

In A Nutshell

Autumn 2003

Budget is Not a Four-Letter Word

by Jim Gifford

Let me open my remarks by saying that I feel somewhat out of place, indeed the last person to give advice on budgeting and money management. If I could be called an expert, it is as a member of the 'drunken sailor' club. I can spend with gusto, sometimes flamboyantly and recklessly, when on a manic high. A good friend has said that, on cheque day, smoke has been seen coming out of my pockets. That said, let me now talk about my experience and insight revolving around the 'mystery of money'.

In this context, allow me to quote Henry David Thoreau from *Walden*, his American classic of the Nineteenth Century. "I would not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well." Growing up in a comfortable home, for me money was never talked about and was not an issue. There was plenty to pay for all the toys and luxuries of our day. For example, we were the first house in our neighbourhood to have a television. To me, money almost seemed to 'grow on trees.' It was abundant and available for our wishes.

My father was a successful businessman but never brought his work home and never talked shop. At the dinner table dad encouraged my older brother and I to participate with each other in open forum debates. We discussed any and every topic, from sex education to religion to politics, everything except, on dad's request, business and money. So I grew up with a naivete on the subject of finances and the proper and wise handling of income. My Irish roots, expressed in being 'generous to a fault', often got the better of me. I recall once purposefully dropping a twenty-dollar bill on the road, for some fortunate soul to discover. After my breakdown, I was spaced-out and there was an oblivious attitude towards the worldly importance of money. On one occasion, I found an uncashed paycheque, from the previous year. Thus when I found myself on a pension, and living in poverty, my life was a constant cycle of 'feast or famine.' From an early age I had been caught in what English romantic poet William Wordsworth called 'getting and spending.'

Although we live in a consumption-oriented society, where our worth and the value of our lifestyle

is often measured by possessions, I find it deeply ironic that those of us who are ex-mental patients on disability pensions are called consumers. It seems like a cruel joke. On our limited income, scraping by is often the necessary way of existence. Thus it is important, if not imperative, to distinguish clearly between needs, wants and desires.

Commenting again from Thoreau's *Walden*, he refers to the essentials of life as food, clothing, shelter, and heat. I've heard a saying about my Irish kinfolk that they don't know what they want, but they know what they need. Such a virtue can only be of benefit when one is budgeting. But a close pal, now a retired executive of a major company, reminds me it is more about priorities. It is like the economic dictum of 'butter or guns.' If I indulge in one thing, I must give up something else. It is all about trade-offs and sacrifices. One may even learn to enjoy living simply.

It is said that Plato, while strolling through the marketplace in ancient Athens, marveled at so many things he could do without. And when fellow Greek philosopher, Diogenes, was bathing in a tub, a visiting Alexander the Great offered him anything in the world he desired. Diogenes grumbled 'get out of my light.' Alexander was reputed to have remarked "were I not

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Alexander, I would choose to be Diogenes." Likewise, when my monetary status went topsy-turvy, I made a conscious effort to make lemonade out of my life situation's lemon. Although I continue to struggle with frugality, I have accepted the 'less is more' approach of simplicity and minimalism.

Yet the priority of our present capitalist society is money. We swim in it like fish in water. We've all heard the suspect quotes 'money makes the world go round' and 'time is money'. And the advertisers try to get us to buy more and more of what we really do not need. But let us not forget the Gospel message of how moth and rust corrupt worldly treasure. Truly The Kingdom of Heaven lays all about us and the best things in life are free; a seagull's squeal, the scent of daffodils, moon cycles influencing moon tides, each sunrise and sunset. Still, there is an undeniable zen calm in having a little money in your bank account.

I would like to summarize an article that appeared in the Autumn 2000 issue of Simple Living Quarterly. It is entitled 'Personal Finance as Spiritual Practice.' Mikelann Valterra writes the four parts to financial control and peace – clarity, understanding, stabilization, and recovery. A 'money fog', seems to pervade many people's psyches. Clarity about where you are is the first step, by tracking expenses or record keeping. Next, understand why you do the things you do. We have a lot of unconscious attitudes and beliefs driving our current financial affairs. Stabilize through a month-in and month-out plan. Recovery is to experience a different and healthier relationship to

money, becoming empowered to make more fulfilling choices and lifestyle changes. Remember, happiness is the by-product of life well-lived and money management is an integral part in the art of good living.

Allow me to close with a quote from David Copperfield by Charles Dickens:

"Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure ought and six, result misery."

Keep Smiling!

A little afterthought: I saw a scene on television when I was a youngster that reveals the absurd importance that money plays in our lives. Comedian Jack Benny is accosted on the street by a robber:

Robber: 'Your money or your life.'

(Silence)

Robber again: 'Your money or your life.'

(Pregnant Pause)

Jack Benny: 'I'm thinking! I'm thinking!'

Thank you and God Bless.

Editorial Note

by Jim Gifford

Terrence Levesque has decided it is time to leave "In A Nutshell." We, the editorial board, would like to thank him for his contributions to our journal and we offer him our best wishes in the future.

Coming on board is Ely Swann, a poet and writer whose work has appeared in The Nutshell under the pen name of Satya Devi. We look forward to her participation on the editorial board.

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.

"In A Nutshell" is a publication of the Mental Patients' Association, #202 -1675 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6J 1L8, ph. (604) 738-2811, fax (604) 738-4132. The MPA is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of programs in ADVOCACY, HOUSING, RECREATIONAL, and SOCIAL ACTIVITIES for former mental patients. For more information on any of the above programs or housing waiting lists, please phone the office at (604) 738-2811. Editorial Board: Jim Gifford, Ely Swann, Reinhart, Byron Fraser, D. Paul Strashok.

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.

The Matinee: when the Good Guys never let you down

by Sam Roddan

The favorite hangout on a Saturday afternoon for a young kid in Vancouver during the hungry thirties was the old Pantages Theatre on Hastings Street.

For one thin dime an eager beaver could feast for hours on a lavish spread of horse flesh and cow-punchers dished up on the silver screen. A Double Feature meant "seconds" and breaks in the film gave plenty of time to squander another nickel on Eskimo Pie.

The Good Guys – Tom Mix, Ken Maynard, Hoot Gibson and Tome McCoy—never let us down at the Saturday matinee. Even in old reruns they loomed bigger than life. Lean, tough cowboys who twirled their six-shooters, rode like the wind and never said die.

The Saturday matinee had much to do with shaping our lives. In the warm and living darkness of the old Pantages we lost our innocence. The booming pipe organ that took up the chase of the Bad Guys out of Tombstone was louder and richer than any "music we heard in a church or cathedral.

We shouted and cheered, bounced up and down in our seats, booed the rustlers until we were blue in the face. Never once were we hushed into silence by the beautiful usherettes who stood guard in the aisles with their Ever-Ready flashlights.

Our cowboy heroes beat to the draw our nagging and anxious parents. Headed off at the pass our bewildered teachers. And best of all, they shot it out with old Doom and Gloom and left them twitching, at least for the afternoon, on Boot Hill or Dead Man's Gulch.

After school, in the dark lanes of East End Vancouver, behind Pender and Dunlevy and Campbell Avenue, we played cowboys and Indians. With cap guns blazing we drove out the Bad Guys holed up behind garbage cans and telephone poles. We terrified the sad-faced drunks. We practiced walking tall through the badlands of False Creek and we won the West many times near Strathcona school. At dusk, we whipped across Hastings

street on the back of Tony, Silver and the Golden Palamino of Tim McCoy and pulled up breathless at our old watering hole, Dusty's Café on Keefer, for an ice-cold bottled of pop.

But on Blue Mondays we had a rude awakening in our stuffy classrooms. Here we were force-fed indigestible stories about trolls and dragons. Memorized poems on daisies and buttercups. Filled pages of foolscap with beautiful lies on topics such as Good Citizenship, Sportsmanship, and Why I Love Black Beauty.

No stories in our school readers could compare with the Perils of Pauline or Orphans of the Storm.

Nowhere, but at the old Pantages did we see beautiful knockouts such as Pearl White or Lillian Gish. And no anguish was more exquisite than watching a black locomotive hurtle toward the railway trestle where Pauline lay bound hand and foot on the tracks. But what groans filled the air at the sign on the cowcatcher, "Continued Next Week".

Our heroes at the Saturday matinee were not all cowboys and adventurous ladies of distinction. One of my favorites was Harold Lloyd – the human fly. Harold Lloyd wore glasses. He had brains. He didn't have a horse, but he had tough, hard hands that helped him climb skyscrapers, steeples and flagpoles.

In *Safety Last* he teetered on window ledges high above the street. Made great leaps into space. Clung to chimney tops in chilling winds. Hung by his finger nails to the big hour hand of the clock a hundred times higher than the one at Birk's on Granville. Higher than Big Ben, for that matter.

Harold Lloyd was upwardly mobile. Always showing us that if we hung on, kept struggling, remained undaunted in the face of danger, never lost our grip, we, too, could make it to the top.

When times are rough a man needs his heroes. In our repertoire we had plenty of hard-riding cowboys and

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daredevils like Harold Lloyd. But we also had Douglas Fairbanks. Bluff hearty men like Wallace Beery, Jackie Cougan.

But I think we all loved Charlie Chaplin the best. It was Charlie who showed us in *The Gold Rush* that a man with a little imagination can make a feast of a boiled leather shoe. That even a weakling, a despised little runt down on his luck, a failure like us all in Reading, Writing and 'Rithmetic, can still hold his own if he has spirit, pluck and heart.

And much, much later we learned that the jaunty twirl of his cane said more than the wild bang-bangs of our six-shooters.

As the years rolled by, the old Pantages, heritage house for our heroes, became the Beacon and then the Majestic. Now it is a parking lot. A fenced-in corral for the horseless carts and covered wagons of today.

"When times are rough, a man needs his heroes."

A cast of thousands still shuffles past that vanished marquee on Hastings. And across the street, in Pigeon Square, tired old men, a short ride from the Last Round-up, still sit on the wooden benches, waiting, as every man must, for the Big Chief to beckon them on.

Man Bites Black Dogs - News Briefs From All Over

Compiled by Scott Dixon

Is it okay to force a mentally ill prisoner on death row to take medication, just so he can be executed once he's sane?

A United States Appeals Court says yes. But Sherry F. Colb - a Law Professor at Rutgers University - says,

"The process of improving a person's health in order to kill him feels like a cruel betrayal.

Creating moral ambiguity, however, is the fact that a refusal to provide needed medical care might itself raise serious questions of cruel and unusual punishment. There is betrayal, whichever way we turn.

The solution to the dilemma may be to sever the link between treatment and death. States could classify mentally ill individuals as automatically ineligible for execution, regardless of how effective treatment might be. Alternatively, the Supreme Court could reconsider the requirement of competency for execution.

However we proceed, the link between medical treatment and execution sullies not only the doctors who participate in such treatment but also the prosecutors who fight to revive a man's sanity only to extinguish both the man and his sanity shortly thereafter."

Like to shop 'til you drop? You're normal!

Responding to what it calls 'a number of erroneous reports in the media' the American Psychiatric Association says it is NOT planning to add 'compulsive shopping disorder' to the list of approved mental disorders. (Bad news for all those on death row who blamed their crimes on compulsive shopping.)

Good News for Twins

Researchers in Denmark looked at the records of more than 20,000 same-sex twins who died between 1943 and 1993 and compared their rates of suicide with the wider population.

They found that the suicide rate was lower for twins, regardless of their sex.

The findings came as a surprise because other studies have suggested that twins are slightly more prone to mental health problems than other people.

"This should lead to a higher proportion of twins committing suicide compared to the general population," the researchers reported in the *British Medical Journal*.

"But our findings show exactly the opposite, further underscoring the importance of strong family ties."

As many as 14 million American adults a year have episodes of major depression, costing employers billions of dollars in lost productivity, but the majority of sufferers don't get adequate treatment, according to a series of studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"This puts to rest the criticism that the high numbers

(of people with depression) are overestimated," said Dr. Ronald Kessler of Harvard Medical School, lead author of a two-year study that used new clinical definitions to measure depression on 9,090 adults around the country. "There are a whole lot of capital-D depressed people out there in the population."

Clutter's Closet

by Marie Annehart Baker

Do you occupy a chaotic zone in the universe? My New Year's Resolution was to get rid of junk from my home. I even promised my son. I had been a slob housekeeper for a long time but several bouts of severe depression got me to admit to a hoarding problem. I was so depressed after losing a job and a dream in the early months of 2002, I descended into the state that might be called hoarder horribilus. I did not unpack after I moved back to the city and it is only now in the year of 2003 that I am cognizant that I must rid myself of surplus furniture and clothing that went with that full-time job lifestyle I no longer want. I am reforming by informing myself about the "clutter condition" or else I am about to tackle the identity blast of coping to being a "hoarder".

You have heard the stories "Cat Woman found with 68 cats", etc. Maybe it was not just animal hoarders that gripped your fancy but yet another incidence of "senior squalor". The term "hoarder" is a loaded expression. I've noticed the uncomfy giggle response in others. Probably damn scary sounding but lucky for us who are in denial. We would just put on the false face of appearing mildly interested. What I found to be a chill factor is that the hoarder disorder (like the sound of that) might be linked to OCD Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Cruising the internet got me to a listserv called Messiness and Hoarding Anonymous, an online support group for clutterers or their families. I have been posting my adventures in cleaning up my hoard ever since. It sure removes the stigma if you regularly communicate and connect with those who know the every which way of living in clutter.

Would you ever admit that you are into CHAOS? It's the "can't have anyone over syndrome" according to Paul Talbot, a local Clutter consultant. In January's issue of *Common Ground*, his article on How To Reduce Clutter caught my rabid attention. Obvious to any sometime visitor I am what is called a "Pack Rat". I have boxes, papers, old clothes and so much stuff that my interior décor is like a rabbit warren. I am forced to be hermit-like because most people would be uncomfortable in my surroundings. Again, I don't really have room for visitors! I do have to venture out with a few other "ratties" to get more help on how to de-junk our lives. I rivet my attention to the hoarder listserv and chat about what if, when, where, how much, dehoarding I am attempting. Getting distracted from the main task is ever so easy! E-mailing is a great way to share the loneliness and internalized shame of hoarding.

Paul Talbot is the inspirational author of the book *Clear the Clutter and Simplify Your Life*. He conducts a support group on the last Tuesday of each month and may be reached at his website www.dialaspeaker.com. Paul's approach is that we organize our lives; once we begin downsizing we make room for more fun, creativity, self-respect. I hope so! I am ass-deep in stuff and if I am to get better housing, I will have to part with my beloved crap! Ouch, it is going to hurt but with help I will be able to do it. It is not an overnight activity. Even if someone else cleans up your clutter, you might still go back. But then everywhere there are other helpers!

Meanwhile back at the rubble, me and the messy roomie (always blame the mess on some other entity) are still up to the armpits in stuff, junk or recent acquisitions. Well, trying flyladymentor on the internet was one helpful resource. Check the website: <http://www.FlyLady.net> The goal is to follow a basic weekly plan for getting things done. You are asked to declutter for 15 minutes a day. No cleaning on Saturdays or stockpiling the mess till it becomes totally overwhelming. The ugly word Procrastinators is used to apply to those who do tons of laundry on Saturdays and want to do a total housecleaning on the weekends. During the weekend a person is supposed to be free like a birdie and go out with family and friends. The Flylady tells you to work a little every day with a routine and you will get free eventually.

Hard to trust the Flylady advice when you are still up to your butt cheeks in accumulated sally ann throwaways. She was far too normal for me and so I had to unsubscribe after receiving hundreds of e-mail messages. But try the FlyLady; you might like her or she might freak you like she did me. The one that got my gizzard was her instructions to run through my place and pick 27 objects to throw away. Argggghhhh! I did buy the FlyLady advice to identify hotzones or areas where clutter happens. You are to keep watch on it and whenever you get the message from FlyLady you fly to your hotzone and begin organizing (much stuff has just to be thrown out). I identified a few hotzones and tried to figure out how to attack them. Until then, you can be sure I am nowhere deep in my clutter den or adobe hacienda. Like after clearing up my dish drainer rack, the cat found it to be a great nesting place!

As I continue to expound, from the Bottom of the Clutter Closet: As If! I wish! Yeah Baby! Well, someday I will be able to get to the bottom of all the clutter that is my current residential nightmare. I have been so overwhelmed with FlyLady advice on housekeeping that I ended up getting pleasure from deleting whatever she sent to my inbox without reading it. Oooh, that was devious! Hey, wait, I did buy a timer and have practiced a bit. Hate to admit but the timer is lost in the maze. Flylady's demand to want a

clean sink in the kitchen was puzzling. I was very accustomed to the weekly pile-up called Mt. Dishmore. Also to compound my disinterest, while watching a PBS special, I saw Haley's Hints and thought to educate myself. Just Google search by that name for the book. What Haley says about cleaning sinks is impressive. He suggests using a polident or other brand of denture cleanser tablet to clean a sink. Just fill with water and put in costume jewellery too if you want and just one tab will do the job. May also use a polident fix on that toilet bowl that you do not want to reach into and swish around with a brush. Sometimes all the good advice becomes a great way to torture yourself! I wouldn't clean costume jewellery in the toilet bowl however intriguing that shortcut may seem.

I am obsessive now about dehoarding (a bit focused in other words). I have tried organizing papers in boxes, rubbermaid containers, and bought file folders, labels, 3 ring binders, you name it, I have it! I still get so overwhelmed. I'm going to try doing just one handful at a time. I do try to look at papers objectively: Can I get this somewhere else, off the internet, from a book? Will I ever really need it again? I'm also trying the "one touch" rule — touch the paper once, then file it, act on it or trash it. It's keeping incoming mail and papers to a minimum, but I still have boxloads to go thru! Last count 20! I do get caught up in reading every little thing, or not being sure where to file something and it all gets mixed up again so whatever effort I've made is wasted. But I have managed to get a few boxes sorted into categories such as personal papers, bills, poetry, health info, etc. Makes things much easier to find but maintaining it is a whole other issue! Then, did I mention my short term memory is shot? I even forget to take the pills that are destroying my memory! Let me tell you it does feel good to get a space cleared and clutter ditched! Those things you absolutely *know* you don't need and finally get around to tossing! I do find I don't miss things once they're gone. So why is it so hard to get rid of it? So when you say that you have been transformed into a "tosser"! Goodbye Clutterbug!

Quote From the Roundtable ***by M.D. Arthurs***

"Manners, courtesy and etiquette are
the oil that lubricates the friction of
human relations."

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

For a rainbow to exist, a certain configuration of sunlight, rain, and a human observer must obtain. It would be hard to untangle how much of the total experience of seeing a rainbow is objective perception, and how much is subjective creativity. Similarly, the experience an infant has of a blanket, or toy rabbit she is attached to, is a mixture of objective perception and subjective creativity. Developmentally, in the beginning all is one, and that one is me. As long as my mother adapts to me perfectly, exactly, I will not be aware of objects, or others. All will seem as parts of me. Mother's person, her breasts, at first will seem to be under my magical control. "Psychologically," says Winnicott, "the infant takes from a breast that is part of the infant, and the mother gives milk to an infant that is part of herself." This blissful state is referred to as participation: the infant swims in the mother's unconscious, and the two are so attuned with each other that they exist as one. Eventually, mother's adaptation will grow less perfect, and her mistakes and my frustration will teach me that she and her breasts are not me. Winnicott writes, "the breast is created by the infant over and over again out of the infant's capacity to love or (one can say) out of need. A subjective phenomenon develops in the baby, which we call the mother's breast. The mother places the actual breast just where the infant is ready to create, and at the right moment." Just imagine how deeply encouraging it must be to realize what I imagine, over and over again. The shock of discovering that in fact I have no control over mother, and the humiliating realization of my total dependency on her, precipitate my search for something that I can control and use for mitigating my overwhelming separation anxiety. The found object which I will infuse with special meaning will be my very first possession, if the adults around me agree not to challenge my bid. This need for an intermediate area of experience, which is neither strict outer reality, nor only inner dream or hallucination, persists for a lifetime. It becomes culture, art, or religion.

"The pervert puts an impersonal object between his desire and his accomplice: this object can be a stereotype fantasy, a gadget or a pornographic image. All three alienate the pervert from himself, as, alas, from the object of his desire," writes Masud Khan, in *Alienation in Perversions*. Compare this with Janine

Chasseguet-Smirgel's words from *Creativity and Perversion*: "Perversion is one of the essential ways and means man applies in order to push forward the frontiers of what is possible and to unsettle reality...it is a dimension of the human psyche, a temptation of the mind common to us all." There are many ways to defy reality. We can create sham and pretence, or beauty and meaning, heaven or hell, or anything in-between.

For Freud, the fetish is not an inauthentic object, instead, it is both the presence of something and the sign of its absence; it is and is not an object. And it is as such that it irresistibly attracts desire without ever being able to satisfy it. The etymology of the word 'fetish' points us to 'beautiful, pretty'. Aestheticism requires a certain distance, it takes one's attention away from emotions, towards more controllable appearances. A masochist "describes how his erotic activities are inhibited unless the whip conforms to certain aesthetic standards, size, shape, tapering, smoothness, color, etc. ... The rigidity of such standards is reminiscent of the severe canons upheld by some critics or exponents of the fine arts. Indeed, if one did not know what was the actual subject matter of association, it would be very difficult for the hearer to distinguish certain diagnostic discussions of the conditions for perverse sexual gratification from an aesthetic discussion of 'good' and 'bad' art," quotes Chasseguet-Smirgel.

What all perverse forms of sexuality hold in common is their singular denial of the other as a subject of desire. Instead, the other is perceived as merely an object of narcissistic pleasure. Any sexual act can be construed as perverse in this respect, just as any sexual act can be free of perverse intent, save for sadism and necrophilia.

Behind this objectification of one's partner hides one's impotence, one's vulnerability to loss. If I care about the other and I lose her, I will have to mourn and grieve. In this pain of loss, the pain of all previous losses will reverberate. Now if my erotic charge is associated with something I can put between me and my lover, such as frilly panties, high-heeled shoes, or a stereotyped fantasy, then should I lose her, I would still possess my fetish. I would simply have to recruit somebody else to replace my lover, but my devotion to my fetish could continue uninterrupted.

Love is not merely an infantile eroticism which constantly insists on newer and newer proofs of attachment. It is always a tender apprehension that takes the other person as he is and in his subjectivity, without claims of possession or demands for submission. You cannot love someone whom you do not know, and you cannot get to know someone whom you do not love. So, love is personal and intimate, whereas desire can be ruthless and impersonal. R. D. Laing quipped often that when one says, "I love steak," one really cannot say that one has compassion for the cow out of whose carcass the desired piece of meat has been carved.

To shelter, feed and look after a cow so that later I can feast on its dead flesh, cannot be called love. Masud Khan writes, "The capacity to create the emotional

climate in which another person volunteers to participate is one of the few real talents of the perverts. A make-believe situation is offered in which two individuals temporarily renounce their separate identities and boundaries and attempt to create a heightened maximal body-intimacy of orgasmic nature." This, however, is always just a seduction: what is promised and yet never intended to be delivered, is relationship.

Laing has frequently reminded us of our inherent human cruelty, the truth of which each of us must bear and struggle with. Turning a human being into a thing that I can use for my own pleasure is one of the most devastating of all cruelties. ■

Satya's Soapbox: you CAN teach an old dog new tricks

by Satya Devi

Two seemingly unrelated events changed a lot of things for me this past year.

About 20 years ago, when Ram Dass was in Vancouver, as he often is, he was talking about a strange older woman sitting in the front row of an auditorium. She was dressed very conservatively, with an outlandish hat, not at all the hippie uniform of the day. Every time Ram Dass said something, this lady nodded and smiled at him. He decided to test her, because, after all, everybody else there was, like him, on the cutting edge of the future of mankind. She continued to nod and smile at him, no matter how outrageous he thought he was being. He finished his talk, and a little bewildered, mingled and talked with the crowd. This lady came up to him and said, "I really liked your lecture and could relate to everything you said." A stunned Ram Dass said, "How is that?" and the lady answered, "Because I crochet." That got as tremendous belly laugh from the audience and it still cracks me up from time to time.

Last year, I quit smoking after a 40-year habit and I was desperate to find something to do with my hands. The Office Manager where I volunteer offered to teach me how to crochet. Didn't she know in whose presence she was? Crochet - moi? I was desperate though, so I tried it and surprise, I took to it like a fish

to water. Many times this year, it has quelled the fires of nicotine beckonings, and also centres and relaxes me before bed. I even came out of the crochet closet last week and did it on the bus on the way to visit in the East End. I'm becoming proficient in the art and am currently making a scarf to send to Ram Dass with a note, "Your work means so much more to me since I started to crochet."

The second and quite unexpected thing to fall on my lap, almost literally, was a computer (in partial payment for a loan) of which the only previous experience with I had had was to send an e-mail to my brother once. So, with 4 pages of hand-written notes, I started off, and within a few days, phoned the Cable Company to come and set it all up, removing some excess TV channels at the same time. It took the Cable Guy almost an hour to set everything up, with little Mohandas, the Pomeranian, in hot pursuit the whole time. Then the Cable Guy handed me this document, which he swore was in English, to set up my "handle" and password. Surmising I couldn't overpower him, I decided perhaps the best attack was to play the helpless female, and raised my voice a few octaves and whined, "Ah, could you maybe show me a bit of this? I'm not too good with written instructions." He was a decent fellow and set it all up in seconds.

So, I've been using it fairly successfully ever since and gave a friend a good laugh by remarking that I e-mailed my friend in Australia and she replied "the same day!"

Progress and challenges come with every generation and this one is no exception, although we may feel we've advanced as far as we can go, there will be a new generation with new ideas and skills to learn. I remember back when my father set up a flush toilet for poor old grandpa, who thought it was a foot wash and used to oval thing that came with it to frame a

photograph of dear old grandma and used the large flat piece for a breadboard. (It's genetic).

I also get a charge out of the Internet Spelling Check alternatives - for Satya Devi are Satyr Devil, and the ultimate fuck you: I was spelling crocheting wrong.

And the wise words all the way back to one of the nuns in Kindergarten remains true today: "Any job worth doing is worth doing wrong until you get it right."

Bookworm

Beyond Fate

by Margeret Visser
(House of Anansi Press, 2002)
Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

While on my holidays, up on Cortes Island, CBC was the only good radio station to listen to. One evening I was riveted by a most unusual, I cannot say pleasant, older female voice with a South African accent, giving a talk to a live audience on fate, boredom, will and depression. It was the 2002 Massey Lectures, broadcast as part of CBC Radio's *Ideas* series, delivered by the Canadian author, Margaret Visser. She was born in South Africa and wrote such bestselling books as *The Geometry of Love* and *Much Depends on Dinner*. Her books have been translated into French, German and Portuguese. She appears frequently on radio and television, and has lectured extensively in Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia. Most recently she has written and presented a six-part series on everyday life in six European cities for BBC Radio Four. She divides her time between Toronto, Barcelona, and South West France.

The book was easy to order (www.anansi.ca), and well worth reading. I have been thinking about the topics Visser addresses herself to for over three decades, yet she pointed to patterns and connections I have never perceived. Her intelligence, eloquence, and wit gave me a thrill that I experience rarely these days.

She received her doctorate in classics, and she uses her erudition to trace the influence of ancient Greece on our present thinking. The importance of becoming aware of this influence lays in the fact that

what you are unaware of controls you. We cannot rid ourselves of the poison of certain ancient attitudes if it remains invisible. "The English word 'fate' is from Latin *fatum*, which means a thing said. All events were laid out in advance, written in a book of fate, spoken, and hence fixed before ever the events occurred. A curse is a *fatum*: a thing said that must inevitably come to pass; a curse is a matter of time, not space," writes Visser, and later she continues, "Destiny, on the other hand, as destination, is the final outcome. It can also mean the line of life, but it always tends to remember and stress the end. Here, however, end means aim, what we strive for; it is not merely finality, the act of dying. Destiny therefore includes striving, intentionality, our own will." If fate is imprisonment, then destiny is the escape. Visser's central theme is that an "important aspect of the Christian revolution was a new resolve to break out of the ancient Greek and Roman view that human beings are in thrall to fate. Christianity's roots in Judaism provided it with a perennially powerful story about hope and freedom: that of the Exodus, or Way Out. The picture is a journey of a people out of bondage to liberation."

Dreams, death, taxes, anything we have no control over, predispose us to a belief in fate. And that belief renders us powerless, therefore unhappy, hopeless, helpless, despairing, depressed. One is reduced to enduring one's fate. One has to accept one's

Being Human

by reinhart

is there nothing we can do,
is there nothing we can say,
to make our dreams come true,
to get for what we pray.

what is the solution
to let us live in peace;
to dispel the confusion and illusion
and let the madness cease.

today i saw a photograph;
a lady young and lovely.
her eyes would sparkle as she'd laugh –
i'd never seen such beauty.

but the war's been waged forever;
the have nots and the have.
and victory has never
come to the rod or the staff.

regardless of all the revolutionaries,
and all the evangelists,
and the philosopher who parries
and thrusts into the mists.

and now this photograph i saw,
with love shining in her eyes –
she was miles above the law,
devoid of all disguise.

since the dawn of recorded time
we have struggled to be free;
we have gone from charity to crime,
and to every conceivable ideology.

each one tries to change the system,
from within or without –
each with his own particular wisdom;
either with faith or with doubt.

and i remember the young lass
with the light in her eyes,
with her kind face bright like glass;
her soft lips of a generous size.

but still i keep on wondering
why millions must suffer, starve and die.
i grow weary of my questioning.
sometimes all i want to say is so-long, good-bye.

and so the rest of us search for a way
to tow the line and pull,
but we are lost both night and day,
and much less beautiful.

yet there's no crease upon her brow;
no reason for her to frown.
she's smiling always, then and now –
and wears good humour as a crown.

but still the holy grail eludes us;
we can find no cure.
alas! 'tis we might be the virus;
but we might never be exactly sure.

in the end we come to ask
is it all futility;
is existence just some sort of mask
or is it really reality.

but i keep coming back to this fair maid,
which distracts me from my task,
and momentarily i am unafraid
and have nothing more to ask.

inevitably i must turn back
to the problem here at hand.
although the answers still i lack,
i am forced to make a stand.

'tis life itself we must address,
and how it ought to be.
and our culpability confess,
and our part in it to see.

i look again at this young girl,
whose beauty comes from within,
whose love is like a precious pearl,
whose love i dream to win.

and i gaze upon her glowing face,
and through her eyes her soul.
and i see her aura filled with grace,
and i recognize each role.

but is utopia a fantasy,
is paradise forever lost.
are all our plans but vanity;
should we keep our fingers crossed.

and if we can imagine it,
be it however new;
and if we may apply our wit,
can we not make it true.

is it then our destiny
to struggle without rest.
does all dissolve into absurdity,
or some eternal, cosmic jest.

but still i find hope in that woman's eyes,
and her tender lips so full;
and it's love in her soul i recognize,
that makes her beautiful.

My Madness

by Jim Gifford

my madness
a crucible of suffering
has redeemed me
from the busyness
 of an insane world
as I, here now
a contemplative loafer
have emerged
 from the universal abyss
to be a seer of solace
speaking words
written with the sweat of my soul
painting the dance of life
 in the music of verse
 as my eagle spirit
soars into the heart of eternity
on the vision quest
 of my madness

River and Stone

by D. Paul Strashok

Run, river, run
flowing so rich and so free;
run, river, run
flowing through you and through me.

And in the middle of every river
is a stone, a rock, a soul
that can be used in the hand of the King
if you'll let Him take control.

Run, river, run
smoothing each stone in the flow
'til the rocks themselves shout for joy
and the hand of the King they'll know.

As David of old took up the sling
so each stone can fly sure and true
to slay the Goliath of vanity mind
then the King gets His glory due.

Flow, river, flow
taking the past away
flowing into the future
and the dawning of Millennial day.

Seek, river, seek
seek out each restless heart
granting joy for godly sorrow
and to each your wisdom impart.

The stones from the flow
will all shine in the bright new day
when the sorrows and cares of a strife-torn world
have vanished and passed away.

"We'll Go Back Through Time"

by Frank G. Sterle Jr.

"The sky's literally falling, you know," claims Denny, looking up into the clear sky, then at Ned. Ned, exhibiting paranoia and concern, queries, "What do you mean?"

"Just that—the sky's falling. It's falling! It's falling!"

"Don't you mean the planet's flying up, or flying upwards, sideways, downwards," Ned subtly counters, "through space, like a spaceship-earth; isn't that what they call it, 'Spaceship Earth'?"

"It doesn't matter how or what it's called," abruptly retorts a frustrated Denny. "But, yeah, that's basically what I mean."

Denny, placing his hand on his abdomen, asks, "You're hungry, aren't you, Ned? *I sure am.*"

"Starved!"

"Then let's go to Safeway," Denny advises, "it's the safest way." His word-play wit leaves him with a smug expression.

Ned, rather confused, replies, "Safest way to what?"

Denny shrugs: "To pinch some grub. You're broke ... remember?"

"*Pinch*, meaning steal." Ned, raised as an extremely honest lad, feels serious resignation. He was reared with his father's belief that it's morally and ethically preferable to forgo \$100 that does belong to you rather than to retain \$50 that does not belong to you.

"Well, duhhh, Neddy!" says Denny, gently pushing Ned forward. "Let's go. Now."

Ned's worried and stops walking. "I don't like this ... What if we get caught?"

"Then we get caught. We have to eat, damn it!"

"Yeah, I guess ..." Again, he's gently pushed by Denny into walking. "... But maybe there's a food bank around or something else."

"No, there's no food bank. It's Safeway or no way: we starve, plain and simple. Besides, Safeway's grub is a lot better than any food bank's—especially those purple grapes we love so much."

"Yeah ... but you eat them too fast," says a resigned Ned, "somebody will eventually notice."

"Oh, you're just being sour grapes," Denny says, again wearing an expression of smugness at his witty pun.

Ned's only remaining concern, and one eagerly held: "But this time I also want to eat some pistachios."

"Fine—pistachios," agrees Denny, while pushing Ned along, firmly. "Now let's go."

An undiagnosed, untreated schizophrenic, Ned, at 34 years of age and of timid demeanour, basically exists in another reality while residing on Kingsway near Metrotown (Burnaby, B.C.). For the first time in his life, he's developed a serious case of mental illness, one that has left him in a precarious state of mind. Indeed, he has actually unknowingly abandoned his Toyota pick-up truck at some unknown location, thus leaving it to be eventually stripped down by thieves for parts and rendering it virtually worthless. In fact, in his precarious state of mind, it seems he doesn't even know that his truck exists.

Ned's hallucinatory companion, Denny, is rather surly and pretentiously-intelligent, and he accompanies Ned almost everywhere while rarely offering a supply of good advice; Ned sees and converses with him frequently, usually when Ned requires food and shelter. However, during some mental-illness episodes when his thought process goes awry, Ned is still left quite susceptible to bizarre acts and dangerous situations.

Moving along, though with a sense of bewilderment, Ned queries, mostly to himself, "I wonder what makes those grapes purple?"

Rolling his eyes, Denny irritatingly replies, "I guess the same aspect that makes other fruits their unique colour. What in the hell got that question into your head?!"

"I don't know ... Others have probably asked the same question, to find out ..."

Denny cuts Ned off and arrogantly chuckles: "You're really convinced that others would give a damn about the colour of grapes?" Then, in a mocking tone of voice, Denny rhetorically adds: "*Since the beginning of time, mankind has queried the reason for the purple in purple grapes!* Come on, Ned—get real! What's wrong with your head?!"

(Continued on next page)

"Nothing's wrong with my head," a rather offended Ned shoots back.

"I know, I know," says Denny, patronizingly, "you were *just wondering*."

Denny's surly attitude shuts-up Ned for a while, which results in passers-by on a fairly busy mid-day Kingsway stopping to look at Ned talking to nothing. He, they, walk two blocks to the local Safeway store. He's been there three times before but didn't get stopped for his thieving; Ned's dialogue with an invisible companion troubled the store's staff, who did not want any trouble over the theft of such minimal amounts of product. Also, Ned's obvious mental illness elicited sympathy from most of the store's staff.

Entering the store, delusional thoughts race through Ned's medically untreated mind: 1) Where in the GVRD exactly are they? 2) When and where exactly did Denny come from? Not that it significantly matters to Ned, because Denny makes important decisions for them both [Ned was never good at deciding, even prior to the onset of his full-blown schizophrenia—decisions that get him fed and sheltered]. 3) Concerning Ned the most, how long will Denny stick around to assist Ned with his physical needs, regardless of Denny's surly nature?

"It's just that the grapes are purple on the outside," Ned continues, "and fleshy yellow-green on the inside and it ..."

"Forget about it—O.K.!" Denny angrily reprimands Ned. "Damn it."

They reach Safeway's fruit and nut departments/sections and begin eating, and other shoppers look on as Ned talks to empty air with a full mouth. They then return to Kingsway quite satisfied of appetite.

"What if we get into trouble eating there like that?" asks Ned.

"Then we get into trouble," says Denny, brushing off Ned's concerns. "So what?"

"It's wrong, isn't it?" Ned rhetorically asks. "Stealing, I mean."

"It's wrong if you've got money and/or you can go without."

Ned feels around in his pants and jacket pockets, worried: "Hey, I lost my key!"

Denny, somewhat dismissively, asks, "What key? What's it for?"

"I don't remember exactly what it's for," replies Ned, starting to panic. "I just know it's gone!"

Denny's quite insensitively incredulous: "What?! You don't know what it was for, but you're concerned nonetheless that it's missing?!"

"Well ... Yes," says Ned, now rather embarrassed.

Exhaling forcefully, Denny advises, "Then retrace your steps ... Where did you go today? You did lose it today, didn't you?"

"Well, yes, I think so."

"Well, let's assume it was today."

"Retrace my steps, eh?" Ned says with an air of enlightenment.

"Yeah; simple."

"You mean go backwards? ... Like, backwards—through time?"

"Yeah!" answers Denny, behaving rather exasperated. "What else would I mean. Think, man!"

Somewhat embarrassed and timid, Ned tells him, "I don't know ... I guess ..."

"Well, you 'guess' too much, my friend. Now, let's start at the end."

"At the end?" asks Ned, puzzled. "You mean ..."

"I mean the last place you were—are—I mean the place you're standing, now."

"O.K." says Ned. "What now?"

Throwing up his arms, Denny suggests, "Start walking backwards, to where we came from."

"To where we came from?"

"Yeah ... Let's go."

Ned begins walking backwards, turning his head around every few steps to avoid collision and misstep. Believing he's actually traveling back through time, he retraces his steps of that day—until he's stopped by a police vehicle and two officers. They inquire of Ned as to why he's walking backwards and in a public place. He looks at Denny and asks him which of them should explain the situation [i.e., the missing key] to the officers. One of the officers asks Ned how he's feeling. The next thing he knows, he and Denny are on the psych ward of Burnaby General and awaiting diagnosis by a psychiatrist.

Denny, quite pissed: "You just *had to* tell those two cops everything, didn't you!"

Quote From the Roundtable **by M.D. Arthurs**

"Those who would sacrifice freedom for security,
lose on both accounts."

Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity **in the Homosexuality Debate**

(InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400,
Downers Grove, IL 60515, 1995, 240 pages.
www.ivpress.com / Ph. 630-734-4014 / Fax: 630-734-4200)

By Thomas E. Schmidt
Review Essay by Byron Fraser
(continued from Summer, 2003 issue)

Chapter 3: "Sexuality from the Beginning"

Here Schmidt takes a hard look at what we can discern about "God's intent" vis-à-vis sexuality from the Bible and what are its (Christian-ethically) "acceptable" forms. There are, he argues persuasively, only three: heterosexual marriage, abstinence (a phase properly awaiting or in between marriage), and celibacy (a "special gift" for the few born/called to higher service [or, in the language of evolution-of-mind sociobiology theorists, such as Tim Leary, et. al., those born neurologically hardwired at a level of Consciousness Circuitry already automatically bypassing "The Wall"—or typical Domestication Level Circuitry, etc.]). And I agree that this teleological approach makes very good common sense; whatever "man's" animalistic background may have been as a species, clearly the design intent—on both physical and non-physical levels (re sexuality)—has been to creatively/reproductively "rise above" this in a direction quite congruent with traditional Christian ethics. (The downside of Christian-metaphysics field-immersion, on the other hand, is that bad/ "deviant" behavior is "socially produced" proximate to, or as a corollary of, proving—but even more especially, enforcing—"its" case or raison d'être [see also, note No. 4].) However, I believe his argument is assailable/questionable on at least two or three points:

1) Granting that homosexual marriage-like "couplings" (as opposed to homosexual acts, per se) are only a recent historical phenomena—with a very poor track record, and only practiced by a minority in the "homosexual community" (pp. 105-08)—still: isn't it grossly hypocritical that Christian heterosexuals (including Schmidt) consider routine sexual "pleasuring" outside of any explicit reproductive function within marriage totally O.K. (or even a marital duty/obligation, as Paul instructs us) while, at the same time, deeming regularized homosexual "pleasuring" (because it serves no reproductive

function) as beyond the pale according to The Plan? More (though I realize—again—this is far from "the norm") : isn't it conceivable, at least, that such longer-term homosexual couplings as there are, do exhibit a psychical "joined in the flesh" bonding virtually indistinguishable from hetero marrieds?

2) While I agree that if what you mean by "being a Christian" on this issue is following what both Jesus is recorded as having said, and what the other relevant Biblical passages literally say about homosexuality, you would have to—with Schmidt—come down foursquare against it, the fact is that many Christians (particularly of the Paulist persuasion) will tell you—I think on pretty solid, but separate, grounds—that that's not what "being a Christian" is all about. In fact, this is a main argument of "revision-ist" author G.A. Edwards (quoted at p. 35 and elsewhere) in Gay/Lesbian Liberation: A Biblical Perspective (New York: Pilgram, 1984) when he invokes Paul's famous baptismal formula (Galatians 3:28) to the effect that: "In Christ there is no longer male and female, slave nor free, Jew nor Greek... [gay nor straight]", etc. For such Christians—and I've personally met many of this variety—the historic person Jesus and/or his teachings (and even, one might add, the entire corpus of literal Biblical teachings) are entirely secondary to what they see as the main Christian enterprise: Group Mind-Field Subsumption in a, quite frankly, this-worldly "Corporate Entity" of Consciousness Immersion they term: "Christ". Who is Schmidt to say that homosexuals cannot be psychically immersed in this field, just like heteros—or that this isn't a large part of what "being a Christian" has come to mean? At least it's a powerful argument and one he hasn't, in my view, sufficiently addressed.

3) There remains the problem of God's culpability in/for "sin". As Lysander Spooner expressed it so well (in An Essay, On Man's Accountability For His Belief [1834]): "God, by having so constituted our

minds, has made himself author of that wrong". In short, it is an inescapable logical non sequitur that, if God was the Creator of All Things— and if progress towards a Higher Good is both possible and His Goal/ The Plan —He had it Absolutely Right in the first place (and only "man" was/is to blame for, plainly put, "fucking things down"/The Fall into Ma-terre, etc.). The only way out of this logical conundrum that I can see for theists is to say: O.K., God didn't get it right in the first place, but His intentions were/are good, and He's trying the best He knows how; He's an Evolutionary God whose growth is co-extensive with man (Jesus Christ having still been a valid Advance Model for where He wants us to "go", as a species, etc.). Therefore: "Evil" is just (has just been) God changing His Mind. (A notable recent exposition of this point of view is Rupert Sheldrake's The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God [Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1991]). Of course, if God's a "sinner" too, it's pretty difficult for His Earth-("God"?) bound representatives to get moralistic in contradistinction to being merely ethical!

Chapter 4: "Romans 1: 26-27 : The Main Text in Context"

In this chapter, Schmidt ably demonstrates, on the basis of a strict philological examination— almost word for word, line for line —of the Greek original of this quintessential Scriptural passage, that the recent attempted Christian-homosexual "revisionist" reinterpretations (most notably those of John Boswell and William L. Countryman) really do amount to just so much spurious and unsupportable claptrap. He puts the case much more politely than this, but that's the sum and substance of his exhaustive analysis— and in no uncertain terms.

Chapter 5: "From Sodom to Sodom"

This chapter's title is derived from the fact that both the first biblical passage (Gen. 19) and the last (Jude 7) relevant to the book's subject-matter refer to the city of Sodom. And Prof. Schmidt engages in further extensive and thorough exegesis of everything noteworthy within the bounded circle in between.

Chapter 6: "The Price of Love"

In many ways, this is the most outstanding and, quite literally, "amazing" chapter in the book. As he says: "this information,...to my knowledge is here collected and thoroughly documented for the first time". To my knowledge, too; I've never seen, or even heard, anything like it. He has culled statistics from approximately 200 scholarly, secular medical and scientific publications (no popular media or Christian writers) reflecting the most recent research data— and

had his findings checked for accuracy by four physicians with relevant specialties —which show the incredible amount of psychological and physical harm that routinely results from (or "along with") same-sex practice. And he asks the very poignant and pertinent question: "Does homosexual behavior incur a sufficient risk of harm to self or others to call it wrong on health grounds alone?"

Under the chapter's two subheadings on "The Prevalence of Same-Sex Practice" and "Patterns of Practice", here are just a few notable random excerpt samplers:

"[The decades-old popular assumption that approximately 10% of the population are homosexual was based on the seriously flawed Kinsey reports of 1948 and 1953 and is completely outmoded] in the light of more than a dozen recent studies that consistently put the incidence of homosexual practice at around 1 percent." (p. 102)

"The NORC [National Opinion Research Center— located at the University of Chicago] data provide an estimate that of the approximately 6 percent who experienced same-sex relations ever, the number of currently active homosexuals is 0.6-0.7 percent of the U.S. adult population.

...The [U.S.] homosexual population— that is, those adults who practice same-sex relations exclusively —is about 1.5 million." (pp. 103 & 105)

Note: If these figures seem counterintuitively low to those whose experience is mainly with large non-rural settings (as was the case with this author), it is because the overwhelming majority of the general homosexual population are concentrated in metropolitan or urban areas.

"Only 10 percent of the male subjects and 28 percent of the female subjects were found to fit into this category ['quasi-marriage' cohabitation]." (p. 106)

"If we project these numbers [on relationship duration and promiscuity— even amongst the nominally 'close-coupled' minority] out over several years, the number of homosexual men who experience anything like lifelong fidelity becomes, statistically speaking, almost meaningless.

Promiscuity among homosexual men is not a mere stereotype, and it is not merely the majority experience— it is virtually the only experience....In short, there is practically no comparison possible to heterosexual marriage in terms of either fidelity or longevity." (p. 108)

"47 percent of...male homosexual subjects had a history of alcohol abuse...51 percent had a history of drug abuse (compared to 7 percent of males generally). A comparable study of female homosexuals revealed 35 percent with a history of alcohol abuse (compared to 5 percent of females generally)." (p. 113)

"Depression is [a] serious mental disorder faced by a disproportionate number of male homosexuals...40 percent...had a history of major depressive disorder (compared to 3 percent of males generally)...A study of female homosexuals found that 37 percent had a history of depression....([Many other] studies...detail other psychiatric affective disorders that occur with greater frequency among homosexuals, including anxiety, tension, loneliness, paranoia and eating disorders. [Footnote 85, p. 205])" (p. 113)

"...40 percent of male homosexuals and 39 percent of female homosexuals had either seriously contemplated or attempted suicide....[The actual attempted suicide rate] amounts to...double...among female homosexuals and a sixfold rate among male homosexuals [as compared to the general heterosexual population]." (p. 114)

"Substance abuse, depression and suicide are virtually undisputed as epidemic problems, but they are by no means the only problems. One other concern that merits attention is the disproportionate number of male homosexuals who prefer sex with boys. Homosexual men are not necessarily pedophiles. Still, several studies reveal that while no more than 2 percent of male adults are homosexual, approximately 35 percent of pedophiles are homosexual. Further, since homosexual pedophiles victimize far more children than do heterosexual pedophiles (150 to 20), approximately 80 percent of pedophilic victims are boys who are molested by adult males. The number of boys victimized is approximately 3.2 million. [Add to this the fact that more men are raped every year in the U.S. than women—mainly due to the circumstances (and high percentage of the general population) in American prisons—and the dimensions of homosexual predatory behavior assume significant proportions.—B.F.] It is impossible to determine the number of male pedophiles, but they may constitute as much as 10 percent of male homosexuals [source cited]." (pp. 114-15)

Note: An interesting sideline tidbit some (like myself) may not have been aware of—but surprised to learn—is that the much-touted and currently "in vogue" (with all manner of Leftists and virtually every Left-Feminist I've ever talked to) French philosopher,

Michel Foucault, was "a self-proclaimed pedophile" (p. 49). Go figure!

"By comparison to even the most promiscuous segment of the general population, the male homosexual 75 percent lifetime STD incidence rate and 40 percent annual STD incidence rate are remarkable....Overall, the general population has a 16.9 percent STD incidence rate, 1.6 percent for the previous twelve months." (pp. 121-22)

Prof. Schmidt also includes an extensive update on the HIV/AIDS situation, the numerous viral diseases and other physical ailments which are rampant, and the recent increasing rather than decreasing incidence of unsafe sex practice. He concludes—in brief —: "...sadly, these and other problems are distributed throughout the homosexual population, so that the minority—evidently the very small minority—are those who are not part of the health crisis." (p. 128)

Chapter 7: "The Great Nature-Nurture Debate"

In this chapter, Schmidt outlines an extremely intelligent "Multiple-Variant Model" with subsections on biological, social constructionist, early childhood "developmental", moral environment, behaviorist, and volitional causation theories—ably demonstrating that differing proportional elements of these factors most often apply. He also surveys the reality of historical same-sex practice compared with what we have today. And finally, he looks at what's available and what have (and have not) been the success rates vis-à-vis various treatment/therapy options for those who might want this.

First off, on the historical angle, here are a few interesting collated excerpts:

"As the history and comparison of cultures shows, there is not a constant percentage of homosexual people simply waiting to be born into every society, unaffected by discouraging or encouraging factors....(p. 149)

Throughout the history of human cultures, no society has approved of homosexuality as we know it today: long-term relationships of mutual consent between adults....there was a period of time during which upper-class Greek and Roman males alternated between women and boys [almost invariably giving up relationships with the latter when the majority of them moved on to heterosexual marriage] for sexual gratification, but approval did not extend to sex between adults, to passive partners or to long-term relationships....(p. 135)

...— sex between females was almost always and everywhere strongly condemned....(pp. 65-66)

...In China and Hindu India, whose people constitute half the world's population, homosexuality is virtually unknown except as a 'Western vice'. (p. 136)"

For the record, on the general state of genetic/biologic hypotheses— which, as Prof. Schmidt says, have a history "Similar [to] theories about depression, schizophrenia and alcoholism [and] have come and gone after further research failed to confirm initial findings" —, here is a definitive summary statement from two top research psychiatrists on their review of research to date (W. Byne and B. Parsons, *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 [March 1993]):

"There is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory, just as there is no compelling evidence to support any singular psychosocial explanation. While all behavior must have an ultimate biologic substrate, the appeal of current biologic explanations may derive more from dissatisfaction with the present status of psychosocial explanations than from a substantiating body of experimental data. Critical review shows the evidence favoring a biologic theory to be lacking." (— quoted at p. 140)

Most developmental theories (which I personally think carry the most explanatory weight) stress undue matriarchal or patriarchal dominance via consciousness-field superimposition and subliminal (often sexually-exploitative) boundary violations which cause a gender-identity "imbalance" through psychical overwhelm of the "impressionable" ("imprint-vulnerable", in the language of sociobiology) child. This most often occurs attendant to "family dynamics" trauma and, in the graphic language of John Bradshaw, constitutes "emotional incest" or "de facto rape" by the mother, father or significant (adult) other. Prof. Schmidt writes:

"...In the classical psychoanalytic explanation, ...something goes wrong with the [childhood] relationship with the same-sex parent, and the individual remains in sexual immaturity or incompleteness, desiring the same sex and (often unconsciously) hostile toward the opposite sex.

...a massive amount of data [associates] adult male homosexuality with the presence in childhood of a distant, unavailable and rejecting father and an intensely affectionate, domineering, intimate mother [and a similar— but not exactly diametrically reverse — correlation obtains with female homosexuals]. Alternatively, the loss of a parent through death or divorce may disturb the parent-child relationship." (p. 144)

"How [then]", he asks, "do we explain the person whose parents were well-adjusted, who experienced no childhood trauma, who exhibited no preadolescent cross-gender behavior and who nevertheless ends up with (and perhaps remembers nothing but) a homosexual preference?" And the answer may very well lie, again, in what "imprint-vulnerability" theory has to tell us about especially acute susceptibility at puberty together with "the recruitment factor":

"...there is a disproportionate problem of sexual molestation of children among male homosexuals....it is disturbing to find that although under 4 percent of boys are molested by men, a recent major study found that the rate of childhood molestation by men among homosexual or bisexual men was nearly ten times that (35 percent). It is also notable that 75 percent of homosexual men report their first homosexual experience prior to the age of sixteen, as compared to 22 percent of heterosexual men reporting their first heterosexual experience." (p. 148)

A very interesting overlap between the development theories about transpersonal consciousness-field ("illegitimate"/unbalancing) superimposition and biologic brain studies research is "the fact that homosexual men are much more likely to be left-handed, dyslexic and stutterers [while homosexual women are far more likely to exhibit powerful verbal/linguistic and analytic/cognitive skills]— all factors related to the development of brain hemispheres." (p. 138) Of course this "totally fits" with everything Left Brain/Right Brain theorists have been telling us about the gender-specific characteristics of the respective spheres for three decades now— so it makes perfect sense that The Man would "move in" (superimpose) on the Left Side (of women) and The Woman would "move in" (superimpose) on the Right Side (of men), with some physiological evidence available about how this has affected growth functions over time. But, as with twin studies, the evidence actually supports an etiological sequence with the non-material ("environmental") factors preceding the material (seemingly "nature-based") ones.

As far as therapy and "healing" programs go the empirical data is very much a "mixed bag". On the one hand, what has been "generally available" has been very unsuccessful— on a par with treatments for drug addiction (and with many parallels to "the addict personality"/this-is- "who I am" syndromes/problems). But, on the other hand, there are many "success stories" of people who have come out of homosexuality and made a complete transition to heterosexuality— plus certain select long-term intensive treatment programs with consistent results in the 55-70% range. The "key"

in these latter seems to be stick-with-it-ness along with a completely alternative (to the homosexual lifestyle) supportive environment sustained over time. (Again, very similar to successfully treating drug addiction.)

Chapter 8: "Straight & Narrow?"

By way of recapitulation, I'll just give you Prof. Schmidt's "Summary Statements" as he lists them:

"1) Scripture must be the primary and final authority for sexual morality.

2) Homosexual acts, according to Romans 1: 26-27 (and supported by several other biblical passages), depart from the only acceptable avenue for the full expression of sexuality, which is heterosexual marriage.

3) Homosexual acts constitute an active negation of marriage, not merely a variant expression of sexuality.

4) Homosexual practice involves a high probability of harmful associated phenomena: promiscuity, substance abuse, depression, suicide and pedophilia.

5) Male homosexual acts involve practices that are injurious to the body and that involve a high risk of infectious disease.

6) While a homosexual orientation is probably caused for each individual by several factors in combination, at the level of action each person is morally accountable.

7) Change is possible."

He also, by way of conclusion, reaches for some sort of conciliatory distinction between "Orientation and Sin" (pp. 164-65):

"...It is impossible, and probably meaningless, to assign a degree of personal choice to a sexual desire. It is not helpful, therefore, to talk about the sinfulness of an orientation in the same way that we talk about the sinfulness of an action.

That is not to say that our orientations are morally neutral, but only that we do not choose them in the way that we choose actions. A sexual desire may involve different levels of responsibility for different people, and in that invisible and complex realm only God is qualified to assign culpability...."

But this will not do. Because we see that he is precisely wrong about No. 6 above— his base premise that all actions, ipso facto, must entail some element of consciously willed freedom of choice (and therefore be subject to his attempted indictment for "culpability", "guilt", and so on). This is a commonplace fallacy and, though we can understand why the good Prof. thinks it is his duty as a Christian ethicist to make these pronouncements, the fact is that many purposeful actions (and especially ones that so obviously fall under

the category of obsessive/compulsive behavior, as so much homosexual activity does [see, again, Dr. Ty C. Colbert's extensive treatment in Broken Brains or Wounded Hearts, note No. 5]) emphatically do not represent conscious freewill choices but the motivations of "the protective subconscious" of deeply violated and wounded selves. The fact that we all have a capacity for freewill should not blind us to the fact that we are not always— and others have not always been—free to exercise that capacity. And I don't think it is "helpful" to impute this sort of "culpability" to homosexual "sinners"— or any others for that matter. To my mind, Jesus certainly seemed to fully comprehend this too: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (St. John 8:11) would seem to be much more His quintessential WAY, incorporating this more perceptive psychological insight. But perhaps his belief in the inseparableness of Himself and God-in-Heaven allowed Him to judge correctly with respect to our Original Innocence in that "invisible realm" which others could not say they knew?

The question remains as to whether or not all the "Gay Pride" emphasis on "choice" and "freedom" is not simply a brave attempt to salvage self-esteem in the face of the desperate reality and truth that, as Prof. Schmidt rather starkly puts it: "the...overwhelming evidence [is] that the homosexual life is anything but gay" (p. 116 [emphasis mine— B.F.]). Is this merely reinforcing internalized oppression by externalizing it— that is, by "accepting" a negative other-imposed social construct rather than doing something about it? A pathetic after-the-fact rationalization for not being able to realize who (sexually/romantically), at a fundamental level, one would have liked to have been— of not being able to admit one's (personhood- "crushed") perceived "failure", one's second-best— or last-best (and, for all intents and purposes, forced) "choice" to oneself (— or others)? "Making a virtue of necessity", as he also terms it? Well, I don't know; the evidence on "simulation of complementarity" in same-sex practice would seem to strongly suggest this. My only thought, by way of analogy, would be to pass along what I told some people who wanted me to get involved in "Mad Pride" a few years ago: I've never been particularly proud of having been designated "mentally ill", however, I am proud of being good-&-mad at some of the people and circumstances which "conspired" in the attempt to drive me crazy! Call me paranoid.

In any case, my few cavils notwithstanding, I cannot other than commend Prof. Schmidt for the sheer tremendous effort he put into preparing this work for us. Wherever one might choose to ultimately stand on this controversy of our times, we must all be thankful for this inestimably valuable gift of scholarship he has bequeathed to us. This is a teacher.

In closing, I just want to note that this Ol' Strange-Attractor Singularity (6) was somewhat bemused with these few comments in the last chapter:

"...single [celibate] people may develop extraordinary gifts to serve and to understand....

...I do not pretend to understand fully the possibilities presented to the celibate person. But I am confident of this: it is only an aberration to equate the absence of sexual gratification with the absence of full personhood, the denial of being or the deprivation of joy.

...the Christian tradition of celibacy affirms that there is something different [about this Path], closer in some ways to the example of Jesus himself." (pp. 167-68)

Of course, many are consoled in the belief that the actual WAY of Jesus was merely representative of the quintessential "Fool on the Hill (/ 'Mound'" — "you walked on water, and we're sure glad you did;

more 'fresh fish' to fry on 'the beach'; thank you very much St. Nick for all the 'free gifts' you were too stupid to put a price-tag on", and all of that), however, I'm still of a (OUT-caste?) mind to think that that may be a somewhat base, or ignoble, in-terre-pretation of the Life-Message of the friend I have in Jesus.

Notes:

6)

"...strange attractors were engines of information...Strange attractors, conflating order and disorder, gave a challenging twist to the question of measuring a system's entropy. Strange attractors served as efficient mixers. They created unpredictability...they created information where none existed."

— James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science*, 1987, p. 258. ■

Thanksgiving Day

by Ms. Neide M. Dos Santos

It was my second week at Triage Shelter, on Powell Street, in the Downtown Eastside. Besides feeling depressed, I felt sorry for the people around me. Thanksgiving Day was coming and I could not forget the great moments that I had spent with my English-Canadian friends and family, in Montreal. I thought it could be a good idea to bake my best tropical pineapple pie for dinner.

Early in the morning, I spoke with Connie, the shelter's coordinator. It was clear on her face that she did not enjoy the idea. Yet, she talked to her director, on my behalf. Finally, I got permission to bake my pies for the thirty-five residents and homeless persons who were expected.

Thanksgiving day, as soon as I had finished breakfast, I dressed in a white uniform and went to the kitchen. We were four people; the chef, a kind and blond English-Canadian, his assistant, a gay man from Trinidad & Tobago, and a young Chinese lady, to help me. At the same time, they were preparing pumpkin pies, the traditional dessert for this occasion.

By the end of the day, I was exhausted, but feeling good about myself. My intention was to make everyone around me happy despite the fact that life could not be more miserable.

Before dinner, my friends Debbie and Don phoned from Montreal, worried about my situation. Also, a bouquet and card arrived from Debbie and her children. I was touched to tears by their kindness. I shared it with the staff, placing it at the reception area, where everybody could enjoy it. I saved one flower for my bedroom.

At seven o'clock they began serving dinner and I could observe peoples' reactions. The only happiness on their faces was the pleasure of a good and generous meal. Their eyes were so far away, lost in good memories. My beautiful and delicious caramel pineapple pies were refused by all those gathered, because they did not match the day. During the long week ahead they had to eat my pies for dessert, maybe as punishment? Just God knows... ■

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 (2003-2004) 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. Tel: 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 604-733-5570.

Named after Vincent van Gough's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, **Gallery Gachet** works to provide a safe, borderless place of artistic expression. It strives to be a place of healing and a center of artistic excellence. Founded in 1994 we provide opportunities to exhibit, perform, publish and sell work and to offer a place for support and community. We aim to use the canvas of the outside world to educate and demystify the public on issues related to mental health and abuse.

Call for Volunteers! Please call the Gallery for more information. Tel: 604-687-2468

Or visit our website www.gachet.org

GALLERY GACHET, 88 East Cordova St. , Vancouver BC, V6A 1K2

Public Resource Centre in the Areas of Mental Health, Wellness and Mental Illness. Books, videos, journals on loan for 2 weeks. Working and reading space, and internet access computers available.

Open: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Location: CMHA (Vancouver-Burnaby), 175 West Broadway Phone: 604-872-4902, Ext. 236 (Alan)

* Our newsletter 'All About Us' is created by Resource Centre volunteers and staff.

The University of Ottawa in cooperation with **Our Voice** present Alternatives Site
<http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~nstaman/alternatives/>

***Our Voice** is a publication containing viewpoints of the psychiatrized since 1987.

The CIF sponsored **Tardive Dyskinesia Group** meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 2:00 pm at the Self-Help Resource Association, #306 - 1212 W. Broadway. Call 604-733-6186 for more information.

