

In A Nutshell

Spring/Summer 2002



Summer brings the quiet moods and enjoyment of the outdoors.

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Underdog Talk to the Philosophers' Cafe

by Jim Gifford

Let me open my remarks by saying that these days I feel quite ordinary and somewhat reluctant to be leading

a discussion on 'breakdown or spiritual breakthrough'. Yet this topic has been central to my intellectual thought and pursuits since I was first hospitalized, over thirty years ago, for what was then diagnosed as manic-depression, now known as bi-polar affective disorder.

During the 1970s, I was admitted for psychiatric care over a dozen times and have spent five years in halfway houses, all of this after having to withdraw from UBC Law School. I had initially experienced cosmic consciousness, a unity with the divine, that was expressed in the imagery of my western roots as 'I Am God' and 'I Am The Second Coming Of Christ'. Although such declarations of godhead are extremely dangerous to verbalize in our culture because of the heretical megalomania implied, it is accepted and revered by other peoples and in other times.

Such revelatory moments, of what I have termed Universego, are the essence of the emergence of Eastern holy persons, such as Indian gurus and Sufi masters and, of particular interest to me, the aboriginal shamans.

In the throes of shamanic rite de passage, the primitive undergoes an intense emotional, mental and physical crisis. Literally thrust into the wilderness, he/she becomes a wounded visionary of dead spirits and the supernatural animal, plant and mineral kingdoms. He/she accesses the darkside of the psyche and, in a manic-schizophrenic-psychotic state, is overwhelmed by terrifying demons, dynamic archetypes of humanity, intuitive magic haunting with its occult powers, even God Itself. Delusions, hearing voices, and hallucinations, are integral to this 'Vision Quest'.

By expressing these potent images of Inner Reality, the primitive comes to accept and be reconciled with these influences seeking to control, possess and manipulate him/her. When this sojourn has run its

course, the now fully-fledged 'wounded healer' returns to communal life as a key figure.

Like the shamanic trial, manic-psychosis among the so-called mentally ill is a time of aberrant behaviour characterized by extreme emotional excitability, impetuosity, frenzy of ideas, rambling speech, prophetic visions, and delusions of grandeur.

During the phase of struggling to balance the fires of psychic energy, the sensitivity to waves of internal and external life-force is so overwhelming a cyclical vibrational swing as to appear to conventional mindsets as disoriented and crippling. There is an intense burst and overcapacity of peripheral experience. Unlike 'normal' people, who discriminate and select image patterns according to survival and interest moulds, the manic-psychotic has the mammoth task of making sense and meaning from sensory information input flooding the mind like a tidal wave. Symbols are used as a unifying tool: telephone poles are crosses, birds are angels, stars are neurons of God's mind. Such metaphors, that allow this sensory swamping to settle into a form of clarity, are the result of falling and imploding into the Abyss, frequently without guides or maps. He/she penetrates the Sources of Being that

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have been coated over in mankind's evolutionary history with layer-on-layer of the civilizing syndrome. Perceived madness is the acting out, in relationship to the world's daily surroundings, of these newly discovered dimensions of the awakened psychological depths. Often creatively gifted as artists, poets, musicians, these individuals' eccentric perceptions and perspectives reveal the proverbial thin line between genius and insanity. In this regard, it is interesting to note the comments of Buckminster Fuller, one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. He had suffered an intellectual and spiritual crisis as a young man and, years later, when asked if he was a genius, he said no, he just didn't have any boundaries or divisions in his head.

Many souls find themselves imprisoned in mental asylums, subjected to pills, therapy and shock treatment, for having expressed allusions of metaphorical language that is misunderstood by the mainstream of the populace in whom latent unconsciousness often only surfaces in sleep. Unfortunately, in our material-oriented culture, these souls, who are driven to the upheaval of dis-ease that leads to psychic death and awakening, are cast aside, fringe members of society who are unheard, ridiculed or ignored. In the Ocean of The Unconscious, some learn to swim while others drown. At odds with and totally unacceptable to the safety and status quo, their profound period of transformation is stigmatically labelled by an intervening and controlling psychiatric profession.

Personally, I see my journey as a 'voyage of discovery' which, by means of extreme growing pains, has unlocked my unconscious depths and granted me a heightened awareness, releasing bottled up energy, and bringing me to a much deeper and broader sense of myself and my humble place in the greater scheme of things.

I realize each of us is special, and unique, with our life stories, gifts, idiosyncrasies and genetic coding,

to name but a few aspects that accentuate our diversity. And yet, in our heart of hearts, I believe we are the One Source that moves both atoms and stars.

Now, despite my concerns about proselytizing, I'd like to express a few ideas that carry me through the day. In esoteric philosophy it states that the Universe is Mind, the Great Thought of God. To me, it is the Ultimate Dream and Matter or Illusion flows through one universal stream of consciousness. Another concept that exists in potentiality for us all is peace of mind beyond understanding of the knowledge of good and evil. In this state of grace you may clearly see through the veil and feel the underlying unity beyond the dual polarity that is fundamental to this worldly magic show of life.

In summary, let us hope some day those who are undergoing a 'breakthrough breakdown' are allowed and encouraged to ascend the spiral of change and, with tender loving care, to grow into the sacredness that is the birthright of us all. With their insights, they may help others through the mind-maze and reveal to humanity its holistic nature. As noted psychiatrist Carl Jung once remarked, 'the deeper the crisis, the rarer the spirit'.

I am reminded of the saying, 'a mind is a terrible thing to waste'. It is time to exercise our compassion by salvaging and redeeming, from the black hole of psychiatric analysis, our beleaguered fellow humanity.

Perhaps one day such persons will be respected and their experiences reflected upon by others, like yourselves, and indeed by civilization in general, which appears to be in the midst of a World Millennial Psychosis. Perhaps those who have been through psychic dis-ease may be seen as an example of the prospective need of healing through the power of psychic regeneration.

In closing, allow me to muse on the mystical nature of two games from our childhood. In one you may say that God is playing hide-and-seek with Itself; in the other God is playing tag – and You Are It. ■

The Editorial Board of "In A Nutshell" welcomes letters, articles, and poetry on mental health issues from you, our readers.

Warning! Do not abruptly stop psychiatric medications! Most psychiatric medications are powerful drugs and should be withdrawn from gradually under the care of a physician or other health practitioner.

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The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the MPA. Donations toward the cost of "In A Nutshell" will be gratefully accepted by MPA.

An Old Jalopy as a Teacher's Best Friend

by Sam Roddan

When I was a young lad, wheels were in my blood. My greatest dream was to own an old jalopy. A chance to celebrate my rites of passage. A flivver or an old crate that could be both a refuge and sanctuary.

My talk was saturated with the folklore of the Downtown Eastside. Gray Dorts, Moons, Cords, the Maxwell, the Chevy, Baby Grand, the Mighty Dussenburg, the Stutz, the Stanley Steamer of 1913.

My heroes then were the men who drove the racing cars to victory... Ray Haroum in his famous Marman Wasp, the great Barney Oldfield, king of the Indianapolis Speedway and later speed demons such as Pop Myers, Wilbur Shaw and Eddie Rickenbacker.

The lingo of the jalopy and flivver came easily to my lips. Words such as differential and helical gears slipped from my well-oiled tongue and were part of everyday speech. How different from my stumbling incoherence in the classroom, as I struggled with a school vocabulary that never made sense.

For years I had tried to learn the meaning of grammatical terms such as nominative absolute, or the subjective complement. What a failure I was. I choked on the spelling of Constantinople and Hohenzollern, and why could I never remember the Code of Hammurabi or the causes of the Peloponnesian War?

But ask me anytime, oh ye pedagogues, about universal joints, tappets, tie rods, magnetos, kingpins, rubber engine mounts, sleeve valves, the power chain. Ask me the specs of a synchro-mesh transmission for an Overland, or an Essex, or a Hudson... or ask me about the Ruxell axel on a Model T Ford. Ask me what year the rear view mirror was invented or the electric horn or when running boards came into style.

Years later, when I started to teach school, I bought a second-hand 1929 Ford Roadster. I don't think I'd ever have made it through my first year of teaching if it hadn't been for my old Ford. It was a dusty gray with a collapsible roof and a rumble seat and genuine leather

upholstery that smelled rich. Passionate students stared at my old Ford from my classroom window with awe and affection.

At recess, I would wander over to my car and casually lift up the hood. Students who for years had been promoted only by size and weight perked up and stared at the collection of wires and the coil and plugs.

I pointed out the fan and the distributor cap and the cables from the battery which carried the juice. I let them test for sparks on the plugs with a screwdriver and check the oil with the dipstick. Nearly every day I had some new and enthusiastic volunteer ready to change a tire, give the old chassis another wax job, warm up the motor or just park it near the school steps for me to jump in right after the last

afternoon bell.

In less than a month, every boy in the class knew how to tighten the fan belt, fix the windshield wipers, turn on the engine with a bobby pin. And all this, mind you, was over and above the regular classroom work such as learning the results of the War of 1812 and being able to recite the first and last verses of Vestigua and the Unnamed Lake. And yes... some of the brighter lads even taught me in their spare time how to pop the clutch and peel a little rubber coming out of the schoolyard.

I got a lot of mileage out of my old Ford. It was the major source of inspiration for countless paragraphs, compositions and imaginary journeys for my students across Canada. Even my principal said it was the greatest teaching aid since the invention of the strap for holding a student's attention.

As everybody knows, a good teacher is worth his weight in gold. In these hard times I'm not suggesting school boards put a second hand Ford roadster in every classroom, but the first step for a young teacher starting out in September is to tread softly on short-lived dreams that vanish all too soon.

"I got a lot of mileage out of my old Ford."

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

D. W. Winnicott wrote that “The alternative to being is reacting, and reacting interrupts being and annihilates”.

I remember standing in front of the radio, Beethoven’s music pouring out of the speakers, holding a chopstick for a baton, and conducting the orchestra in total abandon; all eyes were on me, I was in control, I was eight years old. I didn’t hear my mother coming in behind me, so I was startled and deflated, when I heard her say, “What are you doing?!” The tone was disapproving, and I melted, shriveled into shame. I was catapulted out of my own, ongoing experience, into a paralyzing state of self-consciousness.

R. D. Laing, after a visit to the community inspired by the American psychologist, Robert Firestone in Los Angeles, told me that what he disliked most was how they treated their children. “It’s a crime to make a child self-conscious,” he said, “I’d like to ring the neck of any adult who would do that! They made it a *policy* to bring any child out of a reverie or daydream, by snapping a finger, or calling her to attention by rudely interrupting her some other way”. He went on to say how much he hated when an adult would speak about a child who was present, to someone, referring to the child in the third person.

The summer of my tenth year, my mother and I spent in a small mountain village in northeastern Hungary. She and I had a signal arranged for emergencies when we weren’t in sight of each other: a sharp, repeated two-note whistle that we rehearsed. On one occasion, I was lost in play with a couple of village children behind some haystacks, when from a distance I heard my mother’s distinct whistle. I tried to ignore it, but it was insistent, demanding my return to her. I excused myself, and ran all the way to where my mother stood, talking to a woman who was a stranger to me. When, somewhat out of breath, I arrived and asked her why she wanted me there, she turned to her freshly acquired friend and in a boastful tone said, “See, I told you: he comes, whenever I whistle”. Then, turning to me, she dismissed me, “Run along now, but don’t go too far!” I still remember my chagrin. I never went back to my companions; I was too embarrassed, too ashamed of myself.

environment that allowed them *going on being*. There are two major disasters that can shatter a “good enough” holding environment: intrusiveness and neglect.

The moment I, as a baby, or child, have to deal with the desires of my caretaker, my own desires will have to wait, and I will have to use my resources to satisfy the hunger unleashed on me. If this happens often, regularly, I will eventually forget or exile my desires, forget who I am, and take on the full-time job of playing a role in my caretaker’s scenario. I will cease

to be me, and will become an actor, who will be valued for his performance, not for himself. In Winnicott’s terminology, I will have lost my *true self* and will have to strive for survival through my *false self*.

My desires can become the occasion of excruciating pain and frustration if they are consistently ignored, neglected. In order to survive, I will have to distance myself from unfulfilled desires, and

become cool (i.e., desireless), like the fox who couldn’t reach the luscious grapes and declared that they must be all sour anyways! Not being able to hold onto my mother’s body, left alone in a crib, I fear annihilation. Evolution wired this response into our species, for a baby who lost his grip on his mother’s hair or fur, was a tasty morsel for any lurking predator. My *true self* can only thrive in safety. The *false self* comes into being as an emergency measure, for survival, like animals need teeth and claws.

Surviving isn’t living. By middle age, survivors get exhausted, and are often given the label, *depressed*. Clueless about how to become authentic, terrified to quit the habit of pleasing others, enraged about missing out on one’s very own life, one is left with one last desire in the bottomless emptiness of a free-fall existence: the desire to die, to throw away a rotten hand of cards, not wanting to play, secretly, perhaps, hoping for a fresh deal. A new start. A secret wish to relax. Because that *is* the way: to relax out of the frightened, adaptive tensions of the acquired *false self*, into the genuine, almost forgotten *true self*, through mourning and grieving all that has been lost, lost

“By middle age, survivors get exhausted, and are often given the label, depressed.”

Winnicott observed that babies thrived in an

forever. Relaxation, letting go, letting be: the antidote to the annihilation of being by having to react.

What can one do to remove the barriers to *going on being*? In his most recent book, Mark Epstein points to psychotherapy and Vipassana (the way of *mindfulness*) meditation. An ex-patient recommends learning to ride a motorcycle and practicing a martial art, such as Aikido. Many have found themselves through music or dance or writing or painting or sculpting or carving.

Michael Eigen, a friend of Epstein, writes: "Therapy is far more than rehashing the past, understanding patterns, freeing oneself from destructive

tendencies, although all these are important. Therapy is part of being and, as such, is ever created by being and creates being. The model of a high-velocity particle collider creating new particles is too narrow. A physicist – perhaps Eddington – said: 'Something unknown is doing we don't know what.' This applies to therapy too".

Both Vipassana meditation and *good* psychotherapy allows one to be held, to be safe, to be attended to, without interference, without neglect. One learns to hold oneself like one would have loved to be held by one's mother: in a lingering, curious, loving, allowing way. Is there anything more urgent we should learn? ■

A Psychiatric Diagnosis

by Terrence Levesque

My psychiatric diagnosis is schizophrenia. There is a battle raging as to whether or not this really exists. Only those who have suffered from the illness know the truth. And I can say unequivocally that something I can't explain takes place in the thinking of a schizophrenic. At least six times over the last two decades I have been hospitalized for this illness.

Leading up to the hospitalization, the schizophrenic symptoms have been severe. I have been handcuffed and forcibly dragged out of my apartment by the police. I have been taken away in an ambulance to the hospital. I have heard voices (coming from God knows where) giving me specific information and direction. My thoughts have become overloaded and very disjointed. My ego structure has at one point totally disintegrated. This is just some of the fallout of this illness.

It has been difficult dealing with this illness and family and support people have been understanding of my situation. I am sure it has been hard on them also. I have been a patient and an ex-patient and, as the saying goes, I am a survivor. Some people are concerned over the injustice of the system. I feel it is not my department to challenge the psychiatric profession on this issue.

Before coming to the MPA, I made my living as a logger in the forest industry. This is more than

twenty-five years ago, now. At that time I had no symptoms of schizophrenia – none. I was happily married and living a productive life. All this changed drastically when I became sick. I feel that, with a great deal of help from others, I have worked through my illness and have regained my normal mentality.

It remains to be seen whether my illness will remain in check. I hope to God it does. I can say without a doubt that, without the support, assistance and understanding of many others, my situation would have been very grave. At the present time, I am doing well: I am living independently in my own apartment, I have a small income, I am writing (which to me is being productive) and I am relating well to other people. Hopefully, I can continue on this path. We all could deal in what might have been and I can look back in retrospect at the shape my life has taken. This is something I cannot change. I plan on moving forward with my life. This, to me, is the only sane

thing to do. People might not believe that this illness of schizophrenia is real, but I firmly believe that it is and must be addressed. I know, too, that life goes on and I, too, will make my way in the world. ■

"...without the support, assistance and understanding of many others, my situation would have been very grave."

Bookworm

Woman's Inhumanity to Woman

By Phyllis Chesler

Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

This is an important and difficult book. Important, because it speaks the unspeakable, and difficult, because of all the emotions it engenders. Chesler says she has been "researching and writing this book, on and off, for the last twenty-one years." Exploring the dark side of existence allows one to accept reality. Malice, usually a combination of greed, envy and jealousy, cannot be transformed into generosity, gratitude and compassion, before it is acknowledged, accepted and articulated. In Judaism, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is an entire day devoted to bringing our sins to the light of recognition, an effort to 'come clean'. In the afternoon, a prayer is said that includes these lines: "O God, release us from the burden of our failure. Do not let our past imprison us. Renew us." Chesler's book is just such a prayer. Behind the critical assessment, the dire diagnosis, a strong hope shines for atonement, or as Phyllis would put it, for the daily practice of sisterhood.

I have admired Phyllis ever since I first read **Women and Madness** in 1972, but I hadn't met her in person until January, 1990, when we found ourselves on a panel in New York, at a memorial for R. D. Laing. I appreciated her intelligence, clarity, candour, compassion and courage. All these qualities shine through the book under review. No matter how scholarly, academic and abstract her arguments get, she never loses a personal, intimate tone that asks for connection and empathy, beyond logic and proof.

From about the age of fourteen until I was at least thirty, I remember wishing often that I were female. My perceptions of what it was like to be a girl or a woman were far more positive than my lived experience of being the male of the species. All around me, both men and women either idealized or demonized women; I, without any awareness, as a favour to my mother, decided to idealize. Later, when

my daughter complained that in school she felt tortured, ostracized and tormented by other girls, I had difficulty fully comprehending her plight, because of my romanticized notions of the bliss of feminine existence. Chesler's **Woman's Inhumanity to Woman** filled me with sadness and regret: my daughter wasn't exaggerating, and I ought to have been more protective of her. Since the publication of this book I have spoken with many women who felt affirmed, though saddened by Phyllis's testimony. All the way through the book they kept recognizing, "Yes, I have been hurt that way!", and "Yes, I have hurt other women that way!" both.

"Exploring the dark side of existence allows one to accept reality."

The chapter headings give a good idea about the scope of this book:

- *The Animal Within: The Female of the Species* [a review of evolutionary psychology, anthropology, sociology, primatology, and other related fields];

- *Indirect Aggression Among Girls and Teenagers* [males engage in physical, direct, face-to-face forms of aggression, while females prefer indirect forms, anonymous backbiting, gossiping, spreading vicious rumours, which lead to shunning and exclusion];

- *Woman's Sexism* [an examination of women's complex prejudices and internalized patriarchal values];

- *The Mother-Daughter Relationship in Fairy Tale, Myth, and Greek Tragedy* [Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, The Goose Girl, Like Water for Chocolate, Demeter & Persephone, etc.];

- *Some Psychoanalytic Views of the Mother-Daughter Relationship* [Freud, Melanie Klein, Judith Lewis Herman, Teresa Bernardez, Anna Aragno, etc.];

- *The "Good Enough" Mother and Her Persecution of the "Good Enough" Daughter* [being shamed gets confused with being loved; coldness and silence; witch mothers projecting their own pathology onto their innocent child, etc.];

- *Sisters and the Search for Best Friends* [the effects of sibling positions, envy as a form of hatred, the urge to control, and the fear of being replaced];

· *Women in the Workplace* [unethical actions, competitiveness, betrayals];

· *Women in Groups* [affiliation, scapegoating, the need to silence truth-tellers, power, gaslighting];

· *Psychological Ethics* [healthy & unhealthy competition, how do we treat each other, politics, rape, solidarity, honesty, protection, etc.].

Although Chesler is a psychologist, this is a work of ethics and politics. Emmanuel Levinas, a leading contemporary philosopher of ethics, has proposed that it's not sufficient to be responsible for oneself. I am responsible for the other's responsibility also. Thus, in his opinion, when I become aware of my neighbour's unethical conduct, and remain silent about it, then I too become unethical. Chesler's book is a confrontation, a call to responsibility and justice, a caring, heart-rending wake-up call. Many will try to ignore it, many will prefer to continue sleep-walking. Some may want her to go to sleep, shut up, stop making a racket. And a few will be grateful to her for speaking out and for describing and depicting what is.

Whenever I read the publications of the Stone Center at Wellesley College, papers and books written by women doing psychotherapy with women, I am always pleasantly surprised to find that their findings, recommendations, insights hold true in my experience also, as I do therapy with both men and women. Similarly, Phyllis's plea to treat each other more lovingly, more compassionately, rings true for all of us humans, regardless of gender.

I will end with words from bell hooks, quoted by Chesler:

"We must challenge the simplistic notion that man is the enemy, woman the victim. We all have the capacity to act in ways that oppress, dominate, wound (whether or not that power is institutionalized). It is necessary to remember that it is first the potential oppressor within that we must resist – the potential victim that we must rescue – otherwise we cannot hope for an end to domination, for liberation."

The Self

by Terrence Levesque

The influences on my development have been many. They came from the educational, the workplace, the musical, recognition of great names and faces, events of our time and places seen or heard about. Also this includes people I have previously known, grew up with, worked with or have met just passing through. Taking a look at my life so far, I see that it has been filled with joys and sorrows, partings, new beginnings, endings, personal growth, greater understanding and experiences. With all this behind me, if I think about it, it gives me great satisfaction and self worth. Of course, there has been bitterness, disappointment, anger and frustration. I can relate to being human and being mortal.

In the complexity of life, I have tried not to lose sight of self and I recognize the importance of solitude, quietness, contemplation, reflection and thought. All these things have been important in my life and they are quite common to most people. In

now moving ahead, I think I can build on these strengths. They should serve me well as I get older. I also believe it is important to always put the right foot forward, to communicate properly, to be able to listen and to use one's knowledge effectively.

This is not to say I am backward in any way but am outgoing and personable. It has taken me a long time to draw these conclusions and I still do not think I understand the complexity of character I portray here. Even as I speak of conceptual things, I am constantly aware of the world around me. To me, it is a question of being in the world. It is true the times now are not the same but it is also true that some things about life will never change. My development as a person is still broadening, even though the time has changed. Perhaps you see some things in common that you can relate to. Where do we go from here? I'm still working on the answers. Tomorrow is another day to just be.

"...I recognize the importance of solitude, quietness, contemplation..."

French kiss

by jeremy osborne
aka complexss

I like looking at the sky and seeing the
Sun shining bright
And I like looking at the stars and moon
at night
but id rather look at you
when we are at the park feeding the ducks
and geese and swans too
or when were in a café on a side street
drinking mochaccinos and lattes while
the rain gently pitter patters on the window
and the parked cars and ground

yah ive got to admit
being with you is bliss
it's like a passionate French kiss
from a lovers lips

I also like lying on the beach with you
Hand in hand catching tan
Drinking lemonade and grapefruit juice too
With the sun shining bright overhead
And the waves crashing on the shore
Then going out to a couple of night clubs
And dancing the night away
While fast and hard and happy music plays
Then moving in close for the slow song
And then well head home

yah ive got to admit
being with you is bliss
it's like a passionate French kiss
from a lovers lips

Kings and queens of humanity

by jeremy osborne
aka vercomplexia

Sword wielding sorcerers who create universes
In their minds
Modern weaponry is too slow and weak
To lay them low
So they use magical weapons to protect
The seeds they sow

Symphonies of society's roar in their
Minds
Weaving melodies and harmonies
To create the tapestries of time
Learning to create universes out of
Thin air
But keeping track of reality to make sure
People still care

Kings and queens of humanity
Kings and queens of humanity
Kings and queens of humanity

Ruling the world in a secret society that only
Magicians can see
Old lords retire to their private worlds
New adepts to take their place
Evolving into true magicians
At their own pace
Protected by the good lord of everything
Til they're strong enough themselves
To become kings
And inspire the rest of humanity to do
Great things
By using their powers of persuasion
To manipulate minds
And also to protect them from
Magicians unkind

Kings and queens of humanity
Kings and queens of humanity
Kings and queens of humanity

other songs and other lovers

by reinhart

other songs and other lovers
have fallen from these lips
their rhyme and reason hovers
just beyond my fingertips

kisses I have left behind
or sometimes which left me
are shadows cast upon my mind
at the edges of memory

but the visions of your body
glowing golden in the light
naked soft and lovely
turning silver in the night

these visions of your naked form
steal into my thought
when your head would rest upon my arm
and your body would be caught

and I remember tender kisses
love in the afternoon
gentle sweet caresses
love under a full moon

and the beauty of your nakedness
which once you shared with me
this very beauty i confess
both chains and makes me free

though other loves did taste these lips
and though their love was true
and i loved the way they moved their hips
still my thoughts return to you

for something you expressed in flesh
is honest real blind
the feel of your nakedness
weighs loving on my mind

other bodies i have known
lovers for a day
blend together they have grown
and quietly fade away

and now that i live alone
i ask what it all means
love is with the body shown
that's all i know it seems

then suddenly i see you clear
your naked love shines through
i smile as though you were really here
and sing this song for you

love on a chain

by reinhart

you were young
you were happy

i tried to smile
i was ageing

your life was sweet
your body smooth

my past was ugly
my words well chosen

you loved me dearly
you loved my mind

i loved you surely
i loved your body

your love was selfless
and guaranteed

my love was greedy
my body freed

you came to see me
you brought me joy

i was in prison
i was alone

your love was hopeful
you'd wait for me

my love was urgent
on a chain

you traveled miles
you came to visit

i went nowhere
i just waited

your life before you
your future wide

my life behind
my future lost

you brought me presents
you lay with me

i felt guilty
i felt free

you were loyal
you were naive

i broke your heart
i made you leave

you cried a torrent
you pleaded why

i said all for sex
i've made you cry

you left still weeping
you called me asshole

i still remember
i'm still in pain

i was a lost cause
under lock and key

i may have to stay
i may die here

i may have to spend
my entire life here

i have no future
nothing to give

she deserved better
her whole life ahead

it wasn't fair
to keep her with me

it would be even more cruel
than breaking her heart

i lied to her
i made her go

i'm still in pain
i'm still in love

i hope she's doing well

ODE: to Mimi — Our Beloved Family Member, Birthday Girl & Our Therapist

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

Oh, Mimi, our cherished beloved cat, pet
birthday girl and, yes, precious family therapist,
always know that though neighbours' cats see you not a pacifist
we need you when we stress, are angered and fret
— when we've fought amongst ourselves and are upset —
to act as our proverbial soother, as psychologist,
a feline whose staring eyes can also act as hypnotist
to help the Sterles their bitter angst forget.
For, one day we may be left to interpret
your concern when baby cried — as though you could somehow assist
— as your dear, precious persistence to not let
your 'masters' bear their strife — not without your back stroked, sweet cheek kissed,
your family with bitter turmoil beset;
such a sweet cat's presence from our household will be sadly missed.

ODE: to the Demonic of Worldly Economics

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

The capitalist monetary system, with its cash,
worshipped by man while he claims, "In God We Trust",
when all he exhibits is his intense lust
for dollar bills — money's money — his banked coveted stash
representing 'precious metals' prone to 'stock market crash';
thus, man stabs other man in the back unjust
like he forgot outright he's of 'ash to ash',
like he's blatantly ignorant that he's of 'dust to dust'.
But man will go even worse — into ethical disgust
and into that granting him a fiscal splash —
ignoring his fellow souls subsisting on stale bread crust;
basically stooping into the moral trash
by espousing the ideology, 'Free Trade or Bust!'
man's left humanity a gaping-hole gash.

13 of LIFE'S GREAT — WHILE SOMETIMES SIMULTANEOUSLY LOUSY and BITTER — IRONIES

by FRANK G. STERLE, Jr.

1) *Be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it:*

— Sometimes, something we're convinced would be the best for us, or would be the best of luck, is actually the worst for us, indeed the worst of luck. And, of course, the reverse is just as true. (Thus, the profoundly insightful adage, "Thank God for unanswered prayers".) Therefore, we must always (at least try our very best to) keep in mind that the "terrible misfortune" we received from Fate when we slipped on the proverbial banana and broke our leg, forcing us to stay in bed for a month, actually prevented our premature death by keeping us out of the work office on the day that an earthquake brought the building crumbling down. Undoubtedly, we should utilize this proverbial cloud's silver lining whenever we feel that "things could not go any worse". Though admittedly it often can be a lot easier said than done — a fact I know for myself.

2) *The worst of enemies can become the best of friends, and (unfortunately) vice versa:*

Although it's obviously fictitious, the morally-profound movie *Enemy Mine* nonetheless has a plausible theme: the two main characters - the alien Drac, named Jeriba "Jerry" Shigan (Louis Gossette, Jr.), and its human adversary, named Willis Davidge (Dennis Quaid) — who are war-time adversaries, get to know each other while stranded on a hostile-environment planet and eventually become the closest of not just allies, but of friends. Indeed, the movie viewer need only note one character's tears when the other was about to go out on his own. (An absolutely incredible, heart-warming movie and story!)

— However, sometimes a person that we may have once regarded as a good friend can end up being an enemy. Furthermore, as the ironic adage "with friends like that, who needs enemies?" states, we may find that we should keep that friend-turned-enemy as a "friend" basically for political reasons/interests.

3) *Many people are 'educated' to the point of narrow-minded ignorance:*

— The well-"educated" are (choose to be?) blind to the irony that science is somewhat like a religion, a faith. For, we, society as a whole, will usually believe in some "research finding" or "fact" because some people in long, white lab coats "found" it to be true; and when we read/hear that some "scientific fact" is indeed outdated or false, we will usually willingly consume the new "facts" as gospel truth. After all, it's science, so it should/must be true — right?

— If God was to descend to Earth from Heaven in supernatural glory, many well-"educated" skeptics would claim, and many would truly believe, that some very talented illusionist (perhaps David Copperfield) *must be* pulling some sort of stunt. How would these skeptics know that it was but a stunt? "Because, we have no proof that God exists." Apparently, no explanation, scientific or otherwise, would ever be sufficient for some well-"educated" people (or "experts") to even consider that the supernatural indeed occurs every day on Earth. It seems that there's always an available "logical explanation" to explain away every supernatural occurrence.

Also, it seems that many people can be willfully blind. It's as though as long as the skeptic disbelieves some concept/possibility, somehow it does not exist (on a subconscious level, anyway) - i.e., "If I don't 'know' of it or see it, it's not really there".

— According to one Internet website, "Magician James 'The Amazing' Randi has created a foundation that offers more than 1,100,000\$ [sic] to anyone who can demonstrate a paranormal phenomenon in a scientific test. Isn't it amazing that certain people are absolutely convinced that they have supernatural powers but that none of them seems interested in collecting such an amount of money? Food for thought ..."

According to another website, "... Despite attempts by various [supernatural-feat-claiming] individuals, the prize has yet to be awarded."

However, what is conveniently ignored by the skeptics is the fact that "The Amazing" Randi can completely avoid having to pay up by simply remaining "unconvinced" and/or by concocting some (even specious) "explanation".

4) *Humanity puts so much of ourselves into the (imminently) finite material world, while we place/invest so very little (if any at all) planning, energy, concern and reverence into - and apparently so inadequately value - the infinite, that which indeed should count the very most in our meager Earthly existence:*

— “I don’t wanna go to Heaven; I wanna go to the bank and cash the goddamn [\$4,000,000] cheque!”

— Oda Mae Brown (Whoopi Goldberg) to Sam Wheat (Patrick Swayze), in the 1990 hit movie *Ghost*.

5) *Too frequently, those who are in need the most receive the least - and vice versa (only in fairy tales does justice always, or usually, prevail):*

— This fact has troubled many authors throughout history. A person can note one of the most profound works of Victorian-era fiction, *A Christmas Carol* (a.k.a. *Scrooge*), written on the topic of this social injustice, penned by Charles Dickens. One haunting scene (at least for me), is that of Jacob Marley’s ghost showing a filthy-rich-though-miserly Ebenezer Scrooge how the spirits of men who were very wealthy in life try in vain to throw their non-physical-realm money at a living (i.e., physical-realm) woman huddled in the snowy night against a wooden fence with her baby. But, of course, it is eternally all in vain - they had their chance to do much good with their wealth when they were alive.

6) *Many of the most religious (“spiritual”) people are the least humane, while many of the most atheistic/non-religious/non-“spiritual” people are the most humane; and some of the most “civil” nations/societies have been known to behave the most immorally and brutally toward other nations and their populaces.*

7) *It takes real courage to - without any fear - back down from a confrontation, both verbal and violent.*

8) *Two of this planet’s worst abusers of women - India and Pakistan — are two of the virtually historically non-existent few nations that have ever elected a woman to the highest office.*

9) *Hateful sentiments toward others (that are not translated into physical or verbal assault) only hurt the haters:*

Since most (perhaps even the vast majority of all) hatred is not physically realized here in the “civilized” world, it’s really the hater who suffers (and sometimes debilitatingly so) because of the hatred with which he/

she struggles. (It’s actually quite poetic.) One only needs to experience the (sincere/true) forgiveness of someone against whom one has carried a grudge for some time (sometimes for many excruciating years) — and especially the (some would describe it as being almost supernatural) release of emotional baggage that accompanies that forgiveness — to fully comprehend just how, in a universal-law sense, unnatural and wrong hatred really is.

Mind you, one should not consider hatred and anger synonymously; good/positive can come from constructively-directed-and-utilized anger. One is not necessarily hating a gratuitously- and-miserly-rich person when one feels anger towards the rich person, anger felt over the very potential good that can come out from that gratuitous wealth but is unnecessarily not being realized.

10) *The peaceful conduct/co-operation of 100 percent of the world’s populace is required to ensure/ maintain 100 percent global stability, 100 percent of the time; meanwhile, it can take but one person to cause the disintegration of global stability and then catastrophe — e.g., the lone assassin that alone triggered the expanding domino effect that eventually resulted in the brutal First World War. Thus, we have the power of the vicious few — or the one — over the peace-loving countless many.*

11) *Conceiving offspring by choice is the most selfish of (non-criminal) human acts, while decently and competently rearing/raising offspring (with all the accompanying worry and heartache) is the most selfless of human acts.*

12) *Although every passing second is, once gone, never to be repeated - lost forever - we (especially as bored, restless youth) so often let it pass, wasted, only too anxious for it to become “killed time”:*

As a great example, there’s the episode of the animated *Beavis and Butthead* characters (of like names) waiting for about a half-dozen hours to come and go, as they just sit there on the couch, until some trivial, lame and totally-unproductive TV show (perhaps even a regressive program) they wish to consume finally arrives. (Literally every few seconds, Beavis asks Butthead, “what time is it?”) Indeed, anxiety-inducing.

13) *When told that you can receive something “absolutely free!”, one should always inquire as to how much it will cost.*

SOME REFLECTIONS on FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY

by Byron Fraser

"The error of free will. We no longer have any sympathy today with the concept of 'free will': We know only too well what it is – the most infamous of all the arts of the theologian...for making mankind dependant on him... — Everywhere accountability is sought, it is usually the instinct for punishing and judging which seeks it. One has deprived becoming of its innocence if being in this or that state is traced back to will, to intentions, to accountable acts: the doctrine of will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of finding guilty. The whole of the old-style psychology, the psychology of will, has as its precondition the desire of its authors, the priests at the head of the ancient communities, to create for themselves a right to ordain punishments – or their desire to create for God a right to do so...Men were thought of as 'free' so that they could become guilty: consequently, every action had to be thought of as willed, the origin of every action as lying in the consciousness (— whereby the most fundamental falsification...was made into the very principle of psychology)...the theologians, ...continue to infect the innocence of becoming with 'punishment' and 'guilt' by means of the concept of the 'moral world-order.' Christianity is a hangman's metaphysics..."

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), Section 7.

Thus spake the great defender of the teachings of Jesus Christ from "Christianity" (see also *The Anti-Christ*) and, as a succinct statement about the derivative genealogy of morals, I don't think Ye 01' Hammer could have hit the nail more on the head. However, I should say right off, since our topic is whether or not persons can be justifiably held to have committed criminal acts without having formed conscious wilful criminal intent, that Nietzsche's poignant critiques aimed at moving *Beyond Good and Evil* did not mean that he did not believe in good and bad (and nor do I) – that is to say, in any total impossibility of accountability, or the total relativity of all values: the point here is more at unmasking the psychology of those who, historically, have had ulterior motives for, or vested interests in, prejudicially pointing the finger of

"J' Accuse" – and this in the interest of greater justice; ethicality, in other words, over and against base moralistic judgementalism.

Space requirements preclude my going into the many issues involved in the history of forensic psychiatry or anything very meaningful by way of personal "testimony" so, for purposes of this brief overview, I propose to merely touch upon a few of the theoretical basics – which will hopefully address the fundamental concerns most people have when trying to get clear about the necessary distinctions of law, morality, and psychology which apply here. (Those wanting a more comprehensive introduction to the subject are invited to consult Thomas Szasz's *Psychiatric Justice and Law, Liberty and Psychiatry* for relevant details.) And, as my foil for highlighting these basics, I would like to offer up some critical thoughts on the views of Thomas Szasz, who is usually acknowledged as the most prominent and outspoken academic critic of this field (see especially Chapter 6 of *Thomas Szasz: Primary Values and Major Contentions*, edited by Richard E. Vatz and Lee S. Weinberg: "Forensic Psychiatry is Fraudulent" – and Chapter 3 of *Assessing the Criminal: Restitution, Retribution and the Legal Process*, edited by Randy E. Barnett and John Hagel: "Psychiatric Diversion in the Criminal Justice System: A Critique," for example). My hope is that my negation of Szasz's negation, as it were, may breathe new life into a debate often viewed as deadlocked at a stultifying impasse.

To begin with, then, in spite of my deep appreciation of Szasz's many telling criticisms of biopsychiatry – and of the very real potential for, and the reality of, widespread abuse in The System as it exists today – I do not believe that the fundamental premise of forensic psychiatry is fraudulent, or even ill-conceived. In essence, what Szasz does is leaps from his very valid point about mental "illness" not being a biologically-based medical disease to the conclusion that the "metaphorical" nature of psychiatric diagnoses requires that they be ruled out of court when considering questions of criminal guilt or innocence. Some of his other main arguments are that:

- 1) psychiatrists have no expertise in discerning mental capacity or criminal responsibility

2) to treat people suffering from psychiatric syndromes differently from other criminals amounts to “special pleading,” thereby violating the Rule of Law, and so insanity defences should not be allowed

3) no one is qualified to judge of, or speak to, what another person’s mental state may be – or may have been – because this is all a matter of hope-less subjectivity; what counts are the objective/material facts of the case

4) to declare someone “not guilty by reason of insanity” and then imprison them is an injustice and violates their rights.

To which I would reply, firstly, that probably the most basic requirement in determining criminal responsibility, a precept recognized by Western jurisprudence for at least the last 2,000 years – and which virtually all judges and juries are charged to judge of – is the matter of criminal intent – *mens rea* —: did the accused have a “guilty mind” at the time of the commission of the offence? The main point, *contra Szasz*, as any jurist will tell you, is not the material facts of a criminal act but the immaterial fact of whether or not the accused formulated the conscious criminal intent to break the law. If one cannot conclude “beyond a reasonable doubt” that the accused did have such intent, one is bound to deliver a “not guilty” verdict. And, the reason for this is the commonsense understanding that not all actions are consciously willed nor do they have purposes which can always be discerned from mere outer manifestations. So if opinions regarding “mental state” don’t legitimately speak to this, we must ask Szasz, what does?

His distinguished fellow libertarian colleague, Nobel Prize winning economist F. A. Hayek, whom he tries in vain to rebut on this issue, put the matter well when he wrote:

“The complementarity of liberty and responsibility means that the argument for liberty can apply only to those who can be held responsible. It cannot apply to...the insane. It presupposes that a person is capable of...guiding his actions by knowledge...; it is invalid for those who...are incapable.... A person whose actions are uncontrolled by knowledge of the consequences or a genuine split personality, a schizophrenic, could in this sense not be held responsible, because his knowledge that he will be held responsible could not alter his actions....”

The key distinction to note here (which is a source of endless confusion for those who haven’t clearly identified it) is that between fundamental *liberty* (or

people’s innate/“inalienable” capacity for free will – something we *can*, in a sense, be said to “always have”) and *responsibility* (or the *actual* freedom to exercise that capacity – something we *cannot* be said to “always have”). As Szasz himself says, in another place, unwittingly undermining his own objectivist fallacy that, because persons are always “free to choose,” therefore every action of an individual – and especially all wrongdoing – represents a “free choice”: “...responsibility is not something like a spleen that a person may literally possess or fail to possess. Instead, it is something that a person assumes or fails to assume....” And anyone who doubts that one’s ability to assume responsibility, to exercise conscious choice, can be incapacitated by emotional pain (often deliberately caused by others), and other mitigating factors, is either psychologically naive or a blatant liar with convoluted motives for guilt-inducement. In my experience, these factors at the root of most mental disorders contribute to one’s conscious intent (so far as we can speak of this *even being* “present”) often being *anything but* criminal – even if one’s purposeful actions ostensibly are.

To return, in summary, to Szasz’s objections, I believe:

- 1) that, despite all the current systemic flaws involving treatment, psychiatrists *are* well-qualified to give informed opinions; diagnosis is one of the things they do best
- 2) that to *not* allow insanity defences would be a real violation of Rule of Law which demands that we give full scope to considerations of “capacity” to form criminal intent as a matter of equity
- 3) that we admittedly are dealing with subjectivity in assessing mental capacity (how do we ever know for sure what’s going on in another person’s mind? – of course, we never do or can, other than by introspectively reflecting) – but no more so than when a jury or judge is faced with deciding on issues of criminal intent in any “regular” trial
- 4) that when someone has broken the law but is not criminally responsible due to a mental disorder, this is *not* an involuntary committal where there’s been no crime – so legal authorities certainly do have the right to imprison such a person as a deterrent sanction until such time as they are demonstrably not a danger to the rights of others (all the inherent liabilities of The System, as is, notwithstanding).

Byron Fraser is an ex-mental patient who spent approximately five years in psychiatric prison.

Quotes from The Roundtable

by M. D. Arthurs

“Life and nature are both ugly and beautiful
and so must art reflect.”

“It is the vocation of the artist
to explore past predictabilities,
present probabilities and future possibilities.”

“Until we can all live together
in peace, equality and shared prosperity,
everything else is secondary.”

“Although it is currently out of fashion,
we must continually strive for utopia,
regardless of whether or not it is attainable.”

“Let us not fear stagnation
in some earthly paradise;
for that also would pass.”

■

Bulletin Board

The Self-Help Resource Association of B.C. (SHRA) conducts regular Facilitator Training Workshops for Self-Help and Mutual Aid Support Groups. They also publish a quarterly newsletter and the Directory of Self-Help/Support Groups in Greater Vancouver with approximately 600 listings, many of them dealing with mental health. The latest edition (2001-2002) of the Directory is now available for \$12.00 or \$10.00 at the office if you drop by and pick it up. SHRA is located at Suite 306 – 1212 West Broadway, Van. B.C. V6H 3V1. T: (604) 733-6186. Fax: (604) 730-1015. www.vcn.bc.ca/shra

The Alternative & Integrative Medical Society (AIMS) at UBC publishes the free AIMS Wellness Directory: Lower Mainland Guide to Complementary Health. It contains approximately 250 paid and many unpaid listings dealing with a broad spectrum of mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of healing. For a Directory and/or more info. about the Society, phone (604) 822-7604. Fax: (604) 822-2495. E-mail info@aims.ubc.ca. Web: www.aims.ubc.ca. AIMS, University of British Columbia, Box 81 – 6138 SUB Boulevard, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1. Office: B80A Woodward Building, UBC.

Vancouver Women's Health Collective has peer counselling and makes referrals to support services, groups, and does advocacy work in health care reform. Their address is #1 - 175 E. 15th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V5T 2P6. Info. by phoning (604) 732-5262.

Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network sponsors many self-help groups including a Women's Circle. Their address is #109 - 96 E. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 4N9 and the Co-ordinator of the Network may be reached at 733-5570.

Upcoming events in the Madness 101 Mental Health Dialogue Series can be found by contacting Millie Strom at 604-255-0255 or by e-mail at info@madness101.com.

reinhart

