

In A Nutshell

Summer 2007

2"



...d count myself a king of infinite space...
Wm. Shakespeare

Summer, 2007

Something I Regret But Understand

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

And, yes, it can happen to anybody, including me — if one is in the precise, unfortunate state of mind. Albeit, I have not done such since I was a teenager; and the self-harm I committed involving cutting only happened once.

One night, probably while I was bored and/or obsessive/depressed, I decided to see how close I could dangle the tip of my pocket-knife blade over my mom's cherished, valuable wood cabinet without actually connecting the blade tip with the polished-wood surface. Unfortunately, I failed — the blade tip grazed the cabinet surface (although, I do not recall whether there were any serious marks left).

I felt lousy; and to make myself feel better, I — one whose self-esteem had much to be desired in the first place — decided to punish myself by repeatedly stroking the knife-blade's edge across my throat, leaving many cut marks, though without actually causing blood to flow.

When people asked me about the cut marks, I replied that I was holding the blade up against my throat and swinging my head back and forth, unknowingly actually cutting. "Really," I'd say, with a smirk, "I'm not suicidal." True, I was not, according to dictionary definition, "suicidal"; however, I was a sad, depressed, anxious and obsessive person back in those days (though not really unlike I am these days, now that I think about it) and quite close to holding a death wish.

As for my loved-ones, like mom, it was a devastating act (i.e., cutting my throat), and she, convinced that I had tried to take my own life, was

shocked and devastated. She, understandably in a simultaneous panic, broke down and wept. I had to reassure her over and over again that it was all naught but a careless accident — a concocted story, quite like what I told other people who'd queried me over my quite-visible cut marks.

Today, though, I tell her the truth, assuring her also that I, indeed, did not intend to take my own life, even though I felt lousy

enough to actually cut myself.

"...I, indeed, did not intend to take my own life, even though I felt lousy enough to actually cut myself."

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Like I said, that was the only time I self-abused utilizing the dangerous means of cutting myself. Rather, still in my youth, when angry with myself, I on some occasions would hit myself, with a closed fist. Later on in life, there was even one incident in which I gave my abdomen some repeated blows in order to satisfy myself over some acts I committed in earlier years.

And that was the last time — albeit there are times these days that I might harm myself if I would be in the same state of mind as I was as a troubled, young person.

www.mentalhealthconsumer.net/
FrankGSterleJr

Editor's Note: Ted Rowcliffe Passes

Ted Rowcliffe has passed away in Victoria, B.C. of cancer. He was in his mid-sixties.

For several years, Ted was the manager of the MPA's Community Resource center. He exercised his job with compassion, a sense of humour, and incisive wisdom. He could be trusted.

When 'In A Nutshell' journal was getting on its feet, Ted's help was invaluable. Experienced in journalism, he gave sound advice as we found our way.

Ted Rowcliffe was a generous soul who will be fondly remembered by all those he touched.

Peace Be with You, Ted.

Quotes:

"Tears are sometimes an inappropriate response to death. When a life has been lived completely honestly, completely successfully, or just completely, the correct response to death's perfect punctuation mark is a smile."

Julie Burchill

"I think of death only with tranquillity, as an end. I refuse to let death hamper life. Death must enter life only to define it."

Jean Paul Sartre

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

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So Long, Uterus

by Satya Devi

The last few months have had their physical ramifications and I began to feel very tired, but not able to rest. There were the Ultrasounds, Xrays, ECGs, multitudinal lab work. Having rid myself of leukemia with meditation and Macrobiotics, and 70 lbs, I was not in the mood to have something hold me down from my little Walden Pond retirement had blessed me with. So, off to the M.D.'s office and immediately to rush ins and emergencies. I asked the gynecologist why was this bleeding such a big deal, especially since I felt there were other, more pressing issues. She told me that all post-menopausal bleeding is cancer unless it can be ruled out. The "C"

word, the last frontier, keep it in the closet there along with sex and death. I don't always give credence to the medical profession: when I was cured of leukemia, I was interviewed by an Oncologist who asked me how it went away so easy with blood counts making such a fine comeback. I thought I was having a conversation as I explained to the Oncologist that I had made large changes in my life and I was better and that an illness does not always mean a life-sentence. She said it all sounded like "voodoo" and I said, well, Dr. Schweitzer always had the local Shaman working side-by-side and then people trusted and respected his dreams and insights and he and the Shamans helped each other and he treated them all with great respect. The Oncologist babe says: "I'm not familiar with ...a..that.." So, I took my leave, saying what are they going to say about chemotherapy in 50 years? A little while later my MD had me come to the office and said the leukemia had either gone into spontaneous remission, or I was initially misdiagnosed. Which is their way of saying they haven't got a clue as to what it all was.

I tried to get things in order before the "coup de gros" but I really just wanted to spend time with my friends and my dog, Mohandas.

"...I asked the gynecologist why was this bleeding such a big deal, especially since I felt there were other, more pressing issues,"

my other hand, and said, "Let us go then, you and I, where the evening is spread out against the sky, like a patient etherized upon a table" and then drew my sheet back over me and the Anesthesiologist said, you mean someone actually wrote a poem about us? And then, on to Shangri-La, and when I was pinned and wriggling in the stirrups, how should I presume, and what position should I assume? In the room the nurses come and go, talking of the Canucks.

I came to seeing the yellow ribbon tied around the old oak tree, but it just turned out to be hospital issue of yellow curtains. The wonder Gyne came in and said it seemed successful, they got all the endometrium removed and multiple biopsies done, all of which seem benign, but sent to the labs for routine pathology. And, the staff were wonderful bringing me cups of chipped ice and ginger ale. It was recommended that I take it easy and to expect to have pain in the neck, lower back because of the repositionings of my body

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after anesthesia——no kiddin'... they don't operate kneeling down? And then, finally some gas, a lot of gas, really just to let it pass. I was in bed when the gas started expelling and I looked over and Mohandas was laying on his back with all four legs up straight and his tongue hanging out of his mouth and his eyes all crossed up in his head. In spite of it being a cold night, I flung the windows open and lit lots of incense but to no

avail——I definitely contributed to the Green House effect that night.

So, recovery is day to day and I look forward to a warm summer and a full recovery and even better health. It's beautiful outside—think I'll get Mohandas and go walking.

Moe's Paranoia (The Curse of Larry)

by Oliver Cross

"All things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the best one."

—William of Ockham

"Well, it's been nice working with you all, I'm back to New Mexico," Larry proclaimed gleefully. "Just a few more things to pack up... hey, I have these two pens I don't want anymore. They're both the same. These things are a dime a dozen back in New Mexico. They're cool, see? It says 'Made in USA.' I don't want 'em anymore. Curly, you want one?"

"Sure, thanks Larry," I smiled.

"Hey, here's Moe back from his meeting. Moe, I'm outta here. Want a pen?"

"Sure Larry, thanks!"

"Curly, I can't find my pen. Do you have one I can borrow?"

"Sure, Moe, I believe I have a spare pen around here somewhere. Let me see... oh, here you go."

"Hey, it's just like mine!"

"Yeah, Larry had a few of them that he gave away when he left."

"Wow, you guys, you wouldn't believe it! I lost my pen, asked Curly for a spare, and he gave me my own pen back. With a totally straight face, without even blinking, he lied about it! Man, that guy's crafty. The gaul. I tell you, we can't trust him. He's wicked. That guy's a thief! Just watch him."

"Moe, did you ever find your pen? In any case, I'd kinda like mine back..."

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

Shortly after publishing their book *Just Listening: Ethics & Therapy*, Leon Redler and Steven Gans launched a website, *Just Listening: Philosophy, Therapy & Humanity* [<http://www.justlistening.com>]. Their invitation is simple and pithy: “**Welcome to the global Just Listening Community.** We propose that to simply listen and to listen in the service of the Other brings goodness into the world as well as the benefit of loving and peaceful relations between ourselves and others.” From the Discussion Board, I will quote from a virtual conversation, and cheekily will enter into it. The conversation, as I understand it, is about what’s a worthwhile conversation. For me, all conversations are potentially infinite. What fuels it to go on is surprise. Boredom is waiting for a surprise. My experience is that as long as the participants are candid and spontaneous, surprises occur frequently. I was sufficiently moved by the exchange I happened on, to quote it extensively.

“I actually read very little these days. In fact it seems ‘I do’ (virtually) nothing. The day takes place and things happen, and responses are called forth. A few lines of Nisargadatta [was a teacher of the Hindu school of Advaita Vedanta or nondualism] or similar each day are enough. A habitual focus of attention on the source of attention, and beyond. Felt as the vajra of emptiness/prana/kundalini erect, ascending into ajna, preventing the birth of concepts, the tree folding back into the seed, and then further.... The recognition of the emptiness-power as descending from above via sahasrar into the heart, and this the Self/Atma. Sacrificing all into this emptiness, the here and now, in all its utter transparency and non-existence. All is Siva. Sivoham.

“If someone comes for ‘therapy’, I try to feel carefully where/who/what the Other is and utter what is called forth, and nothing more nor less. The most effective words, I observe, are those, which spontaneously and immediately and without thought or deconstruction jump out of me in response to a felt-shared emptiness.

“In my day job, I am expected to utter stuff in special psychoanalytic words and concepts. I have tried to be open to learning what they have to teach me about the meaning of peoples’ distress, and have learnt much about ‘family dynamics’, but I cannot mirror for my colleagues their discourse or patterns of thought without great effort - constructing a language and way of looking at the world, rather than letting go into being ‘myself-emptiness-freedom-peace-joy’ in order to relate to the same which is them, and thus perhaps to reveal it as Not-Two shining through

the perversity of constructs.

“‘I am nothing and everything.

When I am nothing then I am wisdom, when I am everything then I am love.’ (Nisargadatta)

“Looking at a photo of a Laotian Theravada Buddhist monk with his allowed possessions - three cloths and a string for his robe, a begging bowl, a toothbrush, an umbrella. No shoes. No hair. No books. Radiating joy.

“Nisargadatta, Ramakrishna, Ramana - all sit on the floor in empty rooms with no books.

“What keeps me from living thus?

“Great Doubt must be joined by Great Effort.

“To let go my materialism, some deep rooted inherited anxiety.

“I am called to non-duality, to being lost in the vision of God, here and now, not-two. This vision, this understanding, this disposition, this stance in life, resolved my fundamental afflictions and dilemmas, made it possible for me to live. The transformation from the moment of revelation (‘There is no I’) halfway down the Lensfield Road in Cambridge in 1983 was, to me if not to others, dramatic. It led me through the textbook esoteric revelations, both beneficent and terrifying, spontaneously, without effort or fear. All the promises of religion were seen to be true.

“My experience is that as long as the participants are candid and spontaneous, surprises occur frequently.”

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"Non-duality is not an academic question for me, weighing up alternative theories and positions (as I assume also not for you). I found myself in this non-dual vision, and it is all there is, or isn't.

"One disposition I found life-giving, and the others I did not.

"For me, to come has already happened. What more could happen? And yet I remain a sinner and so my daily practice is to see through all remaining avoidance of this vision, that all may live and live to the full.

"I can see no justice to come, as a different world. There is good and bad, oppressor and oppressed, and each who wish to be and each will have their deserts. The justice to come is the end of this world. Every tear is wiped away in the seeing of not-two, when we come Home.

"Then life and death, action and decision, just happens, crucifixion and resurrection. All we can do is let go, or just listen, and the right responses will be called forth.

"That ambiguous 'just' allows non-dual and dual interpretations.

"Ramana Maharshi asks - who or what is the doer? Our difference is in subtly different answers to that question. But these are just words. We have to say something, unless we choose the silent life, as I am always drawn to do. Words signify difference. They are duality, the creative word. But the doer is beyond creation.

"Can dialogue be anything other than a recognition, an honouring, of differences, even in attempts to efface them?

"And in its assertion of difference, of meanings, it is surely doomed - a traditional Hindu story tells us that there are 18 ways to worship God, and the 18th is rejection.

"Dialogue as evanescent, a play on the light, lila, a reminder of our oft-ignored unity, the ground upon which dialogue depends.

"And when dialogue is seen to be redundant, when not-two or interbeing is revealed by dialogue, the two faces are lost in the Face of God, or whatever term we use, and all that is left is praising, singing, dancing, embracing, shedding tears, sharing bread, telling stories, everyday life.

"When the an-iconic Siva is truly seen - the absolute, the impersonal, known as the destroyer, the remaining form of Siva is the dance, Nataraja.

"Is not this the purpose of dialogue, whilst it still has a purpose - the sharing of recognition of whatever we call it - not-two, interbeing, God, Siva, Christ, Brahma, Buddha, Zen - the refining of each other's perception and understanding, beginning with the prerequisite, where necessary, of giving food to the hungry and clothes to the naked, without which our reminders of non-duality or interbeing are meaningless and indeed blasphemous.

"Are any of us saying anything very different - we simply use the languages we have learned, which have become associated with what we seek to share? To learn each other's languages, may involve questions and challenge, but will be largely a 'chewing of the cud' we have been given in silence, a living-with-it, with-each-other. So the wordy immediacy of the virtual environment is not ideal.

"The only way we could get really stuck, it seems to me, is if we are not agreed on the purpose of our dialogue, if we are facing in different directions, not face-to-face.

"I guess what I have been saying from the outset, in different ways, is that I am no longer very interested in reading books by 'authorities' who are not present to the discussion. I think of the Philadelphia Association's institutionalized inability to walk the most elementary talk from the books prescribed to its students.

"I am interested in dialoguing, indeed living, with others on the basis of what we have each hewn out of, been gifted in, our own experience.

"The only life-giving bread and wine we can share is ourselves.

"I am not sure what 'authorities' can add to this experience, though they might echo it if we can decipher them, extract the seed experience from the text.

"In terms of the seed germinating, what happens for you, when you place the black squiggles on the page named Derrida, for example, in front of your eyes? How does that work? Why are they more interesting to you than other black squiggles? What happens?

"We can't have an abstract relationship. We can only have one, which is about US, relating our experiences one to another. The I and Other we seek are right-here-and-now, aren't we?

"All we can do is let go, or just listen, and the right responses will be called forth."

“My only argument, if such it is, is that these differences in our expectations of dance emerge from differences in our understanding and experience of being, and that we can’t dance without determining what these mis-understandings are, and on this basis what sort of dance we aim to have.

“Can our dance be an argument and we be happy with that? Is argument necessarily a limitation of listening? Not for me anyway. Indeed quite the contrary, when we are in disagreement, we would dishonour the other and ourselves by pretending we were not.”

All of the above were articulated by Stephen Blundell in an attempt to get on the same page with Leon Redler and Steve Gans, before they are to open their forum to others to join in. I would not have quoted Stephen so extensively had his words not touched me deeply, had I not resonated with him powerfully. And yet... What’s he going on about? I can understand the desire to opt for

silence. That decision, however, needs no justification, no explanation; it’s a legitimate option. Laughing, crying, blessing and cursing is also OK, no need to make a case for it. If we are going to converse (turn things around between us), however, I think it ought to be a free-for-all, no holds barred. Whether I tell you about the slice of bread and butter I just ate, or about a passage in

Derrida’s latest book that jarred me, what’s the difference? Whether I tell you how your words have affected me, or how surprising it is to read Slavoj Žižek’s explication of Lacan, what’s the difference? Stephen is beyond books, authorities, and concepts. Suddenly I feel like a kid who is too attached to his toys, and Stephen, the adult, might find it a

chore to play with me. Are we making contact? Are we avoiding contact? Can we achieve co-presence, can we be with each other unabashed, unedited, without worrying about being suitable for the other’s book, or not? Time will tell... ■

“If we are going to converse... I think it ought to be a free-for-all, no holds barred.”

Quotes:

“It is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled withal.”

William Shakespeare in *Henry IV*

“Listening to learn isn’t about giving advice—at least not until asked—but about trying to understand exactly what someone means, how it is that someone looks at and feels about her particular situation....”

Elizabeth Debold

“Whether in conversation we generally agree or disagree with others is largely a matter of habit: the one tendency makes as much sense as the other.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

The Poet vs. The Schizophrenia

by Alex Winstanley

You tried to cut me
but only gold flowed from my veins.
You tried to silence me
but only laughter rang from my lungs.
You tried to abuse me
but I bent like a blade of grass in the open breeze.
You tried to clasp me in a straight jacket
but I sung wise songs to my artificial moon.

Now I form these thoughts with a smile on my lips
and you evaporate into the air
like a flame pinched out by spit.

when i did love the naked truth

by reinhart

when i did love the naked truth
and rejoiced in the delights of youth
your body was my inspiration
your love my only expectation
i had no cause to be uncouth
i had plenty of wisdom in my tooth
i soon came to the realization
that shared love be my expectation

our union is a sacred thing
our naked love doth make me sing
our naked bodies do not lie
they need not know the reason why
though our hearts be filled with suffering
and our minds consumed by questioning
still all the heartache will pass us by
like the clouds will pass across the sky

i loved to live and lived to love
as though this were ordained from above
the purpose of my life seemed clear
i found it in your kisses my dear
the touch of your skin fit like a glove
soft as the down on a turtle dove
how i did love to hold you near
and keep you close with me right here

but now i'm tired of the whole affair
my body aches me everywhere
my heart feels hollow, my mind is torn
my entire being seems old and worn
there's nothing left for which i care
i'm just doing my time and sucking up air
it's been a long, long day since i was born
And i'm ready to lay down the beast and his horn

Dying For A Cigarette

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

It's true — I was dying for a cigarette. Literally. Every time I coughed, my bronchitis-afflicted left lung felt as though it was tearing apart every time I'd cough. But I smoked, nonetheless. I, slowly, was dying — all for a cigarette.

But the first thing in the morning, on November 12th, 1985 (the day after attending my best friend's birthday get-together), I was on my balcony; and I lit up my last cigarette (I was so hard up, I had to resort to a rolled-up cigarette; and a poor roll-job I did, too).

I smoked about half of it before I, feeling disgusted, coughed and then threw it over the side of the balcony and onto my neighbor's lawn.

And that was the last time I intentionally inhaled cigarette smoke. It had been about a two-and-a-half-year habit, with each pack I bought (they were about \$2.75 back then) lasting me between one to two days.

Later that day, visiting my doctor about my bronchitis, I told him that I would quit smoking whenever I had a lung-related illness. He was quite concerned for my well-being at that time, and, writing up a prescription for antibiotics, he retorted: "Well, while you're already at it, why not just quit altogether?"

As I left his office, and I made my way down to my Work & Learn school (a special very-small school for regular-school dropouts, like myself), I thought, *Yeah, really; why don't I just quit? I already feel like s---t whenever I inhale because of my bronchitis. So, quit now.*

So I did.

When I got to school just minutes later, it wasn't long before the first smoke break (there were two of them during each three-hour session of schooling), and I announced to my peers that I'd quit smoking.

"Yeah, right," they all said or thought.

"No, really," I said. "I'm sick already, so I'm quitting now."

Before I knew it, it was smoke time; everybody, or almost everybody, lit up.

Even though the windows were open, the small room filled with cigarette smoke. And unlike all of those smokers who claim that it's harder to quit the habit when around other second-hand smoke, I

felt repulsed. In fact, just breathing in all of the smoke was more than enough to calm any nic-fit I might otherwise endure.

And that was the way it was. Fairly soon afterwards, I got over my bronchitis — after about two weeks, give or take a couple days — and I was, for the most part, over my habit. I could feel it. The urge

simply was not there. And, of course, the fact that my proud-of-me parents didn't smoke made my transition even easier, during the following months ahead when the quitter is still vulnerable to relapse.

Furthermore, on May 25th, 1986, I intentionally inhaled my last blast of marijuana smoke. I successfully targeted alcohol soon after, in the summer (but to be honest, I've to this day have bouts of alcohol consumption). I was clean, but I still hung out with my substance-abusing peers, nonetheless, which only put me in greater risk of relapse. However, instead of tempting me, I only felt proud — even smug — that I could be around all of these somewhat-jealous friends with whom I consumed so much drugs (tobacco being a drug, too), and I could completely abstain.

Before I knew it, it was New Year's, 1987, and I was completely clean. Of course, I lost quite a few "friends" because of my total abstinence from tobacco, drugs and alcohol, but it was well worth it.

However, it was about that time that I was to experience the onset of mental illness. Although I was suffering from a more-mild form of OCD than I later would, I believe that quitting the above-

"And that was the last time I intentionally inhaled cigarette smoke."

mentioned substances brought to fore the total potential, or latency, of my brain chemistry for diagnostic mental illness.

Without getting into the details of my illness(es), let it be known that I went through more than a year of undiagnosed-mental-illness hell before I was stabilized.

It was late-spring/early-summer of 1988 that my psychiatrist (of that time) acquired my permission to admit me to the (then) Hillside program with Riverview Hospital.

Really, I can recall only a few fellow patients who did not smoke tobacco. And with the price of tailor-made, filtered cigarettes being as high as they were, such cigarettes – at least for those who did not buy tobacco whole and roll them up themselves – were like legal currency.

However, it was one very-shameful incident during my stay at Hillside that stunned me and made me realize the potent tobacco addiction endured by the smoking patients, there: One young woman in the same program as myself was asking around the building to “borrow” (unsuccessfully) a cigarette from someone, before she had the misfortune of turning to the disgusting preconditions of one young guy who had an ample supply of tailor-made cigarettes, thanks to his parents’ money. The next thing I knew, they both disappeared; then, a few minutes later, she walked back into the building counting the four or five cigarettes in her hand, followed by the young guy, who had a mischievous smile on his face.

“I just got a blow job,” he bragged to me. She had performed oral sex on him for a small handful of cigarettes. I could not believe it.

But I soon realized then just how disgustingly potent the illicit (if I may use that term) cigarette market is at Riverview. Or perhaps the entire mental-health-consumer population both on and off Riverview grounds or hospital psychiatric wards.

The statistical fact is, 40 percent of current smokers suffer from mental illness, and 80 percent of schizophrenics smoke tobacco. How frightening.

(I recall, in the mid-1980s or so, I’d visit a friend who’d spent a lot of time admitted to Riverview,

and I’d witness full-hand how tailor-made cigarettes were exchanged for items of greater value. My friend once even traded his fairly-expensive “ghetto-blaster,” tape-playing stereo that he’d received as a gift from his parents, for a relatively-low number of cigarettes.)

Currently, cigarette supply held by institutionalized mental-health

clients are regulated by the institution staff; this is a positive step forward that had been initiated a fair number of years ago. But apparently, such control still does not hold much sway over (mostly) women with mental illness, who are desperate enough for a cigarette to perform oral sex – and who knows what else – on men who have the unlimited supply of funds to purchase cigarettes; men, mentally ill or not, who then dangle the cigarettes underneath these vulnerable women’s noses.

www.mentalhealthconsumer.net/FrankGSterleJr

“The statistical fact is... 80 percent of schizophrenics smoke tobacco.”

Quotes:

“[Tobacco] is a culture productive of infinite wretchedness.... The cultivation of wheat is the reverse in every circumstance.”

Thomas Jefferson

“Tobacco and opium have broad backs, and will cheerfully carry the load of armies, if you choose to make them pay high for such joy as they give and such harm as they do.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Bookworm

Nostalgia for the absolute

George Steiner

Anansi, Toronto, 1997

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

Having said, "Language can only deal meaningfully with a special, restricted segment of reality; the rest, and it is presumably the much larger part, is silence," George Steiner proceeded to become a master of three languages (he possesses equal currency in English, French, and German), and became a prolific author. He has also noted, that "We know that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning." Ethics and aesthetics, the beautiful and the good, do not always go together. Being a Jew in the twentieth century is one of Steiner's major preoccupations, as are the art of translation, intellectual history, language, and literature.

I first came to read him in 1983 when I started underlining passages in *Extraterritorial* (1976). I was trained in psycholinguistics, and although my mother tongue was Hungarian, I had to learn English, French, Russian, German, and Latin at one time or another, so I was very interested in what Steiner had to say about "the more general problem of a lost center," in Nabokov, Borges, and Beckett, three representative authors in the literature of exile. He quotes Adorno, "Only he who is not truly at home inside a language uses it as an instrument." He refers to Beckett, who was, "fantastically proficient in both French and English, rootless because so variously at home." I felt driven from Hungarian to English by social upheaval and war (Budapest, 1943, 1956), thus taking my place in what Steiner calls "the age of the refugee." How do we retain our humanity in a world, which according to Céline, is "a mixture of asylum and slaughterhouse?"

Nostalgia for the absolute was originally five radio broadcasts, given in the fall of 1974 as the fourteenth series of Massey Lectures on CBC's *Ideas*. This is a small book of only 60 pages, yet it examines important issues, such as what rushes in to fill the vacuum left by the decay of formal

religions, what is the relationship of truth to survival, what myths have we accepted as science, and what can we be certain of, if anything.

Steiner's starting point is: "the decay of a comprehensive Christian doctrine had left in disorder, or had left blank, essential perceptions of social justice, of the meaning of human history, of the relations between mind and body, of the place of knowledge in our moral conduct." In rushes, what he calls "mythology." For a body of thought to be a *mythology*, it must (i) be a total, comprehensive explanation of everything; (ii) have "certain very easily recognizable forms of beginning and development," such as revelation, orthodoxy, heresy; (iii) develop its own language, idiom, imagery, scenarios. And here comes Steiner's central thesis: "Those great movements, those great gestures of imagination, which have tried to replace religion in the West, and Christianity in particular, are very much like churches, like the theology, they want to replace. And perhaps we would say that in any great struggle one begins to become like one's opponent."

The mythological scenarios Steiner examines are Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, Lévi-Straussian anthropology, and fads of irrationality such as astrology and the occult. For Marx, man has fallen, because "man is exchanging money instead of love for love and trust for trust." The mystery of why so many intelligent, valuable young people all over the world for generations continued to serve, to believe, and to die for the Marxist myth, in spite of evidence of brutality, police states, concentration camps, and Stalin's tyranny, can only be comprehended "in the light of a religious and messianic vision, of the great promise which says you shall wade through hell up to your eyeballs if necessary because you are on the destined, the prophetic way to the resurrection of man in the kingdom of justice." On the other hand, St. Catherine of Siena said, "All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said I am the Way." She deliberately told popes, queens and kings how

to behave. She was spontaneous, unafraid of authority and fearless in the face of death. There is irony in a Christian saint being less religiously obedient and dogmatic than millions of blindly optimistic enlightened materialist men and women who proudly called themselves communist.

"Our language is our window on life," writes Steiner in *Extraterritorial*. He shows that psychoanalysis "is a matter of words – words heard, glossed, stumbled over, exchanged. There can be no analysis if the patient is mute or the doctor is deaf. There can be none, or only its indifferent rudiments, if the patient has not attained a critical level of articulateness, if his own uses of language are too thin or commonplace." For his theories, Freud offers the proof of myth and of literature. The Oedipus complex is articulated on the basis of *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles.

For Claude Lévi-Strauss, myths are "the instruments of man's survival as a thinking and social species". Man is a *mythopoetic* primate, "a primate capable of manufacturing, creating myths, and through these enduring the contradictory, insoluble tenor of his fate." We are the story-telling animals. The story of Prometheus is used by Lévi-Strauss to show the tragic cost to humanity of gaining control over fire, surely "the premise of social-cultural progress." Western man has brought devastation, wherever he went. "The Western obsession with inquiry, with analysis, with the classification of all living forms, is itself a mode of subjugation, of psychological and technical mastery. Fatally, analytic thought will adulterate or destroy the vitality of its object. Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* turns on this melancholy paradox."

Marx, Freud, Lévi-Strauss, occultists, UFO spotters, and narcotic addicts, according to Steiner, all partake in the nostalgia for the absolute, the indubitable, the certain, the hunger for the transcendent. Steiner, however, believes that "the post-religious or surrogate theologies and all the varieties of the irrational have proved to be – illusions. The Marxist promise is cruelly bankrupt. The Freudian programme of liberation has been only very partially fulfilled. The Lévi-Straussian prognostication is one of ironic chastisement. The Zodiac, the spooks, and the platitudes of the guru will not still our hunger."

During the Enlightenment, the rise of the sciences was clearly eclipsing the power of religion. "The truth shall make you free," we were promised, but Steiner asks the disturbing question: "can science assuage the nostalgia, the hunger for the absolute?" It was Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer of the Frankfurt school, who said that objectivity, scientific law, logic itself "are neither neutral nor eternal but express the world view, the economic power-structure, the political ideals of the ruling class, and, in particular, the bourgeoisie in the West. The concepts of abstract truth, of an ineluctable objective fact, are themselves weapons in the class struggle. Truth, in their explanation, is in fact a complex variable dependent on political social aims. Different classes have different truths."

"There may be truths that could be dangerous to the survival of society."

There may be truths that could be dangerous to the survival of society. The second law of thermodynamics, for example, states that the universe is running down. Universal death is assured. War could be a "kind of essential balancing mechanism to keep us in a state of dynamic health." These, and many other

truths could be thoroughly demoralizing, depressing, inducing ennui, boredom and passivity. The book ends with the speculation that it was "a deeply optimistic belief, held by classical Greek thought and certainly by rationalism in Europe, that the truth was somehow a friend to man... I have a kind of picture of the truth waiting in ambush round a corner for man to come near – and then getting ready to club him on the head... we may get a rather terrifying picture of a universe which was in no way built for our comfort, for our survival, let alone for our economic and social progress on this tiny Earth."

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein writes: "Certainty is as it were a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified." Another German philosopher, Heidegger puts it this way: "Questions are the piety, the prayer, of human thought." Tibetan Buddhists meditate on the following question: "Death is certain. The time of death is uncertain. What am I to do?" Perhaps, the answer is, Why not die of exhaustion from giving my all to others? Interestingly, the word *love* is hardly ever mentioned in this book.

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

This list is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and has left out many well-known sites that are widely available and easily accessible from local directories. This entire page in separate e-form for easy clickability will be sent upon request from: duhring@shaw.ca)

Organizations (General)

www.mind.org.uk www.power2u.org www.mhselfhelp.org www.wnusp.org www.tao.ca/~pact
www.u-kan.co.uk www.mentalhealth.com www.ic spp.org www.oikos.org www.icomm.ca/csinfo
www.aapd-dc.org www.mindfreedom.org www.geocities.com www.mdri.org www.breggin.com
www.cvdinforbase.ca/mh-atlas/ www.szasz.com www.antipsychiatry.org www.peoplewho.org
www.walnet.org/llf www.mentalhealth.org.uk www.fsu.edu/~trauma/ip.html www.radpsynet.org
www.contac.org www.buildfreedom.com/ft/psychiatric_survivors.htm www.samhsa.gov
www.nucknfuts.com/index.php www.cam.org www.lino.com/~raiddat <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipsychiatry> <http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~nstaman/alternatives/OVNVinternational.htm>

Advocacy and Activism

www.mental-health-matters.com/activist.html www.m-power.org www.narpa.org
www.protectionandadvocacy.com www.cchr.org www.popan.org.uk www.advocateweb.com
www.gamian-europe.com www.hri.ca www.hrweb.org www.iahf.com www.benzo.org.uk/prawi.htm
<http://members.aol.com/jimhofw/jimho.htm>

Alternatives

www.talkingcure.com/index.asp www.alternativementalhealth.com www.medsfree.com www.mosher-steria.com www.transtherapy.org www.patchadams.org www.healthfreedommovement.com
www.weglaufhaus.de www.elcollie.com www.stopshrinks.org www.lstpm.org
www.emotiosinbalance.com www.the-bright-side.org/site/thebrightside/ www.doctoryourself.com
www.emotionsanonymous.org www.projectresilience.com www.bu.edu/cpr/rr/alternative/
www.religiousfreedoms.org www.wildestcolts.com <http://stopbadtherapy.com> <http://nht.amh11.blogspot.com> <http://essence-euro.org/iasp/> <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/erthworks/nonmain.htm>

Drug Information

www.larsmartensson.com www.drugs-and-medications.com www.drugawareness.org
www.outlookcities.com/psych/ www.canadiandimension.mb.ca/v35/v35_5ab.htm#three
www.nmsis.org www.antidepressantsfacts.com www.socialaudit.org.uk/1.4.html
www.chemsense.com www.prozactruth.com www.quitpaxil.org www.talkingcure.com/archive/drugs.htm www.truehope.com www.astrocyte-design.com/pseudoscience/index.html <http://members.fortunecity.com/siriusw/Biochemical-Imbalance.htm> <http://groups.msn.com/SIDEEFFECTS>
www.benzo.org.uk

Children & Youth

www.voice4kids.org www.aspire.us www.hearmyvoice.org www.ritalindeath.com www.p-a-r.org
www.adhdfraud.org

Tardive Dyskinesia/Dystonia

www.power2u.org/selfhep/tardive.html www.wemove.org www.dystonia-support.org www.dystonia-foundation.org www.iatrogenic.org/index.html www.breggin.com/tardivedysk.html
www.caromont.org/16036.cfm www.emedicine.com/neuro/topic362.htm www.drugdigest.org/DD/Articles/News/0,10141,513136,00.html www.psyweb.com/Diction/tardived.html www.thebody.com/pinf/phenos.html www.reglan-lawsuit.com www.ninds.nih.gov/healthandmedical/disorders/tardivedoc.htm www.easyweb.easynet.co.uk/simplpsych/tardive.html

Bulletin Board

The Self-Help Resource Association of BC (SHRA) conducts regular Facilitator Training Workshops for Self-Help and Mutual Aid Support Groups. They also publish a Directory of Self Help/Support Groups in Greater Vancouver with over 600 listings, many of them dealing with mental health. SHRA is located at suite 306 - 1212 West Broadway, Van. BC V6H 3V1 Tel. 604-733-6186 Fax. 604-730-1015 e-mail shra@telus.net . Website - www.selfhelpresource.bc.ca

Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network sponsors many self-help groups and has recently moved to its new office at #201 - 1300 Richards Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3G6 Tel. 604-733-5570 Fax: 604-733-9556 e-mail vrhmn@vcn.bc.ca

Named after Vincent van Gough's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, **Gallery Gachet** works to provide a safe, borderless, place of artistic expression. It is located at 88 E. Cordova, Vancouver. Tel. 604-687-2468

Ron Carten, former Executive Director of Vancouver /Richmond Mental Health Network has a new blog on-line at www.aimstest.ca. Check it out for interesting information on consumer/survivor issues.

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

(continued from previous page)

Electroshock

www.ect.org www.banshock.org www.idiom.com/~drjohn/review.html <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj;326/7403/1363>

Forced Treatment

www.freedom-center.org www.namisc.org/newsletters/August01/MindAid.htm www.hri/doccentre/docs/gosden.shtml www.garynull.com/issues/Psych/Index.htm www.psychlaws.org www.kqed.org/w/hope/involuntarytreatment.html

Mental Health Law

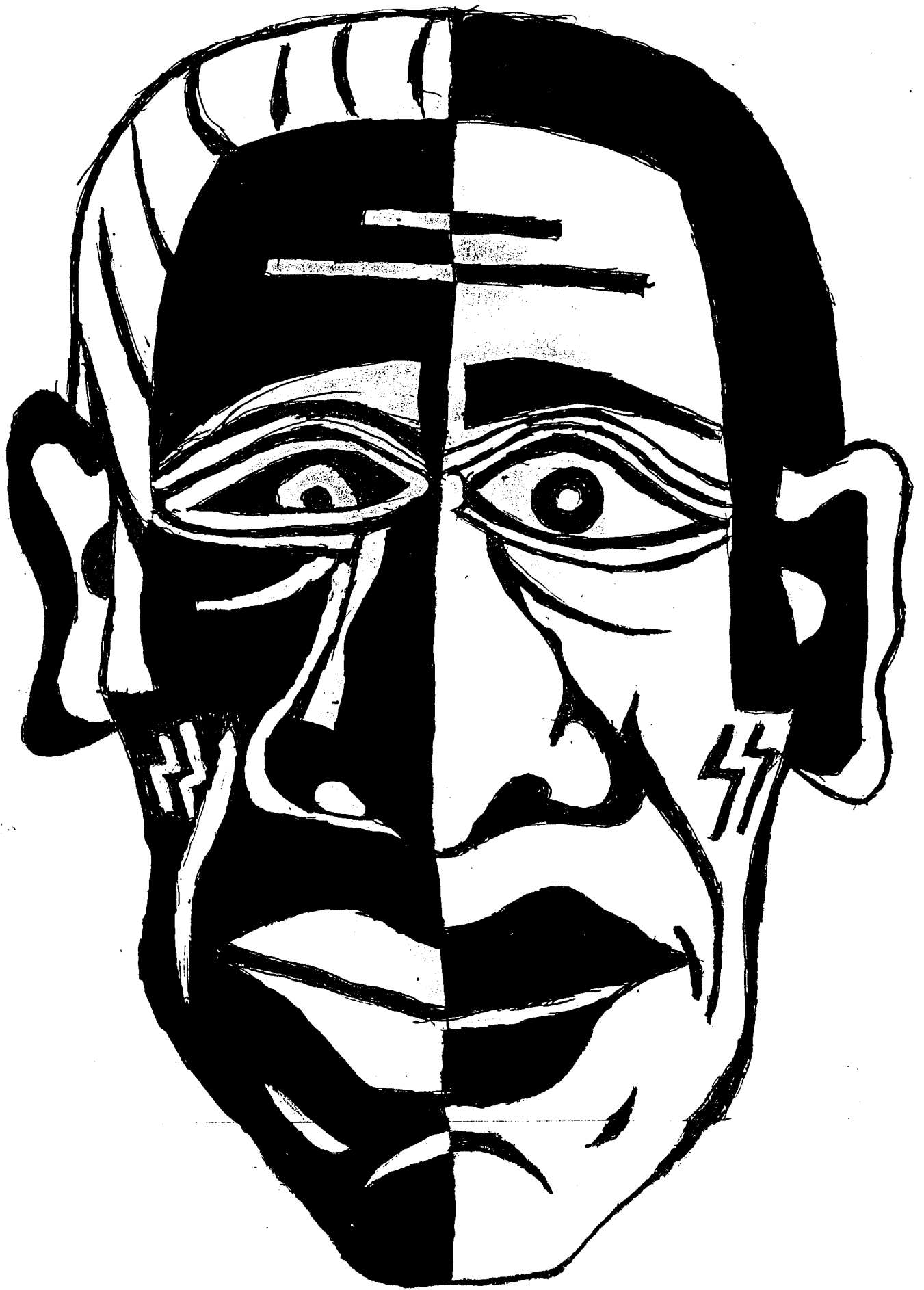
www.bazelon.org www.ac.wvu.edu/~knecht/law.htm www.psych.org/public_info/insanity.cfm www.forensic-psych.com/pubs/pubADment.html www.psychlaws.org www.imhl.com www.ialmh.org www.justiceseekers.com www.safe-trak.com/main/competencyl.htm www.abanet.org/disability/sites.html www.experts.com www.expertpages.com/psychiatry-psychology.htm www.psych.org/advocacy-policy/leg_res/apa_testimony/testimonysub-crimeposted91800.cfm www.ilppp.virginia.edu/ www.law.cornell.edu/topics/mental_health.html www.helpforparents.net/LegalResources/1LegalResources.htm

History of Mental Health Care

www.psychiatricsurvivorsarchives.com www.webcom.com/thrive/schizo/kdarch.html www.cwu.edu/~warren/addenda.html www.epub.org.br/cm/n02/historia/psicocirg_i.htm

Online Publications

www.mentalmagazine.co.uk <http://members.aol.com/asylumpub> <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~expert/psychnews/>



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