

In A Nutshell

Spring

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Rhymes With Work

Part Two

(Part One appeared in the Winter/Spring 2002 issue of the In A Nutshell)

by Frank Molnar

"Real work – having something to lose – as an incentive for people to break out of that cycle, to build their lives on firm footing – not just from crisis to crisis – and to take pleasure in their own very human development."

- Pat Capponi. *Beyond the Crazy House, Changing the Future of Madness.*

Of the many contributing factors, which abetted my recovery from a major mental illness, none has been more significant than that of being steadily employed for the last five years. It was within the framework of those years that I defined what having a mental illness meant to me. This I did by taking risks, such as leaving a job I disliked in the hope of securing another I did, when all I had going was the mere intent to apply myself to the latter. I challenged myself and my beliefs, stood up for what I thought was right despite pressure from the status quo to conform to a certain way of doing things. I dealt with the matter of disclosing my mental illness to prospective employers. The same employers with whom I'd later share the joy I felt upon having been asked to speak on the topic of stigma at a local mental health community event or education series. I faced serious doubts, even genuine fear at times when unsure or unable to perform a given task. I questioned my capabilities, and combed through a list of my very real limitations. I reached out to others for aid, sometimes desperately, while trying hard to proclaim myself a worthy person. I put up with the jeers and all too familiar bantering of fellow workers, who at times thought my behaviour erratic, even odd. I felt the full range of social anxiety, the stress brought on by pending bill and rent payments. Worse still, I had to deal with the inner rantings of an often-deflated self-esteem.

"I challenged myself and my beliefs, stood up for what I thought was right."

Could I have achieved the same level of recovery had I chose to collect a disability pension each month, attend a drop-in daily and apply myself to other pursuits? Indeed yes, without a doubt I could have, even did so for two full years following my

discharge from V.G.H., in 1997. In my case, the decision to re-enter the work force was more an obligation, at first, than a personal choice. It seemed the extra money I was receiving from welfare in order to clothe, feed and care for my son wasn't enough. To weigh matters even more, my ex-spouse was struggling as well, at the time, with only sporadic employment to fend off penury. For me, the final straw came when she related, through teary eyes, how the electric company had shut off the power in her place, hence spoiling two weeks worth of groceries.

I enrolled in the JobStart program the next day; completed an intense four month session and was working part-time in the hotel/hospitality trade as soon

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as the course ended. I've honed the skills I had with those I later acquired and went on to work at up to four part-time jobs at a time, shuffling my work schedule, as need be, to amass a forty hour week. I've saved money, more than aptly provided for my ex-spouse and son and even attended a college course at Douglas College last fall. This course, as well as my own personal experience, has opened the door and allowed me to work in the mental health field while yet retaining my lucrative position in the hotel/hospitality trade.

Looking back, I find it ironic that my decision to re-enter the work force had to do with much mixed human emotions such as: anger, trepidation, fear, a gnawing sense of duty as well as guilt but so little to do with the fact that I had been diagnosed with a major mental illness. It seems that whenever the chips were down, whenever I was hemmed in by circumstances, I always reacted in similar human fashion. I took into account my options and designed the path ahead in my own way.

I know that having a mental illness can range from being a viable concern to a hurdle or even an impenetrable barrier for anyone striving to satisfy their very own human wants and needs. The self-erosion caused by a psychotic break and subsequent hospital stay- for example, the fear of it ever happening again- can silence even the most vivacious spirit. Often the basic intellectual reaction is to withdraw further into the self. The trouble here being that the further we go, the more of our crazy selves we feel we must bury, the more out of touch and ignorant of our humanness we become.

In citing paid employment as the most significant factor abetting my recovery from a bipolar illness, I certainly do not wish to shun the other facets of support I received along the way. It always seemed that the more willing I was to help myself along, the more others were there to make it happen for me. A Big Thanks to you all, you know who you are. God Bless!

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"on a planet that is 75% H₂O, i can think of little more cynical, depressing and perverse than the prospect of buying bottled water."

"one good deed leads to another."

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.

A Place Fit For A Young Man's Dreams

by Sam Roddan

In the olden days when a Greek city state was in peril, the leading citizens consulted an oracle. Lately, I've been meeting with my favorite soothsayer to find out what we must do to save our country and make it a place for a young man's dreams.

My soothsayer is a retired Presbyterian divine. For a hobby he keeps a few goats on his wooded lot near Crescent Beach. Everyone knows the Reverend has made many sacrifices in his lifetime. But he never has an axe to grind and does no moonlighting, except to perform an occasional wedding rite to help make ends meet. The Reverend has a nice perspective on the here and now.

"Man does not live by bread alone," he says.

"But a modest libation on a frosty evening helps clear up a foggy mind."

We usually meet on a Monday morning and take our seats on a weather-beaten drift log at the beach near Blackie's Spit. Today I dispensed with the usual chit-chat about the weather, and how were the goats, and got right down to business.

"Reverend," I asked, "at the time when men are losing faith in their country, going their separate ways, what must we do to be saved?"

Nothing surprises the Reverend. His flock has been asking questions like mine all his life. For a moment we stared at the tiny crabs scurrying for cover under the barnacled rocks. And we listened to the wind rustling through the shore pine.

"If you were a rich young man," the Reverend said at last, "the answer would be easy. Nevertheless, we must first recognize the nature of the enemy. Those who would break up our country are sorry, bankrupt men of mean and petty vision. Many are in high places.

Their fears have infected the security of the aged and the dreams of the young. They know little of the arts or music or the things that unite the nation. They have lost touch with the natural affection for earth and sky."

Seated on the weather-beaten log, I could feel the spell of the Reverend's words. And I wondered aloud what practical steps we must take to toughen our backbone and give reply to the threats on our doorstep.

"What sacrifices are required of us?" I asked.

The Reverend, as was his wont, lifted his eyes to the distant hills. Then he was telling how we must first rid ourselves of false pride. Have no shame for our natural feelings. Find an antidote for fear. Make of generosity a virtue. Dig fresh wells in the desert of the

heart. Above all, hold fast the loyalties to hearth and homeland.

"But Reverend," I interjected, "are you not preaching old-fashioned patriotism?"

"Call it loyalty, then if you wish," the Reverend replied. "But without loyalty we are as tumbleweed. No root. No flower. And remember, the world is man's home and the blood is strong."

The Reverend paused and looked out over the quiet waters of the bay. I glanced at his language-worn face. The time had come for him to leave. I could see that. He must go back to his wooded lot. There were chores to be done, wood to chop, goats to milk. A sick friend to visit.

I watched him slowly walking along the beach. A redemptive figure from another age. A kind of holy man. But a rare soul whose pulpit was this weather-beaten log. And his only congregation an old man, a few gulls, the shore pines bending to the wind.

"But without loyalty we are as tumbleweed. No root. No flower..."

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"money makes a good servant, but a terrible master."

Man Bites Black Dogs - News Briefs From All Over

Compiled by Scott Dixon

The remake of cult horror classic "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre," which tells the gruesome story of a mad serial killer, has infuriated Greek psychiatrists.

It's not the gore or violence that has the doctors up in arms, but the film's Greek-language title: "The Schizophrenic Chainsaw Killer."

"The title has no relation to the English title, the protagonist of the movie is not suffering from schizophrenia and so it is insulting and demeaning to those suffering from it," the heads of three local psychiatric groups said Wednesday in a joint statement.

"The Greek title reproduces the stereotype that everyone suffering from schizophrenia is violent and dangerous."

In the film, Leatherface, wearing a mask made of human skin, kills and mutilates his innocent victims using a chainsaw.

The Greek film distributor had agreed to run a short notice before the film pointing out that Leatherface was not schizophrenic. The distributor also promised to hand out mental health information leaflets to audience members.

South Africa's psychiatric services are on the brink of collapse due to critical staff shortages.

Dr. Eugene Allers, president of the South African Society of Psychiatrists, said half of South Africa's 235 psychiatrists might leave the country rather than being limited by the government's proposed cutbacks. Psychiatrists were also concerned about delays in the bringing in a law to protect the mentally ill. The law forbids discrimination against patients with mental disorders and rules that they should enjoy the same rights as other patients.

New mental institutions should be built in the United Kingdom as an alternative to jailing disturbed offenders, says Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers. It is thought that at any one time there are around 50,000 people with a serious mental illness in British prisons.

Some 40% of sentenced male prisoners and 63% of sentenced female prisoners show signs of at least one neurotic disorder, according to the mental health charity SANE.

Nearly two thirds of male sentenced prisoners and half of female sentenced prisoners suffer from a personality disorder.

The above levels of psychiatric morbidity are three times those among the general population.

Ms. Owers' annual report says the escalating prison population is having an "insidious and chronic" effect on jails in England and Wales.

She also highlighted a 30% rise in the number of incidents of "self-harming" by prisoners - such as cutting themselves - amounting to 7,700 incidents in the first half of last year.

Here's a good reason for jumping on the Canucks bandwagon:

People who strongly identify with a local sports team are psychologically healthier than people who don't, says Dan Wann, a psychology professor at Murray State University in Kentucky.

"It's because we're social. Most of the institutions where we made our connections before are declining. We don't live close to our extended families anymore; we don't go to church like we used to. Something has to take the place of that." Sports fans, in effect, "bond" with their teams.

Before bonding with a team or sports star was revealed as an attraction, most experts believed sports victories fulfilled a need for greater self-esteem on the part of fans. "That was a reasonable explanation, that people were basking in the glory indirectly - assuming most were fair-weather fans," said Indiana University psychology Professor Edward Hirt. "But it doesn't explain the extreme fans and the ones who are really loyal even when their team loses. These people don't just give up, they suffer with the team. ... But there's a sense of pride in being a loyal fan, and the payoff is when the team wins."

Some experts worry about the mental health of devoted fans who don't get the wins they expect. Green Bay psychologist Theodore La Vaque is not one of them. "I don't see anything that would precipitate a wave of mental health problems," he said. "If that were the case, I would rent (the Packers') Lambeau Field and have a very large group therapy session out there."

For better mental health - Go Canucks

Satya's Soapbox: Putting Away the Things of a Child

by Satya Devi

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became [an adult], I put away childish things."

- St. Paul, I Corinthians 13:11

We didn't get a TV for quite a while when I was a child, which didn't matter to me much because I was seeing and hearing things by then. So we used a lot of newspaper cartoons and especially comic books, we even had some black and white comics from an older cousin's collection. We handled them with awe over the inventiveness and sheer genius of them all. When television did come along, our impressive imaginations were stimulated even more and then our tastes grew to hockey and baseball cards. We traded them greedily and with great expectations of who would be the winner. My brother has one of Rocket Richard, never traded, never shown, hidden from unscrupulous would-be thieves.

But then came puberty and the 60's. Commercialism was out. I systematically and ceremoniously burned the hockey and baseball cards; the comic books had to go into the oil drum too, and I held my autographed picture of the Cartwrights on Bonanza – all my pretty ones – and my pubescent poetry and essays all up in smoke. I looked into the blaze and thought I saw a sign, a destiny even. I left my small town for Toronto that same day.

In Toronto I grew up fast and got involved in Pacifist Politics. In order to understand the Left, I read some great books, including *Che Guevera's Diary*, *Das Capital*, *Howl*, *Socialism On Trial*, as well as *Ramparts* magazine, and once held the entire collection of Paul Krassner's *The Realist* in my hand.

I refused to watch TV for about twenty years, and as for the last 15 years – if they're anything like the twenty I missed – I didn't miss anything much.

And I, Claudius was repeated a few years back, so I'm up on that, even watched the French dubbed version one sleepless night of, "m-m-m-moi, Claudie".

Now, I have limited cable but still prefer reading and amassed another large collection of books I cannot sell. I will never read them again, if I ever did read them, and can't get in the door of any bookstore with these once cherished

beauties. The 80's were full of self-help books of the day, and nobody wants them anymore, either. So, if you, the reader, are interested in acquiring any vintage, socially relevant or self-improvement books, please contact me at comradedevi.com. Otherwise, I'll have to pay to get them hauled away. And five blocks from where I live is a comic emporium where they pay top dollar for comics; mine would have been worth a fortune and I threw them all into an oil drum and incinerated them – all my pretty ones. Oh hell kite!

"I read some great books, including Che Guevera's Diary, Das Capital, Howl..."

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"lawyer's maxim:

we defend the guilty to protect the innocent."

"those who enter the mental health profession are often the most in need of its services."

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

The etymology of *sex* comes from “to cut” (Latin, *sexus*). Had it been important to associate sex with “to connect”, our word for it would be *nex* (Latin, *nexus*). How is sexual desire related to severance, cutting, absence of connection? Speculating, based on clinical material, dreams, LSD-induced, or hypnotically accessed experiences, points to intrauterine and perinatal events at the core of sexuality. The myth of Isis and Osiris, twins becoming lovers in their mother’s womb, points to the possibility that the constant circulation of blood between fetus and placenta in both directions through the umbilical cord might feel like eternal intercourse between lovers who are united and held by a beneficent universe. With every fetal heartbeat blood penetrates, and blood is ejaculated. The sequence of being born can be mapped onto the experience of sexual arousal and orgasm. Bliss inside (fetus still has sufficient room, oxygen and nourishment) – no exit (tight fit, contractions create pressure, cervix undilated, nowhere to go) – bloody battle (friction of struggling through dilated cervix) – bliss outside (escape from pressure, fresh source of oxygen and food, room to move again) – these are the four stages of birth. The rise of desire from contentment and its eventual satisfaction through mounting arousal, tension to eventual orgasmic release follows the same pattern.

The trauma of the umbilical cord cut, and the loss of the beloved placenta (half of oneself) is the inevitable cost entailed in coming into this world. Intercourse continues, if all goes well, between mother’s breast and baby’s mouth, blood replaced by milk, a highly sensuous and exciting exchange, repeated six or more times a day. The mother’s attitude toward the wet and messy interfaces of baby/world (mouth, anus, urethra) may influence our later attitudes toward the wetness and messiness of adult sexuality.

Nándor Fodor, a Hungarian psychoanalyst, in 1949, published a book entitled *The Search for the Beloved: A clinical investigation of the trauma of birth and pre-natal conditioning*. In it he wrote that “life is a continuity which does not begin at birth; it is split up by birth.” The legend of the Fall of Man, Fodor

suggests, is a record of our biological origin. He thinks that “our last contact with God was within the womb, at the time of conception.” Be that as it may, the title of Fodor’s book refers to his belief that we experience our placenta as our lover and sexual partner, whom we yearn after and seek, throughout our lifetime after the brutal separation and loss that we suffer at birth.

Let me remind you of Aristophanes’ statements in Plato’s *Symposium*. His speech, in praise of Eros, concludes with “love is the desire and pursuit of the whole.” Aristophanes says that at the beginning all humans were kind of spherical beings rolling around happily. Each had four legs, four arms, two heads facing in opposite directions, and two sets of genitals, also pointing in opposite directions. Some were male/male, some female/female, and some male/female. These proto-humans came to the attention of the Gods, who decided to keep them in their place by cutting each being in half. As you can guess, from that moment on there were a lot of two-legged, two-armed, single-genitalled creatures rushing about, desperately looking for their lost half. Notice how this story puts homo- and hetero-sexuality on a par. This “just so” story and the above conclusion seem to come from the same intuition Nándor Fodor tuned into hundreds of years later.

Robert Stoller in *Sexual Excitement: Dynamics of Erotic Life* concludes that “it is hostility — the desire, overt or hidden, to harm another person — that generates and enhances sexual excitement. The absence of hostility leads to sexual indifference and boredom. The hostility of erotism is an attempt, repeated over and over, to undo childhood traumas and frustrations that threatened the development of one’s masculinity or femininity.” A trauma that threatened one’s existence, regardless of gender, was birth. Separation. Parturition. Note that the phenomenology of both *No Exit* and *Bloody Battle*, mentioned above as two of the four stages of birth, include rage and hostility: the ruthless desire for survival. Desire *per se* is ruthless. Love can mitigate this ruthlessness but doesn’t always overcome it.

“A life contracts death already and birth still in the

spasms of the orgasmic chiasm," Alphonso Lingis writes, paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty. "Nietzsche identifies the inner sensation of life with exultation and not with contentment – life is the feeling of gratuitously expanding force within, not the feeling of the filling of hunger, an emptiness being compensated for with a content," Lingis continues. For Sartre human relations consisted in loving and desiring alternately. Devotion to the subjectivity of another is love; sexual desire is the concrete form of every project to possess that subjectivity. The presence of one fades out the other.

To love the other is to see the other as the other *is*, whether or not this is how the other needs to be seen, and regardless of my need to see him or her differently. To love myself is to love me as I am, not as I feel I need to be in order to be loved. Laing wrote, "All *alteration* of self, of other, making self and other *other* than we are is deception, not true love." Later he added, "Terror of each other spells the extinction of each other. Communion is mutual extinction of mutual terror. Communion: joy in, celebration of our co-existence in this world we share, co-presence, our beings being together in the most intimate, in all possible, spiritual, mental and physical ways, completely. Our only sustainable existence is through co-existence. The culmination, fulfillment, realization of the perfection of existence is co-existence, co-presence: healthy, holy communion. This is our hope, our only sustaining hope of deliverance from our body of death, death's body."

What are the risks of opening oneself to the possibility of sexual communion? One risk is that it might just be

an illusion. I could be betrayed or I might betray. "To know the other, and to be known, in the Biblical sense, through communion-in-sex, *is* possible, I think." R. D. Laing continues, "Why go to such lengths to avoid it? We may miss or avoid this possibility by faking it, hardening our hearts against it, by repudiating it, or, tragically, despite our yearning for it, it may never come our way. Nevertheless, I believe sexual communion to be a possible actuality, one of the most precious, sweetest, feared, envied, dreaded, hated, hazardous possibilities in life."

Joanna Frueh, in her book *Monster/Beauty: Building the Body of Love*, notes, "People believe they don't deserve sweetness. Pleasure is apparently gratuitous. One must persuade them to pleasure. *Sweet*, related to Latin *suadere*, 'to persuade,' and *suavis*, 'sweet.' Pleasure and eros are the sweetness of life, with which one does not have to have a harassed relation and without which one easily grows grim and unforgiving. Pleasure is a necessary luxury, for it is the fat of education, the finest, richest part."

Sex is the mysterious mixture of separation anxiety, rage, yearning, love, play, sensuous pleasure, delicate pain, fear, trembling, hunger, generosity, desperate clinging, free letting go, and one could go on and on. Erotic excitement unleashes lust and desire which crave to get in touch with, penetrate the animal body of the decorously separate other. This wildness is not violent though, it doesn't want to tear the other's eyes out. Lingis writes, "sexual attraction is so like trust: it careens toward sexual surrender to another as into an ultimate trust... Trust is courageous, giddy, and ■ lustful."

The Diagnosis

by Ms. Neide M. Dos Santos

"No, you are my doctor, so please, do not ask me which is my problem. I have been telling you all of my feelings, in the last two weeks, and I expect a diagnosis."

Dr. B., at the Burnaby Psychiatric Hospital, was angry with my answer. But he could not be more frustrated and disappointed than me. I could not get any sleep and did not stop crying, day and night, and his staff did not care.

Considering that I had never been in this kind of hospital, even for a visit, how could I give a diagnosis for my reason for being there?

All I remembered was getting out of my room, located at the YWCA on Burrard street, and going for a

walk, along the beach, and not being able to find my way back...

Two young ladies, jogging by, found me crying, took me somewhere for a cup of tea, and called the police. I was taken to St. Paul's Hospital and, after a couple of hours (just talking), I was transferred to Dr. B.'s hospital in Burnaby.

All requests to get in touch with my family doctor, and my family in Quebec, were ignored. Even my request to talk to someone in French (my second language) was not taken seriously. Also, for a moment, I could not express myself in my mother tongue –

(Continued on pg.10)

Mad Woman Monocle II

by Marie Annehart Baker

We are not blind women in a room fondling a mad female elephant docile and drugged out. The earlier crew, the blind men, found the probiscus (not a Pandora's box but just a trunk) and concluded that there had to be an egalitarian stance between the sexes. Gender distinctions in madness occurred in the 16C but became more elaborate in the 19C. In between centuries, the mad were seen as both soulless and sexless where violent and harsh treatments were intended as necessary to cure them. When gendered social norms were quite rigorously set, then the treatment of women varied from that of men.

19C women were expected (check back to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's mention in MWMI) to demonstrate helplessness and passivity in treatment. However, solitude, loneliness and deprivation of intellectual thought merely prolonged initial symptoms. In the CPG story, she would recover if she avoided work and productivity as a "rest cure" or "yellow wallpaper" straitjacket. Later 20C changes in choices for women in professional, reproductive and personal spheres would be thought to lessen effects of the "female malady". No way, Josefine! Today, apparently the largest number of suicide attempts in the USA come from housewives and the rates for depression for women double that for men. According to National Mental Health Association statistics, women are misdiagnosed for depression about 30 - 50% of the time. Stress induced by the struggle to balance family life and work is still seen by the National Institute of Mental Health as a contributing factor to the development of mental illness in women. Sexual biases and stereotypes still remain in diagnosis and treatment. More economic and intellectual independence for women must still be a critical priority.

Always, always, before the mass movement toward liberation must come the individual woman's encounter with the "insanity" of insanity. Gentle reader this means you. If you are a male, then your task is still to spread the word. In *Dialogues with Madwomen*, a documentary film, the connection between a woman's refusal or inability to fit in with oppressive social norms is portrayed through the stories of seven women including even that of the filmmaker and associate producer. The

homegrown quality is to be sniffed out further. A mixture of home movies, archival footage of psych wards, re-enactments and mostly interviews merge into a moving portrait of women in whom depression, schizophrenia, and multiple personalities coexist with powerful, sometimes inspired, levels of creativity. A person might be able to walk out of a viewing of this film with an incredible enlightened feeling. Yet, there might be no context except perhaps for that of the invisible noose around the neck. How would one's chain get yanked? What might cause the cage to be rattled? So easy to sit through the entire 90 minutes it takes. Easier to remain in the dark even with a tiny bit of self-illumination? Intriguing idea, a bit of knowledge.

The phenomenal impact of Allie Light's contribution to our knowing about mad women needs celebratory comment and review. With her partner (Iving Sharaf), this filmmaker has brought us to a must be seen cutting edge. Most of the madwomen live in the San Francisco Bay area and spin outward from a spiral of Women Studies influences. They do not speak from victimhood but from survivor strength. Pause to mention that the producer, Karen Wong, was murdered and raped during the project and *Dialogues* is dedicated to her memory. This film, recently shown in Vancouver, has been out and about since 1993. Has also become a global hit. To think that to establish the veracity of the work, Allie Light began with the telling of her own story to build the trust with the other women. Sounds simple but built onto this impetus was the required funding that both Allie and her partner had to take out of their own pockets. No National Film Board (government tit-alia) to censor the voices (as it might if the project was done in Canada). The murderous axis family-church-medical establishment is indicted and every mad woman is challenged to tell her own story.

There are many helpers despite the huge conglomerate King Kong hand of mental health professionals. I found my big pink ape oppressor in my art therapy drawings. One picture had me sitting on the edge of a bed while a big pink ape stared at me through the

window. No idea at all about “the meaning” or hidden message. I found out much later that the big pink lady gorilla was probably “just me” trying to figure out why I was so depressed. Not much nirvana in that revelation but the telling truth was that I was so split from “the inner child”. Long ago, that being had not trusted her host. Trauma and then the lack of treatment of that disorder continued until I would eventually find out more about my inner world which did matter so much more than the outer world that tranced me. We might find the way to lair of the madwoman child within us all. Surely, even men must have a resident wonky imbedded female. We all had mothers of assorted ilks! The progressive lens of inquiry into madness and

women, conjecture and confessional, should raise the alarm: “what happened to the monocle” in our gaze? Did a further distance of the self gain a predominant objectification of our plight? The monocle is replaced with even a bifocal glance at the mess of minutae detail of who is mad and what the hell is she mad about today. I still cry at the scene in the Disney movie *Dumbo* where the mamma elephant reaches through the bars to touch her baby. Not only was my mother imprisoned but many First Nations women doing time are mad women too. No, it is not the end of the trail. Mad Woman Monocle will saga forth.

Bookworm

The Truth About Stories:

A Native Narrative

By Thomas King

House of Anansi Press, 2003

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

Each chapter begins with “There is a story I know.” This is a book about stories that are told, not written. It has the feel of speech, or more accurately, music. Certain themes are repeated, played with; variations are introduced. Important thoughts are brought home many times: “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” King quotes the Nigerian storyteller Ben Okri: “In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives.”

You can imagine the implications of the above for psychotherapy. The so-called *talking cure* is a joint effort by patient and therapist to articulate the story of the patient in such a way that what has been unspeakable so far, can at last be said; what had to be a secret can now be revealed; what had to be forgotten can be remembered; what had to be endured and survived can be mourned and grieved; what had been passed over in silence and solitude can be carefully examined, attended to and shared in the company of a loving, empathic other. Therapy, like storytelling is an oral (and aural) art. R. D. Laing used to coach his patients

to tell their stories over and over, until they themselves could describe and depict the most painful and horrendous events without dissolving into tears. He thought that by the time you can deliver your history so that others will weep, not you yourself, you would feel healed and ready to get on with your life without a chip on your shoulders.

When I was seven years old, my grandmother read me Oscar Wilde’s *The Happy Prince And Other Tales*. Both the title story and the one called *The Nightingale And The Rose* filled me with overwhelming sadness. I sobbed inconsolably until I fell asleep. Yet, I asked for these stories to be read to me again and again. Self sacrifice, devoted friendship, selfishness, selflessness, passion and love were the themes. These stories have gone on living in me, inspiring tenderness, care and a melancholy temperament for many decades now.

Thomas King’s father was Cherokee, his mother is Greek. He teaches Native Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Guelph. On CBC radio, he has a popular series, *The Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour*. King compares the Indian of fact with the Indian of literature, the dying Indian. His voice is clear, perceptive, humorous and kind. It is a pleasure to listen to him, and no hardship to listen well.

There is, I think, even a message to George Bush and the U. S. A. hidden in this short but pithy book. King calls attention to N. Scott Momaday who questions the necessity for imagining the world always in terms of binaries. In the Pueblo world, "evil and good are not so much distinct and opposing entities as they are tributaries of the same river. In this world, old men in white leggings chase evil in the night, 'not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect.'" We, and Bush, are left wondering, "So just how would we manage a universe in which the attempt to destroy evil is seen as a form of insanity?" This reminds me of Swami Vivekananda writing in *Karma-Yoga*, "We read in the Bhagavad-Gita again and again that we must all work incessantly. All work is by nature composed of good and evil. We cannot do any work which will not do some good somewhere; there cannot be any work which will not cause some harm somewhere. Every work must necessarily be a mixture of good and evil; yet we are commanded to work incessantly."

Some of the ways King expresses himself make his meaning memorable, like a melody that you obsessively hum to yourself having heard it once: "Neglect is as powerful an agent as war and fire."

"Here is the essence of racism. 'Skin makes the man.'"

"We do not worship nature. We are part of it."

"Money is wonderful insulation... It won't buy you happiness, but it will keep you out of the chill of poverty. It won't provide you with complete privacy, but it will keep the neighbours and the social workers at bay."

In her new novel, *The Way the Crow Flies*, Ann-Marie MacDonald writes, "When stories are not told, we risk losing our way. Lies trip us up, lacunae gape like blanks in a footbridge. Time shatters and, though

we strain to follow the pieces like pebbles through the forest, we are led farther and farther astray. Stories are replaced by evidence. Moments disconnected from eras. Exhibits plucked from experience. We forget the consolation of the common thread – the way events are stained with the dye of stories older than the facts themselves. We lose our memory. This can make a person ill. This can make a world ill." Later, she writes, "'To tell' means to count. Like a bank teller. Even an accountant deals in narrative, and the storyteller too is a kind of accountant. Each provides an audit of events and their cost, and it's for the listener to decide – was it worth it?"

Carlo Ginzburg, the Italian historian, called culture "the matrix of all possible narratives". In the story of our time and place, here and now, capitalism, based on rational materialism, believes that death is the end of everything. Believing this story constitutes a religion of destruction. God, spirit, the sense of belonging to something greater than oneself, have all vanished, leaving us in despair, which, medicalized, we call depression. Being absorbed in this gruesome story of competition, greed and profit, leaves us guilty, not knowing how to atone. We have no positive vision of the future. Our stories these days are about the *pleasant* and the *painful*, not any more about the *good* and the *evil*, or the *just* and the *unjust*. The current story requires docile bodies, and suggestible, hypnotizable minds. We are badly in need of a more life-affirming story.

Paraphrasing Thomas King, I say to you, this is the story about what the book under review made me think, what I thought was important about it. "Do with it what you will. I'd just as soon you forget it, or, at least, not mention my name if you tell it to friends. Just don't say in the years to come that you would have lived *your* life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now." ■

The Diagnosis

(Continued from pg.7)

Portuguese/Spanish. As a consequence, I was never sure I was understood.

Doctor B.'s answer to my questions was just silence, and he did not come to see or talk to me anymore. Three weeks later I was able to read his diagnosis, on a social services sheet: "Affective disorder-depression and unable to work, from November 1st". Until today, almost nine years later, I'm still shocked by his unprofessional behaviour.

What should I have done at that time? Perhaps reminded him that this country is bilingual and, being a Canadian citizen, I had the right to a translator's help? Or that my family and personal doctor in Montreal had the right to be aware of my situations here in Vancouver?

To this day, all these questions remain unanswered for me and nobody, but God, can be the judge... ■

Judge-Mental

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

To address the great societal mind
we'll acknowledge its societal use
as a tool to disperse that great abuse,
abuse by judging other folk while blind
to all the reputations that will grind;
thus, the emotional damage and blues
sung mentally should give us all the queues
that there's a foul stench we're stuck behind.
Let's sit in our thinking chair reclined
— or in our religious outlet pews —
and realize it's no news that we'll find
that what repeatedly are our views
are ones that we really should have declined,
for, one need only look to the slain Jews.

Saturation of Medication

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

Give me peace, please, give me a prescribed drug
for my tortured mind's unable to mull
over that which makes my troubled life null
and void — the chain and ball around I lug,
wrapped up tight in a psychiatric rug;
oh how I feel like a target, a cull,
of a prescription and I seek a lull
in my torment, a proverbial plug.
And I drink each day from my coffee mug
yet following so I still feel quite dull
or the anxiety is like a slug;
but why cannot I soar as a seagull,
drug free, while I observe the river tug
boat, the water splashing onto its hull.

lovers' masquerade

by reinhart

they come out when the sun goes down
and the moon doth rise from sleep
when the stars the lonely globe surround
and the black sky oceans deep

the boys and girls put on their gear
they call it dressed to kill
the fashions change each and every year
the same goal remains still

the ladies paint their faces
the gents slick back their hair
they come to some midnight oasis
to make their entrance there

the code word for the night is beauty
and who is likely to put out
romance and lust and company
are what it's all about

all is fair in love and war
and no lie much to grand
deception is acceptable for
the sake of a one night stand

so they buy each other drinks
and they tell each other lies
and neither of them ever thinks
that they're addressing a disguise

because when we're on the hunt for love
we all put on a mask
inventing characters that be fit enough
for the dark night's secret task

we drink we dance and we make some noise
we court as the animals do as a rule
but we also struggle to maintain our poise
and not be taken for a fool

the body hungers and thirst for love
a blaze burning out of control
you can pray with zeal to the lord above
but you cannot remove the fire from your soul

so they meet at the clubs
and they dance on the floor
or they drink at the pubs
and they prevaricate some more

and once they've drunk and talked their fill
and their lips have loosened up
then a word or two of truth might spill
past the spirits in the cup

then the honesty might make them laugh
and not feel so solitary
and remind then that they're only half
of a greater ordinary

then as it happens two shall meet
and leave for home together
and they shall rediscover that their body heat
hath enriched their lives forever

lovers' interlude

by reinhart

side by side on a park bench sitting
while old maids at home alone are knitting
the lovers smile and kiss a little
while old men feed birds and toothpicks whittle

the he and the she oblivious
to all that's around them obvious
they exist for each other exclusively
they live for each other dependently

alone at the center of their universe
defying adam's and eve's original curse
they shower each other with love and blessing
and fill their time with touching and caressing

yes, their kisses proclaim a rhapsody
their lips in perfect harmony
lo, their bodies compose a symphony
their love like some lyrical revelry

in the park the lovers are holding hands
the blood rushes from heart to glands
they speak of song and poetry
later on they will love each other silently

but for now they're in their own little world
girl loves boy and boy loves girl
reality is merely background and scenery
flowers birds the young the old the greenery

and during moments such as this
when red lips meet and red lips kiss
the lovers rediscover paradise
at least 'til thorn and thistle extract their price

at times they sit most quietly
holding hands in reverie
no need for any kind of words
surrounded simply by the songs of birds

the park transformed into the garden of eden
before the curse of labour and of bleedin'
the man and the woman walk in grace
the hope and calling of the human race

and they gaze deep into each other's eyes
and bit by bit relinquish their disguise
they move upon the love held in the soul
and they move upon the body in each other's control

children and families enjoy the park
and they will stay until it starts to get dark
the grown-ups happily prepare some food
while the kids frolic and play in gleeful mood

in the midst of all this joy and glee
the lovers cultivate an honesty
'tis no surprise that they came here
to sit and hold each other dear

the he and the she as though the last on earth
hang upon each other for all they're worth
time stands still and the world dissolves
and the lovers round themselves revolve

WORK SONG FOR THE REFUGEES OF PETIT WARS

by Satya Devi

Here in the big sidee:

first job: \$10/hr
fired for incompetence

then shit-jobs
minimum wage
if I'll work Xmas Day

can't guarantee
job past Jan 1st
Boss likes easygoing Maritimers

some people's ambition
to make it to the top

my ambition
to make it up
to the Poverty Line

working all day
gutting turkeys

go home to tuna casserole
can't afford a turkey

for this, I
escaped Cape Breton?

La PUCHELLE

by Satya Devi

"You don't understand," he said,
"You eat to avoid pain."

No, it's you who don't understand.
I said to myself and no one in particular,
when you carry the fires
of Joan of Arc –

"Melodrama," the Shrink insists.
"Joan of Arc, Pocahantas; it goes
back to your mother, I'm sure."

He seems satisfied with himself
not noticing
that he's turned into
the Bishop de Beauvais.

I'm acting out
for the love and affection
I never got from my Priest.

I want my heart to go on
beating
like hers, found intact
among the ashes.

FREE WILL REDUX

Freedom Evolves

(New York, NY : Viking Penguin, 2003. 372 pages)
by Daniel C. Dennett

No Place for Sovereignty—What's Wrong with Freewill Theism

(InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515, 1996. 252 pages. www.ivpress.com/ Ph.: 630-734-4014 / Fax: 630-734-4200)
by R.K. McGregor Wright

Dual Review Essay by Byron Fraser

Introductory Quotes

"Free will is real, but is not a pre-existing feature of our existence, like the law of gravity....It is an evolved creation of human activity and beliefs, [similar to] such other human creations as music and money.

...it is neither a metaphysical background condition nor a fundamental physical condition....it is not only not eternal, it evolved and is still evolving....It is the..., conceptual atmosphere of intentional action,...It appears to be a stable and ahistorical construct, as eternal and unchanging as arithmetic, but it is not. It evolved as a recent product of human interactions, and ...[has no universal or guaranteed existence]."

— Daniel C. Dennett, Freedom Evolves, pp. 13 & 10.

"It is not the reality of the will which is in question, but its independence from the rest of our fallen nature, and its capacity to choose autonomously...."

— R.K. McGregor Wright, No Place for Sovereignty—What's Wrong with Freewill Theism.

"The key distinction to note here (which is the 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 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 naïve 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.

..., the fact is that many purposeful actions (and especially ones that so obviously fall under the category of obsessive/compulsive behavior,...[see, again, Dr. Ty C. Colbert's extensive treatment in Broken Brains or Wounded Hearts— What Causes Mental Illness...]) 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 free will should not blind us to the fact that we are not always— and others have not always been —free to exercise that capacity...."

— Byron Fraser in "Some Reflections on Forensic Psychiatry", In A Nutshell (Spring/Summer 2002) and a review of Straight & Narrow?—Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate, In A Nutshell, (Summer & Autumn 2003).

"MECHANICAL MINDS

The usual way in which modern scientists and philosophers try to overcome the problems of dualism is to deny that the mind has any independent existence at all. There is only the activity of the brain. Either consciousness is an epiphenomenon of this physical activity— rather like a shadow that does not do anything —or it is just another way of talking about brain activity. These points of view are all varieties of the philosophy of materialism or physicalism, the doctrine that the only kind of reality is material or physical.

[...]

By the 1980s, behaviorism was going out of fashion within academic psychology, and was largely replaced by cognitive psychology, a school of thought dominated

by the metaphor of the computer. Its theoretical framework is based on three fundamental tenets : first, people behave by virtue of possessing knowledge; second, knowledge consists of mental representations; and, third, cognitive activity consists in the application of computational operations to these representations. All these representations and computations are supposed to be located within the machinery of the brain.

The philosopher who has most enthusiastically adopted the computer metaphor is Daniel Dennett. He is a materialist who regards our subjective experience as an illusion : 'We are organic robots created by a research-and-development process called natural selection.' In his book *Consciousness Explained*[1991], he summarizes the theory predominant within institutional science as follows :

'The prevailing wisdom, variously expressed and argued for, is materialism : there is only one sort of stuff, namely matter— the physical stuff of chemistry, physics and physiology —and the mind is somehow nothing but a physical phenomenon. In short, the mind is the brain. According to the materialists, we can (in principle!) account for every mental phenomenon using the same physical principles, laws and raw materials that suffice to explain radioactivity, continental drift, photosynthesis, reproduction, nutrition and growth.'

This is what Francis Crick [Nobel Laureate for medicine and physiology, co-discoverer of DNA] called 'The Astonishing Hypothesis'....

Crick is surely right. This is indeed an astonishing claim. Even though it is the standard, orthodox view within institutional science, it goes against all our most immediate experience. It is alien to most people's ideas and to common sense. It makes nonsense of our social and legal systems,...As Carl Sagan liked to say, 'Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence.' Where is the extraordinary evidence for the astonishing claim that the mind is nothing but the activity of the brain?

There is very little....Direct experience offers no support for the extraordinary claim that all our experiences are inside our brains. Direct experience is not irrelevant to the nature of consciousness; it is consciousness.

All we find is evidence for some kind of relationship between mental activity and brain activity. ['How is consciousness related to the brain? I believe, today, that consciousness is not a product of the brain, that consciousness is a primary attribute of existence—and mediated by the brain; that all the observations we have about the brain, how experience is related to brain

anatomy, brain physiology and so on, don't say anything more than that there is a systematic correlation between states of consciousness and the brain. None of them has any relevance in terms of where consciousness comes from.... There was a major logical jump that was made there. Instead of saying that we have found the systematic correlation between states of consciousness and the anatomy and physiology of the brain, that we have proven that consciousness is somehow an emergent of the complexity of the neurophysiological processes— we have absolutely no proof for that; actually, we have a lot of proof pointing in the opposite direction....' — Distinguished psychiatrist, researcher and author (*Beyond the Brain, The Holotropic Mind, The Transpersonal Vision*, etc.), Dr. Stanislav Grof, Vancouver lecture : Oct. 22, 1999] ...in spite of the commitment of many scientists and academic philosophers to the materialist philosophy, most people remain unconvinced that they themselves are mere automata whose decisions and opinions are determined solely by physical causes in their brains. The commonplace idea is that our conscious selves are more than our brains....

..., the main arguments in favor of materialism depend on the weakness of dualism. If we have an immaterial conscious self somewhere inside the brain, then where is it? What is it? And how does it interact with the activity of the nervous system?

For generations, Western intellectuals have been caught in this materialist-dualist dilemma, forced to choose between unacceptable alternatives....

Of course, I am not saying that the brain is irrelevant to our understanding of the mind.... recent advances in brain research have much to tell us. Our minds....I suggest, however,...are not confined to our brains, but extend beyond them. This extension occurs through fields of the mind, or mental fields, which exist both within and beyond our brains.

WHY THIS SUBJECT ['The Extended Mind'] IS SO CONTROVERSIAL

[...]

The only remaining explanation is that the existence of psychic phenomena violates powerful taboos....

These taboos are strongest among intellectuals, and are actively upheld by many academics. Otherwise reasonable people can be surprisingly prejudiced when it come to phenomena such as telepathy. Although people with these attitudes usually call themselves skeptics, they are not genuine skeptics. They are usually believers in a worldview that excludes psychic phenomena. Some try to deny or debunk any evidence that goes against their beliefs. The most zealous behave like vigilantes policing the frontiers of science. The Greek word skepsis, the root of our word, means 'inquiry' or 'doubt'. It does not mean denial or dogmatism.

[‘This (all the evidence from non-ordinary states about the extended mind) is absolutely incompatible with the kind of concept of the relationship between consciousness and the brain that we (establishment academia and medicine) are teaching. And we keep teaching it in spite of the fact that now an average person on the street knows about these things but academic circles have not responded to it; they ignore it because we know that this cannot be handled by a little ad hoc hypothesis, a little patchwork; this is a major overhaul. We would have to admit that we have been teaching it all wrong—and it’s very difficult to make that kind of jump.’ — Dr. Stanislav Grof, Vancouver lecture, cited above.]

...These phenomena threaten deep-seated beliefs, especially the belief that the mind is nothing but the activity of the brain. For people who identify science and reason with the materialist philosophy, they arouse fear. They seem to threaten reason itself;...

— Rupert Sheldrake, The Sense of Being Stared At—and Other Aspects of The Extended Mind (2003), pp. 203-06 & 7-10.

“...Even Rationalism bears the stamp of Life—it is irrational.

...Materialists have never been respecters of facts—whatever was not measurable by their ruler did not exist...facts are per se uninteresting to a rationalist outlook, which begins with a critical principle, and not with facts,...

— Francis Parker Yockey, Imperium—The Philosophy of History and Politics (1948), pp. 48 & 51.

“The truth which makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear.”

— Herbert Agar, A Time for Greatness (1942).

“... and the last vestige of a creator external to the world is obliterated.”

— Frederick Engels on the rationale for applying dialectical materialism beyond political economy to all science. In the 2nd Preface to Anti-Dühring (1885).

Introduction

In a previous issue of In A Nutshell (Spring/Summer 2002), I published a brief, 2-page article—“Some Reflections on Forensic Psychiatry”—dealing with the whole question of free will in relation to mental disability and criminality. It garnered more feedback, both negatively critical and positively laudatory, than virtually anything else I have written. The consensus seemed to be that, as one commentator put it, I had “cut through a Gordian Knot of Confusion with a few bold strokes” and brought certain highly sensitive Legal/Philosophical matters into rather stark relief. I had really “struck a nerve”—and/or resonant chord—

with a lot of people. And I’ve repeatedly been urged to say more on the subject ever since. Hence, the “Redux”.

As fortune would have it, two books admirably suited to an expanded look at this subject matter came to my attention not long after publishing that initial piece: one (by distinguished American philosopher, Daniel Dennett) coming at it from a completely “naturalist” materialist/atheist/humanist perspective, and another (by eminent theologian, R.K. McGregor Wright) coming at it from a “supernaturalist” or immaterialist/theistic/spiritual perspective. I thought we might learn something more from a juxtaposition of these ostensibly “polar opposites” and perhaps see wherein science converges with—and departs from—both. As well, wherein the borderlines between “rational” ethics and “irrational” moralism tend to blur or become indistinct—while thinking “outside the circle” may possibly yield new truths beyond the resolutions of either/or in-terre-play. Part 1 of this essay deals mainly with Daniel Dennett’s work, Part 2 with that of R.K. McGregor Wright. The Conclusion draws together some further “reflections”.

Part 1

To begin with, then, it should be stated right off that the “freedom” discussed in Freedom Evolves is not political freedom or any sort of freedom other than freedom of— or “in”—consciousness, what is commonly called “free will”; how did it come about and what does it mean to say that there is free will—that is the main subject of this book. Why should this matter to us? Well, as revealed by the Nietzsche quote on “The error of free will” (Twilight of the Idols, Sec. 7) prefaced to my Spring/Summer 2002 piece, the Moralism-for-Social Control-&-Material Advantage (— i.e., for “No Fun-&-Prophet[...er, Profit]”) main theological game, as it came down to us historically (mainly in Judeo-Christian attire in the Western World), was to say: you have psychological free will, you’ve always had free will (God gave it to you) and so therefore whatever you’ve done “wrong”, you “chose freely” to do, are guilty of, and that’s why we get to punish you (and oh, by the way, why you need us moralists to set you straight in the first place—and, on an ongoing basis; it’s all right here in the script [which I’ll interpret for you, “for a suitable price”]; here, let me show you...etc.). So we’re all familiar with this, and how, with the secularization of the priestly functions, many—if not most—of these basic theological premises were simply morphed onto the emergent liberal-humanist worldview and “adopted” wholesale with little or no change in substantive meaning or ethical import. This is the school of modernist,

reworked “ancient (moral) wisdom” I myself was “brought up (down?)” in during the late 60s under the tutelage of Objectivism and psychologist, Nathaniel Branden (see, for a good representative example, his Chapter, “Man : A Being of Volitional Consciousness”, in The Psychology of Self-Esteem : A New Concept of Man’s Psychological Nature [1969] (1))— and is essentially where Thomas Szasz has been “coming from”, with his “Humanist, All Too Humanist!” fire-&-brimstone preaching about the necessity for retributively harming mentally disordered law-breakers, lo these many years. (Which, of course, is why he took considerable offense at my recent “reflections” on Forensic Psychiatry!).

The problem with this “progressive” turn of events, however, was that science was fast rendering such base theological presuppositions— which relied for a lot of their force mainly on sheer bluff and bluster —largely untenable. Especially a lot of the new work in psychology and cognitive studies was seeming to validate much of what determinism had been saying, traditionally, about man’s thoughts and actions emphatically not being subject to “free will” anything like all— or even most —of the time. (“Most people are too ignorant to be responsible for what they do” was the way Buckminster Fuller, for instance, rather bluntly summarized the new “learned opinion” generalized perception.) In essence, then, the Old (Testament) Formula hasn’t been working very well— either in its traditional theological cloak or in its newfangled liberal-rationalist/humanist-atheist garb. And it is precisely here that Daniel Dennett has come riding to the rescue of The Old School with his Materialist Conception of Consciousness History.

Observing the truth of Nietzsche’s observation (in the above-noted passage) that “the doctrine of [invariable, always ‘free to choose’] will has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is of finding guilty” and that “Men were thought of as ‘free’ so that they could become guilty.” etc.— but worried that the growing modern-day appreciation of this fact might open a dangerous (to “anti-social” Social Control [double entendre intended!]) “exculpatory gap” (2) where we might not be able to harm people for their own and “our” own (/ “The Public”) Good — Dennett has opted, as his Main Project, to demonstrate that exactly the reverse can also be true : that is, how thoroughgoing determinism, cleverly (sophistically?) construed, can be put in service of precisely the same (old) goals. This is a very ingenious attempt at an “all bases covered” tack , as well as being a significant contribution to the age-old task of trying to ground Original Sin exclusively— Adam-istic individually —in “man”. As he says :

“Some hard determinists have argued that we not only should not bewail the passing of ‘genuine’ free will; we should say good riddance, since without the presumption of free will, we may abandon the presumptions of moral responsibility, blame, and retribution, and all live more happily ever after. I have done what I can to sever the connection they imagine between determinism and responsibility,...

...We now uncontroversially exculpate or mitigate in many cases that our ancestors would have dealt with much more harshly. Is this progress or are we all going soft on sin?” (pp. 279 & 290)

And on the virtue of guilt-inducement :

“Guilt and anger mesh together well : Guilt placates anger, and the threat of guilt averts acts that would evoke anger.” (p. 279)

Further :

“As we learn more about patterns of relative disability and their effects, we discover grounds for...exculpating some class of people heretofore seen as clearly culpable....[But] It is quite possible for us to make major revisions in our policies about whom we incarcerate and whom we treat, for instance, without any revision in our philosophical background assumptions...We remove [those persons] from the set of those deemed guilty,...precisely because we adhere to our standard understanding of the concept of guilt [and] recognize [those persons as] not guilty after all. [What I am proposing is that] a category of individuals [read : the not criminally responsible and/or generally mentally disabled] could be removed from the set of those deemed responsible without any change— in particular, without any ‘erosion’ —of our concept of moral responsibility. We would just learn that there were fewer morally responsible people in our society than we had heretofore supposed.” (pp. 291-92)

In other words, he wants to merely re-“spin” the (ancient theological) guilt-inducement verbiage, updating it in service of the State (and contra our now-standard legal thinking about criminal intent/ mens rea, and so on) punishing more people than ever (because this is “good for them” and “teaches them lessons”), but revising operations with terms more exculpatory of high-on-the-hog liberal-humanist “intellectual bodyguards” of State-crime and class privilege-&-warfare, terms masking the same old incarceration-as-“treatment” regimen— even greatly expanding it. He wants to guarantee that “nothing really changes”— but especially the circumstance whereby “his type” continues to get well-paid— in

prestige, perks and pelf—for providing just these sorts of “helpful” name-changes and innovative/ “enabling” conservative rationales. And so, we can see that it’s well worth our while to follow the stage-by-stage unpacking of the more general philosophical discussion in his opening chapters through to his advocacy of a kind of Morgenthau Plan (3) for certain segments of the criminal population, along with increased “humane” disablement-via-treatment/ “treatment”-as-punishment for the mentally disordered— of the sort we’re already all too familiar with —nearer his concluding chapters. What I propose to do here firstly, then, is give a glimpse of the organizational structure of the book by simply listing the chapter headings and then walking through some of the argumentative highlights as they progressively emerge :

- 1) NATURAL FREEDOM
- 2) A TOOL FOR THINKING ABOUT DETERMINISM
- 3) THINKING ABOUT DETERMINISM
- 4) A HEARING FOR LIBERTARIANISM
- 5) WHERE DOES ALL THE DESIGN COME FROM?
- 6) THE EVOLUTION OF OPEN MINDS
- 7) THE EVOLUTION OF MORAL AGENCY
- 8) ARE YOU OUT OF THE LOOP?
- 9) BOOTSTRAPING OURSELVES FREE
- 10) THE FUTURE OF HUMAN FREEDOM

On one level, of course, Freedom Evolves could be viewed as the Summa (rationalist/materialist/determinist/atheist/humanist) Theologiae of a die-hard 50s-to-60s-era schooled establishment academic being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the 21st Century “Brave New World” of New Paradigm Science/ Transpersonal Psychology/Spirit-Mind-Body Medicine, etc., and fighting a desperate rear-guard action on behalf of the Good Old Days when Marx, Freud, Skinner, Einstein and Darwin were the Reigning Intellectual Deities whom all the “best-&-brightest” aspirants to Pontificate Paper Power (“degrees” of separation/insulation from “real world” unpleasanties) were taught to revere. (Ah yes, I remember [the tail end of] them well!) And the prospect of being rent asunder from a certain comfy-cozy ego-attachment to one’s determinist (Only One Past Script=Only One Future Script) security-blanket worldview is surely part of the picture. (As Arianna Huffington put it : “For some, free will—...—is a frightening truth! They are those who find security in rules that don’t bend and instruction manuals... , they prefer to march in scripted time....” — p. 93, The Fourth Instinct— The Call of the Soul.)

But to dismiss Dennett thus lightly, simply because he seems like a dated reactionary tilting hopelessly at currently prevailing “winds of change”, would be a mistake. He represents a variant of perennial philosophy, does so very well, and we can still learn a great deal of value from this major summary exposition of his lifework.

In his first chapter outline of materialist “Natural Freedom”, for instance, we get a “neat” recap of Marx’s doctoral dissertation on “The Difference between the Philosophies of Nature in Democritus and Epicurus”. Here’s a brief excerpt from a chapter titled “The Death of Materialism” (4) by renowned scientists and science writers Paul Davies and John Gribbin which highlights the issues involved :

“In Ancient Greece, there raged a great debate about the nature of change. Some philosophers, such as Heraclitus, maintained that everything is in a state of flux; nothing escapes change of some sort. On the other hand, Parmenides argued that everything is what it is, so that it cannot become what it is not. Thus, change was incompatible with being, so that only the permanent aspects of the world could be considered truly real.

In the fifth century B.C. an ingenious escape from this dilemma was proposed by Democritus. He hypothesized that all matter is made up of tiny indestructible units, which he called atoms. The atoms themselves remained unchanging, having fixed properties such as size and shape, but they could move about in space and combine in various ways so that the macroscopic bodies which they constitute might seem to alter. In this way, permanence and flux could be reconciled; all change in the world was attributed simply to the rearrangement of atoms in the void. Thus began the doctrine of materialism.” (emphasis mine— B.F.)

So obviously Marx sided with, and/or was much influenced by, Democritus and, though a detailed discussion of how he came to weld this essential worldview to an inverted Hegelianism in ultimately fashioning his famous dialectical materialism would take us too far afield here, we can already see that we are not very many steps removed from comprehending Dennett’s essential argumentative m.o.— if we keep this nascent paradigm in mind. Dialectic, of course, is just another word for “discussion” and, as employed by materialists in the Marxian— and other —traditions, is not at all irrelevant to our discussion— particularly about how certain preconceived ethical predilections are derived.

Basically, then, it is considered an elementary prerogative of dialectical materialists to change their (“surface”) verbiage 180 degrees without— fundamen-

rally —changing their minds. If someone asserts something contrary to your point of view, for example, the favored strategy is to just talk your way around (“talk circles around”) your opponent, trying to assume/subsume all of his positions and/or concepts (usually, however, only by parroting them in a merely superficial way— which, at least, serves to convince you that you have imitatively “mastered” them and him or somehow, thereby, established an “appearance” of equivalency [and that’s all that really matters, anyhow, isn’t it?!]), believing all the while that such sophistic speech adeptly facilitates a useful transformative “show” overlaying your underlying (UNDER-lying?) world of principles (a Gnostic might even say : “principalities”) which do not and cannot change (for whatever reason or ulterior motives you may attach to them). This is considered being “cleverly ‘contra-verse-ial’” — for the sake of being controversial —or, rather, for being paid attention to via your contra-verse. Why would this, rather than any genuine concern with real or ORI-GIN-al truth from OUT-side of your presumptively closed-world belief system, be “of in-terre-ress” to anyone? Well, what could be better than “having your way” by “having it both ways”? The old maxim, “You can’t have it both ways”, is thought— like everything else “merely verbal” —to be essentially “superfluous” and meaningless to the dialectical ma-terre-ialist. That is : not a concept reflecting, or necessarily referring to, any objective, quantifiable reality, per se, but only a “representation” of an ever-changing/malleable-within-bounds— though paradoxically —absolutely “fixed nature”/closed system/circular flux. And this same worldview is supposed to ground an absolutist ethics, too. So now we see clearly exactly where Dennett is “coming from” (— and “wanting [us] not to go; that is, to not “get A WAY”), in popular parlance. By collapsing an artificial dichotomy of what were falsely posited as being “only 2 choices” juxtaposed either-or/ thesis-antithesis views (you either always have free will or you are always fatalistically determined) into a variant of determinist compatibilism (“Naturalism is no enemy of free will; it produces a positive account of free will,...” — pp. 15-16) he achieves the basic amoral-but-moralistic predisposition synthesis (it doesn’t matter whether peoples’ wrongful actions have been “freely willed” or “other-determined”, they are de- [“materially”]-facto guilty and should be punished, in any case) that he had as his primary objective in the first place— while, in the process, foisting on us his equally false “3rd choice” designed to “get us nowhere” (new). He creates the problem (suitably) to which he (and his ilk) can become the (theological) solution— yet again! And so we see this pattern of word-idolatry— a fetishistic reverence more for what the sophistic “spin” can do for one’s self-interested “case”, than any

sort of disinterested inquiry into philosophical truth (so characteristic as a stylistic commonplace in numerous Marxist tracts) —repeated, again and again, throughout the book.

I don’t want to dally too long on the whole question of the ongoing so-called “overthrow of the superstition of materialism” in science, philosophy and even psychiatry (5) which Dennett is trying to stand against, but here’s another quote from Paul Davies and John Gribbin which will give the uninitiated some idea of what’s going on :

“...as we approach the end of the twentieth century, science is throwing off the shackles of three centuries of thought in which a particular paradigm— called ‘mechanism’ —has dominated the world view of scientists. In its simplest terms, mechanism is the belief that the physical Universe is nothing but a collection of material particles in interaction, a gigantic purposeless machine, of which the human body and brain are unimportant and insignificant parts. Mechanism, and the related philosophy of materialism, can be traced back to Ancient Greece; but their modern origins lie with Isaac Newton and his seventeenth-century contemporaries. It was Newton who gave us the laws of mechanics, and opened the way for the claim that all physical systems, all events, can be regarded as part of a vast mechanistic process. And it is this myth of materialism that is being laid [to rest] as we move into the twenty-first century.

[...]

...The paradigm shift that we are now living through is a shift away from reductionism and towards holism; it is as profound as any paradigm shift in the history of science.” (*The Matter Myth*, 1992. pp. 7-8 & 29)

That quoted, I think there are a couple of pointers I can pass along to people who do not yet “get” immateriality. First of all, to say that something (more properly some non-“thing”) is non-material is not, as Dennett would have it, to necessarily assert any “supernatural” status; many non-“things” may be existent but not “material”. And this is not just a matter of semantics or verbal gymnastics/hair-splitting. It’s “a difference that makes a difference” and represents both accurate and reputable (relative new) science. When Dennett abruptly dismisses quantum field theory as “incoherent”, for instance, we should keep in mind that why he doesn’t want to co-“hear” about it is not that it is an invalid or nonsensical model, but rather that it does not suit his non-scientific purposes. Here is a particularly elegant statement of what is essentially at issue and why the founders of quantum mechanics, such as Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, argued that we must get beyond the trap of “thing”-a-fied descriptive language

which serves us to a point, at one level, but severely limits our correct observation of greater truth and understanding, at another :

“...In fact, today’s physics shows that quantitative division ad infinitum is absurd, as at a certain moment, the ‘quantitative’ molecule is composed of an energetic atomic complex. A development in physics was needed to demonstrate that a function cannot be indefinitely applied in the material world. Sacred Science starts from this mysterious but demonstrated reality which shows an energetic (spiritual) world preceding the material and quantitative world.” (6)

Secondly, it is very important to note that it may be a very serious type of “category mistake” to apply a too narrowly construed “brute empiricism” to the distinctive subject matter of parapsychology and/or psychical research which very “substantially” supports the transpersonal vision over-&-against Dennett’s “mechanical minds” modeling. And I would recommend especially, in this regard, Michael Murphy’s excellent chapter on “The Varieties of Evidence for Human Transformative Capacity” in his The Future of the Body— Explorations Into the Further Evolution of Human Nature (7) wherein he outlines what he terms a “Synoptic, or Integral, Empiricism”.

And thirdly, I should mention the whole question of what the burgeoning new “science of nothing” or (non-material) factual basis of creation ex nihilo has to say to us about what is beyond even the non-materially existent— a subject far too large to go into here but, against the backdrop of which, Dennett’s pronouncements about how we should “[trade] in [our] supernatural soul for a natural soul” and how “We are each made of mindless robots and nothing else, no non-physical, non-robotic ingredients at all” (pp. 2-3) really do sound like head-in-the-sand anachronisms. For some introductory treatments here, see : Nothingness : The Science of Empty Space (Perseus Publishing, ’98/’99) by Henning Genz; Patterns in the Void—Why Nothing Is Important (Westview Press, 2002) by Sten F. Odenwald; The Book of Nothing—Vacuums, Voids, and the Latest Ideas About the Origins of the Universe (2001) by John D. Barrow; and The Hole in the Universe— How Scientists Peered over the Edge of Emptiness and Found Everything (Harcourt, 2001) by K.C. Cole. Again, Dr. Stanislav Grof on the Creative No-“thing” contra the sort of sterile, concrete-bound quantal thought-modes typified by Daniel Dennett & Co. :

“The void I’m talking about would not be just the source of the building blocks, the sub-atomic particles, but it would also be The Logos, it would also give birth

to forms, to patterns, to meaning. Creation is not just about the building materials— something that Rupert Sheldrake emphasized, that materialistic science never seriously addressed the problem of forms.... That’s not addressed in Western Science. What we do is we think that if we’ve found out that the universe is built of sub-atomic particles, that we have all the explanations. But it would be like somebody wanting to find out about Mona Lisa.... whereas if you know everything about the material aspects of the Mona Lisa painting [down to the atomic level] you basically don’t know anything about what is essential about that phenomenon. So we haven’t really addressed in science where form comes from, where order comes from.” (Vancouver lecture, op. cit.)

[...to be continued]

Notes

1) It took me quite a while to see through this, by now quite commonplace (even “typical”), example of rationalist/materialist/atheist humanism, parading in a modernist/secular guise, as— in reality —simply the age-old phenomena of theologians setting themselves UP as “God”— THE AUTHOR-ity —“through God” (i.e., their particular “non-religious” religion or dogma [or Ma-dog, as the Chinese, with not a little worldly wisdom, would say]-vehicle of ideological dominance, their ideational superstructure) for the furtherance of essentially mundane and base self-interest. A pretty good early antidote to this variant of snake-bite (which thousands continue to be afflicted by every year) is : Is Objectivism A Religion? (New York : Lyle Stuart, Inc. 1968) by Dr. Albert Ellis. More recently, Michael Shermer (of Skeptics Society fame) has provided a useful overview with his chapter, “The Unlikeliest Cult— Ayn Rand, Objectivism, and the Cult of Personality” in Why People Believe Weird Things— Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time (New York : W.H. Freeman & Co., 1997). And lastly, for a very instructive “inside look”, I would highly recommend Murray Rothbard’s The Sociology of the Ayn Rand Cult (available from Liberty Publishing, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368). For the record, too, I should state what probably should have been obvious (with the hope that this may be of some help to any others encountering such sophisticated moralism-that-psychologically-cripples gambits): “Man” is clearly not “a being of Volitional Consciousness” ; “he” is a being with an admixture of self-determined and other-than-self-determined components-of-consciousness— who sometimes has some choice about, or volition over, what those contents-of-consciousness will consist of. Branden’s attempt to drive

an absolute acausal disconnect, or artificial divide, between self-determined and other-determined aspects of consciousness by positing— metaphysically —the capacity for free will as being an omnipresent “irreducible primary” contra determinism is merely the same coin flip-side kin of the “physicalist” determinist, Dennett’s, ploy of trying to say that all determination in individual consciousness (determinist-“free will”) is grounded exclusively in nothing but discrete, traceable-to-brains processes. Why the truth about the interactive— and often other-imposed /non-self-willed —transpersonal nature of consciousness is viewed as such a threat to these fundamentally identical worldviews is not difficult to comprehend once you grasp the underlying moralistic agenda.

2) “... , an undeluded view of free will can ...allay some of our anxieties about what I call the Specter of Creeping Exculpation (is science going to show us that nobody ever deserves punishment?...).” — p. 21. See also : the Chapter 10 subheaded section, “Holding the Line against Creeping Exculpation”, pp. 289-97.

3) The infamous plan— approved in Sept. 1944 by Roosevelt and Churchill, but never fully adopted in its entirety —concocted mainly by U.S. Treasury Secretary, Henry C. Morgenthau and Harry Dexter White for the political and economic prostration of post-war Germany. It originally called for mass sterilizations of the German population along the lines outlined in Theodore N. Kaufman’s 1941 book Germany Must Perish (Newark, N.J. : Argyle Press) wherein he states : “To achieve the purpose of German extinction it would be necessary to only sterilize 48,000,000...which excludes, because of their limited power to procreate, males over 60 and females over 45.” See especially : pp. 25-32 of Crimes and Mercies— The Fate of German Civilians Under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950 (London : Little, Brown and Company, 1997) by

Canadian historical writer, James Bacque. This was not yet thought of in terms of advocating “genocide”— a term which was only minted in 1943 and not really popularized as a concept until post-war (see, in particular : The Man Who Invented ‘Genocide’ : The Public Career and Consequences of Raphael Lemkin [1984] by noted libertarian historian, James J. Martin) —and, of course, must be viewed as a predictable reaction to the anti-Semitism in Germany just preceding this.

4) Chapter 1 of The Matter Myth— Dramatic Discoveries That Challenge Our Understanding of Physical Reality (New York, N.Y. : Simon & Schuster/Touchstone, 1992), p. 10.

5) See, for instance, the recent volume, The Mind and The Brain— Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force (New York, N.Y. : HarperCollins, 2002) by UCLA research professor of psychiatry, Dr. Jeffrey M. Schwartz, and science writer, Sharon Begley— of which George Gilder said : “A stirring refutation of the materialist superstition that grips the world of behavioralism and denies the primacy of mind over brain. Bringing to bear exciting new findings from quantum physics and neuroscience...” (I might also add : “A stirring confirmation of everything Tim Leary was telling us 25 years ago [when no one was listening] about the possibilities of therapeutic brain change via serially imprinting and selectively creating new neural pathways— with or without drugs.” — B.F.)

6) R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz. Sacred Science— The King of Pharaonic Theocracy (New York : Inner Traditions International, 1961), p. 33.

7) The Future of the Body— Explorations Into the Further Evolution of Human Nature (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1992), Ch. 2, pp. 7-23.

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

“write what you are,
and know what you write.”

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 (2004-2005) 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/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.

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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/>

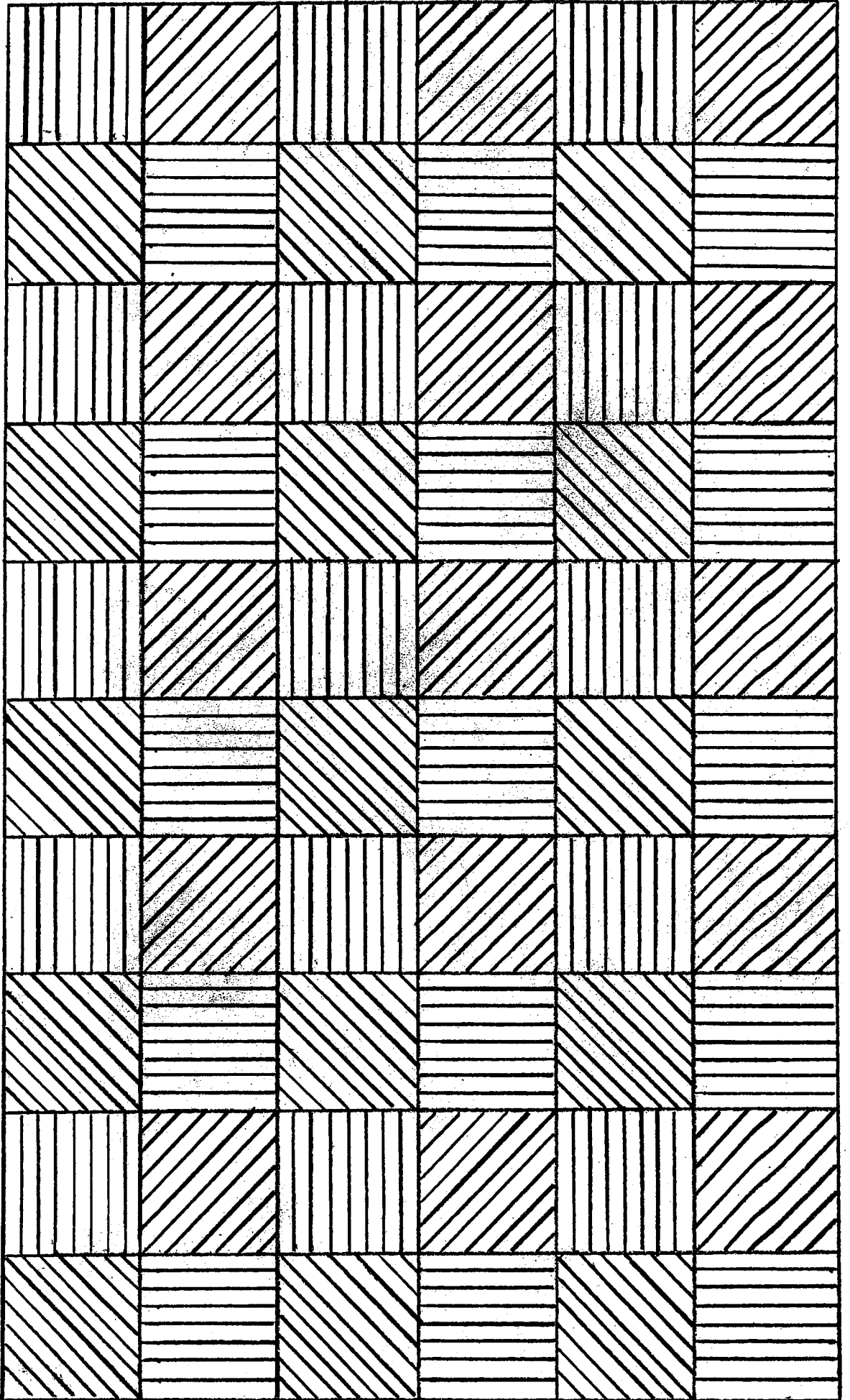
***Our Voice** is a publication containing viewpoints of the psychiatricized since 1987.

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.

You can also get a free info-packet on tardive dyskinesia from the NEC; to contact, see below.

THEO BC provides education and employment services to people within the mental health community. Drop - in orientation sessions are held at our Vancouver location every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month starting at 9:30 a.m. We are located at #100 – 112 E. 3rd. Ave (one block west of Main.). For more information contact us at 604-872-0770 or check us out at www.theobc.org.

The **National Empowerment Center (NEC)** may be found on the Internet at www.power2u.org or by phoning toll-free 800-power2u. The NEC is a C/S/X information and self-help organization headed by Dr. Daniel B. Fisher and Laurie Ahern, both of whom have successfully recovered from psychiatric disorders.



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