations. — Consequence: a particular kind of cause-anticipation comes to preponderate more and more, becomes concentrated into a systemand finally comes to *dominate* over the rest, that is to say simply to exclude *other* causes and explanations. — The banker thinks at once of 'business', the Christian of 'sin', the girl of her love." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols*, "TheFour Great Errors", sect. 5, in *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, Penguin Books, tr. R. J. Hollingdale, N.Y., 1982, pp. 51-52.

Psychology straddles two ontologies: the Object ontology of the hard sciences, and the non-Object ontology of poetry, myth, religion, morality, emotions. Yet I have never personally known, or read the work of, any psychologist, psychiatrist or psychoanalyst, who clearly understood the difference in the first place, much less recognized its importance.

One reason that the suffering neurotic turns toward Eastern religions and philosophies, not to mention primitive mythologies, is that he or she senses the *absence* there of the Object ontology — because he or she knows that the life of the soul is not an interaction of Objects.

In the West, among the naive professionals — liberal arts professors, psychologists, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts — who have never had any experience of the scientific method — of how it works, of what is needed for it to be applicable — but who know all too well the high reputation of science as a repository of truth, the Object ontology is deemed essential no matter what one is talking about. If what you say is Object-ive (still better, if what you say is backed by a Theory) then it must be true. That is what *makes it be true*.

God help the poor patient who finds out about the DSM (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, with each mental illness described in the most Object-ive language, and, furthermore given a code so the insurance companies can quickly decide if the illness is covered by their policies). "All this pain is nothing but an Object among Objects!"

After many years of psychotherapy, it is clear to me that the best therapists are those who have no degree beyond the Master's. The reasons seem to be, first of all, that having far less prestige in the profession than M.D.'s or Ph.D's does wonders for helping one retain the humility which is so essential for any good therapist, and, second, a Master's is sufficiently little education not to destroy the natural compassion and warmth which are also essential for a good therapist; by the time one has an M.D. or Ph.D, these qualities have long since been replaced by the rigid convictions of "advanced theory".

(I once pursued, briefly, a relationship with a Ph.D. who was a Jungian therapist and who also, in her spare time, conducted research. I asked her to tell me a little about her work. She replied that she didn't like to do that because it wasn't really possible to understand her work without a Ph.D. in her specialty. I replied, "If I believed for a moment that there was *any* idea in psychology that I couldn't understand in less than fifteen minutes, I'd take a gun and blow my brains out." The relationship deteriorated rapidly from that point on.)

Someone tells you that they know of a psychiatrist who, in mid-life, decided to become a psychoanalyst, and that, after *fifteen years* of studying psychoanalytic theory, he is only beginning to understand it. It is important that you ask yourself, "What exactly is he beginning to understand? What exactly does he have great knowledge of?" The answer is *not* "the human mind" or "how the mind works" or "the causes and treatments of certain types of mental illness" if you mean by these phrases what you would mean by their equivalent as applied to the human body. The answer is rather that he is learning to understand a vast body of literature, in exactly the same way as one may be said to understand the texts of a religion, or the literature of a particular country and time.

A major part of psychologists' and psychiatrists' training should consist of exercises whose goal is *not* the analysis of feelings (in the sense of tracing their possible source, e.g., in childhood trauma) but rather the expression, however inept, of the feelings themselves, e.g., through "primitive expression" (described below), and through the images and associations they bring to the psychologist's mind. The aim of this training is the ability to discriminate between ever more subtly different feelings (as a tone-deaf person might attempt to develop an ear for music). A psychologist who is not a sensualist is no psychologist at all.

The same skill can be cultivated in the patient. Early in the course of treatment, a therapist should ask the patient for an "inner weather report". This is not the same as asking the patient what he or she is feeling, or what his or her thoughts are at the moment. It is, instead, an attempt to get the patient to recognize and express the emotional "atmosphere" in which he usually lives. If the patient has difficulty understanding what the therapist is asking for, the therapist can ask the patient to imagine that the patient's mental life were the life of an entire country. How would the patient describe what it is like to live in that country? The kind of answer being sought here is along the lines of "Catastrophe is always imminent. Each citizen knows that he or she is worthless unless he or she does something extraordinary that will please the rulers. Every day is filled with dread. The sky is always cloudy and gray. It is always cold. There is not enough fuel to stay warm. Everyone knows that almost certainly he or she will fail at the tasks that the rules consider important. But there is no escape. All that each citizen can do is strive to postpone failure." Etc.

Equally important in a psychotherapist's training is learning to understand (from experience!) what Douglas Hodstadter called, in *Goedel, Escher, Bach*, "jumping out of the context". Psychologically speaking, jumping out of a context means advancing to a state of mind you never had before, which is a much different matter from advancing to an understanding of a thought or concept which previously was beyond your comprehension. Overcoming your fears in certain circumstances is an example, e.g., your fear of speaking in public. Breaking a habit is another example, e.g., cigarette smoking. For those obsessed with thinking, entering upon waking experiences which are, for all practical purposes, free of thought, e.g., through body massage, is another example. What characterizes jumping out of a psychological context is the relative uselessness of words as a means of describing the desired new state and as a means of guiding someone to that state. The best that words seem able to do is to point to certain activities which other people have said helped them to achieve the state, and to provide encouragement for the person to keep trying.

Overcoming Neurosis

First, let me remind the reader that it is questionable whether we should continue to use terms like "neurosis" and "depression", since they connote a condition which can be alleviated by *medical* treatment (e.g., psychotherapy), whereas, in fact, as many authors have pointed out, this may not be the case at all.

"...the neurotic character represents not illness but a developmental phase of the individuality problem, a personality denying its own will, not accepting itself as an individual." — Rank, Otto, *Will Therapy*, tr. Jessie Taft, W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., N.Y., 1978 [first published 1936], p. 49.

"I have seen neuroses, or better said phenomena which appear to be neurotic, which I should like to designate rather as sound reactions to an unsound situation than as symptoms of illness. Yes, one can perhaps, even as Freud has implied in his 'Civilization and its Discontents', view the neurosis in general as a last reaction of the healthy instincts against an overpowering civilization." — Rank, ibid., p. 199.

The concept of sickness serves the same purpose in psychology as the concept of sin does in Christianity, namely, it serves to ensure that the world is divided into patients and therapists, and, perhaps most outrageous of all, it converts all the good things in life — including music, art, conversation, making love — to activities that are *therapeutic*. It makes all the world a sick room.

Second, let us grant what is true, namely, that psychotherapists can help people in three ways: (1) by acting as a source of bought friendship; (2) by prescribing and monitoring a person's reaction to anti-depressant drugs; (3) by acting as consultants and guides when a person wants to work on some particular psychological problem, e.g., problems in relationships or on the job, a sexual dysfunction or other lifelong disability. It has been wisely said that there are times throughout the lives of most of us when we can benefit from the aid of a psychotherapist.

Beyond this, psychotherapy is a fraud. Its underlying theory is not theory but ideology. Ask yourself: Would there be any interest in this theory if no one had mental problems? Now ask the analogous question of physics and mathematics.

For many neurotics, there is really only one fundamental task, and that is *growing up*, which means not spending a lifetime trying to "understand" our problems and the possible sources of these problems.

"O Nature, donne-moi la force et le courage
De me croire en âge"

("O Nature, give me courage and strength enough
To believe myself old enough")

— *Poems of Jules Laforgue*, trans. Patricia Terry,
University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1958, p. 187

A good guide in confronting difficulties, in particular overwhelming difficulties, is to ask yourself, *"In which direction lies growing up?"*

Growing up implies nothing about sickness or pathology. Nor is growing up a "path", i.e., something that you can, or should, spend the rest of your life doing. It is an aim pursued on a daily basis as best we are able. There are better and worse ways of pursuing this aim, and some of the best ones are:

(1) truthful accounting of our successes and failures, our happiness and unhappiness;

(2) learning to distinguish between the Object and the non-Object ontologies, and learning to decide which is appropriate in a given instance (what you are reading now is rife with Object ontology);

(3) becoming emotion-literate;

(4) performing cultural analyses of our parents and others who have oppressed us;
(5) overcoming our child mentality.

Regarding (1): It is often said that all drunks are liars, and the same may be said of those who live in despair as far as their relationship to the good that happens to them is concerned. The first step toward growing up is to become honest accountants of the fortune as well as the misfortune in our lives, and this begins with questions like "How many minutes (hours, days) was life bearable for me last year?" "How many times was I happy?" "How many times did I not fail at something I did?"

Regarding (2): The two types of ontology are covered elsewhere in this book, in the essay, "On the Object".

Regarding (3): "Emotion-literate" is a clumsy term, but it is the best I have been able to come up with for a kind of skill which is only partially, and then very vaguely, covered by terms like "knowing yourself" and "being in touch with your feelings".

Before I explain what I mean by the term, it is important that the reader understand the assumption that lies behind it. That assumption is that some day it will be possible to obtain scientific representations of a person's emotions just as today we obtain scientific representations (via EKG's) of a person's cardiac functioning, and of certain very limited aspects of a person's brain functioning (via EEG's and via images that show the activity of various parts of the brain). This idea will be offensive to those who believe that nothing is more private, more intimately connected with our soul, more outside the realm of science, more nearly unique, than our emotions. "My sadness is not your sadness." But my goal is not to reduce emotions to numbers (whatever that may mean), or indeed to convince anyone that emotions are not as important as he or she thinks they are, but rather to begin mapping the geography of the human soul, to be able to make statements like, "These emotions which you have under those circumstances fall into the same category as the emotions experienced by 85% of the population in circumstances such as the following..." And now, instead of this being a hunch or speculation or assumption based on a therapist's intuition, it will be as verifiable a statement as are statements about heart conditions which are made with the help of ECG's. We do not consider it a grave threat to our individuality that our bodily organs, and their functioning, are the same across the entire human population, and so should we not consider it a grave threat to our sense of self if and when we are able to categorize our feelings.

Such a machine would not enable us to answer questions of "what" a person is feeling. Instead it would merely enable us to classify the feelings (the representations), on the assumption that, if these classifications are correct, then two or more persons with similar feeling representations will find, through discussion, that they do, in fact, appear to have, or to have had, similar feelings. It is probably true that no two people ever have *the same* feeling, but it is hard to believe that the feelings of different persons do not, under some circumstances, resemble each other as, e.g., human faces, hands, do.

So, with the future existence of instruments to perform such measurements taken as an assumption, we can now discuss the term "emotion-literate". It means, first of all, understanding that there are four important questions we can ask about a feeling: (I) What am I feeling?; (II) What are the probable causes of this feeling? (III) What does the feeling make me want to do?; and (IV) What does the feeling *say*?

(I) Most people, when they ask themselves what they are feeling, respond to one of the other three questions, and consider such a response as perfectly valid! But there are fundamentally only two kinds of response one can make to the question, "What are you feeling?": one is to name the gross category into which the feeling seems to fall, e.g., anger, depression, fear, elation, contentment, boredom. This is the response in "public" terms. The other is the response in "private" terms, and is of the form, "I am feeling what I feel when..." In this case, we attempt nothing more than to categorize the feeling *by naming the* circumstances in which we recall having had the same or a similar *feeling*. The development of this skill is never, in my experience, encouraged, or even mentioned, in therapy, and yet it is essential until a machine like the one described above exists.

(II) Helping the client to identify the *causes* of feelings is (or was, until recently), one of a therapist's main goals, a goal which the profession inherited from Freud's theories about childhood trauma. The difference between this question and the second part of the previous one is that, in the previous case, we make no attempt to trace *the cause* of feelings back to earlier periods in life (if such a tracing back is appropriate — not all our feelings have their source in childhood!). In this case we may do such tracing back.

(III) What a feeling makes you want to do is further information about the feeling. Perhaps it is nothing more than a measure of the feeling's intensity: "I feel like beating the shit out of her!", "I feel like blowing my brains out!"

(IV) This may be the most interesting of the four questions, and the one which requires the greatest skill in answering. It is invariably confused with question (III). The way to answer it is via a "primitive expression" of the feeling, which means an expression of the feeling in as blunt, immediate, "naive", language as possible, as though you were speaking under hypnosis, without analyses, explanations, jargon, and, in the case of remembered dreams, *without looking to the imagery for guidance*.

The interpretation of dreams has been a continuing activity of priests in all cultures throughout the ages, including ours, hence our faith in the dream algebra so many of us take for granted. But traditional dream interpretation is equivalent to trying to understand a language purely from its syntax, without having any idea of its native speakers or of the world in which it is spoken. It is like trying to understand a mathematical subject solely on the basis of the patterns of the symbols on the page.

"In our dreams (writes Coleridge) images represent the sensations we think they cause; we do not feel horror because we are threatened by a sphinx; we dream of a sphinx in order to explain the horror we feel." — Borges, Jorge Luis, "Ragnarök", in *Labyrinths*, New Directions, N.Y., 1964, p. 240.

"When we sleep, our nervous system is continually stimulated by various inner causes: almost all the organs secrete and are active; the blood circulates turbulently; the sleeper's position presses certain limbs; his blankets influence sensation in various ways; the stomach digests and disturbs other organs with its movements; the intestines turn; the placement of the head occasions unusual positions of the muscles; the feet, without shoes, their soles not pressing on the floor, cause a feel-

ing of unusualness, as does the different way the whole body is clothed — after its daily change and variation, all of this strangeness stimultes the entire system, including even the brain function. And so there are a hundred occasions for the mind to be amazed, and to seek *reasons* for this stimulation. It is the dream which *seeks and imagines the causes* for those stimulated feelings — that is, the alleged causes. The man who ties two straps around his feet, for example, may dream that two snakes are winding about his feet. This is at first a hypothesis, then a belief, accompanied by a pictorial idea and elaboration: 'These snakes must be the *causa* of that feeling which I, the sleeper, am having' — thus judges the mind of the sleeper. The stimulated imagination turns the recent past, disclosed in this way, into the present. Everyone knows from experience how fast the dreamer can incorporate into his dream a loud sound he hears, bell ringing, for example, or cannon fire, how he can explain it *after the fact* from his dream, so that he *believes* he is experiencing first the occasioning factors, and then that sound." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Human, All Too Human*, tr. Faber, Marion, with Lehmann, Stephen, University of Nebraska Press, London, section 13, p. 20.

A dream is a primitive expression of a feeling. A dream is an answer to question IV which is given while we are asleep. However, in waking life, we can try to do with language what a dream does with images and language.

Questions I through IV throw new light on the interpretation of dreams. The question, "What was the meaning of my dream?" is very nearly a useless question, since at the outset it presupposes something which may not exist, namely, *the* meaning, or at least *a* meaning, of a dream. Second, even if it were proven tomorrow that all dreams have meanings, there is no known, reliable correlation between dream symbols and their meaning. So the question really means something like, "Tell me if I should be optimistic or pessimistic (and I'd prefer you made it the former) about the future, and use my dream as a means to convince me." A far more valuable question is, "*What were my feelings during that dream?*" (question I). The dream imagery *may* serve as a means of corroborating (or calling into question) what you say, but it is of secondary importance. (What is the difference between interpreting one of your own dreams, and interpreting someone else's? If imagery were of primary importance, there would be no fundamental difference between these two activities.) If you cannot remember your feelings, then any further analysis is almost certain to be pure guesswork.

For example, a man has a dream in which he finds out, from an anonymous person in a restaurant, that the police know about his not having paid his numerous traffic tickets, and about his having dodged the draft. His primitive expression of the feelings he had during the dream was: "Alone! No escape! Hunted forever!. Ashamed! No peace of mind!"

He attempts to categorize the feelings, i.e., he asks himself under what other circumstances he can recall having had similar feelings. (He does *not* ask himself "What did the dream *mean*?".) He begins with recent days. After several minutes of comparing, he remembers the feelings he had on the previous day when he looked at his checking account balance for the first time in two weeks and found out that he had far less money than he had thought. He has been unemployed for several months and so far has not had a single job offer or even interview. The feelings he had then, seem similar to the ones in the dream. The dream now seems an expression of those feelings, in particular, of his fear of being "hunted" (haunted) by poverty and debt.

Once he has the original feelings identified which were repeated, and expressed, in his dream, he can judge how accurately his primitive expression of the feelings may have been a clue to the source of the original feelings. Some people are able to use their primitive expressions as a guide in tracking down the source of certain feelings, as shown in the explanation of (4) which follows.

Regarding (4): In retrospect it is absolutely astounding that Freud, who had great admiration for Nietzsche as a psychologist, did not apply Nietzsche's fundamental method to the treatment of neurosis, this method being that of cultural analysis — the explanation of human behavior, in particular, morality, through an analysis of the needs and fears of the culture that created the morality.

(Or maybe it isn't so astounding: "I rejected the study of Nietzsche although — no, because, — it was plain that I would find insights in him very similar to the psychoanalytic ones." — Freud, Sigmund, quoted in Joll, James, "Nietzsche vs. Nietzsche", *The New York Review of Books*, Feb. 11, 1993.)

A religion is a time capsule of the feelings of people in the past; it attempts to preserve those feelings, hand them on to future generations, because the people in the past felt these feelings were that important. A neurosis, e.g., a lifelong habit of despair, is a family religion. The attempt to emerge from that religion on the terms of that religion itself — "Should my mother be forgiven after all?" "Is part of my misery really my own doing, or is most of it due to my parents?" "Was there, after all, some higher good I still can't understand in the way they treated me?" "Was I psychologically abused as a child or am I just using that possiblity as an excuse?" — this attempt is usually hopeless. *Our business as neurotics is to get on top*, and one way of doing this is by making as objective an analysis as possible of the culture that governed the behavior of our parents (as, I suspect, Nietzsche recognized in his early years). What were *their* fears? Why did they have these fears (what in *their* backgrounds engendered such fears)? What were *their* childhoods like? What did *they* believe about the world, and why? How did they wish children would behave, and why? How often did they make love? Did they like it and if not, why not? The purpose of this analysis, I must emphasize, is *not* to find reasons to forgive our parents (that is a separate issue and, in any case, they may not deserve forgiving), but to get on top by taking away some of the power our parents' legacy (the family religion) has over our lives. The purpose is to diminish the feeling that our parents are a force of Nature or God, that there may be a higher purpose in their mistreatment of us.

Primitive expression of feelings often hands us this cultural analysis on a platter.

The primitive expression technique can also be applied to things and situations which fill us with fear, dread, self-hatred, and despair. In these cases, we attempt to give a primitive expression of what the thing or situation *says to us*. Such expressions often make it immediately clear what the source of the feeling was.

The writing down of the answers to the above and related questions — if possible with the help of information from relatives — and discussing them with a therapist who holds no more than a Master's degree and who we have reason to believe will tell us if he feels we are being dishonest, is, for some of us, the beginning of the way out.

Regarding (5): Child mentality is characterized by the feeling which might be expressed, "I would be all right if..." "I would have a right to go on living if...". Inducing this mentality and exploiting it is the primary way that parents, teachers, bosses, religious leaders, and the leaders of most human growth and addiction-recovery movements get us to do what they want. It is a prime motivator in graduate schools, in which the lifelong belief is fostered that you can crawl to greatness on your hands and knees. Child mentality takes the sound idea that, *in his work* (including, of course, his work in school and college), a person should be judged by his performance, and

twists it into the very unsound idea that a person's entire worth is solely a function of his performance in his work, which soon becomes, "You *are* what we think of you."

Child mentality exists wherever people see their salvation lying in someone or something other than themselves, e.g., in a person or deity or spirit who seems to have the answers to their problems, or in a job which will set them far above the crowd, or in an accomplishment which will make them famous if not rich and immortal, or merely in owning a certain product (the main purpose of advertising is to induce and perpetuate this mentality in us). Child mentality is often instilled and maintained by charismatic leaders who conceal it in messages that say, in essence, "You will be free of your child mentality if you do what I say and grant me the power to decide whether you have succeeded or not." For example, psychiatrists as late as the sixties considered it axiomatic that no neurotic could make significant progress in overcoming neurosis without "professional help".

Child mentality exists wherever there is the feeling, "If I pay a high enough price, I, too, will be all right," and wherever there is the feeling of being a victim who has little or no power to overcome his victimness.

Developing a healthy contempt for, and arrogance toward, those who oppress us is often the sign of our beginning to overcome our child mentality.

"Who Possesses My Experience?"

A question that is extraordinarily valuable in helping us to free ourselves of this mentality, is, "*Who owns my experience?*" "Whom does my experience 'belong to'?" Alienation, for example, can be described as a person's not possessing his or her own experience. Some types of neurosis can be described as a person's experience being possessed by one or more other persons (living or dead). The neurotic's experience takes place "out there", completely in the hands of others. The neurotic does not belong to himself.

"No one possesses himself! Detestable thought! No one possesses himself! Thus everything belongs to the others! Don't we own even our faces? Do they belong to anybody who chooses to look at them? And one's body? Can others own one's body? I find the notion most repellent.

"I, and I alone, will be the sole possessor of that which is mine." — Lagerkvist, Paer, *The Dwarf*, Hill and Wang, Inc., N.Y., 1945, p. 51.

If our experience is valueless, worthless, shameful, *until* one or more other persons deems it otherwise — at which time it may become rich and valuable indeed, as our past experience has shown us on one or two occasions (we only make our situation worse if we attempt to deny this when it is true) — then we are still in the clutches of this mentality.

I must make a clarification here: business and pop psychology courses in the early nineties often speak of "owning a task", "owning a responsibility", meaning, simply, accepting the responsibility of carrying it out. This is not the same thing as possessing your experience, since you can own a task or responsibility and still put the judgement of your success in carrying it out in the hands of others.

When we are self-confident, we possess our own experience (we *own the world*!). When we feel inferior, worthless, we do not. A good description of the effect of a domineering parent on a child is that the parent *steals the child's experienc*e — in fact, prevents the child from learning that his or her experience is something that can belong, and should belong, and *must belong*, to the child!

Recovering from a neurosis — at least the type of neurosis I am describing here — consists in reclaiming our experience, "bringing it in" to ourselves, making it our own, taking possession of what was really ours all along, but which we didn't know was ours! A difficult task, especially as we will be inclined to try to not have our cake and eat it too, namely, by reclaiming our experience in a way that will meet the approval of the world, in other words, by bringing in everything but, say, a shirttail.

I have been surprised at the brief but definite lifting of my normal suicidal depression that results from merely saying to myself, "Everything I do is splendid!" , applying it to the most ordinary tasks of life that previously seemed drudgery which I could only carry out in a way that others would despise. The reader will immediately ask, "But what about your errors, mistakes, blunders?" To which my reply is, "The way I fix these is also splendid!"

Recovering from a neurosis by reclaiming our experience is one of the two or three most important ideas in this book.

The Will

Importance of The Will

Ultimately, when we speak of overcoming our child mentality, we are speaking of developing and cultivating our *will*. Unfortunately, the feminization of psychology has pushed this fundamental trait of human — or at least male — psychological health into limbo.

"With what contempt we still look down upon all methods of strengthening and training the will...although they have helped many human beings." Rank, ibid., p. 10.

"The very suggestion that the will be strong, is itself an expression of the strength of the will, for which apparently we are obliged to seek a justification, or cover, as Freud did in the romantic garb of the 'wish'. — Rank, ibid., p. 10.

"...the essential problem of psychology is our abolition of the fact of will, the explanation of the manifold types of abolition of will and its varying interpretation at different times. This psychological problem, actually *the* problem of psychology, as it meets us in psychoanalysis, is therefore a universal problem." — Rank, ibid., p. 10.

"It is important that the neurotic above all learn to will, discover that he can will without getting guilt feeling on account of willing." — Rank, Otto, ibid., p. 9.

"Accordingly the task of the therapist is not to act as will, which the patient would like, but only to function as counter-will in such a way that the will of the patient shall not be broken, but strengthened." — Rank, ibid., p. 16.

"This will awakening or will affirmation in the patient makes it superfluous for him to project his impulsive or inhibiting ego upon the therapist or his own family, since the will represents the only unifying force in the individual." — Rank, ibid., p. 189.

Clarification of Meaning of "Will"

Philosophers and therapists like Rank seem to take for granted that the meaning of "will" is clear, but that is a great error, since, at the least, many readers assume that "will" and "will power" are the same, which they are not. In this book, I use the term "Will", with the capital "W", to mean the setting and pursuing of goals that arise from ourselves — often from our highest self, but not necessarily — and doing so without guilt or apology or any feeling that the worth of the

pursuit is subject to external judgement. Acts of Will are always accompanied by pride, often arrogance.

The most ordinary acts can be acts of Will: cleaning up one's room, going to the Post Office. What distinguishes the Will is that you can say, because you know it is true:

Whatever I Will is good. *Because* I Will it, it is good.

"Good" emphatically does not necessarily mean "successful". You may Will something that fails completely to achieve a goal you had in mind. Even so, *because* you Willed it, it was good.

"What makes the heroic? To go to meet simultaneously one's greatest sorrow and one's greatest hope." "Timid, ashamed, awkward, like a tiger whose leap has failed: this is how I have often seen you slink aside, you higher men. A throw you made had failed. But what of that, you dice-throwers!...If great things you attempted have turned out failures, does that mean you yourselves are — failures?" — Nietzsche, Friedrich. (Epitaph of German aviation pioneer Otto Lilienthal, killed when his glider crashed: "Sacrifices must be made.")

The Will is not the same as the "ability to force yourself to do something". For example, a person may be raised to believe that all that matters is success in business; he may, by forcing himself, achieve that success, even though it is agony every step of the way. This, in my use of the term, is not exercising his Will, although it may fairly be called exercising his "will power". On the other hand, we may subject ourselves to a great deal of pain and suffering through Willing.

The Will is thus different from Schopenhauer's "will":

"The brute feels and perceives; man, in addition to this, *thinks* and *knows*; both *will*." — Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea*, First Book, section 8.

Schopenhauer placed the will (in the sense of wanting, desiring, needing) at the center of his philosophical system, defining it as the "thing-in-itself", which Kant had said we can never know. For Schopenhauer, who was strongly influenced by Buddhism, the will was the source of man's suffering. Nietzsche took precisely the opposite view:

"What is good? — All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man.

"What is bad? — All that proceeds from weakness.

"What is happiness? — The feeling that power *increases* — that a resistance is overcome." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Anti-Christ*, section 2, in *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, tr. Hollingdale, R. J., Penguin Books, N.Y., 1982, p. 115.

Acts of Will are not at all the same as "actions", in the existentialist sense. What you *are* is the sum of what you have Willed, which is not at all the same as the sum of your actions.

Why the Will has been Undervalued

At this point, we must ask ourselves why the Will has been so undervalued in therapy throughout the twentieth century. Freud's teaching, e.g., was aimed in exactly the opposite direction — aimed at making the patient learn what the teacher wants him to, in the way he wants him to learn it. "You never outgrow your need for therapy," Freud once said. The one message from almost every therapist I ever worked with has been: *you can't do it yourself!* Express a desire to at least *try it* on your own, and you will be greeted by condescending smiles — from psychiatrists, in particular. But the truth is, a great deal can be accomplished on our own, once we commit ourselves to learning from our own experience. This means keeping track of our defeats — the sources of our depressions and miseries — and then setting ourselves the goal of not repeating the things that brought them on, or, more realistically, repeating them as little as possible. The only

thing that prevents many neurotics from making progress in this way, is the spell of pre-ordained failure cast over the whole enterprise by the psychiatric community — that, and the assumption that, because this is not a new idea, or one that is difficult to understand, or one that is currently under discussion in book circles, that *therefore* it cannot have any deep value. But our business is not to follow the new, like mindless consumers, our business is to find out *what works*, new or old.

Good therapists, nowadays, are perfectly willing to act as counselors, guides, self-deception antennae, for clients who want to undertake such projects.

In any case, the undervaluing of the Will continued when, after the sixties, therapy became more and more influenced by the Eastern (e.g., Buddhistic) religions and philosophies, and, more recently by the Twelve-Step Movement, which originally had a Christian basis, now more or less disguised.

The Will has been all but ignored because mental-health professionals, beginning with Freud, have instinctively known what a dangerous idea it is, not only to their own theories, but also to the entire professional class they are a part of. Professional therapists like any idea that promises a steady supply of needy clientele who can always be counted on to come back when the latest thing they were urged to "try", doesn't work out. Professional therapists love any idea that says, in effect, "With enough work, you can get better, and if you don't, we are always here to help you", "If you (we) can figure out the causes of your problems, i.e., *what you're doing wrong*, then there is a good chance we can solve those problems." "If you (we) can bring you to an understanding of who you are, then, maybe..."

But who you are is nothing more, nor less, than what you Will — not what you force yourself to do even though you don't want to do it, not what the professionals say you are, not what parents or other authority figures say you are, not what you *think* you are, but: *what you Will*.

"...what everyone in his inmost consciousness *wills*, that must he *be*; and what everyone *is*, that he *wills*." — Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World As Will and Idea*, Fourth Book, section 65.

The Will puts the ghost back into the machine, converts us from being fundamentally Objects, into being what we are. Every act of Will pokes a hole in the Universe.

Strengthening the Will

"What can you do? You look for things that lessen your agony. The slightest things. Even if only for a few moments. You keep track of what was going on in those rare moments when you felt you just might find it bearable to live through the next minute. And I began to find that what seemed to make me feel a little better was, for example, after lying in bed in total despair, I would be seized with an impulse just to clean up the room, hang up my clothes, go to the Post Office and mail a letter. It wasn't that I had read somewhere that such things were the start of the way to mental health, or that I believed that they would make me a better man, so that then, perhaps, I would have a reason to go on living. They were simply things I wanted to do, period.

"Then a strange thing happened: I began, for some reason, to think of gangsters. I thought, you know, gangsters may have their worries — like about getting shot or about going to prison — but I can't imagine a gangster lying doubled up in bed, paralyzed by despair over the lack of meaning of life. I thought of gangster speech, their spit-on-the-ground, I-don't-give-a-shit-what-people-think manner. I thought of the boxer Jake LaMotta, whose life is the subject of the film, *Raging Bull*.

"And it felt good to put myself into the frame of mind of a gangster. *I do it because I want to do it*. I rob you because I want your money. You get in my way, I kill you. It felt *clean* to live in this state of mind. No questions, no what if's, no how can I know's, no will it have value's. I want, I act. Period.

"Well, that was the beginning. Of course, it wasn't that I suddenly saw that the answer lay in robbing and murdering. But I saw that the answer lay in getting out of the child mentality in which I realized I had spent my life...

"People talk about 'taking responsibility', about giving up the blaming of parents for their misfortunes, for their mental suffering. But for most people, this just becomes one more *thing to do*, one more thing to *try*, one more ordeal that someone has said will bring relief from their suffering. They are as passive here as in everything else, their child mentality remains as it was.

"The secret is to *Will* your own suffering — to Will the very suffering that you are experiencing. To get behind it, push with it, not against it. It is essential for you to understand that this is *entirely different* from forcing yourself to say yes to what you hate, like the Christians do or try to do. You don't say to yourself, 'I love this misery because it is part of some higher thing', or 'I love it because surely others are far worse off than I am', or 'I hate it but I will, by sheer willpower, force myself to love it, because maybe then it will go away, if only briefly.' No!

"Let me give you an example. You wake up in the morning and confront another day of failure, of work at a meaningless job, of unbearable depression. Furthermore, you know that all this misery has its source in your childhood — you know the behavior of your parents that led you down the life path that produced it, you could get an A+ in any graduate psychology course in the country on a paper describing the relationship between your present feelings and your experiences in childhood. But now you say to yourself, 'Utterly paradoxical as it may seem— because I certainly didn't bring on that childhood misery myself — *I am* going to cause it, I am going to Will it, I am going to get *behind it and push it in the direction it is already going*. I am not going to push *against* it, try to fight it, and I sure as hell am not going to accept it — just lie back and give in to it and let it work on me — or just lie back and then go over to *its* side and use it to torture myself even more. But instead I am going to help it along — *become its cause*.'

"And you will be amazed to find that, when you do this, you will immediately feel better. I don't know why it is, but perhaps it is a further indication of the fundamental importance of the Will in human life. I don't know. Of course, you will not always be able to do this. There will be many times when you simply haven't the energy. This is not a 'thought that cures'. It is a something that seems to work most of the time when it is tried. Its only disadvantage is that it seems to be able to detect, with remarkable sensitivity, whether you are really Willing your own suffering, or whether you are merely 'going along with the idea', kind of 'giving it a try...' In this case, it doesn't work at all." — S.f., letter.

"Strengthening the Will" is a dangerous phrase for neurotics, because it implies, just as the idea of psychotherapy implies, that the way to overcome a neurosis is through a process of preparation. "Once I am strong (or once I have the necessary academic degrees, etc.) then I will be able to ..." Which keeps the neurotic in exactly the psychological state that constitutes his neurosis! So, temporarily putting aside S.f.'s rather extreme remedy in the previous paragraphs, we ask, "How do you know what to Will?" "How do you avoid the trap of preparation and step directly into the life that you want?" The best answer I have found so far is: by asking yourself the question, "What would I be doing if I were financially independent?" In my experience, this question has a way of bringing you into possession of yourself. It has a way of revealing who you really

are, who you were meant to be, what you should be Willing. Unfortunately, it doesn't also bring financial independence, and so compromises have to be made. But I know of no other question, or activity, that gets to the heart of the matter more quickly.

Additional Thoughts on the Will

I have never known a neurotic who wasn't fundamentally an unwilling, unknowing victim of child mentality. Such people find it very difficult to conceive of any way of living life that is not rooted in bargains: "If I do this, *then* will I finally get that?" And let us not have the slightest doubt about it: we are seduced, lured, enticed into child mentality every waking moment of our lives in American culture: own this, do this, achieve this, have this, and you will be safe at last! The real price of this envied way of life your anguish tells you all too well.

Acts of Will by no means need to be great undertakings. Opening the fingers of your hand...*now*... can be an act of will; so can taking a letter to the Post Office, or vacuuming a room, or looking up a word in the dictionary, or making a to-do list, or deliberately walking erect down a street. Every act of Will, no matter how small, makes the Will stronger.

"It is fantastic how much of a feeling of well-being I can derive from performing duties. Today I took care of the laundry; mailed figs, dates, and money to Sara; paid dues and signed up in the hall; drew a hundred dollars from the bank for Lili. By the time I got through I was so much at peace with myself that I went and bought half a dozen roses for the room." — Hoffer, Eric, *Working and Thinking on the Waterfront*, Dec. 2, 1958, Perennial Library, N.Y., 1970, p. 81.

"An almost infallible means of saving yourself from the desire of self-destruction is always to have something to do. Creech, the commentator on Lucretius, marked upon his manuscripts: 'N.B. Must hang myself when I have finished.' He kept his word with himself, that he might have the pleasure of ending like his author. Had he undertaken a commentary upon Ovid, he would have lived longer." — Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, in *The Portable Voltaire*, ed. Ben Ray Redman, Penguin Books, N.Y., 1977, p. 220.

In the movie, *The Games* (1979, Michael Winner, dir.), Stanley Baker plays an Olympic marathon coach who, at one of his first meetings with his star runner, rips the runner's stopwatch out of his hand and throws it away, saying, contemptuously, you don't run for the stopwatch. I never understood the coach's reason for doing this, but now I think I do: it was an attempt to strengthen the runner's Will, as opposed to his will *power* (his ability to be driven from without). A similar argument, despite what I said above, can be made against To-Do lists (outside of the job environment).

"[For Rousseau] the will of the Sovereign, which is always right, is the 'general will'. Each citizen, *qua* citizen, shares in the general will, but he may also, as an individual, have a particular will running counter to the general will. The Social Contract involves that whoever refuses to

obey the general will shall be forced to do so. 'This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free.'

"This conception of being 'forced to be free' is very metaphysical. The general will in the time of Galileo was certainly anti-Copernican; was Galileo 'forced to be free' when the Inquisition compelled him to recant? Is even a malefactor 'forced to be free' when he is put in prison?...Hegel, who owed much to Rousseau, adopted his misuse of the word 'freedom' and defined it as the right to obey the police, or something not very different." — Russell, Bertrand, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1972, p. 697.

No one can hope to be a good psychologist or a good philosopher who has not been stopped in his tracks by the idea of *the freedom to obey.* Shallow minds dismiss it with contempt, pointing to totalitarian societies as prime examples of opportunities for such freedom. But deeper thinkers will point out that another example is presented in the film, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, in which British prisoners of war who are forced to build a railroad bridge over a river, build one that is so good it shames the Japanese camp commander into committing suicide.

Certainly one way of defying authority is by disobedience, whether actively, as in open rebellion, or passively, as in passive resistance. Another way is through so-called "passive-agressive" behavior, in which one does what is required, all the while making abundantly clear that it is done without the slightest interest or willingness. A third way, and perhaps the most powerful, is to make acts of labor originally intended as punishment, into acts of the prisoner's own Will. (I hope it is clear that this is not at all the same thing as "identifying with the oppressor".)

A closely related idea is that of working Willingly on the side of a selection process that might eliminate us. For example, what would it be like to believe in the theory of evolution to the extent that you did everything you could to give birth to, and raise, healthy children — in other words, everything you could to "allow evolution to work" — but then, if one of them died, you were thankful that "the deep insight" of evolution into those who were truly fit to reproduce and those who weren't, had expressed itself once again? We can imagine a player on a tryout team doing his utmost to perform at his best, and encouraging his fellow players to do likewise, *so that* the elimination process would have a chance to select the truly best players, even if that meant that the player himself would be eliminated.

Or consider descriptions of how to perform various jobs in industry. Workers normally regard these as something to be ignored, or gotten around. Their attitude is understandable, since these instructions are usually handed out with the explicit or implied message that they describe how the job *must* be done. But consider a young, growing, company in which there is obvious interest in the worker's well-being — a company with good managers, abundant benefits, profit-sharing, stock options and stock purchase plans for all employees — and an atmosphere throughout of "we are special!", "we are going to get rich from working here!". In such a company, workers, on their own initiative, are often interested not merely in learning how a job is to be performed, but how it can be performed much better. One or two workers might even attempt to come up with a description of *ideal* performance on the job, including good practices when software or hardware breaks down, and when dealing with fellow employees and customers. ("We are the best!") All of which is nothing less than an attempt to create a new kind of human being through a description of how that human being would behave in various circumstances, and all of which would be

tyranny of the worst sort except that the workers know that the company is, in effect, asking them to write the description so that the workers (and, incidentally, the managers) can make more money.

Alienation, as among industrial workers, particularly in the last century, say, in Victorian England, was not *caused by* long, tedious, workdays, dangerous working conditions, squalid surroundings, starvation wages, but rather by the complete disregard, in fact the destruction, of the worker's Will. Anyone who knows what it is like to do industrial work for one's country when it is at war, as in the U.S. (or Britain or Germany) during World War II, anyone who has the slightest understanding of what a religious person feels like when he or she knows that he or she is doing God's work, knows that it is entirely possible that people could work under the conditions of the last century with joy in their hearts — could consider the hardship *as nothing*.

Will the suffering you are already experiencing! — an idea as seemingly paradoxical as that of the freedom to obey, yet certainly one of the best ways I know of to make unbearable suffering more nearly bearable, if only for a few moments. But it is important to understand what this idea does *not* mean. It does *not* mean, "Recognize that you are responsible for your suffering," as popular psychology, still a captive of Freud's mythology, attempts to convince us. In other words it does not mean, "Resign yourself to the fact that your stubborn refusal to deal with the past in the way we recommend is responsible for your suffering." Another erroneous interpretation is that you should do what you hate. Still another is that you should realize that pain is really good for you (what you hate is what you were meant to love!)

"Will the suffering you are already experiencing" refers instead to a psychological act that comes into being almost as a result of curiosity: "How would things be if I were deliberately to Will this unbearable misery — to want it purely for its own sake — because having something impossibly difficult to have to deal with is far preferable to me than to have only easy, pleasurable things — because I do not want to waste my life doing what anyone else can do — because who knows what might emerge from such a titanic battle, willingly undertaken? — because there may in fact be nothing wrong with me, may never have been anything wrong with me, except my refusal to Will the life I was meant to live."

The Kafka Crowd

A literary figure made to order for those with a vested interest in child mentality, namely, academics, in particular professors of literature, was Kafka. Here was the ideal: a man who, by his own testimony, was all but paralyzed by the cruel tyranny of his parents, in particular his father, and yet, out of his misery, managed to create uniquely powerful literature, which was only appreciated after his death (oh, supreme accomplishment!). Pay attention, class: the more nearly unbearable the suffering, the greater the greatness. Please remember this when you go home and attempt to guess what words on paper will get you an A in the next assignment.

Kafka wrote a famous letter to his father, in which he described some of the ways in which his father had all but destroyed his life. A good antidote to the Kafka poison is a short story by Nadine Gordimer called "Letter from his Father", which is her imagined reply to the letter. Following are some exerpts:

"My dear son,

"You wrote me a letter you never sent.

"It wasn't for me — it was for the whole world to read. (You and your instructions that everything should be burned. Hah!)...

"Some say you were ... some kind of prophet (God knows what you were thinking, shut away in your room while the rest of the family was having a game of cards in the evening); after you died, some countries built camps where the things you made up for that story *In the Penal Colony* were practised, and ever since then there have been countries in different parts of the world where the devil's work that came into your mind is still carried out...

"You couldn't possibly remember how naughty you were at night, what a little tyrant you were, how you thought of every excuse to keep us sleepless. It was all right for you, you could nap during the day, a small child. But I had my business, I had to earn the living, I needed some rest. Pieces of bread, a particular toy you fancied, make wee-wee, another blanket on, a blanket taken off, drinks of water — there was no end to your tricks and whining...

"The fact is that you were antisemitic, Franz. You were never interested in what was happening to your own people. The hooligans' attacks on Jews in the streets, on houses and shops, that took place while you were growing up — I don't see a word about them in your diaries, your notebooks. You were only *imagining* Jews. Imagining them tortured in places like your *Penal Colony*, maybe...

"All that talk about going away. You called your home (more riddles) 'My prison — my fortress'. You grumbled — in print, everything ended up in print, my son...

"You recorded that you couldn't go for a walk without your parents making a fuss, but at twenty-eight you were still living at home. Going away. My poor boy. You could hardly get yourself to the next room...

"You kept silence, with the truth: those playing a game of cards, turning in bed on the other side of the wall — it was the sound of live people you didn't like..." — Gordimer, Nadine, "Letter from his Father", in *The World of the Short Story*, ed. Clifton Fadiman, Avenel Books, N.Y., 1986, pp. 572-584.

Additional Thoughts

Mental health begins with the smell of horse manure and wood smoke.

Even the attempt to be the most solitary of all is an attempt to join a community.

Checklist for detecting cults: Anyone who wants to stop wasting his or her life going down the same old blind alleys, needs to know how to recognize a cult. The major characteristics are the following:

- Insistence that all the *other* truth-seeking groups are cults, but that this one isn't. In fact, this is one of the reasons you should join.
- Strong sense of us vs. them (the outside world, which needs to be saved by us). Secrecy.

- Strong discouragement of thinking and questioning, with the argument that precisely these things which you normally think of as healthy and good, must be discarded in return for the higher truth which awaits you.
- Requirement that you give up putting your self-interest first, and that, in particular, you give up some or all of your possessions. Again, the argument is the appeal through paradox: by doing what seems so "wrong", you will gain access to the higher truth.
- Requirement, strongly aided by various psychological techniques, that the leader be admired, adored, because of how much s/he is prepared to sacrifice for you.
- The claim by the leader that s/he is merely a tool, that s/he gets his or her power from elsewhere — God, the cosmos, History, Being, the People.
- Presence of cult logic: (1) You can't *prove* that our way won't make your life better. Therefore you should give it a try; (2) If what we tell you to do doesn't work, it's because you didn't try hard enough. If it does work, that proves we are right.

No less corrupt than the logic of psychiatry regarding the patient's progress is the logic that was used in the fifties and sixties to prove that we are all homosexual. Some readers may remember it. It is fundamentally a loser's logic, aimed at proving that you, too, are a loser, but its effects on many lives was nonetheless devastating. It is still used today, e.g., by the militant branches of the gay movement, and by some spiritual movements. The argument went as follows:

If you are strongly attracted to the opposite sex, it is probably because you are trying to conceal your latent homosexuality.

If you are *not* strongly attracted to the opposite sex, it is probably because you are homosexual.

If you are *a*sexual, the reason can only be that you know that, if you indulged in any sexual activity at all, it would be homosexual, and so, to avoid having to face that, you choose not to have any sex at all.

If you are tormented by *fears* that you might be homosexual, then these fears probably have some basis in fact.

If you are *not* tormented by fears that you might be homosexual, that is because you have been able to suppress these fears, and the reason you have suppressed them is that they probably have some basis in fact.

Whatever the group can give you, the group can take away. Whatever the marketplace can give you, the marketplace can take away.

In psychological matters, we often don't know what we are doing right, or why, or how.

In matters of the soul, context is everything.

If you want to hide something, hide it where everyone hates to look.

If you want to hide something, make it boring.

Of the handful of good ideas which have come from the countless volumes of writing, and countless hours of talk, on psychology, one good idea is the importance of distinguishing between criticizing the behavior and criticizing the person. A demonstration of the understanding of that difference should be a requirement, along with the now accepted blood test, for any marriage license, i.e., for any license to have children.

No person is ever wrong. Only his decisions, actions, beliefs, can be wrong.

The sad fact is that even if you hate your mother and father, that is no guarantee you will accomplish anything in life.

When a child learns that one of his parents is his mortal enemy, all the world becomes a waste-land.

"I hate this age to the very depths of my being, but one thing I have to be thankful for is that for the first time in history the courts are recognizing that there are circumstances in which a child is justified in killing a parent." — S.f.

If you want to create a monster, find someone you can humiliate day after day, month after month, year after year. We don't know why, but this creates people who are truly amoral. (Think of the Germans after the first World War.) One result is that, sooner or later, the victim comes to the conclusion: "*Because* this was done to me, I am free." Namely, free to do whatever he wants, to whomever he wants.

Far more important than loving your children is respecting them. All sorts of misery have been inflicted on children in the name of love; none that I've ever heard of in the name of respect.

One of the surest signs that a parent respects his children is his refusal to criticize their music, no matter how dreadful he may find it. (Which in no way implies that he must be forced to listen to it all the time, of course.) The self-discipline required to shut up on this subject, to stop those berating, contemptuous words which rise so automatically to a parent's lips — this self-discipline seems to carry over into other parts of the relationship with the child, where it does equal good.

Strong fathers, weak sons: Silicon Valley is full of examples of the brilliant engineer/executive whose sons are at best mediocre in any technical field and typically wind up finding refuge in one of the humanities, where they can spend the rest of their lives licking their wounds. If this turning away from the fathers' path were done with robust self-confidence in knowing something

that the fathers don't know and can never know, then we could rejoice in the phenomenon, but it isn't. The question is, are there any other possibilities for these born has-beens? Have any of them found a way to emerge from their sadness and seize a corner of the world for their own? Is there any *lore* for them to call upon? It would take only one of their number to show the way. Perhaps that one might begin with the thought that if he is going to be defeated, then Jesus God let it be by something mightier than engineering and business!

Despite the teachings of popular psychology (and of previous sections of this book), most people *are* what the world thinks of them.

"It is thus with most of us: we are what other people say we are. We know ourselves chiefly by hearsay." — Eric Hoffer, *The Passionate State of Mind and other Aphorisms*, Harper & Row, New York City, N.Y., 1955, No. 129.

"*What others think about us* — What we know about ourselves and remember is not so decisive for the happiness of our life as people suppose. One day that which *others* know about us (or think they know) assaults us — and then we realize that this is more powerful. It is easier to cope with a bad conscience than to cope with a bad reputation." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, Book 1, 52, translated, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1974, p. 115.

Nothing induces a sense of place in us as much as discomfort or suffering. When we are sick in bed, we become aware of every square inch of the geography of the bedclothes. When jogging on a hot day, we could write pages on the character of each patch of shade and the God-given trees which produced it. In severe depression, when our best friends are the sidewalk curbs and the shrubbery surrounding rundown houses, we could write volumes about a street which — if only momentarily — seems to make us feel better. And surely a person burned at the stake or roasted alive, must, in the course of his agony, develop an extraordinary sense of the cool places in a fire or on a red-hot griddle.

There are two sources of the suffering associated with an illness: one is the physical pain arising from the illness itself, and the other is public opinion about those who contract the illness. One can almost say that suffering when the world is on your side, when there is no doubt about its being for the right reason, is as nothing compared to suffering in shame. One reason why depression has been a major problem in our time is that it is almost universally deemed to be "wrong". If, tomorrow, severe, lifelong depression were deemed admirable, the mark of an exceptional person, most of it would disappear overnight.

"Illness is the doctor to whom we pay most heed: to kindness, to knowledge we make promises only; pain we obey." — Proust, Marcel, *Cities of the Plain*, in *Remembrance of Things Past*, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1970, p. 104.

When we experience shame and guilt, we are doing the dirty work of our enemies.

"The uses of Reason" — Because this phrase is so often uttered by academics, for whom it means something like, "the benefit of conducting one's life as we do", many of us refuse to consider it as describing anything worthwhile outside of mathematics and science.

But the truth is that Reason can serve as a kind of periscope for those who live in despair and would remain paralyzed by the dilemmas fostered in them during childhood. Consider, e.g., those who, in their heart of hearts and soul of souls, *know* that nothing less than perfection has any worth, or, in other words, that there is, in the last analysis, only one right way of doing anything, despite what the second-rate may wish to believe. But perfection, they know from hard experience, is very difficult to achieve, especially as there is no guarantee whatsoever that perfection lies only a little distance from near-perfection. In other words, *any* effort at all, no matter how great, may turn out to be fruitless if one is pursuing perfection. Certainly the questions that the rabble and the second-rate use to guide themselves, e.g., "What pleases me?", are irrelevant to these people.

In such circumstances, after decades of finding in therapy nothing more (or less) than bought friendship, and of all but avoiding most of life's tasks — investing money, doing shopping of any kind, attempting home-repairs — because of the overwhelming difficulty of these tasks and the shame of failure, such a person may come to view Reason as a last resort for losers like himself (not, as the common prejudice has it, as a tool for the healthy), and may begin to think along the lines of, "What are my life's goals? Given these, how should I proceed regarding *x*?"

A philosophical movement at the start of the 20th century had as its motto, "To the things themselves!", announcing thereby its determination to describe the experienced world as directly as possible, with the least possible mediation of existing concepts and theories. Similarly, the time has come in psychology for a movement whose motto could be, "To the feelings themselves!" The four types of emotion literacy described above are a step in this direction, namely, in their attempt to separate the types of question we can ask about a feeling. The proposed machine for comparing emotional states is a further step, since (if it is ever constructed) it will enable us to answer questions of the sort, "To what degree is *x* experiencing the same feeling as *y*?" But without such a machine, the movement will have to content itself with *expression*, not description, as a means of communication. In other words, the movement cannot expect to cash in its verbal utterances at the scientific counter. However, *with* the machine, it may be possible for a person to "somehow" achieve a given feeling by observing the representation of his or her present state, and seeing, at the same time, a representation of the desired state, just as some people nowadays can "somehow" slow their heart-rate or lower their blood pressure via biofeedback.

However repellent to some may be the idea of a machine that would allow the *comparison* (not the "measurement"!) of various types of feeling, including the feelings that occur when people create, or otherwise experience, works of art, it would do wonders to demonstrate scientifically what popular opinion has long asserted, namely, the extraordinary emotional poverty of most technically gifted people, including geniuses like the physicist Richard Feynman. The dif-

ference is hard to fathom for anyone who is not simultaneously acquainted with 20th century mathematics on the one hand, and 20th century literature and art on the other. To such a person, attempts to dismiss the entire realm of technical knowledge with remarks like, "It's just *numbers*" (which, of course, it is, in a magnificent sense completely lost to the speaker) — these remarks are as stunning in the ignorance they reveal as are attempts to dismiss the other side with remarks like "There's no logic to it", "There are no facts". (Very seldom do we hear the remark, "It's just *feelings*" because this side knows far less of what feelings are than the other does about what numbers are.) Feynman's two autobiographical volumes make us realize that there were, and are, people walking the face of the earth, including extraordinarily talented people, who cannot comprehend any use of language other than that of asserting propositions, which is equivalent, I suppose, to someone who could not understand any use of numbers other than those that pertained to shopping.

Nothing gave me greater confidence in the fundamental value of the arts and the humanities than reading Feynman's two volumes of autobiography — or I should say, nothing has convinced me more that criticisms like Feynman's of the arts and humanities do not spring from deep intellectual insight but from an almost inconceivable ignorance of the nature of the subject matter.

If we draw an analogy between, on the one hand, psychology's — and indeed the whole of science's — verbal articulateness about feelings on the one hand, and music on the other, we see how extraordinarily limited that articulateness is (perhaps necessarily so!). Dismissing something as "only a feeling" is analogous to dismissing, e.g., the *B-Minor Mass*, as "only a sound". Saying that such-and-such "is a type of feeling that..." is analogous to saying, e.g., that "the baroque violin concerto is a type of sound that..."

"Whenever someone says something about poetry or music and feeling, I want to say, 'What *feeling*? Be honest: it is so slight that most of the time you could not identify it. Burning your finger on the stove gives rise to a feeling. So does a death in your family. So does humiliation on the job. Or failing an exam. Yes, these are feelings. But what exactly is the feeling I get, or you get, from reading a poem of, say, Yeats, assuming you like Yeats' poetry?" — S.f.

It's a problem only if you think it is. But if you don't think it's a problem, you probably won't find the solution.

In attempting to solve personal problems, don't ask, "What is a solution?", still less, "What is the right solution?", but "What solutions lie nearest to my present situation?", i.e., require the least change, the least effort, least movement, on my part, and then, "Among these, which seem to accomplish the most?"

Most technically-trained people believe that the only problems worth solving are scientific or mathematical problems. Yet if such a person is forced to solve a major psychological problem — giving up cigarettes or alcohol or other drugs, overcoming a sexual disability — he cannot help

but realize that these problems are every bit as challenging, every bit as much a journey into the unknown, as the scientific or mathematical. Perhaps more so, since here there is so little "ready-made" past knowledge that can be called upon; here there are no theorems and very few tried-and-true techniques; no fixed and inviolable rules, no beginning where others have left off; indeed, most of the "knowledge" the person is provided with is little more than a mixture of wishful thinking and partially-disguised moralities. Furthermore, whereas the mathematician can always keep a record on paper of his progress toward the solution of a mathematics problem, a record which he can examine each day, the person attempting to overcome grave psychological problems usually has no idea of how much he has progressed, or of whether all his efforts so far have accomplished anything at all.

Suppose psychology advances to a point where all of psychological knowledge is represented by propositions of the form, "In circumstances *x*, the probability that *y* will do *z* is *w*." Will this render obsolete the works of philosophers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and others, and if not, why not?

Best remark I ever heard on the breaking of habits: "You haven't broken the habit as long as you still think about it."

Line for shy people who are called upon unexpectedly to give a speech: "Well...I don't know what to say...but I'm saying it...." (Paraphrase of line by John Cage)

How to overcome blushing and sweating when giving a speech or talking in a group: Say to yourself, "I am not going to dignify this garbage by blushing or sweating for them. I refuse." It works (sometimes)!

How to make people repay money they owe you: in more than half a dozen cases (my own and others') the following method has never failed. But you should keep in mind tht the method assumes your goal is getting your money back, which is by no means the same as obtaining justice or revenge or finding a suitably nasty way to express your rage and contempt for the other person. (You may, of course, decide that one or more of the latter goals is worth more to you than the money owed you, but then that is another story.)

The method is as follows.

(1) Always control your temper; always speak and write to the other person in a calm, rational manner, no matter what your feelings are;

(2) Analyze the other person's weak points, e.g., do they particularly value their free time? their professional reputation? money? their children and home life?

(3) Analyze your strong points, e.g., do you have a promissory note from them which could be used in court? can you afford to pay a lawyer to write them at least one threatening letter? do you have free time to use for harassing them? are you capable of being patient and persistent over long periods of time?

(4) begin bothering them for repayment, beginning with the simplest, least threatening request, but never letting up, and always gradually increasing the nuisance factor. Do nothing illegal. If they say they will repay you next week, or they will have a decision next week, ask for a day and a time, then call them the moment that date and time is past. Harass them at their weak points, e.g., if they value their professional reputation, remind them that if you take them to court, the summons to appear will probably be delivered to them during their work day, possibly when they have a client (or their boss) in the office; that they will be forced to take time off from work to appear in court; if they value their home life, call or visit them in the evening (always being extremely polite, but taking as much time as possible). Remember that your major weapon is being a nuisance. Legal action is a last resort, although you may use the threat of it. By your actions and persistence, make clear that they have two choices: (A) to be harassed by you, week in, week out, forever, or (B) to pay you and be free of you forever; it is extremely important that your behavior makes it clear to them that you want no revenge, that indeed you will permit them to save face any way they can, that you are simply a force of Nature which has one purpose: obtaining money that is rightfully yours.

The art of manipulating people — we are not *compelled* to practice it, any more than we are compelled to commit murder by merely owning a gun. We cultivate the art when necessary, then remember what we have learned, so that we can apply it to greater effect the next time this is necessary.

Consider the problem of saying no to a person who torments you with his or her demands — perhaps a parent who controls your inheritance, or an acquaintance who you believe might be useful to you in the future. At some point, you feel you have earned the right to lose your temper, to demand that they leave you alone. Much better is not to lose your temper, but, in the kindest possible terms, say that, unfortunately, you will be away on business or vacation that week, or you made a previous committment an hour before the person called. If, after a while, they start asking why you always seem to be busy when they call for help, respond with apologies, and, if worse comes to worse, say that you will try to help them out this next time. Then, in the last moment, in a voice full of regret and apology and clearly suppressed anger at the person's having put you through all this, call to say that your car has broken down, you'll still try to make it if you can get the car fixed in time, and then, of course, don't.

How to on how to: There are really only a few ways we can communicate to someone how to do something. One is by giving step-by-step instructions, relative to the person's existing skills, for doing the thing. When this is not possible, you can tell what you yourself do to achieve the thing, including a description of the feelings and thoughts you have during the process — in particular, what you enjoy about it — and leave the rest to the other person. A third way is simply to say, "Do things like the following ... until expressions such as the following ... begin to occur in your mind."

Succeeding by aiming at very little improvement. Someone once gave me a flat, plastic bat with holes in it. Each hole had a score marked below it. Attached to the bat was a string with a

ball on the end. The idea was to swing the ball up and catch it in the center hole, which had the highest score.

I was amazed to find how often I could get the ball into the center hole by thinking of the bat as a canvas *pocket*. It would be almost impossible to miss in that case: therefore...

Similarly, in playing miniature golf, I was once amazed to find how close to the hole I could get the ball by telling myself that the goal was not to get the ball *into* the hole, but simply to get it anywhere within a yard or so of the hole. That was my only job. Well, since I could hardly miss such an easy goal, no use forcing myself to repeat this process too often, so might as well get it in or very near the hole...

If you enjoy doing something, it doesn't much matter how good you are at it — which explains why there are so many contented mediocrities and failures in this world.

"Not to be content with Life is the unsatisfactory state of those which destroy themselves; who being afraid to live, run blindly on their own Death, which no man fears by Experience; and the Stoicks had a notable doctrine to take away the fear thereof; that is, In such Extremities, *to desire that which is not to be avoided*, and wish what might be feared; and so made Evils voluntary, and to suit with their own Desires, which took off the terror of them." — Browne, Sir Thomas, *A Letter to Friend*, in *Sir Thomas Browne: Selected Writings*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1970, p. 104. (Italics mine.)

Appropriating the negative: there was a time when to be called "queer" could drive a young man to suicide; now the term is boldly chanted in public marches: "We're here, we're queer, get used to it!" Ghetto blacks who know they are regarded as dirty and unkempt by many whites, wear dirty, too-large, too-long, doofus pants with the crotch almost at knee-level — clothes that virtually ensure that no white will change his mind about ghetto blacks. These blacks routinely call each other "nigger", a term that racist whites have used to express their ultimate contempt for all blacks. The early Christians made a virtue of weakness, poverty, failure in life, claiming that it guaranteed their eventual triumph ("the meek shall inherit the earth"). In the early 2000s, balding men began to shave their heads.

These are examples of what we might call "appropriating the negative" — the taking over a term of opprobrium, an attitude held by those who are seen as oppressors, and making it just the opposite of what it originally was. Down is up. The simultaneous contempt for the oppressor, the regarding him and his virtues as objects of scorn, is the other side of the same coin. Up is down.

Aggressive obedience: this is an effective technique for nullifying annoying rules. It consists in making a nuisance of yourself though your attempts to follow the rules scrupulously. For example, in the sixties, I was put on probation by the Secret Service for writing a letter criticizing Pres. Johnson's Vietnam policies, because the letter contained profanity. For six months, I was to notify a specified Secret Service agent whenever I left town. So I would call him, drag him out of meetings, have him paged, whenever my wife and I planned a trip anywhere — even if just to the

next town. I did this so often that eventually, in exasperation, he told me to stop calling him unless I planned to leave the state — or the country.

In the nineties, the custodians of Political Correctness in Berkeley decided that it was sexism to call a woman who served customers in a restaurant a "waitress" because the term was gender specific, and therefore implied there was a difference between female servers and male servers, when in fact the Workers are one, united in their struggle against the Capitalist oppressor. Various alternative designations were sought. The two that came out on top were "wait-person" and "waitron". So, when I didn't get my bill, I would select a waitress who was in a rush delivering plates to tables, and say, "Excuse me, but I'm trying to find my waitress — I'm sorry: my waitron — or should I say 'wait-person'? Wait: I heard that 'server' is the preferred term. But if that's not correct, then — " By which time she would say, exasperated, balancing her plates, a film of sweat on her forehead, "Look, it doesn't *matter*! I'll try to find her!"

Those of us who detest allowing the scholarly trees to obscure the forest, and who therefore read the literature — in particular, the poetry — and the philosophy of an age with our heads turned to one side so that we can hear what's going on beneath the verbal foliage — we know that at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries the idea was circulating through Europe of a something behind things, inside things, a hidden essence, motive force of the world. The idea is present in Rousseau, Wordsworth, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, among others. Schopenhauer identified this something as the will (a much broader term than the Will I have defined in this essay). Unfortunately, the only way to comprehend the power of this idea is through experience. Scholarly study is utterly useless for this purpose. It is a *poetic* idea. For those who come upon it after a lifetime of trying to find a way out of their miseries by doing the bidding of others, by following this or that thinker's or healer's or prophet's ideas, or by waiting for salvation in one form or another — it is like the discovery of the third dimension after a lifetime of living among wall posters.

The idea of the "perfect person", described in another chapter, can sometimes be an effective therapeutic technique for those who are obsessed with their own worthlessness. They can simply ask themselves, "What would I be doing today, hour by hour, if I were the person I know I should be?", and then write down the answer. The result often makes abundantly clear to them why they prefer the agonies of their worthlessness, if the only alternative is a life of such stifling order.

"It is incredible that we are able to *remember* the misery of our childhood so well! Suppose a sudden absence of mind at precisely the right time, an unexpected clap of someone's hands, is all that is required for us to *dislodge* this memory and leave it permanently behind!" — S.f.

This suggests the following therapeutic technique:

Therapist: "You have been depressed most of your life."

Patient: "Yes."

Therapist: "So, from moment to moment, one thing you have never worried about is whether or not you will remember how to be depressed the next moment."

Patient: "Right, now that you mention it."

Therapist: "I'll bet you that, within the next few days, until our next meeting, there will be at least one moment, outside of sleep, when you will be unsure exactly how to be depressed the next moment. If you can honestly tell me next time that such a moment didn't occur, the next session is free. To get things rolling, I'll bet you that you can't tell me, right now, what you do to make sure you don't forget how to be depressed, say, five minutes from now."

Which suggests a related technique:

Therapist: "Suppose there was a person of your age and background who, for some unaccountable reason, was happy most of the time. Suppose he asked you how to be as depressed as you are. What would you tell him?"

Patient: "Well, I'd just tell him what I think about."

Therapist: "For example."

Patient: "The futility of life, the emptiness, the utter uselessness of it."

Therapist: "But suppose he replied that these are just words. He needs to know what the feeling is like, so he can try to duplicate it in himself."

Patient: "It's like knowing — it *is* knowing — that a terrible mistake was made: you were never meant to have been born in the first place."

Therapist: "Mere words. Try again."

Etc.

The single best test of a theory that purports to give a method for making correct interpretations, whether in psychology or literature or the arts or any of the other humanities, is the clandestine submitting of hoaxes to supposed experts in the theory. If the experts can't detect the hoax, then the theory isn't worth much, except as a means of impressing the naive. Such tests should be welcomed by the humanities community, since the tests are all that this community has going for it as far as a demonstration of the value of its theories is concerned. Instead, whenever such a hoax is discovered, an outcry goes up that the perpetrators of the hoax have cheated! (See the story of Alan Sokal's now-famous hoax, the paper, published in May, 1996 in the journal *Social Text* and titled "Transgressing the Boundaries: The Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" in, e.g., Gross, Paul R., and Levitt, Norman, *Higher Supersitition*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Md., 1998, pp x-xi.) But the real cheaters are those who try to sell art to the world and have it accepted as science.

Every neurosis has its comic aspects, and none more than the neurotic need for approval, which always finds a way to take up residence in every attempt to overcome it. You set yourself the goal of putting an end to it and immediately become obsessed with the question whether you are proceeding in the right way, e.g., in the way that therapists would approve. But, of course, being self-aware, you immediately recognize what you are doing, and resolve not to think about the approval of therapists, and after a few seconds or minutes of success, begin wondering if, in fact, you are *really* proceeding without thought of therapist approval, or if, perhaps, a *good* therapist would be able to detect that this motive was still subconsciously present. You manage to push this thought aside, and now begin despising yourself for having begun your project so ineptly.

Who could possibly have any respect for such a person? But there you go again. Oh, God, if only you didn't need the world's approval, *then* the world would like you!

A similar comedy often surrounds attempts to develop the Will: "If I follow these steps, *then* will I be developing my Will? How long will it take? How will I know that I am succeeding? How far do I have to develop it before I begin to feel better? And what is the Will, actually? Give me a more precise definition. Is it enough if I practice these steps twice a day, and if not, how often do I have to practice them? Can I have a day off once in a while? Can you give me some kind of reassurance that this is what I should be doing, rather than something else? What do you do with your life after you've developed your Will?"

A neurosis is a superstition. (That, dear reader, is the single most important idea in this book.) Neurosis arises when we believe things that aren't true, e.g., regarding what we are, what we need.

A long-overdue, and definitely worthwhile, study would be that of the influence, on men who have a fear of, or at least an alienation from, machines, of the men's relationships with their fathers, especially with fathers who themselves were mechanically adept. The question may seem obvious but it is worth asking: is the son's *feelings* about machines — that they are unpredictable, that when they break down, it is because of something he did wrong, so that their breaking down is a judgement of him, that it is hopeless for him to try to understand machines because this a subject that always will be beyond him, that he has no business even trying to understand such things — are these feelings essentially the feelings he had about his father? It goes without saying that the study would have to include a study of boys who can be said to have a good relationship with machines: were their fathers especially warm and loving in the way they introduced their sons to machines, explained their workings, showed how to fix them.

Someone should write a book on 20th century psychology, religion (Eastern and Western) and philosophy and title it, *One Hundred Years of Missing the Point*, because that is what we have done as far as Nietzsche's ideas are concerned. The life work of a man who *gave up* his academic post even though it meant spending the rest of his life in near poverty, and who often had to help pay for the publication of his works, is now the property of a bunch of academic clerks who wouldn't *think* of being philosophers without a guaranteed lifetime job and an annual supply of sycophants like themselves, and whose only real talent is the ability to say what will please the right people at the right time. The most important ideas of the man whom Freud once called the greatest of psychologists, have been all but completely ignored by those who should be paying most heed to them, namely, psychotherapists, who — to be as charitable as I can — do not even *understand* the importance, psychologically, of the Will, of power, dominance, even of cruelty (at least, cruelty against those who torment us). How could they, when they are all women (regardless of their sex) and therefore have never experienced the ultimate argument for these things, namely, the feeling of pleasure and health they bring.

Yet another therapy might be (or no doubt already is) *verse therapy*, in which patient or therapist begins tapping out a regular beat to which the patient then free-associates lines of verse, preferably rhyming, e.g.,

I'm here today and gone tomorrow,
There's nothing in this life but sorrow.
Help me, Lord, to find a way,
I hate this life, yet have to stay.
Can't find no one to live with me,
Don't want no one: I must be free.
Why is life so awfully sad?
It must be that I once was bad
.
.
.

A technique which certainly deserves to be tried, particularly by literary people, is that of *rewriting our childhood*. Why should we go through life with only the memories of the wretchedness we actually experienced? Why not replace these with deliberately created memories of the parents and childhood we wished we had had? Therapists might point out that such memories could be revealing about our present needs and conflicts, but that is not the main purpose of this technique; the main purpose is simply to give ourselves, on however attenuated a basis, some of the experiences of living in a home we loved, with people we loved, and who loved us.

Closely related is the idea of figuring out how we could have *taken over* our childhood, how we could have made it our own, yes, even given the parents we had, the house, neighborhood, town we were raised in. If we had to go through it again, knowing what we know now, how would we have handled the same tyrannies? By no means a futile exercise, because, among other things, it helps to break the depression that arises from the conviction that it couldn't have been otherwise, that the only question for us was and is, will I be able to endure this, and if so, how?

"I was walking along one afternoon when it suddenly occurred to me that I didn't deserve the mother I got: I deserved infinitely better. I began trying to imagine the mother I should have had, that I was *meant* to have, and felt an immediate lifting of the spirits, a kind of internal *cleanliness*. Pictured her as slim, graceful, rather tall, beautiful but not gorgeous, elegant, for some reason always wearing expensive gray dresses. She has a quietness about her, but at the same time she is always very loving, affectionate, very admiring of me. She often seems serious, but she bursts into laughter whenever something strikes her as really funny. This character, I soon realized, is not far from that of the mother in the two films, *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle*.

"You will remind me that imagining that one has been given the wrong parents, e.g., that one is really an adopted child, is a common fantasy among kids who are having trouble with their real parents, but that, of course, does not diminish the power of the idea for adults. It is remarkable how almost human I feel when I think of this 'real' mother. I could almost believe that it wasn't a terrible mistake that I was born." — S.f., letter.

The list obscures the items on the list.

"...works [of art] themselves stand and hang in collections and exhibitions. But are they here in themselves as the works they themselves are, or are they not rather here as objects of the art industry? Works are made available for public and private art appreciation. Official agencies assume the care and maitenance of works. Connoisseurs and critics busy themselves with them. Art dealers supply the market. Art-historical study makes the works the objects of a science. Yet in all this busy activity do we encounter the work itself?

"The Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection, Sophocles' *Antigone* in the best critical edition, are, as the works they are, torn out of their own native sphere. However high their quality and power of impression, however good their state of preservation, however certain their interpretation, placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world." — Heidegger, Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row, N.Y., 1975, p. 40.

An unemployed man, trying to keep himself going in his idleness by following a strict, daily To Do List, becomes so disgusted with his failure to complete all the items that he decides to take a day off. "Today, you can do whatever you want to do", he tells himself. And he finds that he attacks the items on the list with an energy and speed he has never known before, and by the end of the day has completed more items than at any other time since his unemployment began.

People who live near the ocean see the waves every day, year in, year out, and yet they don't remember a single one.

Our perception of distance diminishes rapidly with distance. We have no appreciation of how high the clouds really are, or how far away the ground is when we are in a plane — not even at altitudes as low as, say, 3000 feet. What could be done to make these distances more apparent to us? Looking down from a tall building seems to make us far more aware of the height, but what about heights seen from afar? Would it help to send balloons up to the base of the clouds, each balloon having a weighted streamer dangling from it? (But our appreciation of the height of a kite we are flying is soon lost.) If a parachutist jumped from the balloon, would that improve our sense of its height? How about a person without a parachute?

"...it is what is immediately over our head that gives us the impression of altitude and not what is almost invisible to us, so far is it lost in the clouds..." — Proust, Marcel, *The Captive*, vol. 5 of *Remembrance of Things Past*, Modern Library, N.Y., 1956, p. 312.

The problem of making very great (or very small) distances comprehensible is not easily solved. Charles and Rae Eames' best-known film, *Powers of Ten*, attempts to give the viewer an idea of interplanetary and interstellar distances by showing what a one-meter square picnic scene

would look like when viewed through squares whose sides measure successively 10, 100, 1,000, 10,000, 100,000, ... meters. Popularizers of science and mathematics usually resort to analogies. In the case of *traveling* great distances, the main challenge is somehow to keep before the viewer's eye *both* a representation of the distance the traveler has gone so far, *and* how fast he is going at the moment, perhaps by showing continuously, on a a map or diagram, where the traveler is relative to where he wants to go, and, in a separate image, how fast he is going relative to nearby stationary surroundings he is moving past.

Why, at this late date, is the idea of "psychological time" (p.t.) still such a peripheral matter for us? I describe a trip which you are about to take. Contrast, "It is about 100 miles from A to B", with "Now this fifty miles goes really fast, only about half an hour p.t., lots of interesting scenery, but this ten mile stretch goes very slow, at least six hours p.t., nothing but rolling hills with tract houses..." Even though there is no reliable way of predicting the length in psychological time of a period of clock time to be experienced by ourselves or someone else, there is a simple way of measuring the amount of psychological time which has *passed* for a given person during a given period of clock time, namely, by not allowing the person to see a clock during that period, then asking them, at the end, what time they think it is.

Why is it that, whenever we see actors performing, we so readily see them as real people in real life? Why don't we equally readily see them as actors performing? One answer may lie in a kind of topological rule of the mind which runs, "Whatever something is nearest to, that's what it is." Thus the "distance" to seeing the actors as people in real life may be much less than the "distance" to seeing them as actors performing a scene. A test of this idea would be to ask people involved in the theater what percentage of the time they see the actors as actors.

"Throughout my teenage years, my mother would have various doctors and friends of hers tell me that if I continued my rebellious behavior, it might well cause her to have a heart attack or stroke. A couple of weekends ago, the woman who lives with her called to tell me that she has spent a number of years working with the elderly, and has found that quite often the elderly are ready to die but feel they can't until the lifelong battles they have fought with their children are resolved, and that therefore my continued rebellious behavior may well be causing her to go on living." — S.f.

"In my twenties I went to a pyschiatrist because whenever I entered a coffee shop or restaurant, I thought everyone was looking at me. In middle age, I went to a pyschiatrist because whenever I entered a coffee shop or restaurant, I knew that no one was looking at me." — S.f.

"There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." — Wilde, Oscar, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ch. 1.

Everyone should keep a list of fundamentally frightening things. One of these is the following: you are out walking on a windy beach, say on the coast of New England, in late summer.

The vacation season ended a few weeks ago. There is no one else around. There are scattered clouds overhead and toward the horizon, the remnants of the day's puffy cumulus. Far behind you are a few white houses, but you know no one in the area. You just decided to park the car and stretch your legs on a long trip from one life to another. Underfoot are big, egg-shaped stones, seaweed, but (you are glad to see) no cans or cardboard refuse. As far as you can tell, the beach is completely free of any sign of human presence. There isn't even any driftwood.

The surf is only a foot or so high. You look out to sea. After a while, you begin to think that the water in one area straight ahead is a little smoother than in the rest — as though an oil slick had suddenly appeared, or were in the process of appearing. You keep looking. At times you can't be sure, but at other times, if you had been forced to describe your impression, you would have said that it was as if there were a huge, flat, dark gray *back* underneath the waves, right near the surface. Certainly not a whale: this is much bigger, and, if not flat, then very slightly raised in the middle, and many yards across. Then it disappears again. You realize that if there is something, it must be moving very quickly, because when you do not see the stillness close to shore, you see it way out to sea, off to one side perhaps. The sun sinks in the sky, the undersides of the clouds grow more distinct, and verge on black, though the tops are still illuminated orange. There isn't a soul on the beach. The wind comes up a little. You are a little unnerved by what you might be seeing, so you back up a few steps, almost tripping on the ankle-breaking round stones. You look nervously to the left and right, then straight ahead, because now you are more uneasy when you don't see the shadow than when you do or think you do. The first shades of evening are beginning to descend. For several minutes now you haven't seen anything. All is quiet except for the steady rhythm of the small surf. Birds wheel overhead on your left. You decide to go back to your car. Suddenly, directly in front of you, a few hundred yards out, something huge, enormous *rears up* — there is an enormous *whoosh!* as though the waters of the sea had suddenly gathered themselves. The distant sky, the setting sun are obliterated, a cold shadow falls across you. You stare in horror as an enormous dark gray water *shape* emerges and climbs upward, tens of feet high, more than a hundred, rearing up, a smooth shape of water, shaped roughly like the hood of a cobra, but without distinctive features of any kind, a mere shape of water, blocking the light, flecks of foam dropping from it, the upper part wide, the bottom thinner, reminding you of a waterspout. It stays there, huge, enormous, balancing, it now seems, on its narrow base, wobbling, swaying from side to side! Come, look, doesn't anyone see? You stumble backward, half turning, but you dare not take your eyes from it. Even though it has no eyes, nothing resembling eyes, it seems to be observing you. Certainly if it fell forward from its present position it would engulf you, but in what? Just water? It can't be made of just water. You stumble and scramble across the egg-shaped stones, reach the sand dune, see the shape quavering, trying to keep its balance. You feel a little safer now, you dare to turn your head away from it briefly to search for the best path out of there. When you turn back, after just that brief moment, it is gone: completely, totally gone, not even a ripple on the surface showing where its enormous teetering bulk had been. Your eyes race across the dark water. For one instant you believe or could believe that you see something dark and enormous just under the waves, racing off toward the horizon. You blink, look twice, can no longer see it. Everything returns to normal. The birds are still banking and wheeling, the steady rhythm of the waves continues. You do not take your eyes from the now darkening ocean until you are in your car and driving away.

At a certain San Francisco restaurant there was a waiter who was a master at hyping the upper class. When he arrived at your table to take your order, he said, with a slight British accent, somewhat hurriedly, "Hello, hello, nice to see you again," even though he had never laid eyes on you. He said it in a way that said, "I apologize for not doing anything you feel I should be doing — but of course with exceptional people like you it is hardly necessary to say that." On one occasion, after he took our order, I told him I had to go to the car to get a bottle of wine. The place was packed and he was late in delivering our food. Again that hurried speech as he slid the plates before us: "Sorry again...told them not to start preparation until you came back, just to be sure it wasn't too soon...got a little behind". But what he *really* said was — great master that he was — , "You are such exceptional people that we have chosen *you* to be served later, while those others — those less exceptional ones — well, you know, we must serve them promptly because they don't have the understanding and depth you have."

In a company cafeteria there was a woman who, whenever you said "Thank you" for the plate of food she handed to you, always replied with "Thank *you*". Once or twice I found myself saying "Thank you" in response to her "Thank you" (thanking her for her politeness). I got the impression several times that she was on the verge of thanking me for my courtesy in acknowledging her politeness. She also made a point of spooning the vegetables and meat onto the plate with a special gracefulness, an upper class embellishment of movement, as though *this* was what I was really paying for (the food itself incidental) — as though this gracefulness would remain in the food even after I had carried it to a table, even after I had eaten it (even if I did not eat it).

Connoisseurs of fine restaurants know that there is an intimate relationship between food, furniture, and architecture. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the upper class goes to such restaurants because these places provide another way of experiencing their own beautiful homes. Certain cuts of beef, e.g., filet mignon, taste like antique chairs; *coq au vin* tastes like the wicker furniture in a sitting room with windows looking onto the back yard; after-dinner sherbert is the sprinklers on the lawn at evening.

Being drunk is a way of being in bed with other people The drunker you are, the more blankets and pillows there are. (That is why you don't worry about falling down when you are drunk.) So why not just eliminate the middle-man, and have a bar in which all there is is one big bed, with everyone under the same blanket?

Project: Write or tell a story about a rich, middle-aged couple so obsessed with propriety that everything in their home must be discretely clothed: furniture, knick-knacks, even food, so that, at dinner, it is necessary first to unbutton the soup.

Psychology of cooking: If the cook is a woman, she does not prepare food, she prepares love; she stirs, mixes, folds, her love. Psychology of making things: for a man, making something is a way of expressing his love for tools, for wood, metal, an engiine. The finished product is relatively unimportant — merely a justification for the activity.

"Here is how I learned to love Nature: I was sitting in a field one sunny day, not enjoying it, and I asked myself, 'What would you rather do: sit here or be boiled alive?' Well, I decided I'd rather sit there. Then I asked myself, 'What would you rather do: sit here or die of thirst?' Sit there. 'What would you rather do: sit here, or go to the dentist?' Sit there. And so, after about thirty minutes of this, I found that I loved Nature." — S.f.

"The wilderness: something I want no part of but which ought to be there." — S.f.

The illusion of self-revelation can be used to detect if a house guest is secretly going through your private papers. Simply leave some of these papers — ones you do not mind the guest seeing — where he is sure to notice them if he enters your study. At the top of the pile, place a note, apparently hastily written, reminding yourself to tell various friends how ridiculous the guest is in your eyes, and listing several of his personality traits as examples. If the guest is a lover, make the note appear to be a reminder to yourself of what you will have to tell her in order to prevent her from knowing about your other lover(s).

A similar technique can be used to praise someone in a particularly convincing way. Probably every person who sends and receives email has at least once had the experience of accidentally sending an email to the wrong person. If the email is critical of the person, the blunder can end a friendship. However, if an email praising the person and listing some of his or her admirable qualities is "accidentally" sent to the person, having been ostensibly intended to be sent to someone else, and if the accidental email is followed by an embarrassed apology and explanation, it is hard to imagine the recipient not being full of warm feelings for the sender.

Why is it that, when we are hungry, we always know that it is *we* who are hungering, but when we are depressed, we often think that it is the world that is depressing?

"One of the great delusions is the I. Buddhism thus agrees with Hume, with Schopenhauer, and with our own Macedonio Fernández. There is no subject; what exists is a series of mental states. If I say 'I think,' I am committing an error, because I am assuming a fixed subject and then an act of that subject, which is thought. It is not so. One should say, as Hume points out, not 'I think,' but rather 'it is thought,' as one says 'it is raining.' When we say 'it is raining,' we do not think that the rain is performing an act but rather that something is *happening*. In the same way that we say 'it's hot,' 'it's cold,' we should also say 'it's thinking,' 'it's suffering,' and avoid the subject." — Borges, Jorge Luis, "Buddhism", in *Seven Nights*, New Directions Books, N.Y., 1984, pp. 71-72.

We (some of us, at least) should be mature enough now, at the end of the 20th century, to regard religious faith from the proper point of view, which emphatically does not mean the simple-minded point of view of the typical scientist and engineer ("religious doctrines can't be

proved, so what good are they?"). A religion (we can say now) is a means to an end; it enables people to overcome difficulties that otherwise would have destroyed them. It gives heroic strength to individuals who otherwise would have been utterly helpless. A religion is not "delusion" or "error" in the way that, e.g., believing, today, that the earth is flat is delusion or error. A religion is not a childish fantasy: the truth is that not one of us who have outgrown the ability to believe in religions — not one of us could withstand the kind of tortures which some religious people in the past withstood with hardly a complaint.

The *right* way to judge any religious doctrine, and I include here the doctrines of the New Age movement and its countless branches, is to ask, "How well does this doctrine seem to enable people to endure lives and misfortunes which otherwise would have been unendurable? How strong does it seem to make them?"

Here as elsewhere, the question is not "Is it true?" but "Does it work?"

"Religion, [biologist Edward O.] Wilson theorizes, is so prevalent because it provided a definite evolutionary advantage for those early humans who adopted it. Wilson notes that animals that hunt in packs obey the leader because a pecking order based on strength and dominance has been established. But roughly 1 million years ago, when our apelike ancestors gradually became more intelligent, individuals could rationally begin to question the power of their leader. Intelligence, by its very nature, questions authority by reason, and hence could be a dangerous, dissipative force on the tribe. Unless there was a force to counteract this spreading chaos, intelligent individuals would leave the tribe, the tribe would fall apart, and the individuals would eventually die. Thus, according to Wilson, a selection pressure was placed on intelligent apes to suspend reason and blindly obey the leader and his myths, since doing otherwise would challenge the tribe's cohesion. Survival favored the intelligent ape who could reason rationally about tools and food gathering, but also favored the one who could suspend that reason when it threatened the tribe's integrity. A mythology was needed to define and preserve the tribe.

"To Wilson, religion was a very powerful, life-preserving force for apes gradually becoming more intelligent, and formed a 'glue' that held them together. If correct, this theory would explain why so many religions rely on 'faith' over common sense, and why the flock is asked to suspend reason.' — Kaku, Michio, *Hyperspace*, Anchor Books, N.Y., 1994, pp. 331-332.

Without question, one of the most admirable, most astonishing accomplishments of tormented man was the appropriation and transformation of the Enemy by the early Christians. If you replace the idea of God as supremely good and supremely concerned for the fate of man with the idea of God as supremely bad and supremely indifferent to the fate of man, then Christian doctrine about the nature of God and what he requires of us, is a time capsule of the psychology of the oppressed people of the Middle East around the start of the Christian epoch, with the Roman emporer, of course, being the original God. In families as in empires, when we are oppressed and helpless to do anything about it, we try to find "deeper reasons" for our suffering: we try to explain it as necessary for some higher good; we try to believe that it will be rewarded in the future; we try to convince ourselves that it is really a higher form of pleasure. It was a supreme act of Oneupmanship to convert all the evil qualities of the Roman tyranny into aspects of a supremely good Being, and 2000 years later, every Sunday morning, we can still hear on TV the bland, smiling, interpreters of the Emporer's latest whims.

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

"That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

"Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

"So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry."

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Oh Yet We Trust"

Anyone who is obsessed with the meaninglessness of life cannot help but admire the psychological ingenuity of Christianity, e.g., the idea that the greater the torment, the greater our importance to God — that we have been *chosen* to endure this for some higher purpose because no one else was capable of enduring it.

"'... they tell me that this very misery is a sign of their election by God, that one beats the dogs one loves best, that this misery is perhaps also a preparation, a test, a kind of training, perhaps even more than that: something for which eventually they will be compensated with tremendous interest — in gold? No, in happiness. They call this *bliss*.'" — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Genealogy of Morals*, section XIV.

Or the idea of an infinitely cunning Enemy, so that a lifelong failure who is unable to stop trying to succeed can say to himself, "Of course, he knew my major strength was endurance, therefore it is precisely that which he would try to destroy in me."

There are many other examples of Christianity's psychological genius: the creating God in the opposite of Caesar's image, e.g., Caesar doesn't care at all about us, the Lord cares enormously about us; the reversal of the value of poverty, which marked the lowest level of society; but will mark the highest in the kingdom of God. Christianity is not only a time capsule of feelings, it also makes possible a kind of archeology of values: if you want to find out what the lower class felt about Caesar around the time of Christ, simply reverse all the values of present-day Christianity.

Because it is so "obvious", we do not begin to appreciate the value of conducting one's life in abject humility before an unknowable deity who approves of our living this way. In the depth of your suicidal despair following yet another failure in your life, take a walk along the sullen streets, and then put yourself in a state that enables you to say, "In thy name, I tried to ... , but nevertheless, today I still managed to ..." and here you name the few trivial tasks you managed to accomplish that day. "No suffering is too great for thy honor...I thank thee for allowing me to walk these ugly streets, and to know the degree of my failure and shame and worthlessness...in thy name..." Proof of the power of this attitude is that it works even when we don't believe in any god at all — when we eliminate all reference to god, and simply express our inferiority before the anonymous world that watches inside each of us.

Christianity also made use of a technique that children and employees and other oppressed people frequently apply, namely, that of curtailing, once and for all, the torment of trying to decide if the world is or is not *really* as bad as it seems by once and for all deciding, and in fact proclaiming that it is. Far better to live in the certainty of unending grimness than in the knowledge that maybe, perhaps, this grimness might not be the bedrock of life after all, that maybe (if only you could figure it out) there is something that would put an end to it.

"We can never really have enough of that which we really do not want." — Hoffer, Eric, *The Ordeal of Change*, Harper & Row, 1963, p. 5.

Research project: investigate when the expression, "part of me" first came into usage in the English-speaking world, as in, e.g., "part of me wants to ... but part of me doesn't." What was used to express this idea before the phrase came into use — or is the idea itself something recent in human history?

Why is it that the only occasions on which we want to analyze our feelings are those when we feel bad? Why is it that when we feel good, we usually haven't the slightest desire "to get at the root cause" of our feelings?

Is it possible to feel alienated from anything we derive pleasure from? Show me a man who has no pleasures, and I'll show you a man who doesn't know who he is.

One reason for modern man's sense of alienation is that he has no mirrors — no living mirrors. Recall the scene in the film *Papillon* in which Steve McQueen, serving time in solitary confinement, is allowed briefly to poke his head through the opening in his cell door. The first words he asks of the prisoner in the next cell, who is doing the same, are, "*How do I look?*" In a small village, in a tribe, other people are the mirror. What a person does comes back to him one way or the other — no, in many ways. The person has a self. In modern life, we have the nuclear family, which as likely as not is anything but a mirror, and the world, in which the only way to find a mirror is through fame or fortune. The small things we do, do not exist, are lost in the void.

Certain physical diseases are caused by the body's immune system turning against the body itself. The equivalent in psychology is certain types of neurosis in which the patient's body (and/or mind and personality) are seen as utterly alien, repulsive — the condition, in effect, that Gregor Samsa endured in Kafka's "Metamorphosis".

Chant for future generations:

What do we love to do?
Hate!
What do we love to do?
Hate!
.
.
.

"What a beautiful thing hatred can be! It can be a source of boundless energy, can discipline even the most mediocre minds (rage + self-discipline = talent), can sharpen the senses and create an all-consuming purpose for living where non existed before. Show me a man bent on revenge and I'll show you a man living at the peak of life." — S.f.

"All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?"

— Satan, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I.

"The strong struggle for power, and the weak
Warm their poor hearts with hate."

— Jeffers, Robinson, "Watch the Lights Fade"

"It is difficult to understand those whom one does not hate, for then one is unarmed, one has nothing with which to penetrate into their being." — Lagerkvist, Paer, *The Dwarf*, Hill and Wang, Inc., N.Y., 1945, p. 10.

The child being punished and hearing his parents' "This is for your own good!"; the man on the rack, lifting his soul to God, for whom all this is necessary; the scientist dying of cancer and attempting to view his agony as "a natural process"; the prisoner viewing his execution as an act of God, who loves us as his children —

Love what you hate,
Hate what you love:
That is the road
To heaven above.

"We who have lived through the Stalin-Hitler era know that one of the most striking functions of a mass movement is the inducement of boundless human plasticity — the creation of a population that will go through breath-taking somersaults at a word of command, and can be made, in the words of Boris Pasternak, 'to hate what it loves and love what it hates.'" — Hoffer, Eric, *The Temper of Our Time*, Harper and Row, N.Y., 1967, p. 17.

"Beatrice Webb remarked that [Bertrand] Russell was a good hater, and [D. H.] Lawrence, in a famous letter of denunciation, wrote: 'It is not the hatred of falsity which inspires you. It is the hatred of people, of flesh and blood.' Russell himself told Ottoline Morrell, 'There is a well of fierce hate in me.' This hatred, he said, 'is also a well of life and energy — it would not really be good if I ceased to hate.'" — Hampshire, Stuart, in "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner", review of Monk, Ray, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude, 1872-1921*, in *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 28, 1996.

We who hate life — not *life* (what have we got against the plants and animals?), but *human* life — don't realize that we are in a much different position than the haters of life which Nietzsche so brilliantly analyzed, because we can make use of his analysis for our own purposes. To know the reasons, and the dangers, and the strengths of our hatred, makes us a far greater menace to our enemies than the naive life haters of the past.

When all else fails, make enemies. It is far better to be hated by the world than to be ignored by the world. The worst possible fate for a person with high ambitions, regardless of his field, is to pass through life being treated with utter indifference.

"It's a little bit fun being oppressed." — k. d. lang, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8/2/92, p. D-1.

"Benefits are only agreeable as long as one can repay them." — Tacitus, quoted by Montaigne.

"The familiarity of one's superior makes one bitter because it cannot be reciprocated." — Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sect. 182, Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, Ill., 1955, p. 89.

"Don't take what I say at face value!" — Whenever the smell of interpretation is in the air, watch out: tyrants at work. I once knew a woman who was adept at blaming others for whatever went wrong with the project she was working on. When one of her co-workers finally lost his

temper and told her it might be a good thing if she blamed herself once in a while, she replied, with apparent genuine amazement at his anger, that he shouldn't take seriously everything she said, it was just her way of letting off steam. I hope no one reading this who runs into a similar situation will be inclined to take *her* seriously in that response, because it is nothing more or less than a declaration that she expects to be able to say whatever she wants and never be blamed for it. She can lose her temper, be as nasty as she wants toward her fellow employees (and her boss — she privately went over his head several times), and if anyone complains about her behavior, it's because they took her seriously just when they shouldn't have. (How can we know when we should and when we shouldn't take her seriously?) The result, among naive fellow-workers, is that she becomes the center of attention, people begin walking on eggshells whenever they deal with her, they wonder among themselves what kind of a mood she is in today, and if perhaps this orneriness of hers might not conceal unusual depth and intelligence — maybe her failure to get much done is due to the fact she is so intelligent that the ineptitude of others, and the poor quality of the software, really does hold her back! Why, the truth is, she's brilliant! And if we were only half as brilliant, we would understand her, and see that our ability to get the job done on time, much less our expectation that she do the same, is really — when you look at it properly — something we should be ashamed of!

The gift of self-deception — the worst manager I ever worked for taught me once and for all the extraordinary naivete of our belief that it is better to know oneself than not to. Here was a man who had become so successful at deceiving other people that he could no longer distinguish between deceiving them and deceiving himself. Here was a man who had long ago come to the conclusion that, in all important matters, he was never wrong. As a result, here was a man who could weep real tears while he was sticking a knife in someone's back. Once, after putting an employee on probation for being smarter and knowing more than he (despite the employee's bending every effort to conceal this fact), he noticed that the employee still wore the contractor ID badge he had received when he first worked at the company. The manager came over, put a hand on the employee's shoulder, looked him straight in the eye and said, "First thing tomorrow, I want you to go down to Personnel and get a *Permanent* Employee badge." You would assume that meant that he was sorry he had put the employee on probation, that it was only meant to be a warning; that he didn't really intend to fire him. But you would be dead wrong, as subsequent events confirmed: rather it was his way of making himself feel better about the set-up for dismissal he had just put into effect, his feelings, expressed in words, being something like, "Sometimes I have to be treacherous to people, but I do my best to deceive them into thinking I am not going to hurt them, because that way they will feel better until the moment I actually finish them off: what a basically decent guy I am!"

If you want to do real evil in this world, remember the most important rule: know thyself *not*!

"...the wicked man supposes himself to be punishing the wickedness of his victim;" — Proust, Marcel, *The Guermantes Way*, Part I, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Modern Library, 1925, p. 234.

"The true hypocrite is the one who ceases to perceive his deception, the one who lies with sincerity." — Gide, André, Second Notebook, Journal of *The Counterfeiters*, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1973, p. 427.

"The hypocrite, as the word indicates (it means in Greek 'play-actor'), when he falsely pretends to virtue plays a role as consistently as the actor in the play who also must identify himself with his role for the purpose of play-acting; there is no *alter ego* before whom he might appear in his true shape, at least not as long as he remains in the act. His duplicity, therefore, boomerangs back upon himself, and he is no less a victim of his mendacity than those whom he set out to deceive. Psychologically speaking, one may say that the hypocrite is too ambitious; not only does he want to appear virtuous before others, he wants to convince himself. By the same token, he eliminates from the world, which he has populated with illusions and lying phantoms, the only core of integrity from which true appearance could arise again, his own incorruptible self...Only crime and the criminal, it is true, confront us with the perplexity of radical evil; but only the hypocrite is really rotten to the core." — Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, London, 1965, p. 1-3.

To be able to make people walk on eggshells whenever they have to deal with you, is to be in a position of power. If you always seem impatient with others, if you always seem to be wondering why God put such useless, slow, unintelligent people on the earth, if you always seem to be just barely able to control your temper, then you will find others going out of their way to try to please you, because they will assume that your apparent opinion of them is right, since you are obviously angry at them. English professors and mathematics professors are adept at this kind of appropriation of power.

Most of the value of the popular psychology and self-help movements has nothing to do with the ideas and techniques and programs of wishful thinking that fill books on these subjects, but rather with the fact that they provide an excuse for people to form communities. But out of those endless hours of self-analysis and self-expiation and falling away from the Program and returning the Program and falling away from the Program again there emerges, once in a blue moon or so, a valuable psychological insight. One of these is the difference between acting out one's rage against another person, and honoring one's rage against the person. Children, when confronted with what to them is an impossibility, namely that one (or both) of their parents is out to destroy them, may have no difficulty expressing their rage by profanity and violence, but at the same time they balance the equation by passing the most ruthless judgement against themselves — they are now outlaws, fit to live only on the margins of society, possibly as criminals, doomed to failure at any endeavor approved by the world of their parents. It often takes years of struggle for a person with such a background to achieve the kind of rage which does not bite back.

Taking seriously the old proverb, we must ask ourselves if it would not be of benefit to those suffering great pain if there were a National Pain Registry to which one could send an electronic description of one's pain and receive a readout of the classification of that pain, the kinds of dis-

eases and other circumstances in which others have suffered similar pain, and perhaps the names and addresses of some of these people (those who are still alive).

Those who, after a lifetime of trying to overcome suicidal depression by "sheer thought", have experienced the beneficial effects of drugs like Prozac, may feel they have had a sobering lesson in the futility of all aspects of philosophy and religion which attempt to provide us with the means of enduring great and long-lasting pain. The only effort that anyone should be asked to make from now on, they may think, is simply to hold on until the right drug is developed. The trouble is, in many cases, no one knows how long that may be. Thus, it continues to be important that some, at least, do the hard, lonely, work of attempting to overcome great and long-lasting pain by "sheer thought", not only for their own sakes, but to show the way for others.

One man who did more than his share of such work was John Barnwell, a Harvard chemist who died at 36 after a lifelong battle with a type of neurofibromatosis, in which fibrous tumors "invade critical structures of the spinal column and brain" — Lambert, Craig, "One Hundred Days of Triumph", *Harvard Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 1991, p. 33. It was "a crippling disease that slowly, ruthlessly destroyed [him], closing down each of his five senses one by one and ravaging virtually all of his physical capabilities." — ibid., p. 33.

Barnwell wrote, in his 300-page journal, "One Hundred Days of Triumph",

"As the reader may discover, I am a person of exceedingly strong and often forceful will, frequently depending on mental strength to overcome physical problems. This is central, crucial, to my experience. Repeatedly, the reader may find instances in which his instincts dictate, for example, calling for a physician and/or an ambulance, and yet I do not. In all these cases I am making a conscious choice — mental strength over physical weakness. I hope the reader will find that I have chosen wisely." — quoted in ibid., p. 34.

Remember that it is highly likely that if someone of undisputed importance were to send you a letter saying that they had been examining your case and that it was clear to them that you were an exceptional person — one in a million, in fact — and that your suffering is a necessary part of that distinction, you would feel better in a flash.

Not belonging to yourself — i.e., giving yourself over to the hands of the enemy: "No matter what I'm doing, I know that someone else has already done it better and faster." "No matter what I'm doing, I know that I should be doing something else."

Never forget that Kafka, not the administrators of the Penal Colony, invented the instrument of torture and execution called the Harrow, and that Dante, not God, devised the eternal agonies for the sinners in *The Inferno*.

Our naive, unconscious assumption about the murder we plan to commit in hatred or revenge is that the murdered person will *know* they are dead, that they will experience their being dead through our eyes, that they will every moment thereafter experience what they are missing, what

we have deprived them of! No wonder murder has such a strong appeal as the ultimate punishment! But, of course, we have no idea what happens to the souls of the dead. They may be completely extinguished, they may *in all cases* wind up better off than they were. Therefore, the ultimate revenge is condemning your enemy to the longest possible death-in-life. Don't kill him, make him spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair, preferably in nearly unbearable physical pain that is not constant, but recurs unpredictably. Make sure that every day will be as horrible as the previous, and that he will have no way of putting an end to his suffering.

The best torturers prolong life.

"*Edg*. [*Aside*] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.'"

— Shakespeare, William, *King Lear*, Act IV, Sc. I

We never get used to anguish.

The first part of Kafka's story, "Before the Law", is the single most important story that a neurotic can read:

"Before the Law stands a doorkeeper on guard. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country who begs for admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot admit the man at the moment. The man, on reflection, asks if he will be allowed, then, to enter later. 'It is possible,' answers the doorkeeper, 'but not at this moment.' Since the door leading into the Law stands open as usual and the doorkeeper steps to one side, the man bends down to peer through the entrance. When the doorkeeper sees that, he laughs and says: 'If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. And I am only the lowest doorkeeper. From hall to hall, keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. Even the third of these has an aspect that even I cannot bear to look at.' These are difficulties which the man from the country has not expected to meet; the Law, he thinks, should be accessible to every man at all times, but when he looks more closely at the doorkeeper in his furred robe, with his huge pointed nose and long, thin, Tartar beard, he decides that he had better wait until he gets permission to enter. The doorkeeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door. There he sits waiting for days and years. He makes many attempts to be allowed in and wearies the doorkeeper with his importunity. The doorkeeper often engages him in brief conversation, asking him about his home and other matters, but the questions are put quite impersonally, as great men put questions, and always conclude with the statement that the man cannot be allowed to enter yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, parts with all he has, however valuable, in the hope of bribing the doorkeeper. The doorkeeper accepts it all, saying, however, as he takes each gift: 'I take this only to keep you from feeling that you have left something undone.' During all those long years the man watches the doorkeeper almost incessantly. He forgets about the other doorkeepers, and this one seems to him the only barrier between himself and the Law. In the first years he curses his evil fate aloud; later, as he grows old, he only mutters to himself. He grows childish, and since in his prolonged watch he has learned to know even the fleas in the doorkeeper's fur collar, he begs the very fleas to help him and to persuade the doorkeeper to change his mind. Finally his eyes grow dim and he does not

know whether the world is really darkening around him or whether his eyes are only deceiving him. But in the darkness he can now perceive a radiance that streams immortally from the door of the Law. Now his life is drawing to a close. Before he dies, all that he has experienced during the whole time of his sojourn condenses in his mind into one question, which he has never yet put to the doorkeeper. He beckons the doorkeeper, since he can no longer raise his stiffening body. The doorkeeper has to bend far down to hear him, for the difference in size between them has increased very much to the man's disadvantage. 'What do you want to know now?' asks the doorkeeper, 'you are insatiable.' 'Everyone strives to attain the Law,' answers the man, 'how does it come about, then, that in all these years no one has come seeking admittance but me?' The doorkeeper perceives that the man is at the end of his strength and that his hearing is failing, so he bellows into his ear, 'No one but you could gain admittance through this door, since this door was intended only for you. I am now going to shut it.' " — Kafka, Franz, "Before the Law", in Kaufmann, Walter, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, The World Publishing Company, N.Y., 1956, pp. 124-125.

"But sometimes it is just at the moment when all appears lost that a signal comes which may save us; after knocking at all the doors that lead nowhere, the only one through which we can enter, one which we might have sought in vain for a hundred years, we stumble against unwittingly, and it opens." — Proust, Marcel, *The Past Recaptured*, tr. Frederick A. Blossom, vol 7. of *Remembrance of Things Past*, The Modern Library, N.Y., 1932, p. 190.