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# In A NutShell

A Publication of the MENTAL PATIENTS' ASSOCIATION



Summer '97

# MY MOM WAS A SCHIZOPHRENIC

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Special thank you to Chester Brown for permission to publish "My Mom was A Schizophrenic".

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'In A NutShell' is a publication of the Mental Patients' Association, 1731 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V6J 1M2, (604) 738-2811. The MPA is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of programs in HOUSING, VOCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, and SOCIAL ACTIVITIES for former mental patients. For more information on any the above programs or housing waiting lists, please phone the office at 738-2811.

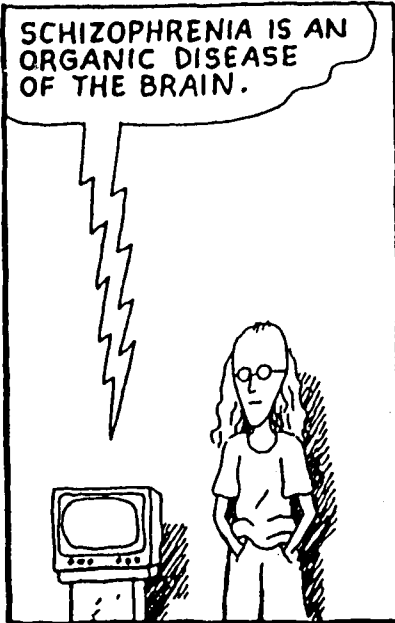
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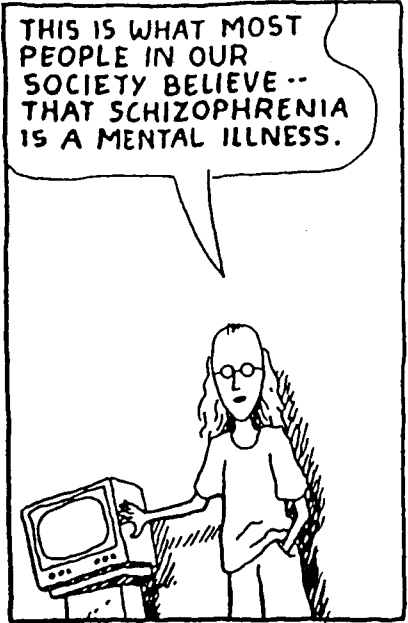
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# MY MOM WAS A SCHIZOPHRENIC

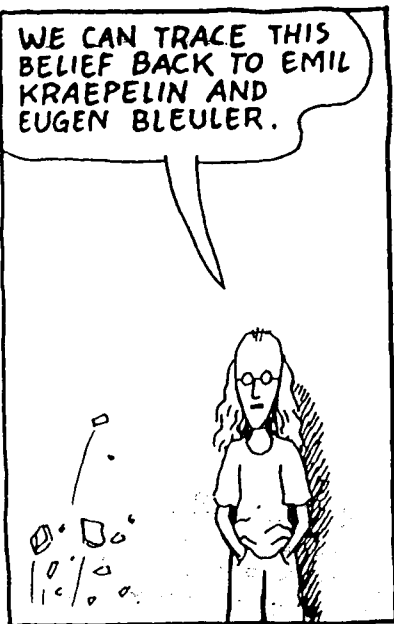
SCHIZOPHRENIA IS AN ORGANIC DISEASE OF THE BRAIN.



THIS IS WHAT MOST PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY BELIEVE -- THAT SCHIZOPHRENIA IS A MENTAL ILLNESS.



WE CAN TRACE THIS BELIEF BACK TO EMIL KRAEPELIN AND EUGEN BLEULER.



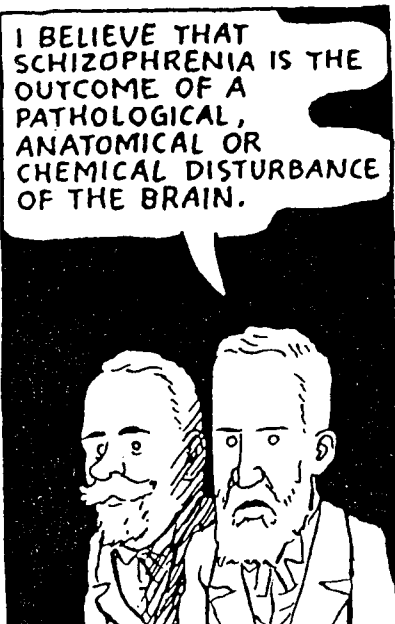
I'M EMIL KRAEPELIN. IN 1898 I DISCOVERED A NEW DISEASE -- I CALLED IT DEMENTIA PRAECOX.



I'M EUGEN BLEULER. IN 1911 I HORNED IN ON KRAEPELIN'S ACT BY GIVING DEMENTIA PRAECOX A NEW NAME -- I CALLED IT SCHIZOPHRENIA.



I BELIEVE THAT SCHIZOPHRENIA IS THE OUTCOME OF A PATHOLOGICAL, ANATOMICAL OR CHEMICAL DISTURBANCE OF THE BRAIN.

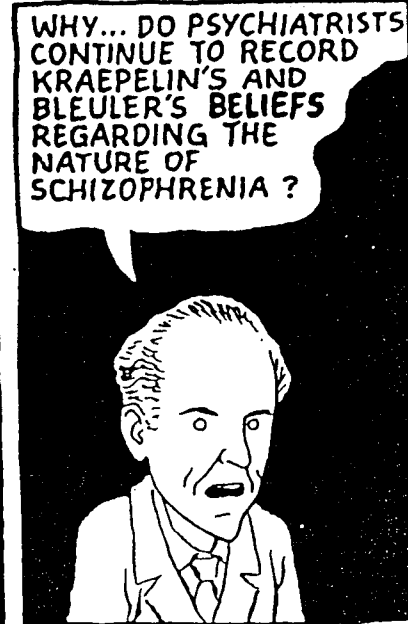


WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT WHAT KRAEPELIN AND BLEULER BELIEVED?

THOMAS SZASZ



WHY... DO PSYCHIATRISTS CONTINUE TO RECORD KRAEPELIN'S AND BLEULER'S BELIEFS REGARDING THE NATURE OF SCHIZOPHRENIA?



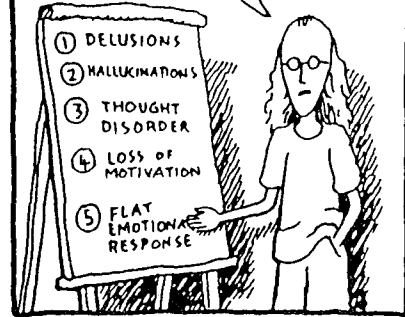
WHY DO THEY NOT EMPHASIZE INSTEAD KRAEPELIN'S AND BLEULER'S UTTER INABILITY TO SUPPORT THEIR BELIEFS WITH A SHRED OF RELEVANT EVIDENCE ?



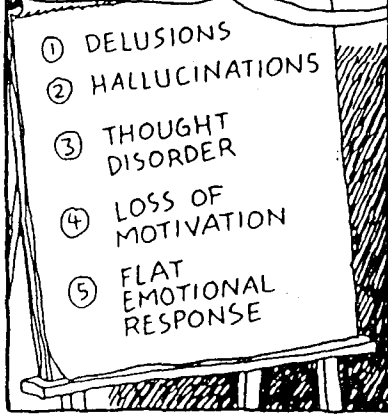
KRAEPELIN AND BLEULER DID NOT DISCOVER THE DISEASES FOR WHICH THEY ARE FAMOUS -- THEY INVENTED THEM.



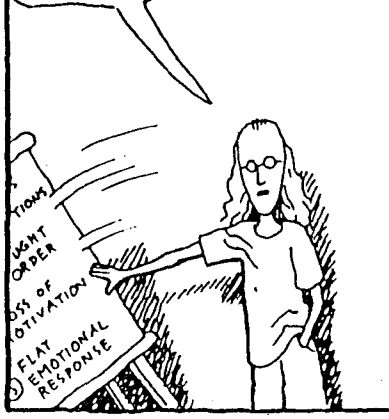
ACCORDING TO THE PAMPHLET UNDERSTANDING SCHIZOPHRENIA (RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF HEALTH) THESE ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA.



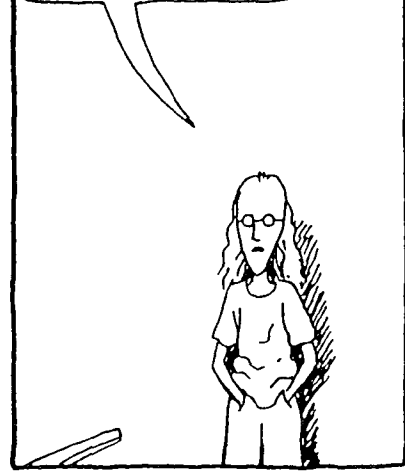
YOU'LL NOTICE THAT THESE "SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS" RELATE TO A PERSON'S BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR.



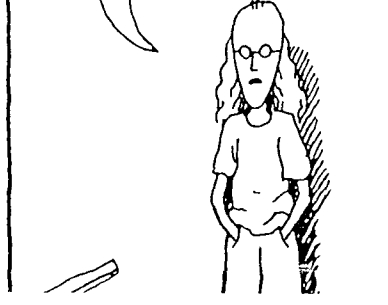
THIS IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN FINDING A LUMP IN YOUR BREAST OR COUGHING UP BLOOD.



DESPITE THEORIES ABOUT CHEMICAL IMBALANCES, BRAIN SHRINKAGE AND GENETIC DEFECTS --



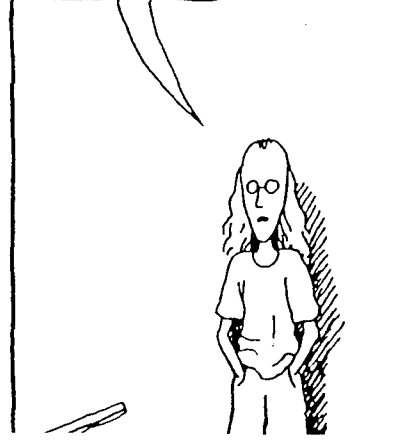
-- SCHIZOPHRENIA DOESN'T SHOW UP IN BLOOD OR URINE TESTS, C.A.T. SCANS, D.N.A. ANALYSIS, OR IN ANY OTHER TEST SCIENCE HAS THOUGHT UP -- NOT EVEN IN POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS OF BRAIN TISSUE.



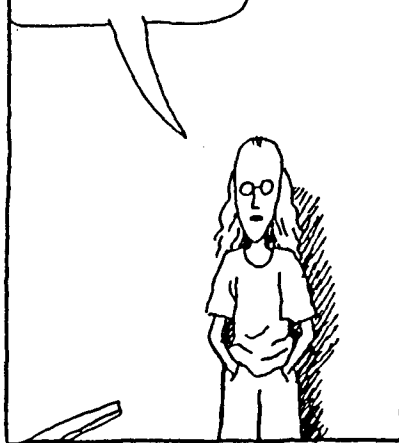
THERE ARE, OF COURSE, DISEASES, SUCH AS SYPHILIS, WHICH CAN AFFECT THE BRAIN; BUT THERE ARE DIAGNOSTIC TESTS FOR THESE DISEASES.



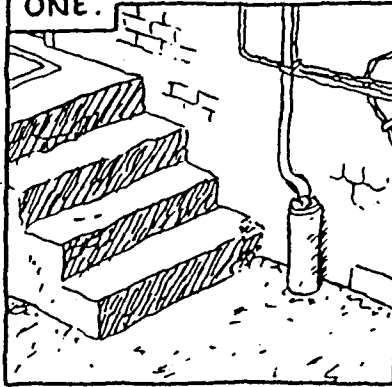
PSYCHIATRISTS TODAY DIAGNOSE SCHIZOPHRENIA THE SAME WAY KRAEPELIN AND BLEULER DID --



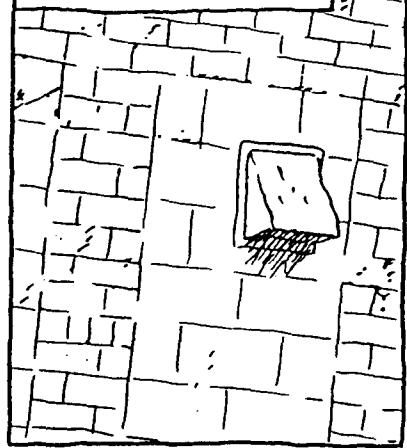
-- NOT BY LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF DISEASE BUT BY LOOKING FOR SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR.



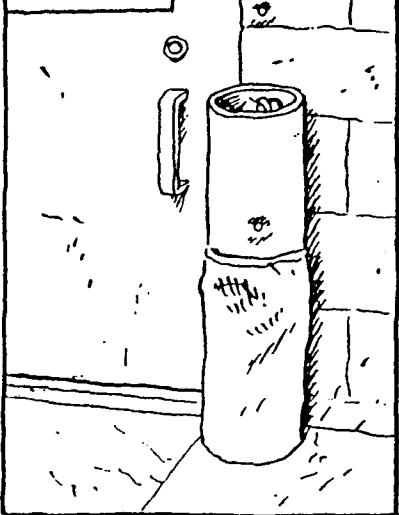
BEFORE 1973 HOMOSEXUALITY WAS CONSIDERED A MENTAL ILLNESS -- IN THAT YEAR THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION TOOK A VOTE WHICH DECIDED THAT IT WAS NO LONGER ONE.



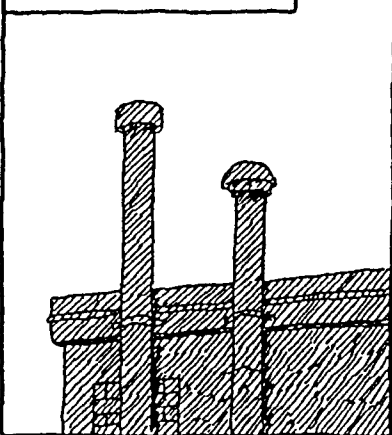
TODAY WE CAN SEE THAT GAY PEOPLE BEFORE THE '60'S WERE MISERABLE NOT BECAUSE THEY SUFFERED FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS --



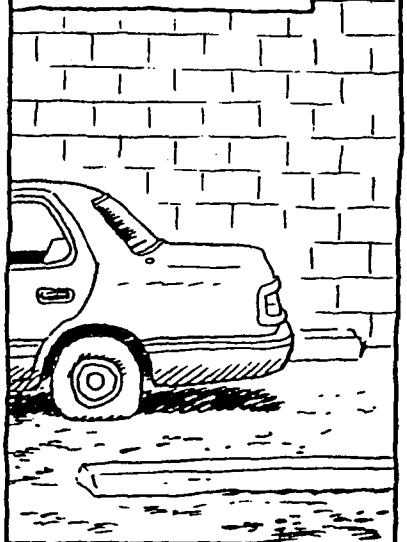
-- BUT BECAUSE THEY LIVED IN A HOMOPHOBIC CULTURE.



MANY, POSSIBLY MOST, GAY PEOPLE IN THAT HOMOPHOBIC CULTURE COULDN'T SEE BEYOND THEIR CULTURE'S ASSUMPTIONS --



-- THEY BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE SICK.



THE SCHIZOPHRENIC IS LIKE A MAN PERMANENTLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF MescalIN.

ALDOUS HUXLEY



THE L.S.D. PHENOMENON... IS AN INTENTIONALLY ACHIEVED SCHIZOPHRENIA.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL



BECAUSE OF ACCIDENTS OF BOTANY AND HISTORY, EUROPEAN CULTURE HAS BEEN AWAY FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC DIMENSIONS AWHILE...

TERENCE MCKENNA



... WE CALL THEM "SCHIZOPHRENIA" AND SLAM THE DOOR.



THE SHAMAN IS A PERSON... WHO IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE UNDERWENT A SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL CRISIS, SUCH AS TODAY WOULD BE CALLED A PSYCHOSIS.



YESTERDAY'S SHAMAN IS TODAY'S CHRONIC SCHIZOPHRENIC !

SETH FARBER



NOT ALL SHAMANS USE INTOXICATION WITH PLANTS TO OBTAIN ECSTASY, BUT ALL SHAMANIC PRACTICE AIMS TO GIVE RISE TO ECSTASY.

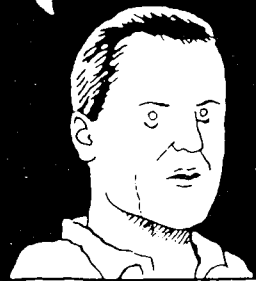


NONORDINARY STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS... ARE IN SOME INSTANCES INDUCED BY THE USE OF SACRED PSYCHEDELIC PLANTS... AND IN OTHERS BY POWERFUL NONDRUG TECHNIQUES--

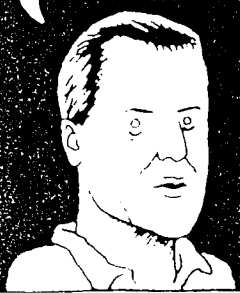
STANISLAV GROF



-- THAT COMBINE IN VARIOUS WAYS RESPIRATORY MANEUVERS, CHANTING, DRUMMING, MONOTONOUS DANCING, SENSORY OVERLOAD, SOCIAL AND SENSORY ISOLATION, FASTING, AND SLEEP DEPRIVATION...



... THE SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCES INDUCED BY PSYCHEDELIC COMPOUNDS IS PRACTICALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THOSE RESULTING FROM VARIOUS NONDRUG TECHNIQUES.



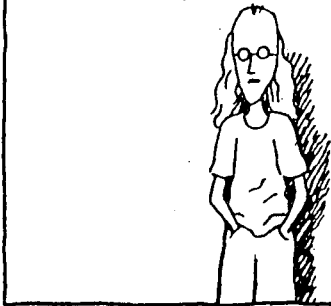
IF IT'S POSSIBLE TO INTENTIONALLY REACH THE PSYCHEDELIC STATE WITHOUT DRUGS, THEN ISN'T IT ALSO POSSIBLE THAT ONE COULD ACCIDENTALLY ENTER THE PSYCHEDELIC STATE WITHOUT DRUGS--



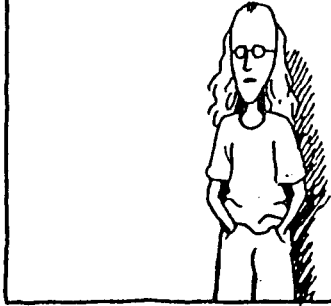
-- AND THAT THIS IS WHAT WE OFTEN CALL SCHIZOPHRENIA ?



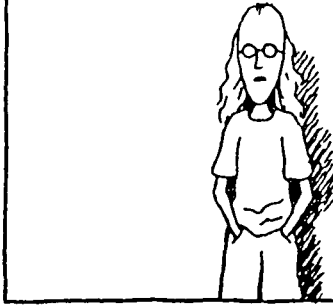
LOOK AT GROF'S LIST AND THINK ABOUT INSOMNIA, HUNGER, THE STERILE BARRENESS OF MODERN CITIES --



-- HOW WE'RE BOMBARDED BY THE MEDIA, THE MONOTONOUS RHYTHMS AND REPETITIVE TASKS OF SO MANY WORK-PLACES --



-- AND THE ISOLATION AND LONELINESS THAT ARE EVERYWHERE IN OUR SOCIETY.



PEOPLE OFTEN HAVE TERRIBLE EXPERIENCES ON PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS -- BAD TRIPS.



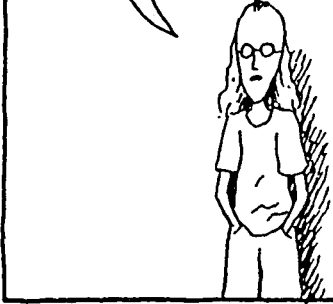
SCHIZOPHRENICS, IN OUR SOCIETY, ALMOST ALWAYS HAVE BAD TRIPS.

PSYCHEDELICS CAN ALSO GIVE THE USER TRANSCENDENTALLY ECSTATIC EXPERIENCES.

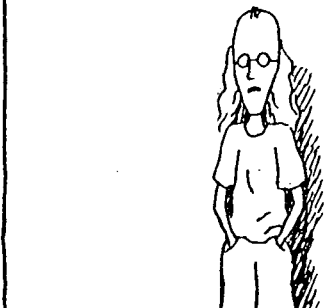


SCHIZOPHRENICS OCCASIONALLY HAVE SIMILARLY POSITIVE REVELATIONS DURING THEIR PSYCHOTIC EPISODES.

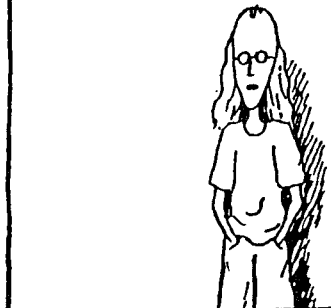
WHY DON'T SCHIZOPHRENICS HAVE MORE GOOD TRIPS? COULD IT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH OUR FEAR OF, AND CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT, SCHIZOPHRENIA?



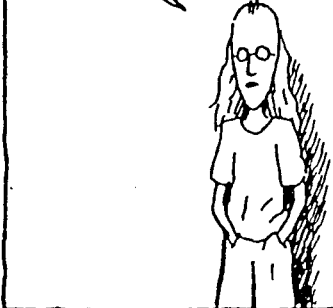
ADVOCATES OF PSYCHEDELICS BELIEVE THAT THE TYPE OF TRIP YOU HAVE DEPENDS ON WHAT TIMOTHY LEARY CALLED THE "SET AND SETTING".

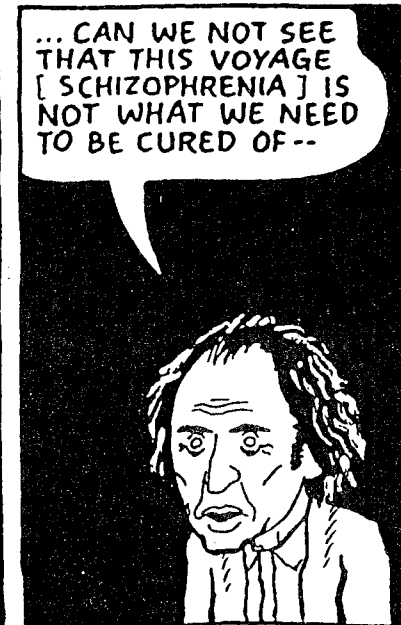
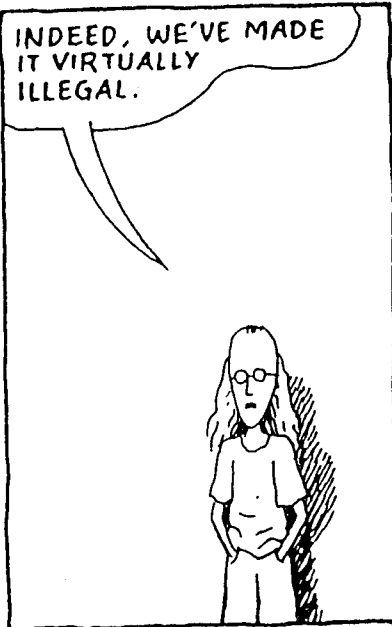


ESSENTIALLY, IF YOU HAVE A POSITIVE MIND-SET AND ARE IN A POSITIVE, COMFORTING SETTING YOU'LL HAVE A GOOD TRIP -- A NEGATIVE SET AND SETTING EQUAL A BAD TRIP.



ALMOST ALL OF US HAVE A NEGATIVE MIND-SET IN REGARDS TO SCHIZOPHRENIA AND WE LIVE IN A CULTURE WHICH IS VERY FEARFUL OF THE EXPERIENCE.







## NOTES

**PAGE 1: PANEL 2** I'm quoting Dr. Rob Buckman of TV Ontario's VITAL SIGNS.

**1:5-1:7** I'm not directly quoting Kraepelin and Bleuler here but, rather, am paraphrasing material from psychiatrist Thomas Szasz's SCHIZOPHRENIA -- THE SACRED SYMBOL OF PSYCHIATRY (1976). According to Szasz, Bleuler in late life did an about-face and admitted that psychiatric definitions "are forensic and not medical."

**1:8-2:2** From Szasz's SCHIZOPHRENIA.

**2:3** Recently, as in: 1994.

**2:4** I thought it was obvious how these "signs and symptoms" relate to beliefs and behaviour, but one person I've shown this strip to has argued the point with me so I'll explain my reasoning.

① & ② X talks to a person no one else can see or hear. This is odd behaviour, but it is behaviour none the less. If X actually believes that X is talking to someone, you or I may think that X is deluded but that doesn't make it any less a belief of X's.

③ This one might not seem to be connected to a person's beliefs or behaviour (thoughts are not behaviour and aren't necessarily beliefs) but then you have to remember that psychiatrists aren't mind readers. They're actually judging how a person speaks and what they say, and speech is a form of behaviour.

④ It may seem like odd behaviour if a person who's been a go-getter all their life suddenly only wants to lie on their bed and look at the ceiling, but (again) it is behaviour.

⑤ How a person expresses emotion is clearly a form of behaviour.

This isn't to say that behaviour can't be an indication of disease. Last year the cat my girlfriend and I live with seemed to have a "loss of motivation" -- all she wanted to do was lie around on the sofa. Since this contrasted with her previously active behaviour, we were concerned and took her to the vet. It turned out she had an infected gall bladder and needed surgery. The vet established this, however, not just by looking at the cat's behaviour, but by conducting various diagnostic tests. Had those tests not found anything wrong, we wouldn't have concluded that our cat was schizophrenic -- there are plenty of healthy cats who do little but lie around on sofas. But while it's fine for cats to lie around all day and do nothing, it's socially unacceptable for humans.

Szasz argues that psychiatry has become our society's method of policing disapproved human behaviour that is beyond the law's reach.

**2:6-2:7** See psychiatrist Peter Breggin's TOXIC PSYCHIATRY (St. Martin's Press, 1991) for a detailed (but very readable) examination and debunking of the various "mental illness" theories. This is a highly recommended book. I wish I'd had room in the strip to bring up Breggin's conten-

tion that psychiatric drugs are used, not to heal people, but to control them. Actually they do the opposite of healing. Even the Ontario Ministry of Health's UNDERSTANDING SCHIZOPHRENIA admits that psychiatric drugs can cause tardive dyskinesia -- which "is damage to the central nervous system, sometimes permanent damage... TD can be so severe that it is disabling." UNDERSTANDING SCHIZOPHRENIA doesn't give the risk rates for TD but according to Breggin, "all long-term patients are likely to succumb to tardive dyskinesia."

**3:2** In her book, THEY SAY YOU'RE CRAZY (Addison-Wesley, 1995), psychologist Paula J. Caplan reports that the vote was 5854 to 3810.

**3:7** From Huxley's THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION (1954).

**3:8** From Campbell's MYTHS TO LIVE BY (1972).

**3:9-4:1** From McKenna's THE ARCHAIC REVIVAL (Harper Collins, 1991). Because I've cut and switched around McKenna's words, I'm going to give them to you here the way he wrote them:

Modern epistemological methods are just not prepared for dealing with chattering, elf-infested spaces. We have a word for those spaces -- we call them "schizophrenia" and slam the door. But these dimensions have been with us ten thousand times longer than Freud. Other societies have come to terms with them. Because of accidents of botany and history, European culture has been away from the psychedelic dimensions awhile.

**3:7-4:1** Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain's book ACID DREAMS (1985) details the scientific debate in the '50's and '60's over whether LSD and similar drugs were psychedelic (mind manifesting) or psychotomimetic (madness mimicking). The psychedelic faction believed that these drugs could be beneficial to people, while those who used the word psychotomimetic believed that they made people crazy. Apparently it occurred to no one that maybe both sides of the debate were right.

**4:2** From MYTHS TO LIVE BY.

**4:3** From psychologist Farber's terrific (and highly recommended) MADNESS, HERESY, AND THE RUMOR OF ANGELS (Open Court Publishing, 1993).

**4:4** From McKenna's FOOD OF THE GODS (Bantam, 1992).

**4:5-4:7** From psychiatrist Grof's THE ADVENTURE OF SELF-DISCOVERY (State University of New York Press, 1988).

**4:9** No doubt, some people who are diagnosed as being schizophrenic are not in a psychedelic-like mental state. One can have "flat emotional responses", "loss of motivation", and "thought disorders" for reasons other than being in an altered mental state. At the heart of the experience I'm talking about are the hallucinations and delusions -- also known as psychosis.

**5:1-5:3** I should add that I don't think Grof's list exhausts all of the possible non-drug ways by which people can enter this state. For instance, I'd certainly add stress and trauma to the list.

**5:5** For examples see MADNESS HERESY.

AND THE RUMOR OF ANGELS for the stories of Barbara and Angela. Each had psychotic experiences that they described in positive terms. Barbara "felt safe and secure and very happy." Angela felt "wonderful! It was as if I'd gotten the code to the universe." When committed to psychiatric institutions both women quickly started to feel like schizophrenics are supposed to: terrible.

Also see Michael Schumacher's DHARMA LION (1992) for his account of Allen Ginsberg's 1948 non-drug-induced "mystical" experiences in which he heard "the voice of [William] Blake, speaking to him through eternity," and saw "that the people around him now had the faces of wild animals."

Because we're not used to thinking of psychosis as being potentially good, most people who have such experiences are more likely to call them mystical.

5:7-5:8 I first encountered Leary's ideas in Robert Anton Wilson's COSMIC TRIGGER (1977).

6:4-6:9 From psychiatrist Laing's THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE (1967). Laing's suggestion that schizophrenia might be a healing experience in the right context, will seem so far-fetched to those who haven't encountered it before (and to many of those who have) that I suppose it'd be a good idea to give an example. (In THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE, Laing gives a detailed case history which illustrates his point. Rather than condense it, I'll give a different -- and more famous -- example.)

Science fiction author Philip K. Dick, in a posthumously published journal (IN PURSUIT OF VALIS (Underwood-Miller, 1991)), gives an autobiographical account of an experience that began in March 1974 and continued for about a year:

It appeared -- in vivid fire, with shining colors and balanced patterns... It seized me entirely, lifting me from the limitations of the space-time matrix.

In another entry, Dick explains that during this period he believed that he "was someone else... From another time period... Dead centuries ago and reborn." Dick frequently asserts throughout IN PURSUIT OF VALIS that this experience healed him.

When it left me, it left me as a free person, a physically and mentally healed person who had seen reality suddenly, in a flash, at the moment of greatest peril and pain and despair; it had loaned me its power and it had set right what had by degrees become wrong over God knows how long.

Although Dick seems to have generally believed that his experience was mystical, he didn't become dogmatically attached to any single explanation and several times in IN PURSUIT OF VALIS he seriously considers the possibility that he was psychotic. He couldn't, however, get past the popular view that psychosis is always experienced negatively. In one of the later entries of the book, from 1981 (Dick died in early '82), he wrote:

In 2-3-74 came comprehension and recognition; there also came the end of -- the healing of -- the gulf that separated me from world. This is 180 degrees away from psychosis. Viewed psychologically, this is, in fact, a healing; it is repair.

11:11 I guess Dick never read THE POLITICS

Incidentally, I've used the word "heal" in this note in a metaphorical sense. I don't believe Laing meant to imply that "normality" is any more of an actual disease than schizophrenia.

A friend who read this piece asked me what my solution to the problem was.

Was the solution to the "mental illness" of homosexuality a new form of psychotherapy or a new drug? No, it was the gradual decreasing in our society of homophobia. If we could similarly get rid of our fear of schizophrenia, I believe our problems with it would decrease and possibly disappear. People who see this as unrealistic are ignoring the fact that in some cultures if you "hear voices" or see things that other people can't see, you aren't a person with a problem -- you're a person with a gift.

Recently, a gay friend of mine came out of the closet. Most of his friends and family responded positively. They were supportive of what they saw as a new adventurous phase of his life. During my first acid trip I became convinced that I wasn't going to recover my sanity -- that the drug had driven me permanently crazy. I knew that my family and friends weren't going to have a Laingian perspective on this. I figured I had institutionalization, mind numbing neuroleptic drugs and possibly electro-shock to look forward to. I decided that rather than face this bleak future, I'd commit suicide. Fortunately, I came out of the trip before I could throw myself off a bridge. But the experience clearly illustrated for me why schizophrenics can be suicidal and how the attitudes of society affect psychosis and make it negative.

If I could have looked forward to an attitude of support for a new adventurous phase of my life, I suspect I would have had a better trip.

Another friend told me of a recent news story -- a schizophrenic had stopped taking his "medication" and had then slashed the face of a child. This friend believed that all schizophrenics should be forced to take psychiatric drugs to keep them non-violent.

The notion that psychotics are violent is a myth. Sure, some are -- but so are plenty of non-psychotic ("normal") people. If we're going to drug all schizophrenics because a few are potentially violent, then, logically, we should also be drugging all non-psychotic people to keep the violent ones in check. But drugging schizophrenics has nothing to do with logic and everything to do with fear of people who "aren't like us."

Extra copies of this mini-comic are available for a dollar each. Write to me:

Chester Brown  
199 Avenue Road  
PO Box 83503  
Toronto, Ont.  
M5R 3S2, Canada

# The Battlefield of Life

Karen Horn

To wake each day  
feeling a mixture of pain and happiness.  
To wonder if you will make it through another day.

These illogical fears,  
these illogical feelings,  
your mind tells you are unfounded.  
Yet the logical mind  
is taken over by the illogical.  
You know it is wrong  
yet you can't help feeling them.

To know truth, beauty and love  
are to experience Heaven,  
To know pain, sorrow and  
the futility of living  
are to experience Hell.

Heaven and Hell are here and now,  
mixed inexorably together.  
We are two halves of the whole,  
battling it out on  
the battlefield of Life.

## In Memory of Al Markley

by Jim Gifford

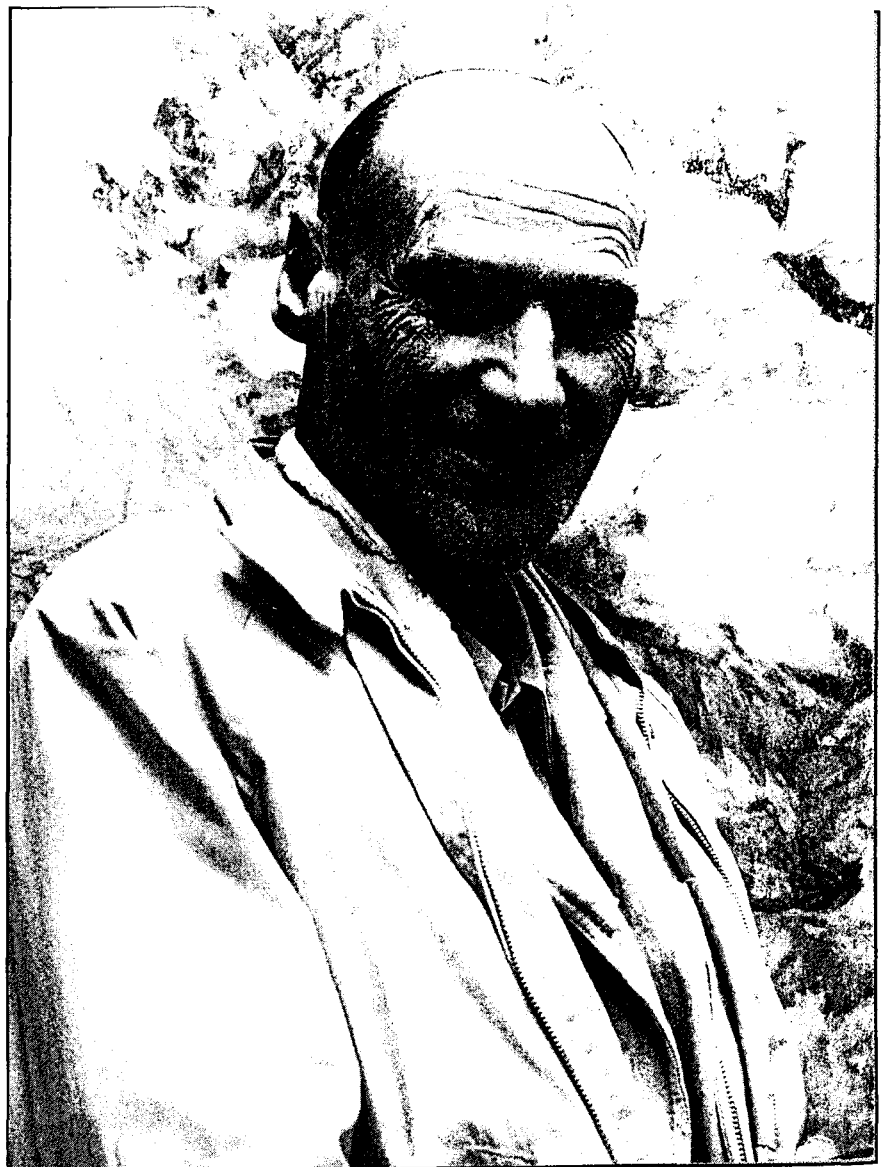
Al Markley has taken a well-deserved rest. He has left this world yet his presence is felt in the minds and hearts of those he touched.

Working the phones as Community Resource Centre receptionist was an occupation Al took seriously. He was good at his work, punctual at his duties. When not taking calls, a smoke was regularly at his fingertips.

But Al didn't just smoke cigarettes, he sucked the juice out of them. I don't think anybody inhaled so thoroughly or got so much passion and pleasure out of this creature comfort.

Al was a true character. For 25 years he had lived at Coast West but the MPA was one of his main haunts. He will be missed deeply. His heart may have succumbed but that broad smile that could light up a room lives on.

Peace Be With You Al.



## UnderDog by Jim Gifford



In 'The Eighties', 2814 West 3rd Avenue in the Kitsilano area of Vancouver was a haven for bohemians, artists and those on the edge.

I shared the main floor with three pals who had lived in Highland Manor, a psychiatric halfway house. We all had been into the abyss and were trying to make a go of it. Another such person in the house was Holgar Mueller.

Holgar was a mathematics whiz who had taught at Columbia College. One day he stood on his desk and took a leak. It was in front of a class of startled and dismayed students. For that escapade, he did time in a mental hospital. He was always an adventurous and unpredictable character.

One morning. I was sitting on the front porch, nursing a cup of coffee. It was a beauti-

ful Spring day. I had just heard on the news about the volcanic eruption in Oregon state. Holgar appeared, dressed in a white suit, white shirt and barefoot. His hair askew, he looked a little wild.

I casually, but with concern, enquired what he was up to that day. He informed me that he was off to Mount St. Helens. With that remark, he descended the stairs, strutted off and disappeared around the corner. It was the last I saw of him for a month.

Turned back at the border, he hitchhiked a ride, quite unconcerned that the driver was headed for Calgary. When he got to the Albertan city, he strolled down to the Bow River, stripped, swam to the other shore, and, eventually, smelling a barbeque, entered a yard where three fellas were gathered, cooking steaks, beers in hand.

Needless to say, there was a minor uproar, Holgar spent the next few weeks in the local asylum before reappearing at 2814 West 3rd.

One evening, we got into a metaphysical discussion that lasted into the wee small hours of the morning. I offered to get him something to drink from the fridge. Nearly empty, as usual, there was a can of V8 juice. I re-entered our livingroom, sat

down, putting the two glasses on the table between us and began to pour.

The table was otherwise empty except for the Holy Bible. Accidentally spilling the red juice, it started flowing towards 'The Book'. Suddenly it parted like the Red Sea, went around either side, and met again at the other end.

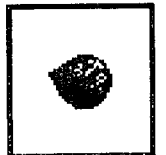
Holgar and I looked at each other. A prophetic omen? Anyway, that was it... Holgar and I shut our mouths, he headed out and I soon was in bed.

There was always a mystical aura surrounding Holgar. Maybe it was his brilliance; maybe his insanity. He treaded the thin line between the two.

The two of us parted company when the house was sold. I've seen him a few times since, once in the Naam Restaurant, the other at St. James Anglican Church in the Downtown Eastside.

He was still struggling with his demons. I hope he has since focused and integrated that energy into positive thinking. God knows, he was the one who envisioned possibilities.

They are endless... just like Holgar's genius.



## Branches Over the Wall: Transformation - The Essence of Life by Dennis Strashok

As mental patients, all of us have gone through unique experiences and situations, some, perhaps more radical and strange than those through which the average person passes. We could be crushed and completely broken by the experiences we have been through, or we can make the most of them, learn from them and allow changes to work in our life that will make us more caring, more complete people in the long run.

I remember when I was a member attending Coast Foundation, we would have some long and serious discussions of philosophy and spiritual topics in the clubhouse. One of the staff commented "Mental patients are more interested in philosophy and religion than any other group of people I have met." Perhaps, this is because we, more than most people, have had reason to ask "Why?" And the more we ask "Why?" the more we will discover answers and reasons that go far beyond just our own small lives.

The concept of testing or trial is found in all the lives of the famous saints and prophets throughout history. The experiences that they went through

were designed to work on them and transform them, change them into persons that lived more in accord with the will of God for their lives. What profit is there in any of these experiences if they have not worked in our lives to change us and I mean change us for the better?

Actually, when testing or trial comes we can respond in different ways. we can become bitter, hardened, despising others and the universe and even God for putting us in such situations, or we can turn and look within ourselves and ask ourselves what these situations are designed to do in our lives. Even

Christ on the cross did not lash out against his heavenly Father, but asked that ultimate question "Why hast thou forsaken me?" and forgave the ones who put him there.

People in all walks of life have problems, difficulties, trials, and testings. This is a part of the growing experience of life and, when we allow the situations to change us and transform us, then we are truly growing and living. Perhaps our difficulties have been a little more intense and extreme than some, but this should only bouy our faith and confidence, knowing that God, in his infinite wisdom, has chosen us to grow faster than others. When we complain of our problems, let us remember that those problems are bringing growth to us, and without them, we cannot be changed into what we should or could be.



## Laughs with Lewry

Psychiatrist: What's your problem?

Patient: I'm a wigwam, I'm a teepee. I'm a wigwam, I'm a teepee.

Psychiatrist: You're just two tents (too tense)!



## Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmar

Earlier this year I spent two weeks traveling around Bosnia and Croatia, teaching professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and teachers) who were busy working with traumatized children and with damaged families. According to estimates, more than 250,000 people have been killed during the past four years in Bosnia alone. In Sarajevo many parks are now cemeteries. The footprints of evil and destruction are painfully visible everywhere. Mustafa, my young driver, the leader of a successful band, called Bolero, hurried about with a serious limp, the trace of a sniper's bullet. Every landmark now carries the memories of who got killed there, or wounded, or raped.

When the Dalai Lama was in Vancouver in 1993, he reminded us that the aim of life is happiness, beatitude, and this he equated with peace of mind. He said that our only enemy is hatred, the hatred we carry within, for it destroys our peace of mind. I thought of him when every morning in Sarajevo, upon awakening, I remembered a nightmare. Each concerned annihilation and total loss of con-

trol, feeling cut off, not knowing what was happening — earthquake, nuclear war, flood. It was my hate of hatred and violence that disturbed me. Nietzsche advocated the love of the unlovable. I failed, and as a result, was gripped by fear, grief and rage at seeing the aftermath of what the Serbs have done.

At the completion of my mission I was asked to write a report and recommendations. Here are some fragments from this report. I selected bits which seemed to me to apply more widely than just to the former Yugoslavia.

"Early trauma makes the victim sensitive to stimuli which remind one of what happened. The essence of trauma is always confinement and torture. You cannot escape and things are done to you, or you are forced into experience, that you'd prefer to avoid but are powerless to. Trauma is coercion. Trauma is not being taken seriously. Trauma is not being treated as a legitimate other person.

"Therefore, for the sake of all children, but especially for those who have suffered during the four years of war, it is essential to change the school system.

As the schools are now (and as they have been for generations), they create frustrated, shamed, humiliated, competitive, authority-seeking, false, fearful, compliant beings. Frustration leads to rage and destruction. Perhaps that is what we witnessed for the past four years.

"Children's desire for perfection, knowledge and skills can be trusted. They can be allowed and assisted in their search for a meaningful occupation. They shouldn't be coerced and criticized 'for their own good'. I would do anything to protect children from ignorant, willful adults, who presume they know better what's good for the children, than the children themselves. Rudolf Steiner, Suzuki, and in Vancouver, the people involved with The Virtual High Learning Community have championed alternatives.

"Traumatized children don't need psychotherapy, art therapy, music therapy, play therapy, they simply need safety, security, love and respect. We need to let them be, and delight in them as they unfold into themselves. They need a rich environment filled with music, art and play; they need to be around joyful and creative adults who love their work, their life, and their world.

"The rest will take care of itself."



## Bookworm:

### Slowness

by Milan Kundera

HarperCollins, 1996

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmar

This new novel, Kundera remarks, has "not a single serious word in it". It is a Big Piece of Nonsense for His Own Pleasure. It is a divertimento, an op-  
era buffa. In his The Raven and the Writing Desk, Francis Huxley inquired into the nature of nonsense, through a study of the work of Lewis Carroll. Carroll himself was more a practitioner than a theoretician of nonsense, holding to the Gryphonesque motto, "Adventures first, explanations take such a dreadful time". In Slowness, several adventures are woven together from the 18th and the 20th centuries. Anyone hunting for a moral in this novel may

find none, yet it's filled with bits of wisdom garnished with laughter, smiles and chuckles.

Huxley writes that in nonsense, "One never knows what one is going to say until one said it". One often has this feeling reading Kundera, that the next sentence had to be a surprise even to him. For instance, taking "the ass hole as the miraculous focal point for all the nuclear energy of nakedness", quoting Guillaume Appolinaire as an expert on the ninth portal of your body, and exclaiming, pointing to the moon, "Look! It looks like an ass hole drilled into the sky!"

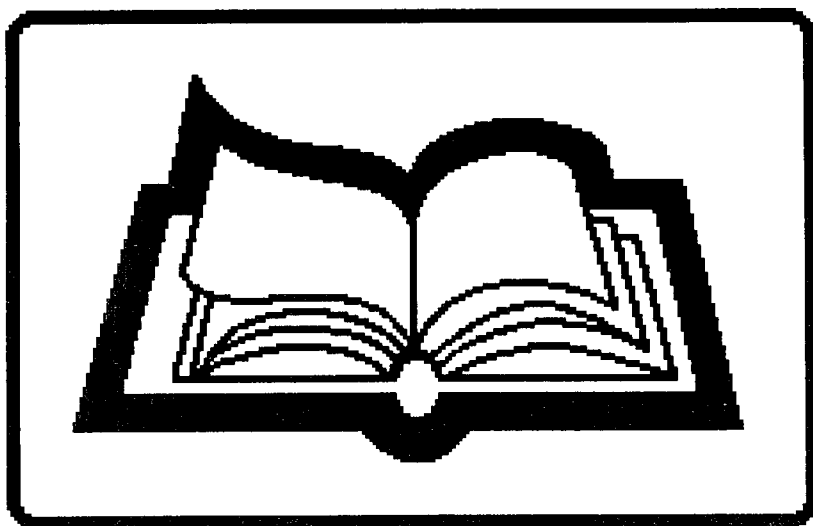
The following is

Huxley's definition of nonsense: "Nonsense, then, is a logical game played with feeling by at least two people, in a spirit of self-contradiction, in such a way that one thing leads on to the other to the constant surprise and mutual enthusiasm of both parties. If there is anything that cannot be spoken of in the game — and there is plenty of that also — it must be looked for at the heart of the self-contradictions that have been put in play by it: and though they are speechless by themselves, they can properly be described as attitudes, which comprise some of the things the game leads on to, as well as being those from which it often starts".

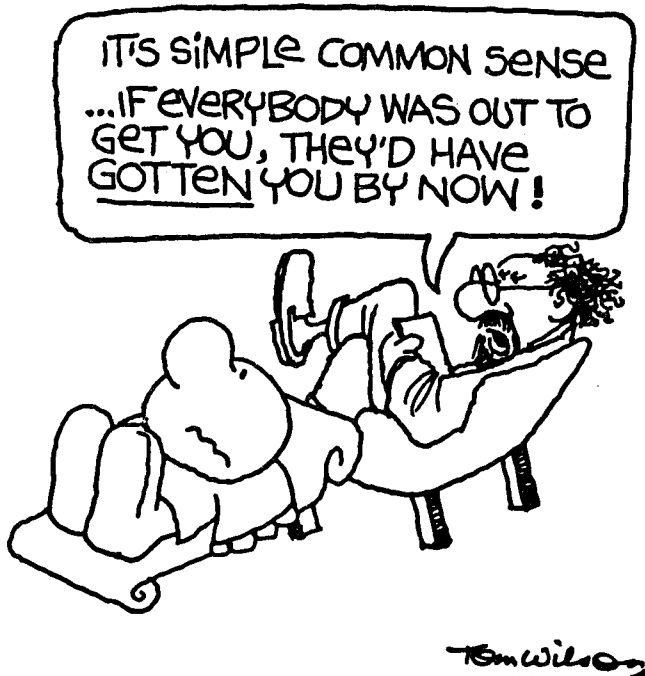
The more serious attitudes that lie beneath Kundera's nonsense have to do with dimensions defined by fast-slow, private-public, remembering-forgetting, truth-lie, time-eternity. In Kundera's existential mathematics, "the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of the memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting". Inside of a horse-drawn carriage recollection is easy; on a speeding motorcycle one forgets everything.

We learn that "love is by definition an unmerited gift", we pause to dispel "the illusion of being elect", and we are given practical instruction: "A man whose mouth stinks has no mis-

(Continued Next Page)







## Rainbows

The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.

Dolly Parton

## Bookworm

*(Continued from previous page)*

truss; no woman would put up with it". The common notion that hedonism is seeking pleasure ruthlessly, is corrected through a reading of Epicurus, "the first great theoretician of pleasure". For him pleasure meant the absence of suffering, "and since pleasures often bring more unhappiness than happiness, Epicurus advises only such pleasures as are prudent and modest". He wrote, "The wise man seeks no activity related to struggle". And it was he who

commanded, "You shall love hidden!"

Madame de T., from the 18th century, emerges as the true disciple of Epicurus. She lied to her husband, she lied to her lover, she lied to a young man she made passionate love with for one night only. Kundera refers to her as "Gentle protective liar. Guardian of happiness".

In this novel Kundera also studies the phenomenology of being a "dancer". A dancer seeks not power but glory. His

desire is "to take over the stage so as to beam forth his self". His life is a perpetual show, theater for an invisible and unknown audience, empty of intimacy, empty of joy.

The book's 156 pages can be read far too fast the first time, so I recommend a second, much slower reading that will leave you with memorable images.





**Bulletin Board**

**“Moments”**

“Moments”, recently published, is a collection of stories by consumers in British Columbia about special experiences in their life journey while working towards mental health.

It is available through the Canadian Mental Health Association, B.C. Division, 405 - 611 Alexander St., Vancouver, B.C., V6A 1E1, phone (604) 254-3211.

**Mental Health Information Line**

For free, 24-hour, confidential information on mental illnesses contact the Mental Health Information Line at 1-800-661-2121. In the Lower Mainland, dial 669-7600.

**Freebies:**

For those in need: Free clothing; Dishes  
Choose from a variety of donations

At Community Resource Centre, 1731 W. 4th Ave., Monday to Friday,  
9 am to 9 pm on request.

