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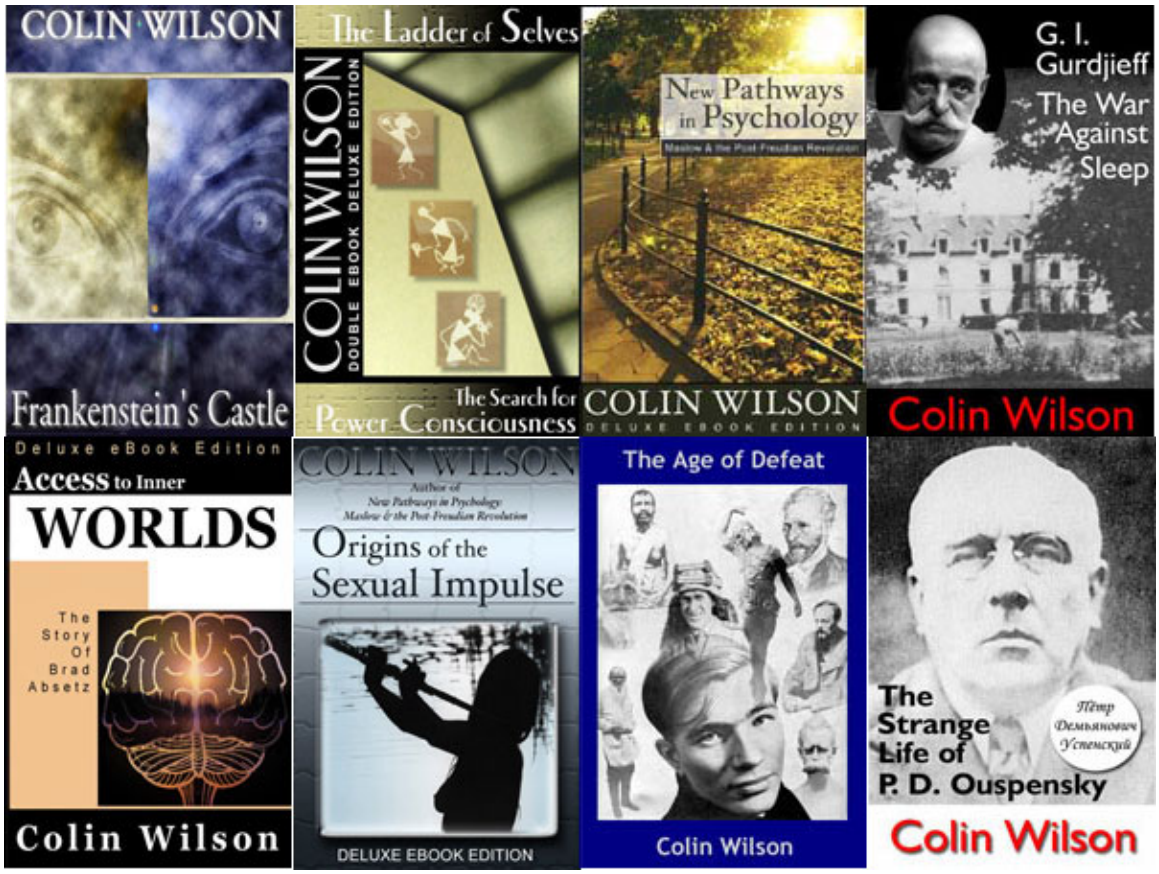

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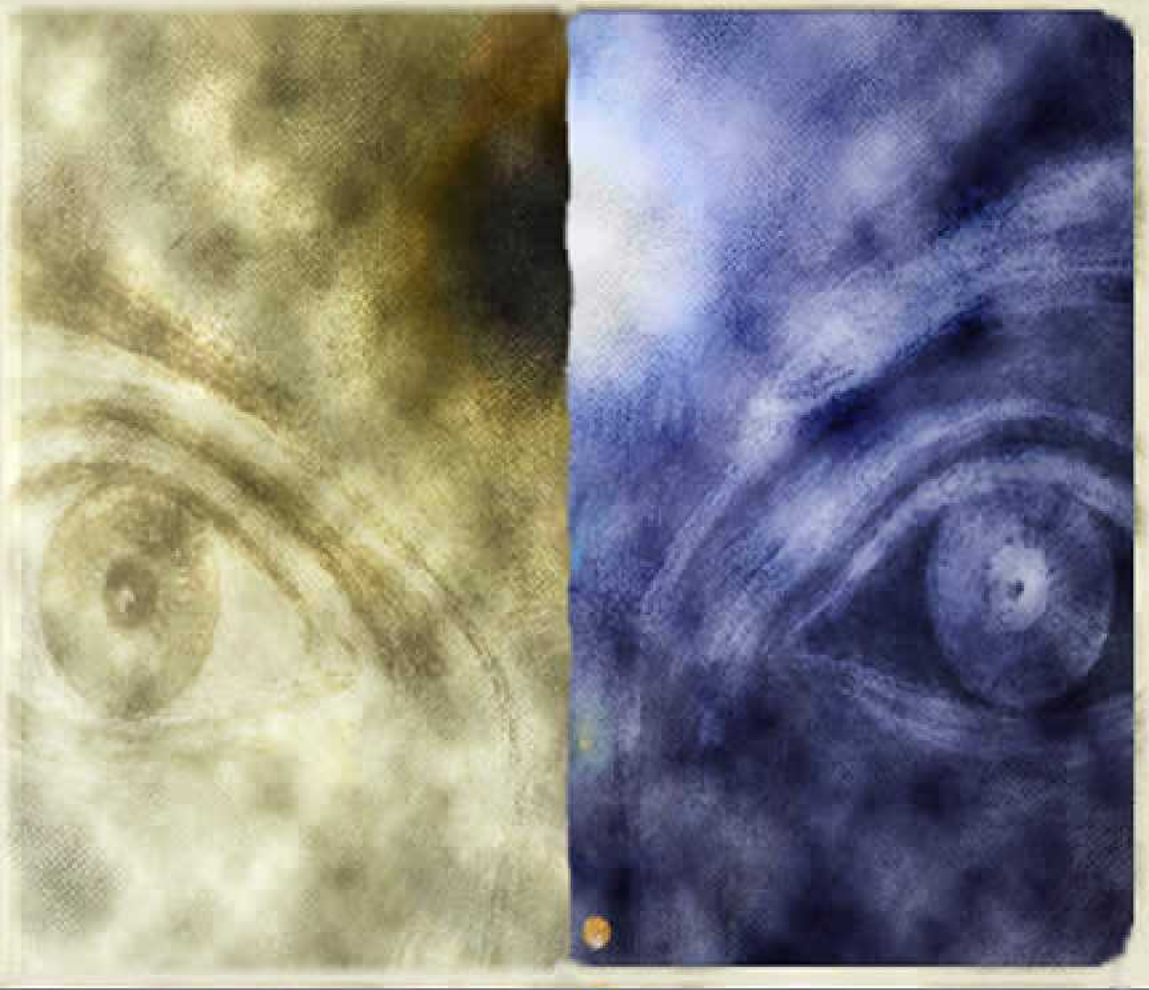

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To Tony Britton
with affection

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CW

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Chapter One

The 'Other Mode'

AS I APPROACH the age of fifty — just twice the age at which my first book, *The Outsider,* appeared — I realise more clearly than ever that my life has been dominated by a single obsession: a search for what I call 'the other mode of consciousness'.

An example will clarify my meaning.

A musician friend once told me how he had returned home after a hard day's work feeling rather tired and depressed. He poured himself a whisky, and put a record on the gramophone — it was a suite of dances by Praetorius. As he drank the whisky, he began to relax. Suddenly, he says, he 'took off'. The music and the whisky entered into some kind of combination that produced a feeling of wild happiness, a rising tide of sheer exhilaration.

Why describe this as 'another mode' of consciousness, rather than simply as ordinary consciousness transformed by happiness? Because it can lead to experiences that seem completely beyond the range of 'normal' consciousness. A BBC producer friend told me how he had sat in an empty control room at the BBC and played himself a record of the Schubert Octet, which happened to be on the turntable. Suddenly, he said, he *became* Schubert. I was intrigued and tried to get him to be more precise Did he have a kind of 'time slip' into Schubert's Vienna, so he knew what Schubert had eaten for lunch on the day he started composing? No, this was not what he meant. He tried to explain: that he had felt as if he was

composing the music, so that he could understand why Schubert had written each bar as he had, and precisely what he might put into the next bar.... I saw that what he was describing was not a mystical or 'occult' experience, but simply an unusually deep sense of empathy. Sartre once said that to enjoy a book is to rewrite it; my friend had done the same for Schubert's Octet. We are bound to 'enter into' music if it is to be more than just a meaningless noise; but clearly, my friend had entered into it ten times as deeply as usual, like going down in a lift.

But then, perhaps it is a mistake to emphasise this element of empathy or sympathy. I had a similar experience when writing a book about Bernard Shaw. A friend had borrowed a book that I wanted to consult; and on this particular morning, he returned it. So I sat down at my typewriter feeling pleased I had it back. It was a pleasant, warm day, with the sun streaming through on to my desk. I was writing the chapter about Shaw's marriage and 'breakthrough', after years of plodding around London's theatres and concert halls—as a critic. No doubt I was 'identifying' with Shaw, imagining what it must have been like to feel that you have sailed out of a storm into a quiet harbour. But this was not what explained that sudden feeling of intense joy, as if my heart had turned into a balloon and was sailing up into the air. It was not just Shaw's life that was somehow passing through my mind; it was something bigger: a sense of the multiplicity of life itself. In a sense, I was back in Edwardian London; but it could just as easily have been Goethe's Weimar or Mozart's Salzburg.

In fact, this 'other mode' of consciousness is a state of *perception* rather than empathy — an awareness of a wider range of 'fact' — of the actuality of the world outside me. What has changed in such experiences is our perspective. I am used to seeing the world in what might be called 'visual perspective' — that is, with the objects closest to me looking

realler and larger than the objects in the middle distance, which in turn look realler and larger than the objects on the horizon. In these experiences, we seem to sail up above this visual perspective, and the objects on the horizon are as real as my fingers and toes.

This is the experience that lay at the heart of *The Outsider*. The 'Romantic Outsiders' — Rousseau, Shelley, Hoffmann, Holderlin, Berlioz, Wagner, Dostoevsky, Van Gogh, Nietszche — were always experiencing flashes of the 'other mode' of consciousness, with its tantalising hint of a new kind of perception, in which distant realities are as real as the present moment. But this created a new problem: intense dissatisfaction with the ordinary form of consciousness, with its emphasis on the immediate and the trivial. So the rate of death by suicide or tuberculosis was alarmingly high among writers and artists of the nineteenth century. Many of them seemed to feel that this was inevitable: that death and despair were the price you paid for these flashes of the 'other mode'. Even a relatively latecomer to the scene like Thomas Mann continued to think of the problem in terms of these bleak opposites: stupidity *and* health, or intensity *and* death.

I was inclined to question this equation. In many cases, the misery seemed self-inflicted. Eliot was right when he snapped: 'Shelley was a fool.' Shelley was a fool to fall in love with every pretty face that came by, a fool to believe England could be improved by violent revolution, a fool to give way to self-pity every time he got depressed, and to feel that the situation could be improved by 'lying down like a weary child to weep away this life of care'. The same criticism applies to a large number of 'romantic outsiders'.

Still, even when full allowance was made for weakness and self-pity, there was another problem that could not be dismissed so easily. L. H. Myers had called it 'the near and the far' (in the novel of that title). The young Prince Jali gazes

out over the desert in the light of the setting sun, and reflects that there are two deserts, 'one that was a glory for the eye, another that it was a weariness to trudge' — the near and the far. And the horizon, with all its promise, is always 'the far'. The near is trivial and boring. Huysmans had made the same point amusingly in *A Rebours,* where, after reading Dickens, the hero, Des Esseintes, has a sudden craving for London. While waiting for his train he goes to the English tavern near the Gare St Lazare, and eats roast beef and potatoes, and drinks pints of ale. Then it strikes him that he has, so to speak, tasted the essence of England, and that 'it would be madness to risk spoiling such unforgettable experiences with a clumsy change of locality'. So he takes a cab back home.

Yet Myers had also glimpsed an answer when he made Jali reflect: 'Yes, one day he would be vigorous enough in breath and stride to capture the promise of the horizon.' He may not have believed it himself, but it was still the correct answer: vitality. In 1960, my conviction was confirmed by the work of an American professor of psychology, Abraham Maslow. Maslow said he had got tired of studying sick people because they never talked about anything but their illness; so he decided to study healthy people instead. He soon made an interesting discovery: that healthy people frequently had 'peak experiences' — flashes of immense happiness. For example, a young mother was watching her husband and children eating breakfast when a beam of sunlight came through the window. It suddenly struck her how lucky she was, and she went into the peak experience — the 'other mode'. Maslow made another interesting discovery. When he talked to his students about peak experiences, they began recollecting peak experiences which they had had, but which they had often overlooked at the time. Moreover, as soon as they began thinking about and discussing peak experiences, *they began having them regularly.* In other words: the peak experience, the moment when the

near and the far seem to come together, *is* a product of vitality and optimism. But it can also be amplified or repeated through *reflection,* by turning the full attention upon it instead of allowing it merely to 'happen'.

The case of the young mother reinforces the point. She was happy as she watched her husband and children eating, but it was an unreflective happiness. The beam of sunlight made her feel: 'I am happy', and instantly intensified it. It is as though we possessed a kind of mirror inside us, a mirror which has the power to turn 'things that happen' into *experience*. It seems that thought itself has a power for which it has never been given credit.

This was a major discovery. It meant that – contrary to the belief of the romantics – the 'other mode' *is* within our control. Shelley asked the 'spirit of beauty':

> 'Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
> This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?'

The answer, in Shelley's case, was clearly that he went around with the assumption that human existence *is* a 'dim vast vale of tears', and regarded the peak experiences as visitations of 'the awful shadow of some unseen power' – instead of recognising that the unseen power lay within himself.

What we are speaking about is what Gottfried Benn called 'primal perception', that sudden sense of 'matchless clarity' that gives the world a 'new-minted' look. We find it in the sharp outlines of Japanese art, with its white mountain peaks and electric blue skies.

T. E. Lawrence describes one in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom:*

'We started out on one of those clear dawns that wake up the senses with the sun, while the intellect, tired after the thinking of the night, was yet abed. For an hour or two, on

such a morning, the sounds, scents and colours of the world struck man individually and directly, not filtered through or made typical by thought: they seemed to exist sufficiently by themselves . . .'

Lawrence has also put his finger on the reason that we experience 'primal perception' so infrequently: the *filter* of thought, of the mind's expectations. It could also be described as the robot, the mechanical part of us. Our 'robot' is invaluable; it takes over difficult tasks — like driving the car or talking a foreign language — and does them far more easily and efficiently than when we are doing them consciously. But it also 'gets used' to spring mornings and Mozart symphonies, destroying 'the glory and the freshness' that makes the child's world so interesting. The robot may be essential to human life; but he makes it hardly worth living.

The robot seems to be located in the brain. This is clear from the effects of psychedelic drugs like LSD and mescalin, which apparently achieve their effect by paralysing certain 'chemical messengers' in the brain. The result is certainly a form of 'primal perception'— as Aldous Huxley noted when he took mescalin; he quoted Blake's statement: 'If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.' So cleansing the 'doors of perception' is basically a matter of brain physiology.

In the mid-sixties I began reading books on the brain; one result was a novel called *The Philosopher's Stone*, in which I suggest that the secret of primal perception may lie in the pre-frontal cortex. But it was more than ten years later that I came upon a crucial piece of research that threw a new light on the whole question. The result was revelatory, and requires a chapter to itself.

Chapter Two

The Riddle of the 'Two Selves'

FOR SOME REASON that no physiologist yet understands, human beings have two brains. Or rather, the brain they possess is 'double' — almost as if a mirror had been placed down the middle, so that one half reflects the other. We seem to have two hearing centres, two visual centres, two muscle control centres, even two memories. Why this should be so is baffling — one guess being that one of the brains is a 'spare' in case the other gets damaged. What seems even odder is that the left half of the brain controls the right side of the body, and vice versa.

From our point of view, the most interesting part of the brain is the bit at the top — the cerebral cortex. This is the most specifically human part; it has developed at an incredible speed over the past million or so years — so fast (in geological time) that some scientists like to speak of 'the brain explosion'.

If you could lift off the top of the skull and look down on the cerebral cortex, you would see something resembling a walnut, with two wrinkled halves. The bridge between them is a mass of nerve fibres called the *corpus callosum* or commissure.

This mass of millions of nerve fibres is obviously important. Which is why brain specialists were puzzled when they came across freaks who possessed no commissure, and appeared to function perfectly well without it. In the 1930s, brain surgeons wondered if they could prevent epileptic attacks by severing the *corpus callosum,* and so preventing the spread of the

'electrical storm' from one hemisphere to the other. They tried severing the commissure in monkeys and it seemed to do no harm. So they tried it on epileptic patients, and it seemed to work. The fits were greatly reduced — and the patient seemed much the same as before. One scientist remarked ironically that the only purpose of the commissure appeared to be to transmit epileptic seizures. Another suggested that it might be to prevent the brain from sagging in the middle.

In 1950, Roger W. Sperry, of the University of Chicago (and later of Cal Tech) began investigating the problem. He discovered that severing the commissure appeared to have no noticeable effect on cats and monkeys. But it *would* prevent one half of the brain learning what the other half knew. So if a cat was taught some trick with one eye covered up, and then asked to do it with the other eye covered, it was baffled. It could even be taught two different solutions to the same problem (say, pressing a lever to get food) with each side of the brain. There could be no doubt about it; we literally have two brains.

Sperry and his associate Michael Gazzaniga then studied a human patient whose brain had been split to prevent epileptic attacks. He seemed to be perfectly normal, except for one oddity — which they expected anyway. He could read with his right eye, but not with his left.{1} It had been known since the nineteenth century that, in human beings, the two halves of the brain seem to have different functions: 'right for recognition, left for language'. People who had damage to the right cerebral hemisphere were unable to recognise simple patterns, or enjoy music, but they could still speak normally. People with left-brain damage were able to recognise patterns, but their speech was impaired. Obviously, then, the left deals with language, and you would expect a split-brain patient to be unable to read with his right eye (connected, remember, to the opposite side of the brain). Sperry's patient was also unable to

write anything meaningful (i.e. complicated) with his left hand.

They noticed another oddity. If the patient bumped into something with his left side, he did not notice. And the implications here were very odd indeed. Not only did the split-brain operation give the patient *two separate minds;* it also seemed to restrict his identity, or ego, to the left side. When they placed an object in his left hand, and asked him what he was holding, he had no idea. Further experiments underlined the point. If a split-brain patient is shown two different symbols — say a circle and a square — with each eye, and is asked to say what he has just seen, he replies 'A square'. Asked to draw with his left hand what he has seen, and he draws a circle. Asked what he has just drawn, he replies: 'A square'. And when one split-brain patient was shown a picture of a nude male with the right-brain, she blushed; asked why she was blushing, she replied truthfully: 'I don't know.'

The implications are clearly staggering. The person you call 'you' lives in the left side of your brain. And a few centimetres away there is another person, a completely independent identity. Where language is concerned, this other person is almost an imbecile. In other respects, he is more competent than the inhabitant of the left-brain; for example, he can make a far more accurate perspective drawing of a house. In effect, the left-brain person is a scientist, the right-brain an artist.

These, then, are the basic facts about the two halves of the brain. It seems ironical that it should have taken me until 1978 to discover them (in Robert Ornstein's *Psychology of Consciousness* and Julian Jaynes's *Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* — an important book of which I shall have more to say later). I started taking The *Scientific American* in January 1964, and that particular issue contains Sperry's original classic article on 'The Great Cerebral Commissure'. Obviously, I didn't read it closely enough.

Now this realisation that 'I' live in the left half of the brain offered a solution to a problem that had bothered me for some time — in fact, ever since I had made a programme about a case— of poltergeist activity for BBC television. Poltergeists are, as everyone knows, the knockabout comedians of the spirit world; they cause loud noises and strange events — like objects flying across the room. In the late nineteenth century, it became obvious to psychical researchers that poltergeists are not disembodied spirits; they are somehow caused by a mentally disturbed individual, usually an adolescent. (This, of course, is no final proof that a disembodied spirit is not involved — my own researches into the problem lead me to keep an open mind.) In the Rosenheim case — about which I made the programme — a girl named Anne-Marie Schaberl was the 'focus' of a series of poltergeist activities in a lawyer's office — oddly enough, many of them connected with electricity. The lights kept exploding, due to sudden tremendous surges of current. The phone bills were astronomical because someone — or something — was dialling the 'speaking clock' five or six times a minute for hours on end. But tests showed that even a practical joker could only dial 'time' three times a minute, because it took twenty seconds to get through. Whatever was causing the trouble was getting straight through to the relays.

Anne-Marie was a country girl who hated working in a town, and in an office. Her father had been a harsh disciplinarian, so she had become accustomed to 'knuckling down' and swallowing her emotions. But apparently some other aspect of her being had other ideas, and set out to wreck the office routine.

Professor Hans Bender, who investigated the case, told me that he had considerable difficulty convincing Anne-Marie that she was responsible, but that when she was finally convinced, she seemed secretly rather pleased. Moreover, said Bender, it

is quite usual for children who cause poltergeist disturbances to be unaware that they are to blame; an investigator must be tactful in breaking the news, because some children become terrified.

How, I wondered, could a person be responsible for such amazing effects, and yet be totally unaware that she is causing them? Sperry's discovery provided the answer. We have two people living in our heads. And the finger seems to be pointing straight at the 'artist' who lives in the right-brain. That also seemed to make sense in that artists have a well-known dislike of mechanical}, routine jobs — like work in a lawyer's office.

Another observation seemed to confirm this suspicion. I had become interested in dowsing ever since I discovered that I could use a divining rod. What intrigued me was that the rod seemed to twist in my hands without any co-operation from me; I was not in any way aware of causing it. But if it is the right-brain that is somehow responsible, then all would be explained. It would be my right-brain that would respond to the water, or the force in standing stones, and which would cause the contraction of the muscles that makes the dowsing rod react.

An experiment performed by Gazzaniga seems to support this theory. The split-brain patient was asked to try to guess whether a red or green light had been flashed in his left eye. Since the right-brain cannot communicate with the left, the score should have been what you would expect from chance. In fact, the patient soon began to get it right each time. If he guessed wrongly, he would twitch or frown or shake his head, and change his guess: 'Red — oh no, I mean green.' The right-brain had overheard the wrong guess, and was communicating the correct one through the muscles — the equivalent of kicking him under the table or nudging him in the ribs.

But then, there is another interesting implication.

Anne-Marie was not a split-brain patient; neither am I. So why should my right-brain need to communicate its observation that I am walking over an underground stream by making my muscles contract? Why can it simply not 'tell' me in the usual way — by making use of the bridge that exists?

The answer can be seen if we simply think about our experience of grasping our own intuitions. My consciousness is usually directed towards the outside world and its problems — and in coping with these problems I receive an enormous amount of help from the 'robot' (which seems to be situated in a 'lower' part of the brain called the cerebellum). I seldom 'look inside myself' and allow my feelings and intuitions to expand.

When this occasionally happens — perhaps when I am listening to music or enjoying poetry — I have an odd feeling that my *sense of identity* has, so to speak, moved over towards the right. Half an hour before, I might have been biting my nails about some practical problems; now I look back on that tense, anxiety-ridden 'self' with patronising sympathy; he no longer seems to be 'me'.

Clearly, what I usually think of as 'me' is not me at all. But when I am trapped in that false 'me' of the left-brain, my communication with the intuitive 'me' is sadly limited. Which is why the right-brain needs to use a dowsing rod to communicate with me. We are *all* split-brain patients. If we weren't, composers would produce nothing but great symphonies and artists would paint nothing but masterpieces.

As soon as I begin thinking about this discovery that there are two 'me's' inside my skull, I see that it explains an enormous amount of my everyday experience. There is an intuitive 'me' and a critical 'me'. If, for example, I am thoroughly relaxed, and I am writing a letter, I actually enjoy the process of forming the letters, the sense of control. As soon as I become tense, my handwriting deteriorates; I lose that

sense of control. Moreover, if someone comes and looks over my shoulder as I write, I become 'self-conscious' — or rather, left-brain—self-conscious — and again I write badly. This is the 'stage-fright' phenomenon, where my sheer anxiety to make a good impression leads to an excess of conscious control, and a reduction in efficiency. To do anything well, I need the co-operation of that 'other half'.

Again, I can study the interaction of the 'two me's' in my work as a writer. When I started writing, in my teens, it was because I was fascinated by the possibilities of self-expression as I saw them in writers I admired. But as soon as I began trying to turn my own intuitions and insights into words, I found I crushed them flat. Words seemed to be the enemy of insight, and their inability to reflect intuition seemed a mockery. But I went on writing, because there seemed nothing else to do; and gradually, I got better at it. There came the day when I looked at what I'd written, and it was still there.

What I thought I'd said hadn't evaporated in the night. The left was slowly becoming more expert in turning the insights of the right into language. And sometimes, it did it so beautifully and economically that the right would get excited and say: 'Yes, yes, that's it!', and the left would feel delighted with the compliment and do its job even better, until the two were co-operating like two tennis players spurring one another on to play more and more brilliantly. This is obviously the state that artists call inspiration.

A little introspection also makes us aware that the left seems to be turned outward, towards the external world, while the right is turned inward, towards our inner-being. The business of the left is to 'cope' with everyday problems. The business of the right is to deal with our inner-states and feelings. And it also seems to be in charge of our energy supply. When I am feeling tense and overstretched, I only need to become *absorbed* in something to become aware that my

energy-tanks are refilling. (T. E. Lawrence said: 'Happiness is absorption.') When I become absorbed in a book or a film, I say it 'takes me out of myself'— meaning literally that. It allows my centre of personal identity to move towards the right, away from this left-brain tyrant who would like to drive me like a galley slave. And soon that inner-spring of energy is brimming over with a sense of strength and relaxation.

The rule seems to be that if we need support and help, we need to ask for it by turning towards that 'other self' in the right-brain. Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality' Ode shows the process in action. The poet feels depressed and jaded, and reflects gloomily upon his decreasing capacity for poetic inspiration. But the actual process of turning these insights into words makes him aware that things are not quite as bad as he thought, and he ends by writing confidently about a returning feeling of strength and optimism. The same process also explains why people who have suffered great personal loss often gain religious faith in exchange; the misery causes them to turn inward; the right responds with comfort and inspiration. The left-brain self becomes aware that it is not alone, and believes it has found God. Possibly it has; but it has certainly found its 'silent partner' who lives only a few centimetres away; and this, in its way, is just as great a discovery.

All this brings us, I think, a great deal closer to understanding that 'other mode' of consciousness. It is a type of consciousness with a great deal more of the right-brain in it than usual. Most of us achieve a certain practical balance between right and left for everyday purposes; and since one day is very much like another, we end by taking this balance for granted as a permanent and necessary state of affairs.

It is nothing of the sort. A change of scenery, a change in our way of life, a new challenge, causes the right to improve our daily allowance of energy; and suddenly we feel renewed and reborn.

Then what is the secret of persuading the right to grant us more energy? For obviously, if we can discover this, we have discovered the secret of the 'other mode' — and probably the secret of human evolution.

At the time I first stumbled upon these discoveries about the right and left, I was engaged in writing a biography of Wilhelm Reich. Reich was, of course, a Freudian, and believed, like Freud, that all neurosis is sexual in origin. In tracing the sexual theory back to its origin, I discovered how Freud came to hold his peculiarly pessimistic views on the unconscious mind. Freud made his 'discovery of the unconscious' as a result of working with Charcot at the Salpetriere in Paris. Charcot had rediscovered the phenomena of hypnosis — originally observed by the Marquis de Puysegur, a pupil of Mesmer, in the: previous century. Mesmer aroused immense hostility amongst his medical colleagues and was forced to flee from Paris. Orthodox medicine was victorious, and during the nineteenth century, Mesmerism was regarded as another term for charlatanism. Hypnosis shared its fate — until it was given a new lease of life by Charcot, who noticed that it could produce a kind of artificial hysteria. Mental illnesses seem to occur in epidemics; and in the late nineteenth century, the chief mental illness was hysteria. Patients would suffer from hysterical paralysis, hysterical blindness and deafness, even hysterical pregnancy, in which the stomach would enlarge and the body exhibit all the normal symptoms of pregnancy. Charcot noticed that he could produce the same hysterical symptoms through hypnosis — and also, of course, undo them. His hysterical subjects could be made to have violent fits, to become paralysed, and to exhibit strength far beyond the normal — one of the favourite tricks of hypnotists was to tell a person that he had become as stiff as a board, then make him lie across two chairs — with his head on one, his feet on the other — while another person

stood on his stomach, which remained unyielding. A hysterical patient could be made to produce 'stigmata' on his hands and feet, like the saints. He could be told that he was about to be touched with a red hot poker, and a blister would form where the hypnotist had touched him lightly with a finger. But if told that he would not bleed when a needle was driven into his arm, he would somehow obey the order, and the blood would refuse to flow.

Freud instantly saw that if there is a part of the mind that can perform these remarkable feats while the conscious mind is asleep, then it must be far more powerful than ordinary consciousness. He labelled it 'the unconscious'. But, being naturally a romantic pessimist by temperament, he also leapt to the conclusion that the unconscious is the real master. The conscious mind thinks it is in control when it is really a mere puppet in the hands of a force far greater than itself. And the mainspring of the unconscious mind is the sexual urge — a discovery Freud made as a result of the observations made by his friend Breuer upon a patient called Bertha Pappenheim. In her hysterical states, Bertha writhed her hips about as if in sexual intercourse or labour — which convinced Freud that her problems were basically sexual, but that it was her conscious repression of her sexual urge that caused the neurosis. (He was mistaken; her problems were due to nervous exhaustion and misery after watching her father die slowly of cancer.) So, according to Freud, neurosis was due to the festering of sexual 'splinters' in the unconscious mind.

Freud's mistake lay in his assumption that, because the unconscious mind is so much more powerful than the conscious, it must be the real master. The ship is far more powerful than the captain; but the captain decides which way it will go; an elephant is more powerful than the boy who sits on its head; but the boy gives the orders.

It was clear to me that the real cause of neurosis is the

conflict between the left- and right-brain 'egos'. The left ego is the master of consciousness; the right is master of the unconscious. And the relation between the two is not unlike the relation between Laurel and Hardy in the old movies. Ollie is the left-brain, the boss. Stan takes his cues from Ollie. When Ollie is in a good mood, Stan is delighted. When Ollie is depressed, Stan is plunged into the depths of gloom. Stan is inclined to *over-react*.

When Ollie wakes up on a wet Monday morning, he thinks: 'Damn, it's raining, and I've got a particularly dreary day in front of me . . .' Stan overhears this and sinks into depression. And — since he controls the energy supply — Ollie has that 'sinking feeling', and feels drained of energy. This makes him feel worse than ever. As he walks out of the gate he bumps into a man who tells him to look where he's going, then trips over a crack in the pavement, then misses a bus just as he arrives at the stop, and thinks: 'This is going to be one of those days— . . .'

And again, Stan overhears, and feels worse than ever. And once more, Ollie feels that sinking feeling. By the end of the day, he may be feeling suicidal — not because things have been really bad, but because of a continual 'negative feedback' of gloom between the right and left.

Consider, on the other hand, what happens to a child on Christmas Day. He wakes up full of pleasurable anticipation; Stan instantly sends up a flood of energy. When he goes downstairs, everything reinforces the feeling of delight — Christmas carols on the radio, the Christmas tree with its lights, the smell of mince pies in the oven. Each new stimulus causes a new rush of delight; each new rush of delight deepens the feeling that 'all is well', and that the world is a wonderful and exciting place after all. Suddenly, he is in the 'other mode' of consciousness; the feeling that all is well has produced a new level of trust and relaxation. He is no longer inclined to

wince, as if expecting a blow; the left-brain tyrant is as utterly relaxed as if he was hypnotised.

Considerations like these make it clear that our chief problem is 'generalised hypertension', a basic feeling of mistrust about the world. The 'other mode' depends upon a degree of communication between the two halves, and this in turn depends upon 'positive feedback'. If I experience some enormous relief, as some appalling threat is removed, Ollie gives a sigh of contentment, and Stan reacts by sending up a wave of relief. And suddenly, Ollie is seeing things in a completely new way — grass looks greener, everything is somehow 'more interesting'.

What precisely happens in such moments? The first thing to note is that when we experience relief, we feel we can *afford* to relax. When I step into a hot bath at the end of a hard day's work, or open a bottle of wine as I prepare to watch the news, I tell myself, as it were: 'You deserve this;' But this concept of 'affording' indicates that we think of our energies in much the same way we think of our bank accounts: as something quite definite and *limited*. This is why I get annoyed if I am trying to change the plug on the electric kettle and the phone rings; I feel this is a tiresome attempt to divert my energies when I need them all for the task in hand. I have *narrowed down* my attention, and I feel that anything that tries to widen it is a nuisance.

Conversely, when I experience relief because some problem has vanished, I allow my field of awareness to widen. And it is this widening that brings the 'peak experience'. Maslow's young mother was feeling quite cheerful as she watched her family eating breakfast, but her attention was fixed on the task in hand — watching to see the baby didn't knock its cereal on the floor. The beam of sunlight triggered a relaxation response, a widening. And the widening brought the peak experience.

It begins to look as if we have discovered the basic

mechanism of the peak experience. But there is still an important question to answer. If 'narrowing' somehow prevents the peak experience, why do we do it? Of course, we all know that 'narrowing' makes us more efficient; I shall make a better job of changing the plug if I give it my full attention. But we seem to habitually overdo it.

Here again, we are dealing with the subject of hysteria. At the same time that Charcot was studying hypnosis in Paris, his younger contemporary Pierre Janet was studying the effects of hysteria. He was particularly fascinated by a rather odd manifestation of hysteria called multiple personality. In such cases, the patient has split into two or more people — completely different individuals, who take it in turns to occupy the body, just as different drivers might take over a hire-car. A typical case was reported by the psychologist Cyril Burt.{2}In 1917, a foreman named Naylor was accused by two workmates of seducing their wives: both had received letters, couched in filthy language, describing Naylor as a philanderer. Naylor himself had received similar letters; so had his employer and the local vicar. Oddly enough, they were signed with the name of his only daughter, May. And May was a quiet, well-behaved girl who obviously knew nothing about them. Burt was asked to investigate. He discovered that the nine-year-old girl was a model pupil at school, of superior intellectual ability, and with no record of practical joking. Her handwriting was neat, and completely unlike that of the anonymous letters. Yet when she told Burt that her favourite flower was the lily of the valley because it was so white and pure, Burt began to wonder if this was not too much of a good thing. He hypnotised the girl, and a completely different character emerged — a coarse, vengeful, foul-mouthed child who detested her father as much as the 'other May' loved him. May was, in fact, a Jekyll and Hyde. Under Burt's treatment, she was finally 'cured'.

The most striking thing about this case is its resemblance to

the Anne-Marie poltergeist case. May Naylor wrote obscene letters; Anne-Marie made electric lights explode — both quite 'unknowingly'. Could that mean that the delinquent May was simply a manifestation of her own right-brain? Hardly; for the right-brain differs from the left simply in its basic activities: it is concerned with over-all patterns and meanings rather than with down-to-earth problems. Besides, in some cases of multiple personality, there have been literally dozens of 'other selves', all of them quite distinct. Clearly, we cannot blame the right-brain for May's misbehaviour. This is a more complicated problem.

Janet noticed an interesting thing about hysterics: that in many respects, they behaved just like multiple personalities. One of his patients, for example, was a hysterical woman who had worried herself into such a state of anxiety that she stared straight in front of her, concentrating upon some vaguely defined worry. In order to attract her attention, Janet had to speak loudly in her ear. But he discovered that if he said in a quiet voice: 'Raise your right arm', she would obey. If he then asked her loudly: 'Why have you got your right arm in the air?', the woman would looked amazed; she had no memory of raising it. Her conscious 'self' had narrowed down, but 'unconscious' areas of her personality were still accessible. She had, in effect, become two people. Her neurotic anxiety made her suppress her 'wider self'. And multiple personalities appear to do just this. Most of them have had traumatic childhoods, and they face life with extreme caution and mistrust. Some severe shock then causes them to 'split' into two different people; the suppressed part gets its own back by taking over the body. (And the original personality — the one suffering from anxiety — usually has no memory of what happens during these periods of 'takeover'.)

So in the case of May Naylor, it seems likely that the 'good May' was over-anxious to please, and that she suppressed all

natural naughtiness in order to win the favour of her parents and teachers. Her own anxiety about her 'naughty' impulses had the effect of amplifying them — what Viktor Frankl calls 'the law of reverse effort' (i.e. a stammerer who tries hard not to stammer becomes worse than ever) — until she was suppressing a virtual juvenile delinquent. This delinquent, robbed of any form of self-expression, finally became strong enough to take over May's body, and write the obscene letters about her father.

It is not an easy concept to grasp — the notion that 'narrowing' our awareness can turn us into more than one person. But it does seem to be so. And it provides a clue to what is wrong with most of us. We are all 'partial personalities'; we are all 'hysterics'. And this is an inevitable consequence of the sheer complexity of human life. Imagine a woman making an enormous patchwork quilt; it is so big that she seldom sees the whole thing. As she works, she is only aware of a fairly small part of it. It is the same with any 'cumulative' activity. When I first started collecting gramophone records, it was easy to 'know' my collection; but as it gradually grew bigger, I had to keep a catalogue. And now, if I want to know if I have a particular recording of a Mahler symphony, I have to look in my catalogue, instead of instantly being able to recall the record. The size of my collection means I can only 'know' a small portion at a time.

In the same way, we spend our lives accumulating new experiences. My brain stores all these experiences; and the neurologist Wilder Penfield discovered that if he touched a part of the temporal cortex of the brain with an electric probe during an operation, the patient (who was conscious) recalled experiences that took place years ago in the utmost detail, exactly as if re-living them. But for practical purposes, most of our experiences are lost. And my personality, unlike my record collection, has never been catalogued. So whole vast areas of

my being are packed away — on microfilm, as it were.

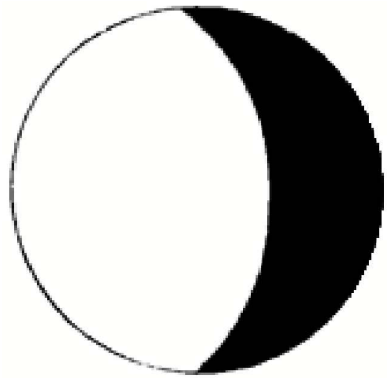
The fascinating implication is that if I could somehow 'spread out' my personality — as the woman can spread out her patchwork quilt — I would be amazed to discover that I am far 'bigger' than I had ever suspected. Or, to put it plainly, more 'godlike'. Moreover, those moods of 'wider consciousness'— the 'other mode'— allow me a glimpse of the sheer size of the quilt. Hermann Hesse described such a moment in *Steppenwolf*, where the hero is in bed with a pretty girl:

> 'For moments together my heart stood still between delight and sorrow to find how rich was the gallery of my life, and how thronged the soul of the wretched Steppenwolf with high eternal stars and constellations . . .'

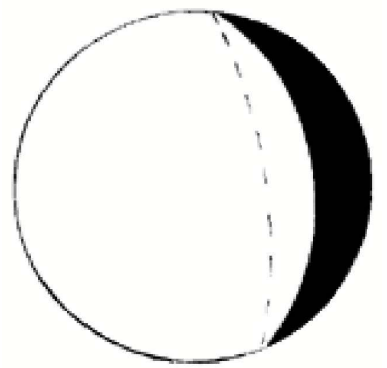
Yeats was obviously speaking of the same experience when he wrote in *Under Ben Bulben:*

> Know that when all words are said
> And a man is fighting mad,
> Something drops from eyes long blind,
> He completes his partial mind,
> For an instant stands at ease,
> Laughs aloud, his heart at peace . . .

Here the important phrase is 'he completes his partial mind'. Yeats's preoccupation with moon-imagery leads one to suspect that he was thinking of the 'completed mind' as something like the full moon, and the 'partial mind' — the everyday self — as the moon in its last quarter. And this symbol provides a useful image of the human psyche, with the 'everyday self' as the last quarter:



Janet's hysterical patient was a very thin slice indeed, hardly more than a sliver. (Oddly enough, such patients often suffer from 'tunnel vision', a narrowing of the visual field.) But her 'wider self' was still there:



But then, if we are all, in some respect, hysterical patients,

then the above diagram applies to all of us. Outside the 'everyday self' there is a kind of grey, penumbral area of the wider-self. I experience this wider-self whenever some interesting challenge makes me feel 'more alive'. Conversely, whenever I am bored and tired, the everyday-self contracts, and the penumbral area becomes correspondingly bigger. Most of us, even in our moments of greatest anxiety, never become as narrow as Janet's patient.

Now in the 'other mode' of consciousness, the whole personality seems to expand; the quarter moon turns into something closer to a half. This is more than the usual feeling of increased 'interest' or vitality, or even T. E. Lawrence's 'absorption'. When we are happy, we still see the world in more or less the same way as when we are unhappy or merely indifferent. We just seem to see *more* of it; the change is quantitative. In the 'other mode', the change seems to be qualitative; we have an odd sense of revelation or insight, a desire to snap our fingers and say: 'Of *course!*' Of course *what?* Even if we can manage to cling on to some fragments of that insight, it seems impossible to express. And the reason it is so hard to express is that we see that 'everyday consciousness' is somehow based upon a set of *false assumptions,* so that we would have to start by explaining what is wrong with these assumptions. And this sets the solution of the problem back another pace....

Still, let us make the attempt. To begin with, the 'false assumption' lies in the fact that I take it for granted that 'I' am the quarter-moon. My everyday sense of identity usually seems quite solid and secure; when mixing with other people, I am aware that they see me as a definite person; and *I* feel myself to be a definite person. When I experience ordinary happiness, I am still a definite person — but a happy one. But as soon as I experience the 'other mode', my mind seems to perform a kind of conjuring trick that makes me gape with astonishment.

The boundaries of my everyday self seem to dissolve, and I turn into 'something bigger'. It is almost as if the blood was returning into an arm or leg that had 'gone to sleep' because I had been lying on it. Moreover, there is an intuition that this 'new self' is not sharply defined by 'identity', like my everyday self. It seems to stretch into the distance. This sense of boundlessness is so foreign to our everyday experience that it produces a sensation of paradox. This is why Steppenwolf can talk about himself as 'the wretched Steppenwolf', as if he was speaking of another person. What seems even more paradoxical is that this new sense of 'self' is stronger than the everyday identity, even though it has no boundaries to define it.

But at least, we can now begin to understand precisely why the 'everyday self' is a kind of hysteric. In 'stage fright', the left-brain is gripped by mistrust and a sense of inadequacy. It is rather as if a man who had to make a speech suddenly began to worry about whether his mouth would open and close, and tried to do it with his fingers. Obviously, he would speak badly. In effect, a man suffering from over-anxiety is clutching his own windpipe, and wondering why he feels suffocated. We can perfectly well understand what is wrong with such a person — recognise that he is over-reacting, and that he needs to stop indulging his hysteria. But we think of ourselves as 'normal' and balanced. We think of our own left-brain reactions to the world as sensible and responsible. So it is difficult to grasp that, even in the most sensible person, there is still a kind of hysteria which somehow keeps him trapped and confused. In his important essay 'The Energies of Men', William James puts his finger on the problem: 'Most of us feel as if a sort of cloud weighed upon us, keeping us below our highest notch in discernment. Compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake.'

James also compares us to hysterics: 'In every conceivable way life is contracted like the field of vision of an hysteric

subject — but with less excuse, for the poor hysteric is diseased, while in the rest of us, it is only an inveterate *habit* — the habit of inferiority to our full self — that is bad.'

James was not aware that the right and left sides of the brain contain two different people, so he lacked an important clue for understanding how this 'hysteria' comes about. As to the question of how to remedy the situation, he had no very useful ideas. Speaking of certain people who seem less 'inferior to their full self' than the rest of us, he says:

'Either some unusual stimulus fills them with emotional excitement, or some unusual idea of necessity induces them to make an extra effort of will. *Excitements, ideas, and efforts,* in a word, are what carry us over the dam.'

This is a worthwhile insight, but it simply takes us back to the position of 'the Outsider', who is always looking for extreme or violent methods for escaping from his sense of suffocation. He may preach revolution, he may take drugs, he may subject himself to extreme physical hardships 'so that he might feel the life within him more intensely' (as Shaw's Shotover puts it); he may even, like Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, commit murder. But all these methods involve the same assumption: that the answer lies 'out there', in the physical world. We have seen, beyond all shadow of doubt, that the answer lies 'inside' — in that other self who inhabits the right-brain.

But this analysis has answered another of the major questions of 'the Outsider'. He experiences the moment of intensity, of insight, of 'absurd good news', and then wonders whether it was all an illusion. Our knowledge of the mechanisms involved enables us to state authoritatively that it is not an illusion. The business of the right-brain is pattern recognition, the 'bird's-eye-view'. The left-brain is confined to the worm's-eye view. Where over-all patterns and meanings are concerned, a bird's-eye view undoubtedly provides a truer

picture than the worm's. So we conclude that the sense of 'absurd good news', the feeling that 'all is well', is justified.

The next problem is how to *bring home* this insight to the everyday self, to the left-brain ego. But first of all, we need to look more closely into the curious powers of the right-brain.{3}

But these controversies are irrelevant to the present argument. If Gooch is right, then the 'I' lives in the cerebral hemispheres — both of them — and the 'other I' in the cerebellum. The central point — that we are two people — remains unchanged. My own view is that both Gooch and Ornstein are partly right, and that the right hemisphere is, so to speak, the 'antechamber' of the unconscious mind, whose 'seat' may lie elsewhere in the brain, even possibly extending to the body.

Chapter Three

More Mysteries

ON FEBRUARY 21, 1977, a forty-eight-year-old Philippino woman named Teresita Basa was murdered in her apartment in Chicago; she had been stabbed several times, and an attempt had been made to burn her body. The police were unable to find any important clues, although the motive seems to have been robbery. Five months later, in July, Dr Jose Chua and his wife Remibias — also from the Philippines — were sitting in their apartment in Evanston when Mrs Chua got up abruptly and walked into the bedroom. The doctor followed her, and found her lying in a trance-like state on the bed. When he asked her what was wrong, a strange voice issued from her mouth saying, in Tagalog (the language of the Philippines): 'I am Teresita Basa.' She went on to say that she had been murdered by a fellow employee at the Edgewater Hospital, a black named Allan Showery. He had, she said, killed her and stolen some jewellery.

When Mrs Chua woke up, she remembered nothing of what had happened; apparently she had, quite spontaneously, become a 'medium'. A few days later, it happened again. This time, Dr Chua told the 'spirit' that the police would need evidence; it replied that Showery still had some of the stolen jewellery in his possession, and that her pearl cocktail ring was now on the finger of Showery's common law wife. Still the Chuas found themselves unable to go to the police. But when the 'spirit' manifested itself a third time, they apparently decided that it would be less trouble to do what it asked. As a

result, the Chicago police questioned them, then called on Allan Showery. They found the jewellery, just as the 'voice' had said, and his common law wife was wearing the cocktail ring. Under questioning, Showery admitted that he had gone into Miss Basa's apartment — the woman had been a Manila socialite before coming to America, hence the jewellery — and murdered her, then taken the jewellery.

There is, admittedly, room for a grain of doubt about the truth of this story. Mrs Chua worked in the same hospital as the dead woman, and had actually left just before her 'possession', saying that she was afraid of Showery. She could have suspected him, and used this method of telling the police. But that hardly makes sense; all she had to do was to give them an anonymous tip-off — why involve her husband in the incredible story about the 'voice'?

The story interests me, not because it seems to provide evidence for life-after-death, but because it indicates something that strikes me as equally intriguing: that the human body can be 'taken over' by other personalities, who use it in the same way that successive drivers use a hire-car. Such a view seems, in a way, contrary to experience because we somehow take it for granted that the personality and the body are very closely involved. I recall reading *Frankenstein* as a child, and suddenly being struck by this paradox of the 'self'. Suppose Victor Frankenstein had removed the monster's arms and replaced them with new ones; would it still be the same monster? Obviously yes. But he could go on removing parts and changing them for others until he had enough spare parts to make another monster; at what point, precisely, would it cease to be 'the same monster' and become another one?

In his book *The Shape of Minds to Come,* Professor John Taylor states the standard view of personality: '. . . we recognise personality as a summation of the different contributions to behaviour from the various control units of the

brain.' That seems to make sense. Yet cases like that of Teresita Basa suggest otherwise. So do many cases that seem to suggest 'reincarnation'. In *Mysteries* I mention the case of Jasbir Lal, a three-year-old Hindu boy who apparently 'died' of smallpox. Fortunately, his father decided to wait until the next day before burying him; by morning, the child had awakened again. But as he slowly recovered, his family became aware that he seemed to be a different personality. And he said as much. He claimed to be the son of a Brahmin of another village, and at first declined to eat with the family, who were of a lower caste. A few years later, the child 'recognised' a Brahmin lady who was visiting his village, claiming she was his aunt. This lady confirmed what the child had said: that at the time he had 'died' of smallpox, a young man named Sobha Ram had also died in Vehedi village, due to a fall from a cart. (In fact, the child insisted Sobha Ram had died from poison, but this never seems to have been confirmed.) Taken to Vehedi under supervision, Jasbir was able to lead the investigators — by a complicated route — to Sobha Ram's house, and he demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the family and its affairs. The case is cited by Dr Ian Stevenson (in *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*), who agrees that it looks very much like a proven. case of reincarnation. But Sobha Ram died when Jasbir was three....

In 1877, there occurred in America a case that has some striking resemblances to that of Jasbir. On July 11, a thirteen-year-old girl named Lurancy Verrum, who lived in Watseka, Illinois, had a fit, and was unconscious for five hours. It happened again the next day; but while lying 'unconscious', she went on speaking, declaring she was in heaven, and could see a little brother and sister who had died. As similar trances kept recurring, the family concluded she was mentally disturbed, and thought of sending her into a mental home. However, at this point, a Mr and Mrs Asa Roff— friends of the

family – intervened. Their daughter Mary, who had been dead twelve years, had behaved in a similar manner, and they persuaded the Verrums to allow them to bring along a friend, Dr E. W. Stevens. On the day Stevens was introduced to Lurancy, the girl was in a savage mood; but she talked to the doctor, and stated at one point that she was an old woman named Katrina Hogan, and then that she was a man named Willie Canning. After another 'fit', Stevens calmed her with, hypnosis; then the girl declared that she was being possessed by evil spirits. Stevens, who knew something about spiritualism, suggested that she needed a 'guide' or control, and Lurancy agreed. She said that someone called Mary Roff had offered to help her. Mrs Roff, who was present, said this would be an excellent idea....

The next day, Lurancy was no longer 'herself', but Mary Roff. She recognised none of her family, but asked to go 'home' to the Roffs' house. (Mary had died at the age of eighteen in 1865.) As Mrs Roff and one of her married daughters approached the Verrum home, Lurancy, who was looking out of the window, said excitedly: 'There's my ma and sister Nervie.' She wept for joy when they came into the house. A few days later, the Verrums allowed 'Mary' to go home to the Roffs' house. She showed the same precise, detailed knowledge of the Roff family that Jasbir showed of Sobha Ram's. Asked how long she could stay, she replied that 'the angels' had given her until May. And on May 21, Mary announced that she would have to leave 'Rancy's' body at eleven o'clock. Mary took tender leave of all her family, then returned to the Roff home. On the way, she became Lurancy again. And from then on, Lurancy was a perfectly normal girl.

Now obviously, cases like these suggest very strongly that 'personality' can survive bodily death. In which case, it would seem possible that cases of multiple personality are really cases of 'possession'. Yet while this is a hypothesis that should

not be totally dismissed, it would leave us with just as many problems as before. For the real mystery here is: what precisely *is* a 'personality'? Is each person really an 'individual' — an indivisible unity? We know this is not so; we react differently in different situations, and it is quite easy to imagine the same person behaving like totally different people in different situations. But this, we say, is merely a question of different 'aspects' of the same personality. But then, in cases of multiple personality, it looks as if different sets of 'aspects' have come together to form totally different personalities. Many people seem so limited and boring that it is quite easy to believe that they have half a dozen other personalities hidden away in some recess of the mind. In short, personality seems to be like a suit of clothes; and it is possible for everyone to possess any number.

Besides, my personality seems to be closely connected with my conscious-self. If someone asks you whether you remembered to pass on a message, you may reply: 'No, it didn't come into my head.' Yet it *was* in your head — somewhere. It just didn't happen to emerge into the *centre* of consciousness. And in that gigantic storehouse of memories and experiences inside my head, there must be material for hundreds of 'personalities'. By 'the' personality, we mean only the one in the centre of consciousness.

A case history will underline the point. In the year that Lurancy Verrum began having fits, a fourteen-year-old boy named Louis Vive was attacked by a viper and severely traumatised. Vive was a neglected child who had been in a reformatory since he was ten; he was quiet and obedient. But after the shock, he began having fits, and was sent to the asylum at Bonneval. One day, he had a 'hysterico-epileptic attack' which lasted fifteen hours; when he recovered, he was a different person. To begin with, he no longer suffered from hysterical hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body). He

had no memory of anything that had happened since the viper attack. And he was violent, dishonest, and generally badly behaved. This new 'delinquent' self would alternate with the former, well-behaved Louis Vive, who suffered from paralysis.

After a period in the marines, and a conviction for theft, Vive was sent to the asylum at Rochefort, where three doctors became intrigued by his case of hysterical hemiplegia. By this time, the 'bad' character was present most of the time. He was paralysed down the right side, and his speech was halting and poor. But in spite of this, he was given to delivering violent harangues 'with a monkey-like impudence' on atheism and the need for violent revolution.

The doctors believed that hysterical hemiplegia could be transferred from one side to the other by various metals. Vive responded to steel, which transferred the hemiplegia from one side to the other. And there was an instant change of character; Vive was again a quiet, well-behaved person, who remembered nothing of his career as a violent radical and criminal.

We, of course, have a clue that was unknown to Vive's doctors: that when his right side was paralysed, his left-brain was affected — hence the poor speech. So the 'person' who expressed himself in the violent speeches was Vive's right-brain self'. The steel caused the paralysis to reverse, and the left-brain Vive returned.This is not to say — obviously — that the revolutionary Vive was a totally right-brain being, since he was able to express himself in speech. Presumably both personalities made use of both sides of the brain. But the 'well-behaved' Vive was oriented to the left, and the badly behaved Vive to the right.

Now oddly enough, this seems to be a recurring pattern in such cases. One of the most fully documented is that of Christine Beauchamp, described around the turn of the century by Dr Morton Prince in his book *The Dissociation of a*

Personality.{4} Christine, the primary personality, was quiet and undemonstrative. Like Vive, she had had a difficult time in late childhood. A severe psychological shock brought on a period of depression and general exhaustion. Under hypnosis, another personality emerged, who called herself Sally. Sally's speech was impaired — she stuttered. But she was in every way livelier and healthier than Christine. Christine was unaware of Sally's existence, but Sally knew everything that went on in Christine's mind. When Christine was 'low', Sally could take over the body. And the personalities of the two were so different that Prince could tell at a glance whether it was Sally or Christine 'in the body'. On one occasion, Christine was about to take a trip to Europe for her health; Prince called at the hospital to enquire about her, and was surprised to hear that she was in the best of health and spirits. Entering the room, he instantly saw why; Sally had taken over, determined that Christine's poor health should not deprive her of a holiday in Europe. Prince says: 'As I walked into the room I was astonished to see not Miss Beauchamp but Sally, stuttering and merry as a grig.' In fact, the holiday kept Christine in such good spirits that Sally was unable to take over.

The case of 'Doris Fischer', described by Dr Walter Prince, has a similar pattern.{5} Doris was a quiet, timid child who was badly treated by her father. After a severe shock (all such cases seem to begin in the same way), her alter-ego 'Margaret' made her appearance. Margaret, like Sally Beauchamp, was cheerful, healthy and mischievous. Both were given to playing malicious tricks on the 'primary personality'. (Sally used to take long walks into the country, then abandon the body and leave the easily exhausted Christine to walk back.)

Now it is certainly tempting to see here the kind of self-division we all experience. I may feel too lethargic to go for a long walk, and force myself to do it 'against my will'. But the 'division' here is between my body, which feels tired, and

my 'controlling ego', which feels that a walk would nevertheless be good for me. A rather more interesting form of 'division' occurs if I am not physically tired, but simply bored with the idea of a walk, so that the very thought rouses internal resistance. If I now force myself to go, I am aware of something much more like 'two selves' in conflict. The interesting point to note here is that if I force myself to walk until I feel I can no longer drag myself a step further, I can usually force myself through some kind of psychological 'barrier', and experience 'second wind'. Quite suddenly, the fatigue vanishes and I feel able to go on for miles. In 'The Energies of Men', William James reports that this used to be a favourite method of treating 'neurasthenic' patients suffering from permanent exhaustion; the doctor forces the patient to make immense efforts, which at first cause acute distress; then the distress suddenly vanishes and gives way to relief.

These different 'levels' of personality seem to bear no obvious resemblance to cases like that of Louis Vive or Doris Fischer, where it seems to be a matter of completely different 'persons'. In her book on the case of 'Sybil' (who exhibited, sixteen different 'selves'), Flora Rheta Schreiber mentions that tests with an EEG machine (for measuring 'brainwaves') reveal that the different personalities in such cases often have different brain patterns. This seems impossible — as remarkable as the same person having several different sets of fingerprints. But no one supposes that a person who has just got 'second wind' has a different brain pattern. It is almost as if we could be 'divided' two ways — vertically or horizontally. A person like Louis Vive seems to switch horizontally, as if the two 'persons' involved completely different interactions of the right- and left-brain. A neurasthenic patient who is 'bullied' into a more vital state seems to have moved vertically, as if climbing a ladder.

Yet the two systems, horizontal and vertical, are plainly

connected. Why is it that all cases of multiple personality seem to begin with a shock? Presumably because the shock causes a sudden drop in vitality — a descent down several rungs of the 'ladder'. And this 'fall' allows the secondary personality to assume control.

The Victorian scientist Sir Francis Galton performed an experiment that demonstrates a controlled 'descent' of the ladder. He deliberately induced in himself a persecuted state of mind, walking through London and telling himself that everyone he met was a spy. It was alarmingly successful, so that when he passed a cab stand in Piccadilly, he had a feeling that all the horses were watching him. It took several hours for him to get back to normal, and even then, it was easy to slip back into his mild paranoia. Intrigued by this experiment, Professor Peter McKellar of New Zealand tried persuading friends in a restaurant that the waiter had something against them and was determined not to serve them; he records that he was surprised how easily he could induce a state of mild paranoia.{6}

McKellar also mentions an interesting experiment conducted by Dr E. A. Kaplan in which a hypnotised subject was told that his left hand would be insensitive to pain, while the right hand would be capable of automatic writing. When the left hand was pricked by a needle, the patient felt nothing, but the right hand wrote: 'Ouch, it hurts.' This certainly seems to reveal a sub-system of personality split off from the rest. Moreover, it is a sub-system which, like Vive's, is associated with the right and left halves of the brain. But here again, we must beware of the assumption that the secondary personality 'is' the 'right-brain self'. William James performed an experiment in automatic writing; his subject was a college student. When the hand that was doing the writing was pricked, the student was unaware of it, although he reacted sharply if his left hand was pricked. But the right hand wrote: 'Don't you prick me any

more.' Later, the student was asked to try automatic writing with the left hand, and was then asked how many times James had pricked his right hand; the left hand answered accurately 'Nineteen'. So the subpersonality that did the writing had use of both hands; presumably it also had the use of both sides of the brain.

Before we allow this subject to lead us farther afield, we need some further clarification of the respective roles of the right and left hemispheres.

To begin with, we must avoid falling into the obvious trap of regarding the right as a hero and the left as a villain. The error is more dangerous because it is not entirely without foundation. The 'left' *does* tend to behave like a nagging and self-opinionated housewife, obsessed with its own trivial purposes, continually imposing its own simplistic notions on the complexity of reality. For the past two centuries, poets and artists have been warning us against the rational intellect. Blake makes it the villain of his prophetic books (where he calls it Urizen). Wordsworth recognised that it was chiefly to blame for the 'shades of the prison house' that close around us as we grow up. T. E. Lawrence called the intellect his 'jailer', and said that the richness of physical reality is 'filtered and made typical' by thought.It is also true that the states of mind William James called 'melting moods' recur when the left relaxes its neurotic vigilance. It happens when we sigh with relief, or when we are suddenly filled with delighted anticipation — perhaps when setting out on a holiday. But all this proves is that the left-brain in modern man has become too dominant for its own good: not that it should surrender its dominance to the right. If cases of secondary personality are anything to go by — May Naylor, Louis Vive, Sally Beauchamp, Doris Fischer— 'surrender to the right' would be no solution at all. (Morton Prince remarks that secondary personalities are always inferior to the 'original self'.) Stan may be in many

ways preferable to Ollie, but he is not cut out to be the leader and make the decisions. In the twentieth century, Hermann Hesse has been one of the few major writers to understand this; in *Glimpse into Chaos* (1919), he warns Europe against being taken over by a 'primeval, occult, Asiatic ideal' — an ideal he calls 'Russian man'. Russian man, he says, 'is not to be adequately described either as a "hysteric" or as a drunkard or criminal, or as a poet and holy man, but only as the simultaneous combination of all these characteristics'. Hesse is describing a 'right-brainer', a character not unlike the 'revolutionary' alter-ego of Louis Vive.

This is a difficult point to grasp, since 'right-brain' moods — of relaxation and expansion — are so obviously desirable. They fill us with optimism and replenish our vital energies. Everything looks clearer and brighter; scents, colours, sounds, become richer, so that we have a sense of being almost overwhelmed by meanings that we usually overlook. And yet — oddly enough — we can easily grow tired of them. Like a hot bath, they leave us relaxed and refreshed — but who would want to spend twenty-four hours in a hot bath?

It is not easy to see why precisely this should be so. But this is because we spend most of our time in a state of meaning-starvation; so the idea of growing tired of too much 'meaning' seems as absurd as growing tired of food would seem to a starving man. The fact remains that a starving man grows tired of food once he is full up.

Meaning, like food, is not an end in itself. My body converts food into energy, and my mind converts meaning into purpose. Why? Because this seems to be the nature of the evolutionary drive. There is no point in being overwhelmed by meaning — like the mystics. Our task is to *pin it down*. When a scientist glimpses a new truth, he immediately sets about converting it into concepts and symbols. If he failed to do this because it was too big, too complex, he would only feel frustrated.

The fundamental human urge is not for happiness, but for control. A man who has spent his life in a state of misery may be glad enough for a few scraps of happiness; but the moment he becomes a little accustomed to happiness, he is seized with a desire to grasp its underlying principle, so that he can turn it on and off as he pleases. The romantic poets and artists of the nineteenth century had their glimpses of ecstasy and moments of vision; what made them so unhappy was their lack of control over them. After all, a vision is an insight, and an insight is something I ought to be able to recall at will. If a 'vision' comes and goes as it pleases, and I am unable to remember what it was about, then I am probably better off without it.

In short, insight is not enough. The two halves need to combine their functions. When this happens, the result is far greater than either could achieve individually. In *The Dam Busters,* Paul Brickhill describes how the planes that bombed the Moener dam maintained an exact height above the water; a powerful light was placed in the nose and tail of each aeroplane, so the two beams crossed at the necessary height. All the pilot had to do was to reach the height at which there was only one circle of light on the water instead of two, then release his bombs. In the same way, the faculties of the right and left hemispheres, of insight and logic, can be focused together at a single point. When this happens, the result is a sense of actuality, as if the mind had suddenly 'got the distance' between itself and the real world. For this *sense of actuality* I have suggested the term 'Faculty X'.

And it should be clear that the most important element in Faculty X is not the 'insight', but the discipline and control of the 'left-brain'. Gibbon has described how the inspiration for the *Decline and Fall* came to him as he sat among the ruins of the Capitol, listening to bare-foot friars singing vespers. It was his first visit to Rome, and no doubt the reality of the place brought that sense of insight, the feeling that *here* was the

place that was the historical and religious centre of ancient Rome. But the insight would not have come if he had not first studied Roman history. An ignorant peasant would only have seen a lot of ruins. Gibbon *brought to a focus* his sense of the present and his knowledge of the past. And that knowledge — which had no doubt cost him a great deal of boredom and several beatings (he described his school as 'a cavern of fear and sorrow') — was the more important of the two elements.

It is true that we do not *need* this kind of knowledge to achieve Faculty X — Proust experienced it tasting a cake dipped in herb tea and tripping over a paving stone. No doubt Paris experienced Faculty X the first time Helen of Troy surrendered herself. But occasions like this are rare because our senses are dulled by habit. And when we become habit-bound, we cease even to try to bring the two 'beams' to a focus. In fact, a person suffering from what James calls 'habit neurosis' lives with only one beam switched on; the right-brain has lost interest in life. The result is 'life failure', the feeling that nothing is worth doing.

And here we come to the heart of the matter, the real problem of human existence. It is this power of habit to *rob us of all sense of reality*. In this sense we are all dual-personalities' for— half the time we are striving and struggling to stay alive and improve our lot; the other half, we accept the present as if there was no reality beyond it, and lapse into a kind of hypnotic trance. Seen objectively, there is something almost macabre about this duality, a touch of Jekyll and Hyde. It is like meeting a man of impressive personality and powerful intellect who suddenly sucks his thumb and lapses into baby talk.

Let me try to be more specific. I spend my day writing about the peculiarities of the human mind and our ability to slip into the 'other mode' of consciousness. Periodically, as I write, I remember that a boxed set of the Beethoven symphonies

conducted by Mengelberg arrived this morning, and each time, I feel a glow of satisfaction; I am looking forward to comparing his version of the Ninth with Furtwangler's. At the end of the day, I relax in my armchair, pour myself a glass of wine, and watch the TV news. Now it is time to play the Mengelberg; but somehow, I have lost interest. Is it really worth the effort of finding the Furtwangler set? I put on a record, but I am not really listening; I am glancing at a book someone has sent me for review.... And tomorrow, I shall wonder why I didn't stick to my original intention of comparing Mengelberg and Furtwangler, for now the idea strikes me again as fascinating....

What happened? Well, quite simply: at a crucial point, my 'robot' took over. My relaxation triggered an automatic response, almost like the post-hypnotic suggestion that can cause a person to fall asleep when a certain key word is repeated. I relaxed — and then, in effect, I over-relaxed and fell asleep.

To blame the 'robot' would be absurd; he is only a convenience, like the housewife's washing machine. The trouble lies in ourselves: in this curious failure of the sense of reality. This deficient sense of reality seems to lie, for example, at the root of all mental illness. Consider what happens when someone begins to feel 'run down'. Life begins to seem repetitive and futile; it costs an effort to get through the working day. Then he takes a fishing holiday, and within a couple of weeks is feeling cheerful and alive and ready to face the winter. What precisely has happened? Well, it sounds absurd when expressed in so many words: but what has happened is that the holiday has convinced him of the real existence of the rest of the world. As he sits watching his float bobbing on the water, something inside him gives sigh of *relief,* as if he has just received some news that took a weight off his mind. And if he tried to express his feeling in words, he would

say: 'My God, I'd forgotten that this place existed.' If you said: 'Are you trying to tell me that you literally forgot that there was such a place as Scotland?', he would answer: 'Not quite. But I'd somehow stopped believing in it.' And we can all perfectly well understand this paradoxical statement (which would certainly baffle a Martian): that you can somehow know a place exists, and yet not believe it.

The explanation lies in the simple fact that before we can 'know' something, it has to *sink in*. A child is born into a narrow little world of its cradle and its mother's arms; it knows nothing of the 'outside world'. Gradually, the area of its experience is extended — to other rooms, to the garden, to the street outside, to the park. Each step gives it a wider range of experience, and it envies its elder brothers and sisters who go to school, and seem to lead far more 'grown up' lives. The craving for a wider range of experience is fundamental to all of us. But then, there is another kind of experience, which is at once more exciting and less real than the street and the park: the experience that comes through television and books. *This* is where the dichotomy seems to begin. We know the Wild West exists, but we don't really believe it. In order to really believe it, we would need to have been there.

Which brings us back to that mysterious paradox. For the man on the fishing holiday has been there before. Yet he has still somehow 'forgotten' it.

And *what* has he forgotten? Not just the existence of that particular place. What he experiences as he steps outdoors with his fishing rod, and recognises that smell of evaporating dew, is far more complex. It awakens echoes inside him, memories of other times and places, a sense of the sheer bigness of the world, of its multiplicity and excitement.

But these, in turn, are what drive us to effort. When a man achieves something he has wanted for a long time, he feels an enormous sense of satisfaction at the thought that *he has not*

allowed himself to be discouraged, not allowed himself to lapse into mistrust and life-devaluation. At the same time, he glimpses the real menace of forgetfulness: that it causes us to spend our lives half-asleep, that it turns us into inefficient machines who never realise a quarter of our potentialities. It is not the drive and will-power that we lack. Show us a goal that touches deep springs of excitement, and nothing can stop us. Our real trouble lies in that deficient sense of reality, our tendency to forget the goal even after we have seen it.

Suddenly, it is possible to see what has gone wrong with human evolution. Animals have no sense of purpose beyond their instincts — for self-preservation, for reproduction, for territory. They are trapped in the present. Man has developed conceptual consciousness, the power to grasp a far wider range of experience, to remember distant goals. This *farsightedness* is so far beyond that of any other animal that, in theory, we ought to be little short of god-like.

Then what has gone wrong? Quite simply: that although we possess this power — which has been bequeathed to us from thousands of generations of evolution — we make so little use of it that we might as well be cows grazing in a field. Like the animals, we also spend most of our time stuck in the present. We bumble along short-sightedly, obsessed by the needs of the moment, deriving no real advantage from the power that distinguishes us from whales and chimpanzees. It is as absurd as owning an expensive Rolls-Royce and keeping it permanently in the garage. We have forgotten why we bought it: that it can transport us to new scenes and distant places, that it can open our minds to new possibilities. In effect, we have started to travel along a completely new path of evolution, then forgotten why we set out. Instead of marching, we are sitting by the roadside, trying to think up ways of passing the time.

And how has this strange situation come about? Through a *polarisation* of our powers. Psychologically speaking, we consist

of three major components: the left-brain, the right-brain, and the 'robot' (probably located in the cerebellum) The purpose of the left-brain is to 'cope', to deal with immediacy. The purpose of the right-brain is to make us aware of meanings, of over-all patterns. The purpose of the robot is to mechanise our learning, so we can get on and learn something else. What has happened is that the left-brain and the robot have formed an alliance, a kind of business-partnership, aimed at guaranteeing our survival. It has been fantastically successful, but there is one drawback: it has robbed us of all sense of *urgency*. It tells us that tomorrow will be more-or-less like today and yesterday, and that consequently, our only aim is to keep out of trouble and stay alive. And since the right-brain was always the silent partner, it can do very little about it except mutter under its breath and dream about the coming revolution that will break up this dreary alliance. (In fact, as we shall see in a later chapter, the right-brain and the robot have their own alliance, whose consequences are just as disastrous.)

Consider the way the alliance operates. The left is coping with its everyday tasks with the aid of the robot; it does this efficiently, but without much enthusiasm, for it 'takes them for granted'. Suddenly, an emergency arises. The left instantly dismisses the robot; it cannot afford to make any mistakes. It demands an assessment of the problem, and the right obligingly provides this, together with a flood of surplus energy.

Suddenly, the left is no longer bored. It is gripped by a sense of purpose. It can see that failure could lead to a chain-reaction of failures and defeats. With a powerful sense of urgency, it proceeds to take decisions and give orders.But with this kind of teamwork, the problem already begins to look less serious. The left begins to lose its sense of urgency, and hands over some of its tasks to the robot again. The right ceases to provide surplus energy, and again begins to feel 'left out'. And the left wonders why it is again feeling bored and

tired.

This, then, explains why human beings fail to take advantage of their 'far-sightedness', and why they seem to have got 'stuck' at this point in their evolution. The three components are so arranged that they actively interfere with one another— rather like a car in which the brake, accelerator and clutch are placed so close together that you cannot brake without accelerating or depressing the clutch....

What *should* happen can be seen whenever we experience those brief moods of 'reality' — 'holiday consciousness' — in which everything becomes sharp and clear, like Wordsworth's view of London, 'all bright and glittering in the smokeless air'. What strikes us with a kind of amazement in such moments is the 'interestingness' of the world, its endlessly fascinating complexity. This is right-brain perception, meaning perception.

And what is perfectly obvious in such moments is that if only we could maintain this level of meaning-perception, all our problems would disappear. It fills us with excitement and courage, and the sense of endless vistas of possibility induces a kind of incredulity that human beings could ever suffer from boredom. In Durrenmatt's play *An Angel Comes to Babylon,* one of the characters asks the angel why human life is so full of suffering. The angel regards her with astonishment and says: 'My dear young lady, I have travelled the world from end to end, and I can assure you that there is not the slightest sign of suffering.' And the moments of 'holiday consciousness' bring that same absurd perception: that most suffering is really the result of 'habit neurosis'. Human beings are a hundred times stronger than they ever realise. As James says: 'We live subject to arrest by degrees of fatigue which we have come only from habit to obey.' As Graham Greene's 'whiskey priest' in *The Power and the Glory* stands in front of a firing squad, he has the sudden perception that 'it would have been so easy to be a saint'. The threat of death has awakened him to the

realisation that what he regarded as insurmountable barriers are really as surmountable as a five-barred gate.

No animal is capable of such a vision, because no animal possesses our 'conceptual consciousness', this power to see into the distance. What it means, then, is that human beings possess a possibility that is open to no other creature on earth: of *breaking through* to a new evolutionary level of vision and purpose. All that is necessary is for us to solve this simple mechanical problem: how, so to speak, to rearrange the brake, accelerator and clutch until they stop interfering with one another. Solve that, and we shall have learned the secret of how to turn men into creatures like Durrenmatt's angel.

There are several approaches to this problem, and they deserve a chapter to themselves.

Chapter Four

Frankenstein's Castle

IN THE MID 1950s, a book called *A Drug Taker's Notes* was published in England; it described the writer's experiences with the 'psychedelic' drug lysergic acid. The author, R. H. Ward, was a great deal less well-known than Aldous Huxley, whose own account of his 'psychedelic' experiences, *The Doors of Perception,* had created a sensation in 1953. Ward's book aroused far less interest; which is a pity, for it is, in its way, as important as Huxley's.

The opening chapter contains an account of an early experience with nitrous oxide, used as a dental anaesthetic. He says: 'On this occasion, it seemed to me that I passed, after the first few inhalations of the gas, directly into a state of consciousness already far more complete than the fullest degree of ordinary waking consciousness, and that I then passed progressively upwards (for there was an actual sensation of upward movement) into finer and finer degrees of heightened awareness.' He records his surprise that he was still able to think, and was not being made unconscious by the gas. He speaks of 'an extraordinary sense of the *rightness of things*', and says: 'While it was altogether strange, this new condition was also familiar; it was even in some sense my rightful condition.'

Perhaps the most important phrase here is 'a state of consciousness already far more complete than the fullest degree of ordinary waking consciousness'. This is the most difficult thing for us to grasp: that everyday consciousness is

Appendix C

The Energies of Men (1907)

by William James

Editor's Note:
Passages from this essay are mentioned a number of times in *Frankenstein's Castle,* thus we have included the entire essay here. William James (1842-1910) first delivered this as a speech to the American Philosophical Association at Columbia University, on December 28, 1906. It was published in Janury 1907 in the *Philosophical Review* (that is the version included here below); and published again later — in a shorter and slightly different version, titled *The Powers Of Men* in *American Magazine* in October 1907. This shorter "popular" version (with James's preferred title, *The Energies Of Men*) is included in the 1911 posthumous James anthology *Memories and Studies*.
—Michael Pastore

We habitually hear; much nowadays of the difference between structural and functional psychology. I am not sure that I understand the difference, but it probably has something to do with what I have privately been accustomed to distinguish as the analytical and the clinical points of view in psychological observation. Professor Sanford, in a recently published 'Sketch of a Beginner's Course in Psychology,' recommended 'the physician's attitude' in that subject as the thing the teacher should first of all try to impart to the pupil. I fancy that few of you can have read Professor Pierre Janet's masterly works in

mental pathology without being struck by the little use he makes of the machinery usually relied on by psychologists, and by his own reliance on conceptions which in the laboratories and in scientific publications we never hear of at all.

Discriminations and associations, the rise and fall of thresholds, impulses and inhibitions, fatigue, — these are the terms into which our inner life is analyzed by psychologists who are not doctors, and in which, by hook or crook, its aberrations from normality have to be expressed. They can indeed be described, after the fact, in such terms, but always lamely; and everyone must feel how much is unaccounted for, how much left out.

When we turn to Janet's pages, we find entirely other forms of thought employed. Oscillations of the level of mental energy, differences of tension, splittings of consciousness, sentiments of insufficiency and of unreality, substitutions, agitations and anxieties, depersonalizations — such are the elementary conceptions which the total view of his patient's life imposes on this clinical observer. They have little or nothing to do with the usual laboratory categories. Ask a scientific psychologist to predict what symptoms a patient must have when his 'supply of mental energy' diminishes, and he can utter only the word 'fatigue.' He could never predict such consequences as Janet subsumes under his one term 'psychasthenia' — the most bizarre obsessions and agitations, the most complete distortions of the relation between the self and the world.I do not vouch for Janet's conceptions being valid, and I do not say that the two ways of looking at the mind contradict each other or are mutually incongruous; I simply say that they are incongru*ent*. Each covers so little of our total mental life that they do not even interfere or jostle.

Meanwhile the clinical conceptions, though they may be vaguer than the analytic ones, are certainly more adequate, give the concreter picture of the way the whole mind works,

and are of far more urgent practical importance. So the 'physician's attitude,' the 'functional psychology,' is assuredly the thing most worthy of general study to-day.

I wish to spend this hour on one conception of functional psychology, a conception never once mentioned or heard of in laboratory circles, but used perhaps more than any other by common, practical men — I mean the conception of the *amount of energy available* for running one's mental and moral operations by. Practically every one knows in his own person the difference between the days when the tide of this energy is high in him and those when it is low, though no one knows exactly what reality the term energy covers when used here, or what its tides, tensions, and levels are in themselves. This vagueness is probably the reason why our scientific psychologists ignore the conception altogether. It undoubtedly connects itself with the energies of the nervous system, but it presents fluctuations that can not easily be translated into neural terms. It offers itself as the notion of a quantity, but its ebbs and floods produce extraordinary qualitative results. To have its level raised is the most important thing that can happen to a man, yet in all my reading I know of no single page or paragraph of a scientific psychology book in which it receives mention — the psychologists have left it to be treated by the moralists and mind-curers and doctors exclusively.

Every one is familiar with the phenomenon of feeling more or less alive on different days. Every one knows on any given day that there are energies slumbering in him which the incitements of that day do not call forth, but which he might display if these were greater. Most of us feel as if we lived habitually with a sort of cloud weighing on us, below our highest notch of clearness in discernment, sureness in reasoning, or firmness in deciding. Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are damped, our drafts are checked. We are making use of only a small part of

our possible mental and physical resources. In some persons this sense of being cut off from their rightful resources is extreme, and we then get the formidable neurasthenic and psychasthenic conditions, with life grown into one tissue of impossibilities, that the medical books describe.

Part of the imperfect vitality under which we labor can be explained by scientific psychology. It is the result of the inhibition exerted by one part of our ideas on other parts. Conscience makes cowards of us all. Social conventions prevent us from telling the truth, after the fashion of the heroes and heroines of Bernard Shaw. Our scientific respectability keeps us from exercising the mystical portions of our nature freely. If we are doctors, our mind-cure sympathies, if we are mind-curists, our medical sympathies, are tied up. We all know persons who are models of excellence, but who belong to the extreme philistine type of mind. So deadly is their intellectual respectability that we can't converse about certain subjects at all, can't let our minds play over them, can't even mention them in their presence. I have numbered among my dearest friends persons thus inhibited intellectually, with whom I would gladly have been able to talk freely about certain interests of mine, certain authors, say, as Bernard Shaw, Chesterton, Edward Carpenter, H. G. Wells, but it wouldn't do, it made them too uncomfortable, they wouldn't play, I had to be silent. An intellect thus tied down by literality and decorum makes on one the same sort of impression that an able-bodied man would who should habituate himself to do his work with only one of his fingers, locking up the rest of his organism and leaving it unused.

In few of us are functions not tied-up by the exercise of other functions. G. T. Fechner is an extraordinary exception that proves the rule. He could use his mystical faculties while being scientific. He could be both critically keen and devout. Few scientific men can pray, I imagine. Few can carry on any

living commerce with 'God.' Yet many of us are well aware how much freer in many directions and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up. There are in everyone potential forms of activity that actually are shunted out from use.

The existence of reservoirs of energy that habitually are not tapped is most familiar to us in the phenomenon of 'second wind.' Ordinarily we stop when we meet the first effective layer, so to call it, of fatigue. We have then walked, played, or worked 'enough,' and desist. That amount of fatigue is an efficacious obstruction, on this side of which our usual life is cast. But if an unusual necessity forces us to press onward, a surprising thing occurs. The fatigue gets worse up to a certain critical point, when gradually or suddenly it passes away, and we are fresher than before. We have evidently tapped a level of new energy, masked until then by the fatigue-obstacle usually obeyed. There may be layer after layer of this experience. A third and a fourth 'wind' may supervene. Mental activity shows the phenomenon as well as physical, and in exceptional cases we may find, beyond the very extremity of fatigue-distress, amounts of ease and power that we never dreamed ourselves to own, sources of strength habitually not taxed at all, because habitually we never push through the obstruction, never pass those early critical points.

When we do pass, what makes us do so? Either some unusual stimulus fill us with emotional excitement, or some unusual idea of necessity induces us to make an extra effort of will. *Excitements, ideas, and efforts,* in a word, are what carry us over the dam.

In those hyperesthetic conditions which chronic invalidism so often brings in its train, the dam has changed its normal place. The pain-threshold is abnormally near. The slightest functional exercise gives a distress which the patient yields to and stops. In such cases of 'habit-neurosis' a new range of

power often comes in consequence of the bullying-treatment, of efforts which the doctor obliges the patient, against his will, to make. First comes the very extremity of distress, then follows unexpected relief. There seems no doubt that we are each and all of us to some extent victims of habit-neurosis. We have to admit the wider potential range and the habitually narrow actual use. We live subject to inhibition by degrees of fatigue which we have come only from habit to obey. Most of us may learn to push the barrier farther off, and to live in perfect comfort on much higher levels of power.

Country people and city people, as a class, illustrate this difference. The rapid rate of life, the number of decisions in an hour, the many things to keep account of, in a busy city man's or woman's life, seem monstrous to a country brother. He doesn't see how we live at all. But settle him in town; and in a year or two, if not too old, he will have trained himself to keep the pace as well as any of us, getting more out of himself in any week then he ever did in ten weeks at home. The physiologists show how one can be in nutritive equilibrium, neither losing nor gaining weight, on astonishingly different quantities of food. So one can be in what I might call 'efficiency-equilibrium' (neither gaining nor losing power when once the equilibrium is reached), on astonishingly different quantities of work, no matter in what dimension the work may be measured. It may be physical work, intellectual work, moral work, or spiritual work.

Of course there are limits: the trees don't grow into the sky. But the plain fact remains that men the world over possess amounts of resource, which only very exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use.The excitements that carry us over the usually effective dam are most often the classic emotional ones, love, anger, crowd-contagion, or despair. Life's vicissitudes bring them in abundance. A new position of responsibility, if it do not crush a man, will often, nay, one

may say, will usually, show him to be a far stronger creature than was supposed. Even here we are witnessing (some of us admiring, some deploring — I must class myself as admiring) the dynamogenic effects of a very exalted political office upon the energies of an individual who had already manifested a .healthy amount of energy before the office came.

Mr. Sydney Olivier has given us a fine fable of the dynamogenic effects of love in a late story called 'The Empire Builder,' in the *Contemporary Review* for May, 1905. A young naval officer falls in love at sight with a missionary's daughter on a lost island, which his ship accidentally touches. From that day onward he must see her again; and he so moves Heaven and earth and the Colonial Office and the Admiralty to get sent there once more, that the island finally is annexed to the empire in consequence of the various fusses he is led to make. People must have been appalled lately in San Francisco to find the stores of bottled up energy and endurance they possessed.

Wars, of course, and shipwrecks, are the great revealers of what men and women are able to do and bear. Cromwell's and Grant's careers are the stock examples of how war will wake a man up. I owe to Professor Norton's kindness the permission to read to you part of a letter from Colonel Baird-Smith, written shortly after the six weeks' siege of Delhi in 1857, for the victorious issue of which that excellent officer was chiefly to be thanked. He writes as follows :

My poor wife had some reason to think that war and disease between them had left very little of a husband to take under nursing when she got him again. An attack of camp-scurvy had filled my mouth with sores, shaken every joint in my body, and covered me all over with sores and livid spots so that I was marvelously unlovely to look upon. A smart knock on the ankle-joint from the splinter of a shell that burst in my face, in itself a mere bagatelle of a wound, had been of necessity

neglected under the pressing and incessant calls upon me, and had grown worse and worse till the whole foot below the ankle became a black mass and seemed to threaten mortification. I insisted however on being allowed to use it till the place was taken, mortification or no; and though the pain was sometimes horrible, I carried my point and kept up to the last. On the day after the assault I had an unlucky fall on some bad ground; and it was an open question for a day or two whether I hadn't broken my arm at the elbow. Fortunately it turned out to be only a very severe sprain, but I am still conscious of the wrench it gave me. To crown the whole pleasant catalogue, I was worn to a shadow by a constant diarrhœa, and consumed as much opium as would have done credit to my father-in-law.

However, thank God I have a good share of Tapleyism in me and come out strong under difficulties. I think I may confidently say that no man ever saw me out of heart, or ever heard one croaking word from me even when our prospects were gloomiest. We were sadly scourged by the cholera and it was almost appalling to me to find that out of twenty-seven officers present, I could only muster fifteen for the operations of the attack. However, it was done, and after it was done came the collapse. Don't be horrified when I tell you that for the whole of the actual siege, and in truth for some little time before, I almost lived on brandy. Appetite for food I had none, but I forced myself to eat just sufficient to sustain life, and I had an incessant craving for brandy as the strongest stimulant I could get. Strange to say, I was quite unconscious of its affecting me in the slightest degree. *The excitement of the work was so great that no lesser one seemed to have any chance against it, and I certainly never found my intellect clearer or my nerves stronger in my life.* It was only my wretched body that was weak, and the moment the real work was done by our becoming complete masters of Delhi, I broke down without delay and discovered that it I wished to live I

must continue no longer the system that had kept me up until the crisis was past. With it passed away as it in a moment all desire to stimulate, and a perfect loathing of my late staff f life took possession of me.

Such experiences show how profound is the alteration in the manner in which, under excitement, our organism will sometimes perform its physiological work. The metabolisms become different when the reserves have to be used, and for weeks and months the deeper use may go on.

Morbid cases, here as elsewhere, lay the normal machinery bare. In the first number of Dr. Morton Prince's *Journal of Abnormal Psychology,* Dr. Janet has discussed five cages of morbid impulse, with an explanation that is precious for my present point of view. One is a girl who eats, eats, eats, all day. Another walks, walks, walks, and gets her food from an automobile that escorts her. Another is a dipsomaniac. A fourth pulls out her hair. A fifth wounds her flesh and burns her skin. Hitherto such freaks of impulse have received Greek names (as bulimia, dromomania, etc.) and been scientifically disposed of as 'episodic syndromata of hereditary degeneration.' But it turns out that Janet's cases are all what he calls psychasthenics, or victims of a chronic sense of weakness, torpor, lethargy, fatigue, insufficiency, impossibility, unreality, and powerlessness of will; and that in each and all of them the particular activity pursued, deleterious though it be, has the temporary result of raising the sense of vitality and making the patient feel alive again. These things reanimate; they would reanimate us; but it happens that in each patient the particular freak-activity chosen is the only thing that does reanimate; and therein lies the morbid state. The way to treat such persons is to discover to them more usual and useful ways of throwing their stores of vital energy into gear.

Colonel Baird-Smith, needing to draw on altogether

extraordinary stores of energy, found that brandy and opium were ways of throwing them into gear.Such cases are humanly typical. We are all to some degree oppressed, unfree. We don't come to our own. It is there, but we don't get at it. The threshold must be made to shift. Then many of us find that an excentric activity — a 'spree,' say — relieves. There is no doubt that to some men sprees and excesses of almost any kind are medicinal, temporarily at any rate, in spite of what the moralists and doctors say.

But when the normal tasks and stimulations of life don't put a man's deeper levels of energy on tap, and he requires distinctly deleterious excitements, his constitution verges on the abnormal. The normal opener of deeper and deeper levels of energy is the will. The difficulty is to use it; to make the effort which the word volition implies. But if we do make it (or if a god, though he were only the god Chance, makes it through us), it will act dynamogenically on us for a month. It is notorious that a single successful effort of moral volition, such as saying 'no' to some habitual temptation, or performing some courageous act, will launch a man on a higher level of energy for days and weeks, will give him a new range of power.

The emotions and excitements due to usual situations are the usual inciters of the will. But these act discontinuously; and in the intervals the shallower levels of life tend to close in and shut us off. Accordingly the best practical knowers of the human soul have invented the thing known as methodical ascetic discipline to keep the deeper levels constantly in reach. Beginning with easy tasks, passing to harder ones, and exercising day by day, it is, I believe, admitted that disciples of asceticism can reach very high levels of freedom and power of will.

Ignatius Loyola's spiritual exercises must have produced this result in innumerable devotees. But the most venerable ascetic system, and the one whose results have the most voluminous

experimental corroboration is undoubtedly the Yoga system in Hindostan. From time immemorial, by Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, or whatever code of practise it might be, Hindu aspirants to perfection have trained themselves, month in and out, for years. The result claimed, and certainly in many cases accorded by impartial judges, is strength of character, personal power, unshakability of soul. But it is not easy to disentangle fact from tradition in Hindu affairs. So I am glad to have a European friend who has submitted to Hatha Yoga training, and whose account of the results I am privileged to quote. I think you will appreciate the light it throws on the question of our unused reservoirs of power.

My friend is an extraordinarily gifted man, both morally and intellectually, but has an instable nervous system, and for many years has lived in a circular process of alternate lethargy and over-animation: something like three weeks of extreme activity, and then a week of prostration in bed. An unpromising condition, which the best specialists in Europe had failed to relieve; so he tried Hatha Yoga, partly out of curiosity, and partly with a sort of desperate hope. What follows is a short extract from a letter sixty pages long which he addressed me a year ago:

Thus I decided to follow Vivekananda's advice: "Practise hard: whether you live or die by it doesn't matter." My improvised chela and I began with starvation. I do not know whether you did try it ever ... but voluntary starvation is very different from involuntary, and implies more temptations. We reduced first our meals to twice a day and then to once a day. The best authorities agree that in order to control the body fasting is essential, and even in the Gospel the worst spirits are said to obey only those who fast and pray. We reduced very much the amount of food, disregarding chemical theories about the need of albumen, sometimes living on olive oil and bread;

or on fruits alone; or on milk and rice; in very small quantities — much less than I formerly ate at one meal. I began to get lighter every day, and lost 20 pounds in a few weeks; but this could not stop such a desperate undertaking ... rather starve than live as a slaver Then besides we practised *asana* or postures, breaking almost our limbs. Try to sit down on the floor and to kiss your knees without bending them, or to join your hands on the usually unapproachable upper part of your back, or to bring the toe of your right foot to your left ear without bending the knees ... these are easy samples of posture for a Yogi.

All the time also breathing exercises: keeping the breath in and out up to two minutes, breathing in different rhythms and positions. Also very much prayer and Roman Catholic practises combined with the Yoga, in order to leave nothing untried and, to be protected against the tricks of Hindu devils! Then concentration of thought on different parts of the body, and on the processes going on within them. Exclusion of all emotions, dry logical reading, as intellectual diet, and working out logical problems. ... I wrote a Handbook of Logic as a *Nebenprodukt* of the whole experiment.After a few weeks I broke down and had to interrupt everything, in a worse state of prostration than ever. ... My younger chela went on unshaken by my fate; and as soon as I arose from bed I tried again decided to fight it out, even feeling a kind of determination such as I had never felt before, a certain absolute will of victory at any price and faith in it. Whether it is my own merit or a divine grace, I can not judge for certain, but I prefer to admit the latter. I had been ill for seven years, and some people say this is a term for many punishments. However base and vile a sinner I had been, perhaps my sins were about to be forgiven, and Yoga was only an exterior opportunity, an object for concentration of will. I do not yet pretend to explain much of what I have gone through, but the fact is that since I arose from bed on August

20, no new crisis of prostration came again, and I have now the strongest conviction that no crisis will ever return. If you consider that for the past years there has not been a single month without this lethargy, you will grant that even to an outside observer four successive months of increasing health are an objective test. In this time I underwent very severe penances, reducing sleep and food and increasing the task of work and exercise. My intuition was developed by these practises: there came a, sense of certainty, never known before, as to the things needed by the body and the mind, and the body came to obey like a wild horse tamed. Also the mind learned to obey, and the current of thought and feeling was shaped according to my will. I mastered sleep and hunger, and the flights of thought, and came to know a peace never known before, an inner rhythm of unison with a deeper rhythm above or beyond. Personal wishes ceased, and the consciousness of being the instrument of a superior power arose. A calm certainty of indubitable success in every undertaking imparts great and real power. I often guessed the thoughts of my companion ... we observed generally the greatest isolation and silence. We both felt an unspeakable joy in the simplest natural impressions, light, air, landscape, any kind of simplest food; and above everything in rhythmical respiration, which produces a state of mind without thought or feeling, and still very intense, indescribable.

These results began to be more evident in the fourth month of uninterrupted training. We felt quite happy, never tired, sleeping only from 8 P.M. to midnight, and rising with joy from our sleep to another day's work of study and exercise. ...

I am now in Palermo, and have had to neglect the exercises in the last few days, but I feel as fresh as if I were in full training and see the sunny side of all things. I am not in a hurry, rushing to complete —.

And here my friend mentions a certain life-work of his own. about which I had better be silent. He goes on to analyze the exercises and their effects in an extremely practical way, but at too great length for me to entertain you with. Repetition, alteration, periodicity, parallelism (or the association of the idea of some desirable vital or spiritual effect with each movement), etc., are laws which he deems highly important. "I am sure," he continues, "that everybody who is able to concentrate thought and will, and to eliminate superfluous emotions, sooner or later becomes a master of his body and can overcome every kind of illness. This is the truth at the bottom of all mind-cures. Our thoughts have a plastic power over the body."

You will be relieved, I doubt not, to hear my excentric correspondent here make connection at last with something you know by heart, namely, 'suggestive therapeutics.' Call his whole performance, if you like, an experiment in methodical self-suggestion. That only makes it more valuable as an illustration of what I wish to impress in as many ways as possible upon your minds, that we habitually live inside our limits of power. Suggestion, especially under hypnosis, is now universally recognized as a means, exceptionally successful in certain persons, of concentrating consciousness, and, in others, of influencing their bodies' states. It throws into gear energies of imagination, of will, and of mental influence over physiological processes, that usually lie dormant, and that can only be thrown into gear at all in chosen subjects. It is, in short, dynamogenic; and the cheapest terms in which to deal with our amateur Yogi's experience is to call it auto-suggestive.

I wrote to him that I couldn't possibly attribute any sacramental value to the particular Hatha Yoga processes, the postures, breathings, fastings and the like, and that they seemed to me but so many manners, available in his case and

his chela's, but not for everybody, of breaking through the barriers which life's routine had concreted round the deeper strata of the will, and gradually bringing its unused energies into action.He replied as follows:

You are quite right that the Yoga exercises are nothing else than a methodical way of increasing our will. Because we are unable to will at once the most difficult things, we must imagine steps leading to them. Breathing being the easiest of the bodily activities, it is very natural that it offers a good scope for exercise of will. The control of thought could be gained without breathing-discipline, but it is simply easier to control thought simultaneously with the control of breath. Anyone who can think clearly and persistently of one thing needs not breathing exercises. You are quite right that we are not using all our power and that we often learn how much we *can,* only when we *must*. ... The power that we do not use up completely can be brought into use by what we call *faith*. Faith is like the manometer of the will, registering its pressure. If I could believe that I can levitate, I could do it. But I can not believe, and therefore I am clumsily sticking to earth. ... Now this faith, this power of credulity, can be educated by small efforts. I can breathe at the rate of say twelve times a minute. I can easily believe that I can breathe ten times a minute. When I have accustomed myself to breathe ten times a minute, I learn to believe it will be easy to breathe six times a minute. Thus I have actually learned to breathe at the rate of once a, minute. How far I shall progress I do not know. ... The Yogi goes on in his activity in an even way, without fits of too much or too little, and he is eliminating more and more every unrest, every worry — growing into the infinite by regular training, by small additions to a task which has grown familiar. ... But you are quite right that religious-crises, love-crises, indignation-crises, may awaken in a very short time powers

similar to those reached by years of patient Yoga practise. ... The Hindus themselves admit that Samadhi can be reached in many ways end with complete disregard of every physical training.

Allowance made for every enthusiasm and exaggeration, there can be no doubt of my friend's regeneration — relatively, at any rate. The second letter, written six months later than the first (ten months after beginning Yoga practise, therefore), says the improvement holds good. He has undergone material trials with indifference, traveled third-class on Mediterranean steamers, and fourth-class on African trains, living with the poorest Arabs and sharing their unaccustomed food, all with equanimity. His devotion to certain interests has been put to heavy strain, and nothing is more remarkable to me than the changed moral tone with which he reports the situation. Compared with certain earlier letters, these read as if written by a different man, patient and reasonable instead of vehement, self-subordinating instead of imperious. The new tone persists in a communication received only a fortnight ago (fourteen months after beginning training) — there is, in fact, no doubt that profound modification has occurred in the running of his mental machinery. The gearing has changed, and his will is available otherwise than it was. Available without any new ideas, beliefs, or emotions, so far as I can make out, having been implanted in him. He is simply more balanced where he was more unbalanced.

You will remember that he speaks of faith, calling it a 'manometer' of the will. It sounds more natural to call our will the manometer of our faiths. Ideas set free beliefs, and the beliefs set free our wills (I use these terms with no pretension to be 'psychological'), so the will-acts register the faith-pressure within. Therefore, having considered the liberation of our stored-up energy by emotional excitements

and by efforts, whether methodical or unmethodical, I must now say a word about *ideas* as our third great dynamogenic agent. Ideas contradict other ideas and keep us from believing them. An idea that thus negates a first idea may itself in turn be negated by a third idea, and the first idea may thus regain its natural influence over our belief and determine our behavior. Our philosophic and religious development proceeds thus by credulities, negations and the negating of negations.

But whether for arousing or for stopping belief, ideas may: fail to be efficacious, just as a wire at one; time alive with electricity, may at another time be dead. Here our insight into causes fails us, and we can only note results in general terms. In general, whether a given idea shall be a live idea, depends more on the person into whose mind it is injected than on the idea itself. The whole history of 'suggestion' opens out here. Which are the suggestive ideas for this person, and which for that? Beside the susceptibilities determined by one's education and by one's original peculiarities of character, there are lines along which men simply as men tend to be inflammable by ideas. As certain objects naturally awaken love, anger, or cupidity, so certain ideas naturally awaken the energies of loyalty, courage, endurance, or devotion. When these ideas are effective in an individual's life, their effect is often very great indeed. They may transfigure it, unlocking innumerable powers which, but for the idea would never have come into play. 'Fatherland,' 'The Union,' 'Holy Church,' the 'Monroe Doctrine,' 'Truth,' 'Science,' 'Liberty,' Garibaldi's phrase 'Rome or Death,' etc., are so many examples of energy-releasing abstract ideas. The social nature of all such phrases is an essential factor of their dynamic power. They are forces of detent in situations in which no other force produces equivalent effects, and each is a force of detent only in a specific group of men.

The memory that an oath or vow has been made will nerve

one to abstinences and efforts otherwise impossible: witness the 'pledge' in the history of the temperance movement. A mere promise to his sweetheart will clean up a youth's life all over — at any rate for a time. For such effects an educated susceptibility is required. The idea of one's 'honour,' for example, unlocks energy only in those who have had the education of a gentleman, so called.

That delightful being, Prince Pueckler-Muskau, writes to his wife from England that he has invented "a sort of artificial resolution respecting things that are difficult of performance." "My device," he says, "is this: I give my word of honour most solemnly to myself to do or to leave undone this or that. I am of course extremely cautious in the use of this expedient, but when once the word is given, even though I afterwards think I have been precipitate or mistaken, I hold it to be perfectly irrevocable, whatever inconveniences I foresee likely to result. If I were capable of breaking my word after such mature consideration, I should lose all respect for myself — and what man of sense would not prefer death to such an alternative? ...When the mysterious formula is pronounced, no alteration in my own .views, nothing short of physical impossibility, must, for the welfare of my soul, alter my will. ... I find something very satisfactory in the thought that man has the power of framing such props and weapons out of the most trivial materials, indeed out of nothing, merely by the force of his will, which thereby truly deserves the name of omnipotent."

Conversions, whether they be political, scientific, philosophic, or religious, form another way in which bound energies are let loose. They unify, and put a stop to ancient mental interferences. The result is freedom, and often a great enlargement of power. A belief that thus settles upon an individual always acts as a challenge to his will. But, for the particular challenge to operate, he must be the right challengee. In religious conversions we have so fine an

adjustment that the idea may be in the mind of the challengee for years before it exerts effects; and why it should do so then is often so far from obvious that the event is taken for a miracle of grace, and not a natural occurrence. Whatever it is, it may be a highwater mark of energy, in which 'noes,' once impossible, are easy, and in which a new range of 'yeses' gain the right of way.

We are just now witnessing — but our scientific education has unfitted most of us for comprehending the phenomenon — a very copious unlocking of energies by ideas, in the persons of those converts to 'New Thought,' 'Christian Science,' 'Metaphysical Healing,' or other forms of spiritual philosophy, who are so numerous among us to-day. The ideas here are healthy-minded and optimistic; and it is quite obvious that a wave of religious activity, analogous in some respects to the spread of early Christianity, Buddhism and Mohammedanism is passing over our American world. The common feature of these optimistic faiths is that they all tend to the suppression of what Mr. Horace Fletcher has termed 'fearthought.' Fearthought he defines as 'the self-suggestion of inferiority'; so that one may say that these systems all operate by the suggestion of power. And the power, small or great, comes in various shapes to the individual, power, as he will tell you, not to 'mind' things that used to vex him, power to concentrate his mind, good cheer, good temper; in short, to put it mildly, a firmer, more elastic moral tone. The most genuinely saintly person I have ever known is a friend of mine now suffering from cancer of the breast. I do not assume to judge of the wisdom or unwisdom of her disobedience to the doctors, and I cite her here solely as an example of what ideas can do. Her ideas have kept her a practically well woman for months after she should: have given up and gone to bed. They have annulled all pain and weakness and given her a cheerful active life, unusually beneficent to others to whom she has afforded help.

How far the mind-cure movement is destined to extend its influence, or what intellectual modifications it may yet undergo, no one can foretell. Being a religious movement, it will certainly outstrip the purviews of its rationalist critics, such as we here may be supposed to be.

I have thus brought a pretty wide induction to bear upon my thesis, and it appears to hold good. The human individual lives usually far within his limits; he possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use. He energizes below his maximum, and he behaves below his optimum. In elementary faculty, in coordination, in power of inhibition and control, in every conceivable way, his life is contracted like the field of vision of an hysteric subject — but with less excuse, for the poor hysteric is diseased, while in the rest of us it is only an inveterate habit — the habit of inferiority to our full self — that is bad.

Expressed in this vague manner, everyone must admit my thesis to be true. The terms have to remain vague; for though every man of woman born knows what is meant by such phrases as having a good vital tone, a high tide of spirits, an elastic temper, as living energetically, working easily, deciding firmly, and the like, we should all be put to our trumps if asked to explain in terms of scientific psychology just what such expressions mean. We can draw some child-like psychophysical diagrams, and that is all. In physics the conception of 'energy' is perfectly defined. It is correlated with the conception of 'work.' But mental work and moral work, although we can not live without talking about them, are terms as yet hardly analyzed, and doubtless mean several heterogeneous elementary things. Our muscular work ire a voluminous physical quantity, but our ideas and volitions are minute forces of release, and by 'work' here we mean the substitution of higher kinds for lower kinds of detent. Higher and lower here are qualitative terms, not translatable immediately into quantities,

unless indeed they should prove to mean newer or older forms of cerebral organization, and unless newer should then prove to mean cortically more superficial, older, cortically more deep. Some anatomists, as you know, have pretended this; but it is obvious that the intuitive or popular idea of mental work, fundamental and absolutely indispensable as it is in our lives, possesses no degree whatever of scientific clearness to-day.

Here, then, is the first problem that emerges from our study. Can any one of us refine upon the conceptions of mental work and mental energy, so as later to be able to throw some definitely analytic light on what we mean by 'having a more elastic moral tone,' or by 'using higher levels of power and will'? I imagine that we may have to wait long before progress in this direction is made. The problem is too homely; one doesn't see just how to get in the electric keys and revolving drums that alone make psychology scientific to-day.

My fellow-pragmatist in Florence, G. Papini, has adopted a new conception of philosophy. He calls it the doctrine of action in the widest sense, the study of all human powers and means (among which latter, *truths* of every kind whatsoever figure, of course, in the first rank). From this point of view philosophy is a *pragmatic,* comprehending, as tributary departments of itself, the old disciplines of logic, metaphysic, physic and ethic.

And here, after our first problem, two other problems burst upon our view. My belief that these two problems form a program of work well worthy of the attention of a body as learned and earnest as this audience, is, in fact, what has determined me to choose this subject, and to drag you through so many familiar facts during the hour that has sped.

The first of the two problems is *that of our powers,* the second *that of our means of unlocking them or getting at them*. We ought somehow to get a topographic survey made of the limits of human power in every conceivable direction, something like an ophthalmologist's chart of the limits of the

human held of vision; and we ought then to construct a methodical inventory of the paths of access, or keys, differing with the diverse types of individual, to the different kinds of power. This would be an absolutely concrete study, to be carried on by using historical and biographical material mainly. The limits of power must be limits that have been realized in actual persons, and the various ways of unlocking the reserves of power must have been exemplified in individual lives. Laboratory experimentation can play but a small part. Your psychologist's *Versuchsthier*, outside of hypnosis, can never be called on to tax his energies in ways as extreme as those which the emergencies of life will force on him.

So here is a program of concrete individual psychology, at which anyone in some measure may work. It is replete with interesting facts, and points to practical issues superior in importance to anything we know. I urge it therefore upon your consideration. In some shape we have all worked at it in a more or less blind and fragmentary way; yet before Papini mentioned it I had never thought of it, or heard it broached by anyone, in the generalized form of a, program such as I now suggest, a program that might with proper care be made to cover the whole field of psychology, and might show us parts of it in a very fresh light.

It is just the generalizing of the problem that seems to me to make so strong an appeal. I hope that in some of you the conception may unlock unused reservoirs of investigating power.

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Contents

Chapter 1

Beyond Left-Brain Consciousness

On the afternoon of Sunday 3 January 1960, I was about to leave the house when the telephone rang. A man with a strong foreign accent explained to me that he was from some international press agency, and that he was ringing to tell me that Albert Camus had been killed in a car accident. For a moment I suspected a joke; my friend Bill Hopkins often rang me up pretending to be a Chinese laundry, or the head of the women's section of the KGB with just one vacancy for a male. The journalist soon convinced me that he was genuine; he knew too much about the accident to be making it up. Camus had been driving back to Paris with his friend Michel Gallimard when a front tyre burst. The car hit a tree and Camus was catapulted through the rear window; he was killed instantly.

On my way to the station a few minutes later—I was going to meet my wife—I tried to grasp the fact that Camus was dead. He worked for Gallimard, my French Publisher, and had been about to write an introduction to my second book. I had met him in Paris and found him immensely likeable. Yet now, trying to focus the meaning of his death, I found myself unable to summon any reaction. It was like ringing a doorbell and hearing no sound. When I asked myself: 'How do you feel about his death?', the answer was a kind of: 'So what?'

Yet, in a sense, this was appropriate. The starting-point of all Camus's work is this sense of meaningless, that feeling of alienation that he called 'the absurd'. Meursault, the hero of *L'Etranger,* experiences this same inability to react to the

death of his mother. 'Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday; I can't be sure...' He is not heartless or self-centred, merely *trapped* in the Present. It would not even he true to say he is bored; he seems reasonably contented. But his sense of meaning is limited to what goes on at the end of his nose.

Then, at the end of the book—when he has been sentenced to death for killing an Arab—he experiences a surge of anger that brings insight. 'It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and...I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe: Staring at the stars he comments: 'To feel it so like myself...made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still.' This seems an odd statement from a man who seems to plod through life like a blinkered horse. Is it possible to be happy without knowing it?

Here we confront a paradox; for the answer is yes. We have all experienced the moments that William James calls 'melting moods', when it suddenly becomes perfectly obvious that life is infinitely fascinating. And the insight seems to apply *retrospectively*. Periods of my life that seemed confusing and dull at the time now seem complex and rather charming. It is almost as if some *other person* a more powerful and mature individual has taken over my brain. This 'higher self views my problems and anxieties with kindly detachment, but entirely without pity.

Looking at problems through his eyes, I can see I was a fool to worry about them.

If I could remain in this state all the time—or at least, summon it at will—life would be a continual adventure. And this is the maddening absurdity. For during these moments of intensity and affirmation, we can see that it would be *so easy* to maintain this insight. Whenever we face crisis or difficulty, we can see that life without it would be delightful. Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* says that he would rather stand on a narrow ledge for ever than die at once. But we do not have

to go that far to see that life without crisis or misery is full of potentiality. I can recognize this truth even when a minor inconvenience disappears. If the lavatory is out of order for a week, I heave a sigh of relief when the plumber finally appears. The fact that I can now stop flushing it down with buckets of water becomes an extension of my freedom, a source of active pleasure. And it continues to be so until I begin 'taking it for granted'. When this happens, I slip into the state in which Meursault spends most of his life: happy without realizing it.

What is wrong with human beings? Why is it, as Fichte says, that 'to be free is nothing; to *become* free is heavenly'? Why is it that, we seem to be unable to appreciate our freedom unless it is under threat? Why do human beings seem to live in an almost permanent state of unreality?

The basic answer is that human beings are the only creatures who spend 99 per cent of their time living *inside their own heads*. Sherlock Holmes used to keep a cabinet filled with press cuttings on every subject under the sun, so that if he was confronted with a mystery involving, let us say, an American oil millionaire, he could send Watson to the file for a sketch of the man's career. We all have similar filing cabinets inside our own heads, and they contain 'press cuttings' (some of them rather brittle and faded) of everything that has ever happened to us.

Confronted by some irritating problem, we can look in the file to see whether anything like it has ever happened in the past. This means that we can brood on these matters while lying in bed with our eyes closed; the experience is all there in the filing cabinet.

But this method has its disadvantages. When I am dealing with the real world, I react to it in a sensible and balanced manner, and find many problems exhilarating. When I am lying in bed with my eyes closed, I am out of touch with reality; the

result is that I am likely to over-react to problems, and work myself into a state of anger or frustration or depression. And even when I am supposed to be 'in touch with reality' during the day, I spend a great deal of my time in that library with its filing cabinets. Every time I stare out of a window, or wait at a bus stop, or sit in the midst of a traffic jam, I descend into my mental world, and virtually lose touch with reality.

This ability to 'live inside our heads' is, of course, one of the greatest evolutionary advances made by the human race. Grey Walter remarks in his book on the brain that a chimpanzee 'cannot maintain a mental image long enough to reflect on it'. Human beings can not only maintain mental images; they can spend hours at a time in a world of imagination. The purpose of this faculty is to enable us to envisage the future and anticipate its problems. Yet it has one enormous disadvantage. It means that we can, without even noticing it, lose contact with the world of actuality. There is an old joke of a man going to borrow a lawn-mower from his next door neighbour. On the way there, he imagines his neighbour saying: 'Why don't you buy one of your own?', to which he replies: 'Because I can't afford it.' 'Then why not get one on hire purchase?' 'I don't like being in debt.' 'Yet you're willing to come and borrow mine...' At this point he meets his neighbour in the front garden and shouts: 'Keep your bloody lawn-mower...' We all allow similar fantasies to undermine the sense of reality. And we are totally unaware of how far the fantasy has taken on a life of its own. Man is the only animal who is prone to insanity; and this is because he spends so much time in this suffocating prison inside his own head. His fantasies creep all over him, like ivy on a tree, until they drain away his life.

This is why the moments of reality—like Meursault's sense of relief and happiness—come as such a shock. Our mental apparatus reduces things to oversimplified images, and we

come to accept these as a fair copy of the reality 'out there'. And then, in some moment of relaxation and happiness, the reality bursts through, infinitely more exciting than our dehydrated mental images. It is more real, heavier, richer, more beautiful, and it fills us with a desire to live for ever. Camus describes such a moment at the end of his story 'The Woman Taken in Adultery'. Her 'adultery' is with the African night, which enters into her being and possesses her. 'Not a breath, not a sound, except at intervals the muffled crackling of stones that the cold was reducing to sand... After a moment, however, it seemed to her that the sky above her was moving in a sort of slow gyration. In the vast reaches of the dry, cold night, thousands of stars were constantly appearing, and their sparkling icicles, loosened at once, begin to slip gradually towards the horizon. Janine could not tear herself away from contemplating these drifting flares. She was turning with them...' The passage brings to mind another 'woman taken in adultery!—Lawrence's Lady Chatterley—and her own mystical sense of living nature as she returns home after love-making: in the twilight the world seemed a dream; the trees in the park seemed bulging and surging at anchor on a tide, and the heave of the slope to the house was alive'. And Dostoevsky's Alyosha experiences a similar sensation as he looks at the stars: 'there seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds of God, linking his soul to them'; he flings himself, weeping, on his knees, to kiss the earth.

Yet all that has happened—to Janine, to Constance Chatterley, to Alyosha Karamazov—is that they have walked out of the prison inside their own heads, to confront the reality of the world. William Blake writes:

> Five windows light the cavern'd Man: thro' one he breathes the air; Thro' one hears music of the spheres; thro' one the eternal vine Flourishes,

> that he may receive the grapes; thro' one can look
> And see small portions of the eternal world that
> ever groweth; Thro' one himself pass out what
> time he please; but he will not, For stolen Joys are
> sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.

If the 'five windows' refer to the senses, then the passage is incomprehensible, since it implies that we can walk outside our senses, and we know this to be impossible. But What Blake actually means is that man lives in a cave inside his own head, *yet he does not have to*. He can 'pass out what time he please'. He can 'snap out' of the dream-like state, and reassert his sense of reality.

The comment about 'bread eaten in secret' is equally puzzling unless we recognize that Blake is speaking about the dream-like state in which we spend most of our time. Provided the daydreams are pleasant, the cave inside the head is a warm and comfortable place. The danger is in allowing ourselves to mistake it for the real world. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* are cautionary tales about women who make this mistake; both commit suicide. Tolstoy had enough insight to make Anna wake up as she is about to be killed by a train, and recognize that this is preposterous—that death is the last thing she wants.

But how is it possible that even the most habitual day-dreamer could do anything as absurd as committing suicide? Children, of course, find it easy to sink into states of black depression, particularly imaginative children—because their knowledge of the world is so small that they habitually turn molehills into mountains. But surely the stupidest and most self-absorbed adult ought to know better? And the answer, once again, is that the astonishing pace of human evolution is to blame. More than any other animal, we have the power to focus upon particulars; we possess a kind of mental

microscope which enables us to narrow down our attention to a single problem. A microscope can make a flea look as big as a horse. It can also turn a minor annoyance into a major catastrophe. Once we enter the state of adulthood, we spend so large a proportion of our lives dealing with problems that we forget their actual scale. We forget to take our eye away from the microscope. To use a slightly different analogy: it is as if we possessed a pair of reading glasses—for close-up work—and a pair of long-distance glasses. We get so used to wearing the reading glasses that we forget to remove them when we go out for a walk, and find ourselves peering short-sightedly at the scenery.

Then some crisis—or moment of delighted anticipation—reminds us that we ought to be wearing the long-distance glasses. And the moment we put them on, we experience a revelation. Everything becomes clear and real. All petty anxieties drop from our shoulders. We feel like laughing aloud. Suddenly, it becomes obvious that all the miseries and anxieties were a stupid mistake, due to the wrong glasses. There is a feeling of relaxation and happiness that seems to express itself in the words: *'Of course!'*

But 'of course' what? If we could answer that question we would have solved one of the most basic problems of human development.

And the starting-point must be the 'glimpse of reality'. T. E. Lawrence describes a typical one in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom:*

'We started out on one of those clear dawns that wake up the senses with the sun, while the intellect, tired after the thinking of the night, was yet abed. For an hour or two, on such a morning, the sounds, scents, and colours of the world struck man individually and directly, not filtered through or made typical by thought: they seemed to exist sufficiently by

themselves...'

This is the sensation we experience after an illness, when we first begin to convalesce. The heart seems to be wideopen to experience, and, as Lawrence says, we no longer filter it through our critical mechanism. It is the feeling we sometimes get on the first day of a holiday. Reality comes flooding in through the senses, and it has upon us the same effect as food on an empty stomach.

One of the most important discoveries of recent decades is the one for which Roger Sperry has received the Nobel Prize: the recognition that this 'critical mechanism' is located in the left side of the brain, while the mechanism that enables us to 'appreciate' reality is located in the right. Of the two cerebral hemispheres—the parts of the brain that press against the top of the skull—the left deals with language and reason, the right deals with feeling and intuition. (For some reason that is still not understood, the left brain controls the right side of the body, with all its muscles, and the right brain controls the left side.) Looked at from above, they look like the two halves of a walnut. Sperry discovered that if the 'bridge' between the two halves is severed—as it is in some cases to cure epilepsy—the patient turns into two different persons. One man tried to button up his flies with his right hand (connected to the 'rational' side of his brain) while the other hand undid them. Another patient tried to embrace his wife with one arm while the other pushed her away. A patient who had been given some wooden blocks to arrange into a pattern (a right-hemisphere activity) tried without success to do it with his right hand. His other hand kept trying to help, and the right kept impatiently knocking it away, as if to say: 'Let *me* do this.' Finally, he had to sit on his left hand to stop it from interfering.

Now in this case, it is obvious that the left hand ought to

have been given its own way; for it is connected to the right brain, and could *see* the answer. But before we jump to the conclusion that the right is a hero and the left a villain, we should note that the right is also at the mercy of negative emotions. When one split-brain patient became angry with his wife, his left hand tried to hit her; the other hand defended her and held the left hand tightly.

The left brain, then, is the critic, the 'restrainer', the part of T. E. Lawrence that kept him from appreciating reality—except when he got up so early that the left brain was still asleep.

This enables us at least to begin to explain what that 'Of *course!*' means. 'You', the ego, live in your left brain. When we say that man is the only creature who spends 99 per cent of his time inside his own head, we mean, in fact, inside his left cerebral hemisphere. And in the basement of the left hemisphere is the library full of filing cabinets—the stuffy room that we mistake for reality. In *Heartbreak House,* Hector asks Shotover: 'How long dare you concentrate on a feeling without risking having it fixed in your consciousness all the rest of your life?', and Shotover answers an hour and a half. We all know what he means. Obsessions get stuck in our heads. We brood upon past experience like a cow chewing the cud, regurgitating it and chewing it yet again. Finally, the experience has become shrunken and tasteless, like an old piece of chewing gum. *And yet we still mistake it for the real thing.*

It is upon the basis of this dry, tasteless experience that we base our major decisions on life. If I am asked whether I would like to go to the theatre on Saturday night, I recall previous visits to the theatre, try to remember what they were like, and say yes or no on the basis of those faded memories. Worse still, confronted by some tiresome problem, I remember the last time I had to deal with a similar problem, and my energies drain away; I feel exhausted and depressed before I have even

started. And this 'assessment' is made upon completely false data—a tasteless piece of chewing gum.

Yet we make this mistake habitually, all the way through our lives—*habitually undermining our own vitality*.

This is why that 'glimpse of reality' makes us say: 'Of *course!*'' We have seen through the error—the mistake that has caused a constant leak of energy, that has stolen so much of our happiness, that has prevented us from achieving a fraction of what we might have achieved.

This brings another interesting recognition. For more than two thousand years, philosophers have been producing gloomy and negative assessments of human existence: Ecclesiastes says there is nothing new under the sun and that life is vanity; the Buddha says it is all illusion; Aristotle says it is better not to have been born. Very few philosophers seem to have much good to say about life. Because these men are great thinkers, we are inclined to take their word for it. Yet now we see that thinking has its own limitations: the limitations of the left brain. No doubt Ecclesiastes and Aristotle *thought* they were taking everything into account; but they had left out precisely 50 per cent of human existence. They were mistaking an old piece of chewing gum for the real thing.

It is true that many philosophers—particularly among the mystics—have warned us against the danger of mistaking thought for reality. And in the past century, writers as different as Walt Whitman, G.K. Chesterton, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley and Henry Miller have repeated the message. But there is usually something oddly unsatisfying about these disciples of instinct and intuition. They seem to offer a poor second best. D.H. Lawrence fulminated against 'head consciousness' and advised us to trust the solar plexus; but his work offers no clear advice on what to *do*. In a sense, he is as pessimistic as the 'thinking' philosophers; some of his stories seem to suggest that man would be better off if he was born as

a horse or a fox. Walt Whitman envied the cows because they were uncomplaining. But what *we* want to understand is the secret potentialities of consciousness. Rejecting the left brain in favour of the right is obviously no solution. I do not feel that human beings have made a mistake in evolving left-brain consciousness. For all its problems and anxieties, I still prefer the condition of being human to being a cow. What we need to know is how to go *beyond* left-brain consciousness.

The right-brainers, like the left-brainers, have left something important out of account. What? We can see the answer if we think again of Meursault's experience of the 'benign indifference of the universe', of Janine's experience of the African night, of Alyosha Karamazov's desire to kiss the earth. This is not simply a glimpse of the *external* reality. It is an internal reality that has opened up. Hesse expresses it with beautiful clarity in *Steppenwolf*, another novel about a man who finds himself trapped and suffocated in left-brain consciousness. At the end of a frustrating day he goes to a tavern to eat and drink; the wine causes a sudden relaxation into right-brain consciousness:

'A refreshing laughter rose in me... It soared aloft like a soap bubble...and then softly burst... The golden trail was blazed, and I was reminded of the eternal, and of Mozart and the stars. For an hour I could breathe once more. ...'

The laughter is the equivalent of the 'of course' feeling; we always want to laugh aloud when tension gives way to relaxation. But what is important here is the phrase '*reminded* of the eternal, and of Mozart and the stars'. There was nothing to stop him *thinking* about Mozart and the stars at any time of the day. But he is referring not to thinking, but to a feeling of the *reality* of Mozart and the stars. It is as if an inner trapdoor had opened, leading into an immense Aladdin's cave.

What, then has happened? In effect, Steppenwolf has brought his right and left hemispheres into alignment. He has relaxed *into* right-brain consciousness. Another important observation made by scientists examining the differences between right and left is that the left is obsessed by time; the right seems to have little sense of time. This seems reasonable, since logic and language have a lineal and serial structure—like a chain-while patterns spread out sideways, so to speak. The left brain tends to hurry forward, its eyes fixed on the future, while the right strolls along with its hands in its pockets, enjoying the scenery. They are like two trains running on parallel tracks, but at different speeds. If the right can be persuaded to move faster, by working it into a state of excitement (as, for example, with exciting music), then the two trains can run side by side, and the passengers can lean out of the windows and talk to one another. The same effect can be achieved if the left can be persuaded to move slower. This is what Steppenwolf has done as he relaxes with his glass of wine. Hence the sudden feeling of reality.

So one of the main functions of the right brain is to add a dimension of *reality* to our experience. The world as seen by left-brain consciousness is flat, two-dimensional, little more than a sketch. The business of the right brain is to add a third dimension. It is this recognition of reality that brings the feeling of relief, the sense that 'all is well'. As absurd as it sounds, we live most of our lives upon the assumption that reality is unreal—two dimensional. We feel that it is flat, boring, too easily known. But when the right brain begins to do its proper work, we recognize the absurdity of this assumption: that the world is infinitely richer and more meaningful than the left can grasp.

This provides us with our first major clue to the solution of this problem. Even if the left cannot *see* the world as full of potentiality, it can hold on to the moments of insight and

refuse to let go of them. If I know that present difficulties will end in triumph, I am un-discourageable; I merely have to know it intellectually. And if I can 'know' that reality actually has a third dimension, I shall never fall into the mistake of complaining that there is nothing new under the sun and that life is futile.

This is a point of considerable importance. So much of the literature of the past century has been concerned with boredom and frustration. Artsybashev wrote a novel called *Breaking Point* about a dull Russian town in which practically everybody commits suicide. He was arguing, in effect, that when life is seen without illusions, the only courageous decision is to refuse to go on. We can see the absurdity of the mistake. His characters lack sense of purpose, so they have become trapped in left-brain consciousness, which dehydrates the world of meaning. They have forgotten the trapdoor that leads into inner worlds.

This tendency to become trapped in left-brain consciousness is perhaps the greatest single danger that threatens us as a species. Every year, thousands of people commit suicide because they believe 'that is all there is!—they think this two-dimensional world of our everyday experience is the only reality. All mental illness is caused by the same assumption, which can be compared with the assumption of savages that an eclipse of the sun could mean the end of the world. A savage who knew the real cause of an eclipse might still experience a certain irrational anxiety as the sun became dark; but his basic attitude to the experience would be relaxed and rational. And if human beings could grasp this insight about right-brain consciousness, mental illness would finally become as rare as leprosy.

As soon as we glimpse this possibility of a balanced left-and-right consciousness, we can see it as the beginning of a whole range of new developments in human consciousness. Consider,

for example, what happens when I read a novel. To some extent, I enter the world of the novelist; yet because my left brain is doing most of the work, scanning and interpreting the words, my experience of that mental world is only superficial. I can recall certain books I read in childhood—Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the opening chapters of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Conan Doyle's *Lost World* and the Sherlock Holmes stories, Rider Haggard's *She* and *Cleopatra*—which made me feel as if I had entered a state of trance; I was living in the world of the book rather than in the 'real' world. My mind supplied that fictional world with smells and colours and tastes. In short, my right brain did its proper work of adding a third dimension of reality to the book.

Neither is it a matter of becoming absorbed in certain characters and events in fiction. I have slipped into that same state of total absorption when reading Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* and William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The right brain can add this same element of reality to ideas.

So the 'filing cabinet' inside the head is only part of the story. When consulted by the left brain, the cabinet may appear to contain only sheets of paper. But when the right brain can be persuaded to play its part, these sheets can be transformed by some alchemy into a living reality. This enables us to see precisely what is wrong with those writers who are prophets of instinct, like D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller. They may appreciate literature, yet they feel that books are 'just words', a kind of game that should not be confused with reality. But when a book is transformed by the right brain, it becomes another kind of reality, with claims to equality with the 'real world'.

This is why the past two centuries or so have been some of the most exciting in human intellectual history. In 1719, a political pamphleteer named Daniel Defoe produced *Robinson*

Crusoe, and seven years later, Jonathan Swift published *Gulliver's Travels.* Defoe meant *Crusoe* to be a piece of realistic journalism—it was based upon the true story of a shipwrecked mariner—and Swift intended *Gulliver* as political satire. In fact, both had created a kind of magic carpet that could carry the reader off into the realms of imagination. In 1740 came Samuel Richardson's *Pamela,* the first novel actually written as an exercise in pure invention (or 'escapism' as we might now say), which created a sensation all over Europe. Until this time, the favourite recreational reading of bored housewives had been volumes of sermons—for the sermon, with its anecdotes and exhortations, also provided a higher vantage point from which one's own life could be surveyed. But as a magic carpet, the novel was as superior to the sermon as a jet plane is to the old- fashioned airship. In a few decades, England became a nation of avid readers; the same thing happened all over the civilized world. Bored housewives had gained 'access to inner worlds'. Caught up in the sad destiny of Clarissa Harlowe or young Werther, they could transform mere words into a living reality by adding the weight of their own experience.

The experience altered the mind of civilized man. Defoe, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Montesquieu were of a generation of realists. They were succeeded by a generation of dreamers, who placed feeling and desire above convention and duty. And a curious thing happened. Man suddenly noticed that nature was beautiful. Earlier generations had regarded mountains as impressive but inconvenient. These new romantics saw in them a reflection of their own inner mountain landscape. Nature was exciting because it reflected man's new sense of his own potentialities:

> To horse!—way o'er hill and steep!
> Into the saddle blithe I sprung;

The eve was cradling earth to sleep,
And night upon the mountain hung.
With robes of mist around him set,
The oak like some huge giant stood
While with its hundred eyes of jet
Peered darkness from the tangled wood.

This is the young Goethe, and it conveys the excitement of a young man setting out to ride to his mistress. Poets like Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Shelly, Pushkin, seemed to have glimpsed new possibilities of freedom for the human spirit.

Then why did disillusion set in? Partly for the same reason that early experiments in flying ended in crashes. The romantics were too inexperienced to know how to handle this sense of freedom. Many of them thought themselves free to seduce any number of young ladies with a good conscience, then found themselves in violent conflict with their sense of human decency. Others preferred to escape boredom with the use of drugs and alcohol. Overtaken by physical and emotional reactions, most of them concluded that the vision of freedom had been a delusion—in which case, human life is futile and tragic. With its unprecedentedly high rate of suicide and early death, the romantic experiment was finally accounted a failure.

Yet a new generation of romantics—Dostoevsky, Mann, Hesse, Shaw, Yeats—began to understand that freedom can only be achieved through self-discipline. Dostoevsky achieved his vision of freedom when he believed he was about to die in front of a firing squad, and became aware of something that earlier romantics had only glimpsed in flashes: *that the real trouble with human beings is that we habitually exaggerate our feelings.* A man who thinks he is about to be shot realizes with absolute certainty that most of the problems that have made him miserable are unutterably trivial; if he could only get

a second chance, he could guarantee never to be unhappy for the rest of his life.

Experiences of this type always bring the same insight. We make the habitual assumption that we consist of a mind and a body. But there is another kind of body: the emotional body. For practical purposes, my feelings and emotions constitute a separate entity. And this is what makes life so difficult. The emotional body wastes an enormous amount of my time with its damned feelings. The sun goes behind a cloud and I feel gloomy. Somebody fails to reply when I ask a question, and I feel rejected. I trip over the pavement and feel accident-prone. I miss a bus and feel unlucky. I open my bank statement and feel apprehensive. I remember something I have forgotten to do and feel guilt-stricken. Nearly all these 'feelings' are negative. When the sun comes out from behind a cloud, I usually fail to notice it. When my bank statement shows a credit balance, I take it for granted. When I catch a bus, I am usually thinking about something else. So on the whole, the emotional body is a dreary bore, groaning at my failures and undervaluing my successes.

When some crisis awakens my sense of urgency, I suddenly realize how easy it would be to discipline the emotional body, and tell it to keep its stupid feelings to itself. How? That question can be answered by anyone who casts his mind back to such a situation. A real emergency has the effect of 'stiffening the sinews', arousing 'vital reserves'. Minor anxieties are instantly suppressed with a mental gesture that is rather like compressing a spring. With that threatening gesture, they instantly subside, like a whining child who realizes he has gone too far and that the heavy hand is about to descend.

This explains one of the minor mysteries of human psychology: why we go out of our way to look for challenges. Why should anybody want to become a Member of Parliament

or the chairman of a sub-committee? Why, for that matter, should anyone want to climb a mountain? The old explanation, 'because it's there', is no answer. But every challenge arouses in us the kind of vital energy necessary for bullying the emotional body into silence. It sits on our shoulders, like the Old Man of the Sea with his legs wrapped around Sinbad's neck, slowly choking us to death—until an emergency arises. Then, with a single jerk, we throw him off. And suddenly, we can breathe again. Unfortunately, we do not follow Sinbad's lead, and beat out his brains while he lies on the ground. We forget him, and allow him to sneak back as soon as our thoughts are elsewhere...

The first thing we observe when the Old Man has been unseated is that life becomes far richer and more exciting. The Old Man's task, apparently, is to try to make us tired of life by keeping us entangled in triviality. He keeps on reacting to every minor problem as if it was the end of the world, and finally he convinces us that life is one long series of dreary obstacles. My only real ally against him is my reason, my ability to tell myself: 'Don't be stupid—this is not important.' If the Old Man can persuade someone to commit suicide, he has scored a real triumph.

Conversely, a man who had achieved what the Buddha called 'enlightenment'—permanent freedom from the Old Man—would live in an unwavering state of serene intensity. In this state, the external world is seen to be endlessly fascinating because, like a mirror, it reflects the immense depths of the internal world.

The past two centuries have been one of the most important periods in human history. For the first time, large numbers of human beings have been freed from the pressing involvement with physical reality. They have learned that it is not simply entanglement in mere physical process. Life lived under these conditions is basically futile and repetitive. We begin to live

only when we learn to descend into ourselves as a coal miner is transported deep into the earth.

But *how*? How do we begin to go about making the descent? The story I now propose to tell is of a man who stumbled accidentally on the 'trick', and whose life has been totally transformed by it.

Chapter 2

Ten Days in Viittakivi

Some time in 1980, a Finnish correspondent, Matti Veijola, wrote to ask me whether I would be interested in attending a seminar in Finland for ten days in the summer of 1981. I had only once been to Finland—in 1960, on my way to Leningrad, and I had been impressed by my glimpses of its lakes and pine forests. For me, Finland meant the symphonies of Sibelius and the songs of Kilpinen, and that extraordinary novel by Alexis Kivi called *Seven Brothers*. The idea of an extended visit sounded pleasant, particularly since I could take my family.

In fact, the holiday—in the August of 1981—came at exactly the right time. I had just completed the hardest four months work of my whole life. I had been commissioned to write a book on the poltergeist, with a delivery date of 30 June; and by the end of January I had finished the basic research and was ready to start typing. At this point, another publisher asked me if I would like to provide the text of an illustrated book on witchcraft, a subject I already knew reasonably well. Then *Reader's Digest* asked me if I could write them a short novel about Rasputin, of whom I had once written a biographical study. The terms were tempting, and since writers are habitually short of cash, I accepted both offers, assuming that the publisher of *Poltergeist* would allow me a couple of extra months for delivery of the typescript. I was mistaken. They had scheduled the book for autumn publication; an editor was waiting to get to work on it the moment it arrived, and to rush it to the printer. So it looked as if I had to write three books in

four months. The prospect made my heart sink. The book on witchcraft would not be too difficult, since the text had to be written in sections—which meant there were no problems of construction. But a novel may simply refuse to go in the right direction, and have to be started again from the beginning. (For twenty-five years now I have been writing a novel called *Lulu,* and must have started it a hundred times.) Yet I couldn't afford to discard a single day's writing. The same was true of the poltergeist book; 120,000 words in eight weeks meant 15,000 words a week, or ten pages every single day, with no time for revision. Moreover, poltergeists are singularly repetitive creatures, behaving like disembodied football hooligans; I was not sure how I was going to spin out their boringly predictable activities for 120,000 words—this was a hurdle I would have to take when I came to it.

The very thought of all that non-stop typing, without time for relaxation, made me feel trapped. In 1973, I had been under similar pressure, and had begun to experience 'panic attacks,' bouts of sudden fear and intense depression. I had struggled my way out of these with common sense and a certain amount of self-analysis. Now the old sensations of unease began to return—a feeling I call 'the burning-rubber smell'—as if the brakes are beginning to smoulder. On the morning when I received the letter saying *Poltergeist* had to be delivered on time,

I had been to see my doctor; he told me I was suffering from high blood pressure and had to lose two stone in weight. He also arranged an appointment with a specialist about a problem of internal bleeding that sounded ominously like cancer. When I got back from the doctor, I went to my desk to write about the burning and torture of the Bamberg witches; as I wrote I began to experience a 'sinking' sensation, accompanied by the old feeling of panic. In such moments, it suddenly seems that the floor of our sanity is very frail, and might collapse like thin

ice. There is a feeling of energy draining away, and a suspicion that life is a battle that has been lost in advance. I forced myself to go and look for a reference book that I needed—although the action seemed meaningless—and stood in front of the bookcase, struggling with the sinking sensation. It was like trying not to be sick. Then I went back to my typewriter, gritted my teeth against the sense of misery and futility, and went on writing. At some point, I had to lean forward to pick up something I had dropped on the floor. Quite suddenly, the oppression vanished—as abruptly as the sun coming out from behind a cloud. With an almost dizzy feeling of astonishment and triumph, I realized that my emotions had been 'trying it on', having a tantrum, and that they had suddenly decided to give up. And at once I saw with great clarity that human beings possess *two bodies*. One is the physical body, the other—just as real, just as self-contained—is the emotional body. Like the physical body, the emotional body reaches a certain level of growth, and then stops. But it stops rather sooner than the physical body. So most of us possess the emotional body of a retarded adolescent. And as soon as we find ourselves under pressure, as soon as life begins to look difficult, the emotional body bursts into tears and tries to run away.

That insight was a turning-point. But since I had four months of non-stop writing ahead of me, and the anxieties about my physical condition, that was not the end of the matter. I lay awake for hours at night, trying to stop the pounding of my heart, and to resist thoughts that dragged me into depression. I knew that my salvation lay in that thread of pure will, the determination not to give way; yet there was always a fear that the thread might eventually snap under the strain. I finished the 50,000 words on witchcraft in just over a month, and felt a certain irritation when the publisher told me that he had overestimated the space available and would have to cut

out 10,000 words—a whole week's work. I settled down to the Rasputin novel, which fortunately went well for the first hundred pages, although there were days when I felt so low that I could eat only the occasional digestive biscuit. Halfway through, it was clear that I wasn't going to succeed in compressing his life into 60,000 words—I had already done 40,000, and hadn't even got him as far as St. Petersburg... Eventually I finished it on time, 15,000 words too long—leaving *Reader's Digest* the problem of cutting—and on the day after I typed the last paragraph, began *Poltergeist*. Again, the gods were with me. New information, new ideas, turned up at exactly the right moment. I was well behind schedule, but the publisher told me that if I could deliver most of the book by the agreed date, I could have another fortnight to write the final chapter. I began to experience a sort of grim exhilaration as I forced myself into the final gallop. I finished the book with several days to spare, and then went on to write six articles for a magazine of which I am advisory editor. At the end of the four months, I had the satisfaction of calculating that I had written a quarter of a million words, the length of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

A week later we set out for Finland—Joy, myself, and our two boys Damon and Rowan. At last I had time to take stock. My most powerful ally in the previous four months had been my power of reason. My emotions had staged a full-scale revolt, trying to convince me that if I pressed on at this pace, the result would be nervous breakdown. My body, on the whole, had behaved rather better, in spite of the high blood pressure and the blood in my urine that made me suspect cancer (it turned out to be nothing worse than a broken vein). What was most important was a recognition—to which I shall return in the last chapter—that if I could drag myself out of a state of fatigue and depression into 'normality', then there was no reason why I should not drag myself out of normality into a

state of far higher energy and intensity. We have, in fact, far greater control over our inner being than we realize. The answer lay in developing a certain power of realism, of objectivity. When we experience moods of fatigue or depression, it only takes some real crisis or danger to show us that the depression was sheer self-indulgence. If we could simply hold fast to this vision—which reason tells us to be true—we would never again be victimized by our emotions.

But the hard truth is that this control can only be achieved by confronting the emotions head-on and bullying them into submission. In the *Seven Pillars,* Lawrence describes how, after a halt in the desert, they realized that one of their number was missing. Lawrence turned his camel and went back to search. But the camel disliked leaving the main group, and kept trying to turn back; Lawrence had to force it to go on. Throughout the first half of 1981, my emotions had behaved like Lawrence's camel every time I sat down at my typewriter. And I now had the satisfaction of having taught the camel a degree of obedience.

We drove to London airport on the day Prince Charles was married, and the radio babbled endlessly about the ecstatic crowds; it was impossible to find out what was happening elsewhere in the world. At the Post House Hotel they even offered us a slice of wedding cake, to the surprise of our smallest boy, who speculated that it must have been enormous. The following day we flew to Helsinki.

The bearded man who met us at the barrier had a slight American accent and a quiet manner; he introduced himself as Brad Absetz, one of the teachers at Viittakivi. When I asked where he'd parked the car, he explained that Viittakivi didn't have a car—so we had a four-stage journey ahead of us: by bus into Helsinki, by train to Harmeenlinna, by bus to Hauho, then by taxi to Viittakivi. It is a measure of how far I had succeeded

in controlling my sense of boredom that I accepted all this without an inward groan.

In Helsinki, with an hour to wait for the train, we went to a tea shop. It was a curiously old-fashioned place—a small room that looked like a Victorian parlour, with a bird cage hanging from the wall; on a table in the centre of the room stood a huge cake-stand with all kinds of sticky pastries; we helped ourselves and took our tea over to the curtained window. I could imagine that this place had looked exactly the same at the time of Ibsen and Strindberg. While we drank tea, Brad told us more about the Viittakivi centre. It sounded not unlike the Esalen Institute near San Francisco, except that at Viittakivi the subjects ranged from world religions to organic farming. It had been founded by American Quakers after the war, in association with the Finnish Settlement Federation; this explained how an American like Brad had come to be involved.

On that first meeting, Brad did not strike me as in any way unusual—certainly not the kind of person about whom I might want to write a book. I found him relaxed and easy to talk to, and in some subtle way definitely not the type of American that I had met at Esalen—serious-minded students of Zen and Group Therapy. But he was not the kind of person you would notice in a crowd. The main thing that struck me about him was that he seemed to be at ease and at peace, like a man sitting in front of his own fireside. He made me think of that earlier generation of Americans, like Henry James and Henry Adams, who had come to Europe looking for a sense of the historical past. If that was what Brad was looking for, he seemed to have found it.

The train pulled out of the station, past the harbour, and we were soon in the open countryside. There is something very soothing in the green, flat Finnish landscape, with its wooden houses and glimpses of water between the trees. As we sat in the restaurant car, drinking watery beer, I experienced

suddenly that curious sense of satisfaction that can only be described in the words 'being where you are'. That sounds absurd only until we reflect that for most of our lives we are *not* where we are. I am walking down a lane in Cornwall, but only my body is there; my mind is 'elsewhere.' It is not in any particular place; it is just 'not all there'—a phrase we also use for the mentally defective. And then, beyond a certain point of relaxation, it happens. The left brain slows down; suddenly, it is walking in step with the right. And you are there, in the present moment, wholly and completely. You can taste the flavour of your own consciousness.

Casually, I asked Brad whether he had ever done any writing—the kind of polite question you ask a travelling companion on a long journey. He said: 'I once wrote some poems'—the kind of answer you expect from a travelling companion you know to be literate. Then, after a pause, he added: 'If you could say I wrote them.'

Oddly enough, I knew immediately what he meant. 'Who did, then?'

'I suppose you could say they wrote themselves.'

I said: 'The right brain?'

Brad looked at me curiously; but it was no time to open a conversation on split-brain physiology, with the children asking what was the Finnish for 'potato crisps'. And, unlike most poets, Brad did not seem anxious to pursue the subject.

I said: 'I'd be interested to see them some time; and we talked of other things.

Viittakivi stands in the midst of thick woodland, at the end of a lake that stretches for many miles. (In Finland there are so many interconnected lakes that it is possible to row for days.) Although it was late July, there was already a tang of autumn in the air—winter comes early that far north. The leaves were turning gold, and through the still air, you could hear a dog barking several miles away. The only drawback in this paradise

is the mosquitoes—but Brad assured me they were scarce this year. (They seem to have the same power as vampire bats, of being able to feed unnoticed on their host—I watched one of them settle on the neck of Jormma (Brad's teacher-colleague) and make a three-course meal while he talked on unaware.)

Our chalet was comfortable, with a balcony that overlooked the lake. After some initial confusion—the taxi driver had absentmindedly gone off with a case containing the children's pyjamas—we settled down to a cold supper. The only obvious drawback to the place was that it was 'dry'; alcohol was not actually forbidden; but there was none available on the premises, and the nearest state liquor store that sold wine was twenty miles away. I thought longingly about the magnums of Beaujolais I had seen at Heathrow, and had decided against buying because of the weight... When we finally retired to bed, I lay awake for hours, made uneasy by the total stillness.

Breakfast was at eight; but since this was six o'clock London time, we decided to sleep late and make do with coffee and biscuits. The day was soft and grey. Since the first seminar was not being held until the afternoon, we caught the bus into Hauho, the nearest village, which is about five miles away. It is little more than a few shops, supermarkets and houses scattered around a cross-roads; unlike English villages, Finnish hamlets are mostly as nondescript as filling stations. In fact, most of Finland has an impressive air of order and neatness, as if run by an army of hard-working housewives. This intimidating air of efficiency is softened by the green, empty landscape, and the low volume of traffic on the roads; the country still seems to belong to the trees and birds. We bought groceries and cans of beer, went and looked at the church, and found a taxi that got us back in time for lunch. All meals in Viittakivi are self-service, and proved to be excellent. I grew particularly fond of a hard rye biscuit, as brittle as a sheet of ice, and of a kind of peanut butter better than any I have had in England or

America.

Now it was time for work. While my family went boating on the lake, I attended the opening seminar, which took place in the large hall above the dining-room. It was a pleasant place, with huge windows looking out over the lake and forest. There were forty or fifty students, ranging in age from mid-teens to mid-seventies. And, apart from regular lectures involving all the students, there would be five study groups under particular individuals, one being myself.

Brad opened the proceedings with a short speech about the importance of being together and getting to know one another. From anyone else it would have sounded trite; but Brad had a quiet air of meaning every word he said. He felt we were there to try to reduce the distance between individuals, to try to become a kind of family. After this, every student introduced himself and explained why he had come to Viittakivi—about half of them spoke in Finnish and had to be translated. I was startled when one of them, dressed in a kind of multi-coloured suit, went and sat under the table and buried his face in his hands, peeping out at intervals and shuddering nervously; after which he stood on the table and performed a series of balletic poses. It looked as if he was trying to communicate, like the man in G.K. Chesterton who keeps hopping around on one leg; then I gathered that he was one of the group-leaders, an actor who was here to teach us how to get rid of our inhibitions through physical movement...

I am not, I have to confess, the kind of person who enjoys group activities. My brain tends to switch off, like a bored schoolboy in a class. In the wrong mood, I would have found all this exasperating. But the past six months had made me very aware that boredom is more to do with the person who is bored rather than of the person who is doing the boring. We are too mechanical, and allow certain stimuli to *hypnotize* us into passivity. So I deliberately refused to let my attention wander,

and found that I was becoming increasingly interested in these people and their motives. It is true that I had seen it all before, in similar work groups in England and America: all the serious-minded people who feel that civilization is too impersonal, that capitalism is shameful, and that all governments are rather wicked. In fact, we had a number of extreme leftists and trade unionists among us, and they seemed to. take it for granted that we all agreed that the rich must somehow be forced to surrender their ill-gotten gains. Yet there was an air of good humour about their idealism that made me feel they would not be too offended if I admitted that I regard socialists as well-meaning but muddleheaded brigands.

After an interminable amount of discussion—everybody wanted to talk—we finally worked out separate 'themes' for the work groups: creativity, society and responsibility (most of the leftists joined that one), self-expression through movement, and so on. My own group was concerned with the theme of inner freedom.

The following morning, I lectured to the whole student body for ninety minutes, and this was followed by two hours of discussion. Their stamina seemed to be tremendous. I was reminded of that story told by Berdyaev, of how a group in St. Petersburg had stayed up until four o'clock one morning discussing the universe; when someone suggested it was time to go to bed, someone else said: 'No, we can't go to bed yet—we haven't decided whether God exists.' Our discussion was mainly political. I had finally decided I should nail my political colours to the mast rather than try to avoid discord; so I began by explaining how I had ceased to be a socialist after I wrote a book about Bernard Shaw which defended the socialist position. (When I reread my own book in print, I saw that the arguments for socialism were nonsense.) I went on to speak about the animal need for territory, and pointed out that

Proudhon was unaware of this fundamental urge when he formulated the principle that property is theft. To my surprise, a large number of people nodded enthusiastically—evidently I had been mistaken to suppose they were all leftists. The trade unionists, to do them justice, listened politely, but evidently felt that I had failed to understand their ideal of human brotherhood. And in the afternoon, I listened with equal politeness while three young leftists made stirring speeches about all the things that are obviously wrong with society, and how easy it would be to put them right if only people would refuse to obey authority. Again, most of the audience nodded enthusiastically, and I concluded that they had an unusual capacity for empathy.

Yet even my total disagreement with these ideas began to seem fruitful. The stresses of the past months had taught me not to 'give way' to feelings of impatience and boredom. It was interesting to find that I could listen to ideas that struck me as naive with detachment, even with sympathy. They simply made me more aware that the basic hunger of human beings is for a certain inner freedom. Leftists make the assumption that it can be achieved through political reform, rather as a sexually inexperienced person imagines that losing your virginity completely transforms your life. And the clear recognition that they were mistaken made me aware of the precise nature of this inner freedom. I tried to explain it the following morning, in the first session of our work group. There were seven or eight of us, including Jormma, who had come along to translate. Most of the group spoke English (indeed, two were Americans), but one lady spoke only Finnish and Swedish. I found the prospect of non-stop translation discouraging, but it proved to have its advantages. It meant that I had to speak slowly, clearly and precisely, and that everyone had a chance to reconsider it as it was translated.

I began by explaining Husserl's recognition that all

perception is 'intentional', that when we see something, we have to reach out and grasp it, just like picking up an object in the hand. But this act of 'grasping' has become unconscious—or rather, subconscious, hovering in the twilight between conscious and unconscious. From childhood on, we imagine that happiness is due to circumstances—holidays, Christmas, unexpected pleasures, and so on. In fact, the holiday only stimulates perception, so you 'grasp' twice as hard as usual. The result is that feeling of reality, intensity. If we could deliberately reprogramme the unconscious mind to make twice as much effort, we could achieve intensity at will.

As I write these words, they seem to me to say exactly what I mean, and to express one of the most important truths human beings are capable of grasping. But most of the group were only able to half-grasp my meaning. I felt the irritating sense of non-communication that I often feel after lecturing. That night, I lay awake for hours wondering how I could overcome their mistrust of the words—make them see straight to the reality behind the words. They wanted to 'do', not listen. And so the next day, I taught them a basic 'trick' for inducing deeper intentionality, the 'pen trick'.

Sudden crises cause the mind to 'contract', and when the danger vanishes, we expand with a feeling of relief. Graham Greene produced this effect by playing Russian roulette with his brother's revolver—pointing the loaded gun at his head, spinning the chambers and pulling the trigger. When there was just a click, he felt immense relief. 'It was as if a light had been turned on...and I felt that life contained an infinite number of possibilities.' This demonstrates the basic principle: that if the senses can contract violently, and then relax and expand, the result is a sense of relief, and a perception of the objective value of being alive.

Russian roulette is a dangerous way of causing this 'contraction'. It can be accomplished with less risk. One simple

method is to take a pen or pencil, and hold it up against a blank wall or ceiling. Now concentrate on the pen as if it is the most important thing in the world. Then allow your senses to relax, so you see the pen against the background of the wall. Concentrate again. Relax again. Keep on doing this until you become aware of the ability to focus the attention at will. You will find that this unaccustomed activity of the will is tiring; it produces a sense of strain behind the eyes. My own experience is that if you persist, in spite of the strain, the result is acute discomfort, followed by a sudden immense relief—the 'peak experience'. The result is less spectacular—because less dangerous—than Greene's Russian roulette, but it is, in some ways, more interesting, for we become aware that we can alter our perceptions with an act of will. They are not just something that 'happens to us'.

Having explained this, and watched them practising the 'pen trick' for ten minutes or so, I was reminded of another exercise for the focusing of perception: Wilhelm Reich's breathing exercise. Reich made his patients lie on the floor, and take a deep breath; then they had to exhale slowly, allowing the outgoing relaxation to move from the lungs, to the stomach, then down to the genitals. They had to repeat, as they did this: 'Out, down, through.' I had described the exercise in my book on Reich, and occasionally practised it when I wanted to relax; but I had never regarded it as particularly important, as Reich did. Now, on impulse, I asked my group to lie down on the floor, and accustom themselves to 'Reichian breathing' for five minutes or so. Then, at the end of that time, I asked them to raise their pens, stare at them, and combine the Reichian breathing with the 'pen trick'. I did this with them, and immediately understood that I had stumbled upon an interesting discovery. The breathing exercise induces deep relaxation and a sense of physical well-being. The pen exercise induces a sense of concentration and control. The two

should, in theory, counteract one another's effect. But this does not happen. The control itself somehow becomes relaxed and confident, like a baby's breathing. After a few moments, I noticed the curious sense of exaltation, followed by a sensation as if floating out of my body. I glanced sideways at the others; all were lying there contentedly, obviously experiencing the same floating sensation. When the strain of holding up the pen became too great, we rested the arm, then started again. Time became unimportant; when I looked at my watch I could hardly believe that we had been lying there for more than half an hour, and that no one showed the slightest inclination to get up.

I had, in fact, accidentally come across a method of 'doing' as well as 'knowing'. For the remainder of our seminars it proved invaluable.

On most days, there were lectures as well as work groups. I attended many of these—on farming, education, community work, the problems of the Third World—although I seldom joined in the discussions afterwards. The truth is that I found some of the basic assumptions so naive that they were not worth the waste of breath. One pleasant, serious lady who had worked in Africa told us that she had become disillusioned with Finnish education because backward students lost heart when they failed to receive prizes, and so became the 'losers in society'. She looked forward to the day when there would be no more prizes—not only in schools, but in society. Competition, she said, was wicked and ought to be abolished. I tried to envisage a world in which all competition has been forbidden, and conjured up an image of a city of identical houses, with everyone dressed in grey uniforms. So I ceased to listen, and stared out of the window at the trees, which were distorted by the rain on the window panes. All I had to do was to imagine that I had just stumbled in out of a snowstorm, and was now relaxing in this pleasant, warm room. In moments like

these, I could see the basic problem of human existence with great clarity. We *need* stimulus to get the best out of us. When no stimulus is available, we settle dully into the present like a boat grounded by the tide. Yet in every crisis, we can see that these 'dull' situations should not be regarded as a misery, but as havens of peace. We should be able to use the imagination to recall situations of crisis, to generate instantly the power and drive that will lift us out of boredom like a rocket leaving the launching pad.

Later the same afternoon, I returned from a long walk in the woods to find a green plastic-covered notebook on my bed. Its title-page made it clear that these were some of the poems Brad had mentioned; he called them 'concentrates'. I opened the book casually in the middle without any particular interest—for the past twenty-five years I have received at least one unsolicited book of manuscript poems every week or two. But the first poem I read struck me as pleasingly epigrammatic:

> The world is full of promise when I am empty of threat.
>
> When the world is empty of threat I am full of the world.

I had been expressing the same idea to our work group that morning: that our innate mistrust of the world keeps us from grasping its possibilities, and that when this mistrust evaporates, because of some sudden relief, the world rushes into our senses like air into a vacuum. Brad had said the same thing with more concentration. I turned the page and read:

> Sadness is within me like a creeping gray mist blurring the landscape within me, like clinging blue smoke rising from the fissures within me, like a melancholy melody echoing through empty chambers within me...

The romantic melancholy was like the autumn landscape outside, with grey clouds reflected in the lake. I poured myself a glass of wine and went on reading. His style had a pleasing simplicity:

> The morning tide is out, the beach washed clean and smooth of even the sharply etched stepping of early birds; the far water line is undulating ever so slowly: perfectly reflecting an inner seascape.
>
> A lone gull perches motionless and one-legged on the single log-post that breaks the gray, still surface of the morning sea, and stares with unblinking calm through the vanishing mists towards an outer infinity.

What impressed me was that he seldom made the mistake of trying to be literary, or deliberately striking. I have never enjoyed Dylan Thomas because he seems to be trying too hard. Brad's 'concentrates' seemed effortless and sure-footed. They avoided sentimentality as easily as cleverness and display. Yet he could write lines as arresting as:

> The dark orchids of deadly violence Exude a warm fragrance of sweet bloodshed.

Just as a painter like Utrillo is able to capture a music of nostalgia when he paints an empty street, so Brad seemed to be able to convey the essence of his experience in the barest and plainest of descriptions.

But the poem that impressed me most was the longest of all—one that began: 'Following the afterimage of a wise old man within me...' (I quote it in full in the next chapter). Here

the sense of describing an inner landscape is so strong that the poem must have sprung out of an almost hallucinatory experience. In his autobiography Jung described how, in a period of great stress after his break with Freud, he developed the curious ability to descend into his own mind, and to enter an apparently real landscape with real people—he called it 'active imagination'. In one of these strange waking dreams, lung had also encountered a 'wise old man' named Philemon, and he records his conviction that in his conversations, 'he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I.' And this convinced Jung that 'there are things in the psyche which I do not produce'. There is in ritual magic a technique for entering the 'astral realms' which seems identical with Jung's 'active imagination', and Yeats has described briefly his own experiences with the method. Ouspensky also seems to have developed a similar ability, which he describes in *A New Model of the Universe*. But Brad was the first person I actually met who seemed to have developed the same ability.

A couple of hours later I met Brad in the sauna, and told him how exciting I found the poems. We sat together on the top step—which is the hottest part—until one of the children made it uninhabitable by ladling more cold water on to the hot coals, so that the heat became suffocating. So we went out and jumped into the lake, swam for a few minutes, then went back and repeated the process. After half an hour or so of this, we agreed we were sufficiently dehydrated, and I asked Brad if he felt like coming back for a glass of wine (an excellent Finnish-bottled Beaujolais that I had found in the state liquor store in Tampere). So we walked back over the low wooden bridge to my chalet, filled two tumblers to the brim, and clinked glasses. And when Brad began to tell me the story of how he came to write the 'concentrates'—and also to paint pictures and create metal sculptures—I encouraged him to begin at the beginning.

It was a story so remarkable that I interrupted him to tell him he ought to write a book about it. He shrugged and said he didn't feel he was a writer. And as he talked on, the conviction came upon me that if he wouldn't write the book, then I would do it for him. Before he had finished, I even knew what I intended to call it: Access to Inner Worlds.

Chapter 3

How to Contact the 'Other Self'

Early in 1961, Brad and his wife decided to adopt a newly- born baby, whose mother had been unable to take care of him. Like all adoptive parents, they wanted the opportunity to give love and protection to a child in need. But fate seemed to be against the venture from the beginning. During the early months of his life, the child had been left alone for long periods. This is, of course, the most vital formative period of a baby's life—the period at which 'imprinting' occurs. Konrad Lorenz made the observation that baby monkeys that do not receive the love of a mother during this period become incapable of forming emotional attachments; it seems that the give-and-take of love is imprinted within the first weeks of a child's life. And the baby had been left lying on one side for such long periods that one side of the head had become slightly flattened and malformed. From the beginning, their adopted child was 'difficult', screaming incessantly for attention, yet hardly seeming to respond to their attempts to give love.

In one sense at least, the child was fortunate; Brad and his wife were determined to do their best. With less responsible parents, the end result might have been a battered baby. It was not as if their son was an only child—they had three others, and a fourth arrived subsequently.

Then, when the boy was four and a half, he was found to have an abdominal cancer. The growth was removed, and the operation seemed to be successful. But a year later, a check-up revealed nodes of cancer scattered all over his internal

organs. It was clear that the child was going to die. They decided to devote themselves to trying to make the last months of his life as complete and as rewarding as possible. The child seemed to grow up and change quite suddenly, as if in some way trying to make up for the years that were lost. He required constant attention; Brad and his wife took turns sitting up with him at night. The months extended to a year, then eighteen months. His eventual death was a shattering experience for everyone. Brad's wife took it very badly. She was physically and emotionally exhausted, and delayed shock induced severe depression. Brad watched her descend into a subjective world of guilt and self-questioning; she lost interest in the outside world. Plunged into destructive self-analysis, she felt at times that she was damned, and that the whole world was damned with her. The, depressions were balanced by a manic counter-phase in which she seemed to experience ecstasies of indescribable absolute freedom.

For hours at a time she lay on the bed, her eyes closed, struggling with guilt and depression. When she emerged from these inner spaces, that seemed to be as depressing as Piranesi's dungeons, Brad was always there beside her, ready to provide her with a link to the world of reality. At first, he was convinced that this was a growth-process, from which she would emerge stronger than ever. But gradually, it became clear that she was not improving. These descents into the mind can inaugurate a process of negative feedback, a kind of inner landslide of pessimism. When it became clear that her experiences were becoming frightful and unmanageable, Brad decided to look for outside help. A point came where, for the sake of the children, he felt it necessary to commit her to hospital. On the day a friend drove them there, he felt that he had reached a limit of physical and psychological exhaustion—that if something had complicated or prolonged the problems, he would have experienced physical and nervous

collapse. After returning from the hospital, he slept for almost twenty hours.

But the ordeal was by no means over. For the next few years, the pattern of breakdown, hospitalization and partial recovery continued, and much of the responsibility for bringing up the children fell on Brad. During the day, he worked as a schoolteacher. In the evening, he had to cope with his wife's illness, which now involved hallucinatory experiences. He would lie beside her for hours, waiting for her to emerge into reality. He learned to become relaxed, sensitively alert, inwardly poised for the moment when she would 'surface' and he could be of help. It was a continuation of the experience of the last years of their son's life.

It was in this state that he began to experience a curious sense of inner freedom, of release from the body. What happened then can be told in his own words:

'One day I was lying on my back on the bed beside my wife during one of these long periods of relaxed but concentrated sensitivity, when I noticed a clear but puzzling impulse in the muscles of my upper right arm, near the shoulder. What was clear about it was that the impulse was a movement impulse, i.e. the muscle was indicating a readiness to move. What was puzzling was that I had no thought or intention of moving my arm for any reason at the moment. However, being deeply relaxed, and having the underlying feeling of well-being that accompanied it, I was not alarmed, but I was rather curious, and I thought something like: "Well, if that arm wants to move, it may." It waited for a moment, during which the impulse got stronger, and my arm really did rise slowly from the bed and stop in mid-air as the movement impulse ceased. "This is really interesting," I thought. "What now?" After a brief moment I felt another clear impulse to move in that arm. Again I let it happen, and observed it with interest as my arm moved still

further. For the next few minutes I allowed such impulses to move my arm (and soon it was both arms) through a series of movements. My attention was following what was happening as a definitely interested but non-interfering bystander.'

On subsequent occasions, the movement impulses developed and became more complex. Brad discovered that he could make a kind of inner gesture of permission, and the movement-impulses might or might not avail themselves of it. 'These movements formed series and patterns involving my whole body and my breathing too. These were not repetitive routines in which the same series and patterns would occur time after time. Basic movements occurred in different patterns, and in different *series,* lasting different lengths of time, and with differing degrees of muscle strain and intensity each time.'

What was happening to Brad? The answer, I believe, is simple. The effort to remain 'awake' had removed certain of his functions from the realm of the mechanical to the realm of the deliberate or controllable. Human beings are 99 per cent 'robot'. Our bodies are programmed to breathe, to sleep, to digest, to excrete; our instincts are programmed to reproduce our kind and protect our children. But our minds are also largely mechanical. A child has to learn to speak his own language; he then does it automatically, without effort. I can even learn to speak foreign languages without effort. I am typing this page without effort, because after thirty-odd years, typing has become 'automatic'. We *live* automatically. The answer to T.S. Eliot's question: 'Where is the life we have lost in living?' is: 'The robot has stolen it.'

It is, of course, extremely convenient to do so many things automatically; it saves me an immense amount of trouble. But it also robs me of a great deal of pleasure. When I first learned to drive, it was delightful to climb into a car and set it in motion—a feeling of astonishment and self-congratulation. I

can still recapture that feeling if I make an enormous effort of imagination. It costs so much effort because I am having to wrest it from the hands of the robot.

The simplest way of ceasing to live 'mechanically' is to make a continual attempt at 'vigilance', self-awareness. From Brad's early diaries—dating back to his first days in Finland—it is clear that he had always made this effort to wrest a little freedom from the hands of the robot. In 1955, he wrote: 'Five years have gone by since I consciously began in this direction, and these traits which I hoped to get rid of are still with me.' And in 1958 he wrote:

> The learning and the teaching The fathering and the husbanding, this many-sided busyness cloaks a quiet waiting for the miracle to happen.

But it was the experience of years of stress and exhaustion that caused his own 'miracle' to happen.

The nights of waiting beside his son taught him the discipline of vigilance, of non-mechanical waiting. The 'robot' could not be allowed to take over; it had to be kept at bay. It happened again as he lay beside his wife during her long periods of schizophrenic 'absence'. And in pushing back the boundaries of his mechanicalness, he was extending the area of his freedom.

But the freedom applied to the right-brain 'self as well as to the left. The right-brain entity is usually modest and self-effacing; it defers to the assertive left-brain ego. But as Brad's left-brain ego remained in suspension for hours at a time, the right began—with a certain hesitancy—to express itself. He gave it permission to continue. The result was the series of spontaneous movements.

And what was the right-brain self trying to achieve in these movements? The answer is to be found in his statement: 'My

body was getting into better condition than it had been for a long time.' To a large extent, we drive our bodies with the will. Look at a man walking through the city with his briefcase; everything about him—his quick, firm walk, the way he leans forward slightly, the way he swings his umbrella—all testify to his purpose and his need to achieve maximum efficiency. It is completely different from his walk as he strolls home from a cricket match. The right brain prefers to do things slowly and easily, but the left is always in a hurry. Brad's right brain was saying, in effect: 'If you give me a chance, I'll show you how to relax properly and how to use your body properly. I'll show you how to perform your physical functions with a minimum of effort, and how to recover quickly from fatigue...'

He records: 'The whole process became flowing and fluent as time went on. Furthermore, I could choose to slip into these movement experiences from much less intense levels of relaxation, and in an increasing variety of situations; for example, while sitting at my desk, sitting in an audience listening to someone lecture or in a theatre or concert hall; or standing at a bus Stop waiting for a bus. For each situation I would choose limits to the kind of movements allowed so as not to draw attention or become conspicuous. These limits did not at all seem to prevent the process or lessen the quality of the experience for me.

'One of the first things I had noticed during the first few weeks of these experiences was that I could trust my body to move safely; that is, even though I usually had my eyes closed to better concentrate, I never moved so as to fall off the bed, or hit the wall or piece of furniture with some part of my body if I were elsewhere in a room...' The part of the mind that enables a sleepwalker to stroll along the top of a wall without falling off had surfaced in Brad when he was otherwise fully conscious. He also noticed: 'Ordinary movements like walking, sitting, getting up from a seated position, were not only getting

easier, but they were also changing. I found myself beginning to choose to sit on hard chairs or seats, and to sit on the front part of the seat with my back straight and lightly balanced. This did not require any forceful conscious muscular efforts on my part; it was not a disciplined effort—on the contrary, it was easier to sit that way.'

One day, as he stood in the queue in the dining-room, waiting to collect food from the buffet, he observed the now-familiar impulse in his right hand and arm. He allowed the hand to reach out towards the food. It went over the first plate, and took a spoonful of food from the second plate. He relaxed and waited; the arm again reached out and took food from another plate. This continued until it had served the whole meal. The choice of food surprised him. His hand reached for foods that he had not touched for years. But there was no regular pattern. No foods were totally ignored and none were regularly chosen. The same held true of the amounts of food. 'Going to meals became very exciting because I never knew beforehand what kind of meal I would choose for myself. Sometimes, I would find myself taking only a glass of sour milk or a glass of water, and, joining the others who were eating, saying by way of explanation that I did not seem hungry at the moment. Once I found myself engaging in a complete fast, except for teas and juices and water, and for five days I went to the dining-room for each meal, not knowing if I would eat that meal or not.' But there was no physical discomfort. As a result of this new way of eating, his weight, which had been between eighty-two and eighty-five kilograms, dropped by ten kilograms, and remained there.

Brad recalled an experiment in nutrition performed in the early fifties. Various types of food were placed on the floor, and infants were allowed to move among them and choose their own. After a short time—three or four weeks—the infants settled into a routine of eating which, according to the

nutrition experts, was an ideal 'healthy diet'. Abraham Maslow had once cited a similar experiment; chickens were allowed to choose their own foods; but in this case, the unnutritive food was flavoured with something that made it smell good, while the nutritive food smelt unappetizing. What emerged in this case was the observation that the *dominant* chickens—5 per cent of the total—began to choose the nutritive food, in spite of its smell, while the non- dominant ones chose the appetizing food. The result was that the dominant chickens became even more dominant, while the non-dominant ones became less so.

The lesson is plainly that the dominant creatures have a stronger instinct for the food which is best for them. But the baby experiment reveals that *all* human babies, both dominant and non-dominant, make an instinctive choice of what is good for them. The choice comes from what George Groddeck called the 'It', that something else inside us that seems to know what is best for us. In adults, this is always being overruled by the left-brain ego- and, in most cases, not for any sound reason. It is not good sense on *any* level when, because I am feeling tense, I gulp down a meal at top speed. It only gives me indigestion. And I may often *know* perfectly well that what I am doing is silly; my reason, which is closely connected to the left-brain ego, can see that quite clearly. So what is making me eat too fast? Not my reason, and certainly not my instinct, but a conglomeration that I can only call 'the false self. Rather complicated feedback mechanisms are at work: my tension releases adrenalin into my system, and the adrenalin urges me to eat faster, even though I may feel that this is bad for me. My 'robot' then proceeds to develop bad eating habits; and if I become anxious about these, things may get worse than ever. What is necessary is quite obvious. The controlling 'I' has to assert itself, and set out to break the bad habits. It must cease to feel helpless and passive. For the final decisions always lie in the hands of this controlling ego.

Brad himself came to recognize this through an interesting experience. His wife was also beginning to experience spontaneous movements, and the two of them would sometimes allow these movements to integrate into patterns. 'Sometimes we found ourselves acting out non-verbal role playing in situations which also developed without conscious intent.'

Late one evening, Brad and his wife began a 'duet' of spontaneous movements. It developed into a situation in which he made sexual advances which she resisted. Brad allowed the impulses to continue, and began making increasingly strong assaults, until a kind of attempted rape developed. She continued to plead with him to stop; he made no attempt to check the impulse. Suddenly, his impulse collapsed, and they both felt frightened and bewildered. Brad began to wonder whether he could trust an impulse that had led to a near-rape. The next day, he telephoned a friend who had studied Zen Buddhism in Japan. Her reply was that no matter how much power and authority these impulses seemed to have, he must recognize that *he* was in charge. 'The part is not meant to dominate the whole.' His mistake had been to assume that this 'other self, which seemed to have a deeper insight into questions of health and diet, must be right about everything. In essence, her advice was: stop being so passive. This is only a part of you. Consult it by all means, but do not make it your sole guide and mentor.

My own interpretation of this episode would be that Brad's 'other self was attempting to correct another kind of imbalance. I have never met anyone who struck me as less capable of rape than Brad. His whole personality is gentle, thoughtful, receptive. His early journals show continuous self-analysis and self-criticism. Yet all men need to be capable, at times, of expressing some degree of aggression, if only jokingly. Presumably the 'impulse' was trying to add a dash of

sexual aggression to the totality of Brad's personality...

In short, the 'It', the other self, is the regulator of the body and the instincts, what Gurdjieff called 'the moving centre'. It is, in short, the 'wisdom of the body'. And it has no real jurisdiction in the realm of the mind. Its task—when it is allowed to get on with it—is to maintain physical health and balance. Brad noticed this one day when he came back from his first ski of the winter; as he lay on the bed, his muscles aching, his leg muscles began making spontaneous movements in the opposite direction from the strains he could feel in his muscles. In effect, they were saying: 'Don't just lie there waiting for the tiredness to go away; you can *do* something about it.' We have all noticed something of the sort. When very tired, the best way to unwind is not to lie down and try to relax; it is to get *absorbed* in something else. Five minutes' total absorption—let us say, in some fascinating news item on television—recharge our vital batteries more than hours of trying to relax.

Watching cats, dogs and babies in Viittakivi, Brad noticed how many of their movements seemed to have no obvious purpose. In adults, such spontaneous movements become restricted to yawning, stretching, rubbing the eyes, scratching, and a few others; but anyone can observe that pleasant ripple that flows along the muscles when we yawn and stretch, and how it is followed by relaxation.

Another important point to note is that most of us have no idea of how really to relax. The only time we do it 'properly' is when we have been anxious, and the anxiety disappears. Imagine a man lying out on his front lawn on a sunny day, reading the newspaper. Suddenly his wife looks out of the window and says: 'Is baby out there with you?', and he says: 'No', and jumps to his feet. For five minutes there is considerable tension as they rush out into the street and search the house—until they find baby asleep under the bed. And when he lies down in the sunlight again, he feels *really* relaxed; the

relief almost makes him feel dizzy. Events like this make us aware that, even when we think we are relaxed, half our circuits are still switched on. Why? Because modern life gets us into a habit of 'vigilance', and we may become so accustomed to continuous movement that we never have time to 'unwind'.

But even this does not explain why I cannot relax when I *want* to—when I am lying in the sunlight with nothing to do for the rest of the day. In order to understand this, we have to recognize that the real culprit is 'the robot', that automatic servant who becomes so accustomed to rushing that he begins to anticipate our wishes—or what he thinks are our wishes—and keeps us in a state of subconscious alertness all the time. When the robot has formed a habit, it can only be broken by determined conscious effort.

The widest and most prevalent example is boredom. When I prepare to engage in some interesting task, I generate a certain tension—another name for energy—and this tension is discharged as I perform the task. My robot, accustomed to non-stop activity, maintains a state of subconscious tension for most of the time. (I use subconscious here to denote the twilight realm between conscious and unconscious.) And his foresight is usually justified—life is always throwing up unexpected challenges. But if, for some reason, I have to sit quietly for a fairly long time—in a dentist's waiting-room, in an airport lounge, on a train—the tension begins to form a pool inside me. If we observe ourselves in a state of boredom, we note that it is a state of discomfort, like wanting to urinate badly.

The consciousness of modern man has an almost permanent substratum of this kind of discomfort—in other words, of boredom. When a crowd at a boxing match or a football game screams itself hoarse, it is deliberately discharging this tension. Football hooliganism is a simple and understandable extension of this method. The hooligan has just *seen* how satisfactorily he

can discharge his tensions by cheering for his team, and his unconscious mind cannot understand why he should not extend this principle and display conspicuous gallantry in combat with the supporters of the other team, or against these 'civilian' shopkeepers and publicans who are not on one side or the other... (All soldiers feel a patronizing contempt for non-combatants.)

This is the 'mechanical' method of discharging tension (boredom). But there is an alternative method: the method of conscious control. Imagine that you are about to set out on a long train journey—a journey that usually leaves you exhausted and shattered—and for some reason you are convinced you will have a serious accident. On the train, you sit and stare out of the window, wondering if today is your last. Every time the train brakes, you tense your muscles, waiting for the crash. Yet you never experience a single moment of boredom; and when you get off at your destination, you are surprised to feel as fresh as when you got on board. Maintaining continual alertness has prevented the robot from taking over. Moreover, when you finally settle down in an armchair to watch television, you sink into a deep and genuine relaxation, free of underlying tension. You have temporarily broken a bad habit...

This is how Brad achieved total relaxation, lying at the side of his wife in a condition in which total alertness was combined with relaxation. His conscious mind undid the bad habits of a lifetime. As a result, he was launched into a totally new area of experience.

What had happened is that Brad had reconstituted the parliament of his mind, and given the Member for the Subconscious (or the right brain) wider powers of action. He immediately found one field of activity in which this wider power could be utilized. Bee-keeping had always been one of his major enthusiasms. His family was fond of honey, and Brad enjoyed the ritualistic aspect of the work. He would first take

a shower, to lessen body odour—bees are understandably highly sensitive to smells, since they detect flowers by their sense of smell. He would don the protective clothing, like an astronaut. Then the opening of the hives would be performed like a slow-motion ballet, so as not to alarm or disturb the bees. Even before the movements started, Brad derived deep satisfaction from tending his bees; after a morning of slow-motion activity, he would lose all sense of time. He had slowed down the left brain until it worked at the same pace as the right. And, according to Sperry's observations, the right brain has very little sense of time. After the 'movements' began, he found that he could enter into the ritual of bee-keeping with a new sensitivity. Before he approached the hives, he would stand there, and engage in an inner dialogue. 'I am consciously aware of various factors that should influence my decisions about my work with the bees. But I know I am also subconsciously aware of many other factors. In years of experience, I have noticed many things that have influenced my behaviour towards the bees; I must allow these to influence my decisions today. I have also forgotten many things; it would be good if these too could influence my behaviour...' And, with this ritual dialogue completed, he would wait for the movement impulses to take over, and then allow them to carry out his work with the bees. He never quite decided whether this new method increased the output of honey. The only thing that was quite certain was that this way of working was deeply satisfying, a way of entering the situation with his whole being, like a man wading into the sea.

Another experience of this period underlines an important aspect of these movements. During a flu epidemic, Brad had to spend several days in bed. Lying there on a Sunday afternoon, completely relaxed, he allowed the movement impulses to take over. They led him out of bed and into the kitchen, where he found himself putting the kettle on to boil, and then—moving

very slowly—choosing certain dishes, arranging them on the tray, placing a decorative centrepiece in their midst, preparing the tea, carrying the tray to the carpeted floor of the living room, and there sitting down and going through a stylized tea-drinking ceremony. He had seen the tea ceremony performed in that same room by a Japanese student; but this was not at all the same thing. He was struck by the thought that perhaps the original tea ceremonies had originated in this way. In fact, the Japanese tea ceremonies, like their rock gardens, are designed to create a state of inner calm which will allow the emergence of such subconscious impulses.

The next stage of this development was yet more interesting, and raises important questions. One day when Brad was sitting at the tea table, drinking a third cup of tea and feeling relaxed and sleepy, his little daughter asked him to make a drawing that she could colour. When Brad said he was too sleepy, she left the pencil and paper, and went off to play. He felt the familiar impulse in his arm, and watched his hand move out to pick up the pencil. It drew a line, relaxed, then drew another line, and went on until the drawing was finished. It was a curious, flower-like pattern. The next day, after work, he took some oil-pastel crayons, relaxed into a state of receptive readiness, and again watched his hand take up crayons and create an exotic fantasy flower. This continued for the next two weeks, flower after flower, all quite different.

Brad brought a folder of his drawings along to our chalet, and I found them fascinating. I have a box of colour transparencies of them beside me as I write, and even in this much-reduced form, I find them very striking. Each one is a beautiful, elaborate and complete pattern, virtually a completed painting. Two of them resemble Paul Klee fish (many people who have seen them have this impression of Paul Klee fantasy at first glance). I imagine that Klee was giving expression to the same deep pattern-making impulses of the

subconscious. They are all very elaborate, and deeply satisfying to look at. A bad painting or drawing, like a bad piece of writing, seems too crude and obvious—so much more obvious than life. A good painting has some satisfying complexity that makes it resemble life. Brad's colour drawings all have this complexity. Although they all look like small fragments of various—and totally different—patterns, they are quite unlike, say, the design of a carpet, which is repetitive. These seem to be designs caught in flight as they rush through the mind, expanding into other designs with the infinite variety of the unconscious. Some look like glimpses of space with exploding stars, some like a shower of multi- coloured eyeballs, some like strange angular birds, some like Douanier Rousseau flowers, some like creatures seen under a microscope, some like curious abstract paintings. To my mind, they are the most striking of the products of his 'impulses', for they could not be faked. They leave no doubt that the subconscious self knew precisely what it was doing. They are instant, visual evidence that something very strange took place. Their variety seems enormous; they could be reproduced in a book, and would be as visually satisfying as the work of most modern painters; moreover, they give the impression of coming from an inexhaustible supply, as if Brad could have gone on producing one a day for ten years without repeating himself.

The first dozen or so drawings were produced in less than two weeks, and then Brad temporarily 'dried up'. He felt that it was a pity to allow this ability to slip away, and tried nudging it into activity. The impulses began again, but this time the results seemed to be a crude, mocking caricature of the previous drawings, and he had a strong feeling that something was wrong. He found himself saying to himself: 'All right, I get the message—I will not force myself to draw.' And he stopped. Six months later, the impulse returned; he bought a pack of colour felt-pens, and began again, this time producing another

seventy-two in about eighteen months. As he did them, he had a sense of watching a stranger at work. In some cases, he would criticize: 'My God, how can that colour possibly go with the others?' But the stranger always knew best. Finally came two particularly fine drawings which he labelled 'The fireball' and 'The ice crystal'. These seemed to have a quality of finality, like a period at the end of a sentence. It was as if some inner territory had been completely mapped. The drawing impulse then disappeared, except for two small 'epilogue' drawings.

This drawing period raises more questions than I can fully discuss in a short book. The drawings resemble 'psychedelic patterns', but they were not produced under any kind of drug. This suggests that the patterns seen by patients who have taken mescalin, LSD or one of the other mind-changing drugs are in some way 'objective' parts of some inner landscape—perhaps Jung's 'archetypes of the collective unconscious'. In my book *Mysteries* I discuss the Frenchman Rene Daumal, who attempted to explore his 'inner world' by holding a handkerchief soaked with ether against his nostrils; when he began to lose consciousness, his hand would fall and he would recover. In this way he hoped to snatch glimpses of his unconscious mind. He had an overwhelming sense of meanings flashing by at a pace too fast to pin down, 'an instantaneous and intense world of eternity, a concentrated flame of reality', a vision of circles and triangles moving and combining in an inexpressibly complex manner, and a sound like a ritual chant or formula. Daumal speaks of a vision of curved non-Euclidian space and time. Again, in a remarkable book called *A Drug Taker's Notes*, R.H. Ward speaks of his experiences under dental gas, and later with LSD25. He speaks of the sensation of passing, after a few whiffs of gas, 'into a state of consciousness already far more complete than the fullest degree of ordinary waking consciousness'. Again, he

gives pages of description of his experience of these inner realms. There are dozens of similar experiences on record, leaving no possible doubt that our ordinary consciousness is of an extremely inferior and limited variety, like looking at a scene through a crack in a fence, and that the 'inner realm' *is* a genuinely objective realm, not a subjective world of dreams and delusions. In a state of mental stress just before the First World War, Jung learned how to descend, consciously, into this inner realm—a trick he called 'active imagination'—and described his experiences in detail in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections.* (And again, I have discussed these at length in *Mysteries,* particularly in the chapter called 'Descent into the Unconscious'.)

At the moment, we know as little of these inner realms as William the Conqueror knew about the world beyond Europe. It was only in the 1950s that Aldous Huxley first clearly formulated this notion that the inner realm is as vast, as real and as strange as the globe upon which we live. One day, when future Columbuses and Vasco da Gamas have provided accurate maps of the New Worlds of our minds, we shall re-read Jung, R.H. Ward, Rene Daumal, John Lilly, and be able to specify just what part of this *terra incognita* was explored in their pioneer inner voyages. And when that happens, I think we shall also look at Brad's drawings, and recognize that each one is as precise and significant as the formulae of relativity or quantum mechanics. When I spoke of them with Brad, he described his own feeling that the 'someone' who made them was trying to tell him things which could only be expressed in this way. I also have an obscure sense of a meaning slightly beyond my grasp as I look at them—but not, as with music, because there is no exact verbal equivalent; rather, because they are glimpses of a pattern that I have never seen as a whole.

But even if we are inclined to reject all this as mysticism, at least it cannot be doubted that the drawings reveal the

'other' part of the brain as a reservoir of pure creativity. This was equally obvious when I looked at some of Brad's 'metal sculptures'. He brought them along at the same time as the drawings, and at first I was dazzled by the almost oriental intricacy of the patterns. They were all made out of the same kind of scrap metal-sheets of 'leftovers' after holes had been punched out, leaving a lattice or grid made up of connected triangles. It seemed unbelievable that so many patterns could be made out of anything so simple—by comparison, my younger son's 'Rubik snake' is crude and obvious. Brad said that he was equally surprised; he had simply watched his hands bending the metal with a pair of pliers, and had no idea of what would emerge. Obviously, what had happened was that the pattern-making department of his brain—the right hemisphere—had succeeded in taking over his hands, and expressing its ideas without any kind of interference from the critical faculty. And this in itself is something of a miracle. As I write these words, the meanings of what I intend to say emerge from my right brain, and my left catches them and clothes them in words. After years of practice, it does this quite competently. And unless my left brain performed its part of the operation, the meaning would simply remain unexpressed. Even artists and musicians and ballet dancers have to use the intermediary of the left hemisphere to select and filter their spontaneous impulses. If the left is feeling tired, or intervenes too actively (out of nervousness or self-consciousness) the communication becomes jammed, and a kind of stutter emerges. (Stuttering itself is the most commonplace example of excessive interference of the left brain with right-brain functions.) We all know that we do these things best if we do them without too much self-consciousness. Michael Polanyi pointed out that a pianist who concentrated on his fingers would play badly. He must *attend from* his fingers, *to* the music.

Here is the basic insight into the whole problem discussed in the opening chapter—the problem of 'alienation', the feeling of 'absurdity', 'nausea', futility and meaninglessness. They all involve attending *to* something instead of attending *from* it. Sartre's 'nausea', in the novel of that title, is due to looking at the tree and nothing but the tree-failing to see beyond it to the wood. A stutter is like a brake that keeps catching on the wheel, making it shudder. In 'nausea', the brake has locked completely.

What Brad achieved was the equivalent of a wheel without a brake. The stutterer cannot *help* interfering with his natural self-expression, even though he would greatly prefer not to interfere; the interference has become automatic, robotic. Brad had succeeded in persuading his left brain to adopt a policy of total non-interference. Betty Edwards's book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* describes various tricks for persuading the left brain to stop interfering. She points out that many sketches of familiar objects are bad because we *know* too much about the object, and try to put this knowledge into the drawing. If someone looks at the object through a simple 'view-finder" and concentrates on its mere *shape*, ignoring all other data, the result is a far more accurate drawing. Brad's hours of 'suspended consciousness', lying beside his wife, were a far more effective method of preventing left-brain interference.

The next stage was the writing of the poetry—or rather, the 'concentrates'. But before we discuss these, another experience of the same period should be mentioned.

'One morning, in my study, movement-impulse writing began, but the handwriting that took form on the page was completely foreign to me—it was not like my handwriting at all. I do not remember the sentence word for word, but it was a sentence in which a person, who named herself, briefly

introduced herself. I looked at the sentence in amazement. Always, up to now, I had felt quite clearly that my movement-impulse writing was expressing various levels of myself. Strong rejecting feelings filled me completely. I put the pencil down, pushed the paper away, and found myself saying with a tone of uncompromising determination: "I... will... not... be... a... mouthpiece... for... anyone... but... myself!"'

This is important, because it makes it clear that Brad recognized 'movement-impulses' as a part of himself. (This, justifies his own deliberate reshaping of some of the 'concentrates'. Many modern investigators in the field of psychical research are inclined to believe that all 'automatic writing' is simply an expression of the unconscious mind of the writer. Brad's experience clearly contradicts this view. On this one occasion, he recognized the 'entity' as *another person* who wanted to join in the dialogue. He concludes, 'There was never a repetition of that kind of experience.'

This explains, then, why the 'concentrates' were less spontaneous than the drawings or metal sculptures. Among Brad's notes, I see many early poems dating from his earliest years in Finland, and these have that same quality of photographic observation that is found in the concentrates:

> The black glass-smooth lake with its cold shine
> breathes a whispy mist
>
> That makes the far shore tree groups into dark,
> solitary islands.

And he admits that the writing period began as a result of conscious meditation upon the theme, 'What are words?' But the process followed the familiar pattern. The impulse in his arm would lead him to pick up a pencil and allow his hand to

write, one word at a time, without thinking about it. Then he would read the words, and try to understand the meaning. He would then attempt to express this meaning more clearly, making sentences around key words. If the writing reached an impasse, he would relax and allow the 'automatic writing' to take over again. This was clearly much more of a collaboration between the 'two selves'. But then, I find it difficult to envisage writing which is not such a collaboration. Sperry's experiments showed that although the right brain understands language, its linguistic capacities are poor compared with those of the left, just as most of us write very badly with the left hand (connected to the right brain) compared to the right. Here, it seems to me, the images are moving closer to the world of our conscious understanding. Reading Brad's concentrates, I am often reminded of the musical landscapes in the symphonies of Bruckner, or of the peaceful visionary landscapes in the paintings of my friend William Arkle. When man wishes to express the impersonal, he turns to nature. It is the same with the German romantic writer of *novelle,* Adalbert Stifter. His stories are usually simple, like folk tales; they could be told in a few paragraphs. But he devotes page after page to descriptions of natural scenery, or explanations about local customs. A critical student might accuse him of padding. But the perceptive reader soon recognizes that, far from being 'padding', these descriptions of hills, mountains, forests, lakes, are in a sense more important than the story itself. J.P. Stern says of him: 'We feel he would rather not tell the story at all...' Stifter is escaping from his personal self through these descriptions of scenery. And this is surely the heart of the matter. For what he is escaping *to* is not simply the impersonal world of nature, but his own inner mountain landscape.

This seems to me to be the essence of the longest and most important of Brad's concentrates—the one that led to the writing of this book:

Following the afterimage of a wise old man within me I walked a road within me, up over forested ridges down through meadowed valleys, to a dead end that became a lane, and then a path leading towards a muffled roar growing louder and louder within me to where the path opened out of the tangly bushes into a spacious green glen, and beyond the glen...the roar itself. Breaking through the shorelines of a calm upper lake overflow waters were rushing down boulder strewn, rock studded irregular channels forming, swirling, slashing, curling, crashing rapids within me.

Nearby, in the dense underbrush surrounding the glen lay mossgrown millstones worn smooth by wear and weather, memorials of a mill once working within me, its mechanical being turning the power from swirling rushing rapids to revolving stones grinding the seeds of harvests. Within the glen, near the rapids bank, was a solitary tree of gigantic girth and stature... widely spreading, deeply probing roots drawing up the overflow into their growth, stabilizing the earth along the bank; leaves of widely spreading highly reaching branches, drawing down the sun into their growth, releasing refreshment into the air...an organic power transformer outliving the mill within me. Downstream, to my right, the rushing rapids eased into a smooth even flow that slowly stilled into the calm serene being of new found depths.

I left the rapids and the glen within me, still following the afterimage of the wise old man,

> back along the path that became a lane that led to the road end, now beginning, down through the meadowed valleys, up over forested ridges, all familiar now, to a point where a path appeared in the dense forest along the road.
>
> I walked this path right off the road through the thick tree screen, and suddenly, up before my eyes stood revealed through thinning trees the steep mossy slope of a forested mountain.
>
> The path led up irregularly...around stumps and stones, through dead leaves, branches, and low bushes with wintered berries, hanging dull and red here and there...until high up, upon the slope, I reached an open clearing around a granite boulder which I climbed to look back over whence I had come.the forests, the ridges, the meadows and valleys just travelled through.
>
> There, beyond them, lay the calm deep waters that were stilling the rushing rapids of the overflow within me. Contrasting patches of dark purple cloud shadows and glistening radiant sunlight moved over land and the peaceful waters, and islands rose reflected from its still serene surface. And along the distant skyline of the far shores rose hazy silhouettes of other forested regions yet unreached.

This concentrate excited me because it was such a striking example of Jung's 'active imagination', or of the kabbalistic technique of inner travel. But there was another reason, connected with my own experiences of tension and 'panic'. I

had—as described earlier—identified the root of the trouble as the 'emotional body', a kind of spoilt child that hides inside all of us, and whose separate identity only becomes obvious in times of misery or fear, when he becomes uncontrollable. Now in writing the book on the poltergeist, I had returned to the books of Max Freedom Long on the Hunas of Hawaii, for Huna 'magicians' (called *kahunas*) seem to be able to cause appalling damage, even death, by somehow making magical use of 'poltergeists'. But what interested me so much about the Hunas was their belief that man has no less than three souls or 'selves', which they call the *unihipili,* the *uhane* and the *aumakua,* meaning 'low self, 'middle self and 'high self. When Max Freedom Long first went to Hawaii as a young man, he become so intrigued by the strange beliefs of the Hunas that he tried hard to penetrate their secrets. He began with the etymology of these three Hawaiian words, and concluded that *unihipili,* low self, means a spirit which can grieve but may not be able to talk. *Uhane,* middle self, means a spirit which can talk. And Long quickly became convinced that these two 'souls' correspond quite exactly to our western notions of the conscious and unconscious minds. (He rather loosely uses the term 'subconscious', which I use to mean the twilight realm between the two, so I shall refer to the *unihipili* as the unconscious.)

Long goes on: 'To summarize, the *kahuna* idea of the conscious and subconscious seems to be, judging from the root meaning of the names given them, a pair of spirits closely joined in a body which is controlled by the subconscious and used to cover and hide them both. The conscious spirit is more human and possesses the ability to,talk. The grieving subconscious weeps tears, dribbles water, and otherwise handles the vital force of the body. It does its work with secret and silent care, but it is stubborn and is disposed to refuse to obey.'

My panic attacks had made me very familiar with that refusal to obey, which led me to compare the *unihipili*—which I called the emotional body—to T. E. Lawrence's camel refusing to go back into the desert. I was also deeply struck by Long's remark that the *unihipili* 'intermingles with or tinctures the conscious spirit to give the impression of being one with it'. That is most certainly true. The emotional body is so dangerous because I think it *is* 'me'. When the emotional body goes into revolt, I feel completely shattered and undermined because it seems to me that *I* am betraying myself. Lawrence remarks in the *Seven Pillars* that during the desert war, he saw men drive themselves to the limits of endurance, yet there was never a sign of a break *unless it came from within*. When the mind is unified and confident in purpose, nothing can go wrong. When the emotional body becomes hysterical, then and only then are we in danger of inner defeat. This is the basic explanation of all mental illness and of all suicide.

Now, the chief characteristic of the *uhane* (middle self) is that it can *talk,* which reminds us that this function is governed by the left brain. And we have already seen that this left-brain self is the 'everyday self, the consciousness that confronts the world, the being who 'copes' with human existence. This notion is confirmed by Enid Hoffman's book, *Huna: A Beginner's Guide,* in a chapter called 'The selves in the brain'. She remarks: 'The middle self, whose consciousness is centred in the left hemisphere of the cortex...of the brain, continually reviews the information coming from the low self, whose consciousness is centred in the solar plexus.' And this identification of the 'dwelling place' of the *unihipili* also seems to make sense. When we are in an upset and undermined condition, we keep on feeling a 'sinking sensation' in the pit of the stomach.

So the spoilt schoolboy lives in the solar plexus, and the 'middle self lives in the left brain. Then what of the right

brain? According to Enid Hoffman's interpretation of the *kahunas, this* is the home of the 'high self, the *aumakua*. According to the *kahunas;* the high self knows the future and can control it. If the *unihipili* is our unconscious 'basement', then the *aumakua* is the superconscious 'attic'. The main difference between the unconscious and the superconscious is that we can, if we relax deeply, allow the activities of the unconscious to enter consciousness. But the activities of the superconscious are normally inaccessible to us. We can, according to the *kahunas,* communicate with the 'high self (and so control our own futures), but it has to be done *via* the 'low self. The telephone line from the middle self runs via the low self; there is no direct line to the superconscious.

One obvious consequence is that if the 'low self is in a state of misery and revolt—as mine was during the panic attacks—then no messages can get through to the superconscious; there is too much crackling on the line. If we wish to make use of the superconscious, the first step is to soothe the unconscious into serenity.

If the unconscious is a spoilt schoolboy, then what symbol would be appropriate for the superconscious? I had already decided, before I read Brad's poem, that it was the wise old man of Jung's inner voyages. So Brad's poem fell upon ground that was perfectly prepared for it.

I asked Brad how he had come to write the poem, and his explanation confirmed my feeling that it was a communication of the *aumakua*. In June 1976, he began to experience a feeling of restlessness and a need to be alone. By now, he recognized the symptoms well enough to know that he had to find the time and the patience to allow something to surface. He telephoned friends who lived in a remote part of central Finland, Bob and Beverley Schrader, and asked if he could go and spend a few days with them. On the evening of his arrival, Beverley

mentioned that she had recently discovered an interesting piece of scenery on one of her walks. The next morning, Brad set off on the walk she had recommended. 'During the whole walk I sensed everything with slow, intensive concentration—not thinking about it, but just taking it all in very deeply. Everything about that walk felt significant and important in some inexplicable way.' The following day, he accompanied Bob Schrader on a walk in the opposite direction, and again experienced the same sense of significance, of something rising slowly to the surface. By the next morning, he knew that his purpose had been achieved; the walks had accomplished the release of the impulse that had made him restless. He was able to write the 'concentrate'. 'With the writing completed, I felt that it stood in the same relationship to me and my inner world as my last two paintings had: i.e. that it was a summarized account of the way I had come in my recent personal development, a concentrated synthesis of my inner state of being, a symbolic map of the fundamental features of my inner territory, and an integrated presentation of my past, present an future direction.'

The meaning of the symbolism need not at present concern us: the overflowing lake, the rapids, the now-defunct mill, the great tree whose roots hold the bank together, the forested slopes of the mountain, the clearing with the granite boulder, the calm waters of the pool. An 'explained' symbol is a symbol drained of half its meaning. But the poem leaves us facing a far more important question: in fact, the question that lies at the centre of this book: what was Brad's 'wise old man', his *aumakua,* trying to tell him? The implications are so complex that they require a chapter to themselves.

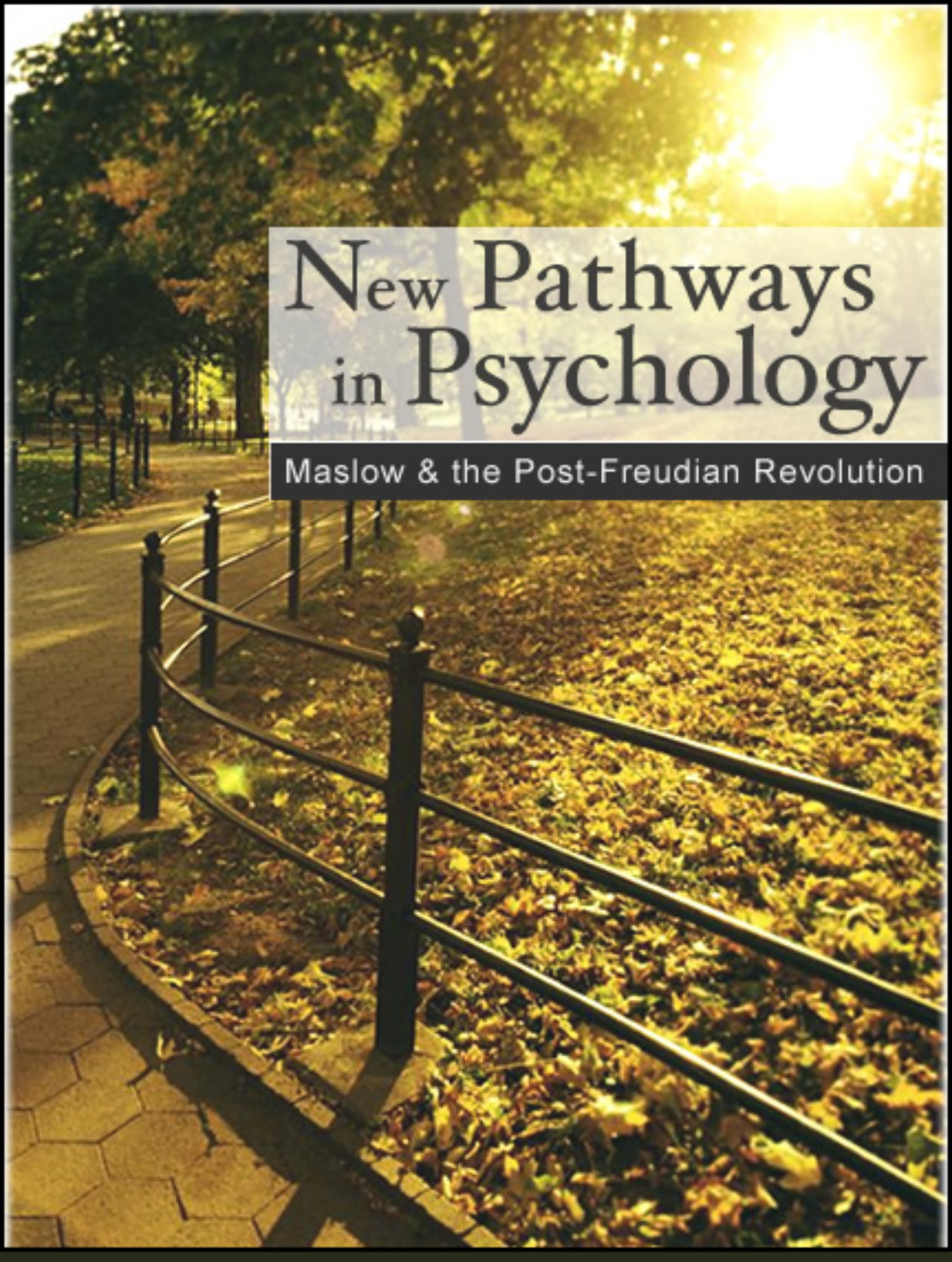
Chapter 4

The Road to Visionary Consciousness

The question needs to be considered in stages: the 'movements', the 'tea ceremony', the 'bee-hive ceremony', the metal sculptures, the paintings, the concentrates.

We have already seen that the purpose of the original movements seemed to be to improve Brad's physical condition, to reduce his weight to its natural level, to teach him to make proper use of his energies and powers of recuperation. Once this had been achieved, it seems to have moved on to a more constructive or creative stage. The emphasis shifted from the body to the mind. The mind of modern man flows forward like a narrow, fast stream; it needs to be taught to broaden into a slow-flowing river. Brad's 'tea ceremony' seems to have been an attempt to show him that even a simple, functional activity like making tea could be given a third dimension of meaning, turning it literally into a ritual after all, the purpose of all religious ritual is to re-awaken the memory of something that we ought never to forget. The same is true of the 'bee-hive ceremony'. Brad had always performed his work with the bees in a slow and deliberate manner, because bees respond better to slow movement. The 'wise old man' said, in effect: 'Why waste this activity? Why not make it an opportunity for communion with the rest of your being?' And so tending the bees became another religious ritual.

The paintings and metal sculptures represent a new level of creativity. What surprised me most about the metal sculptures was their astonishing variety. I would not have believed it



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For Bertha Maslow

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C.W.
CORNWALL, MARCH 1971

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Introductory
Personal Notes on Maslow

SOME TIME IN 1959, I received a letter from an American professor of psychology, Abraham H. Maslow, enclosing some of his papers. He said he had read my book *The Stature of Man*,{1} and liked my idea that much of the gloom and defeat of 20th century literature is due to what I called 'the fallacy of insignificance'. Maslow said this resembled an idea of his own, which he called 'the Jonah complex'. One day, he had asked his students: 'Which of you expects to achieve greatness in your chosen field?' The class looked at him blankly. After a long silence, Maslow said: 'If not *you—who* then?' And they began to see his point. This is the fallacy of insignificance, the certainty that you are unlucky and unimportant, the Jonah complex. The papers he enclosed looked highly technical; their titles contained words like 'metamotivation', 'synergy', 'eupsychian'.

I glanced at them and pushed them aside. Some months later I came across them again: this time, my eye was caught by the term 'peak experience' in one of the titles, and I started to read. It was immediately clear that I'd stumbled upon something important. Maslow explained that, some time in the late thirties, he had been struck by the thought that modern psychology is based on the study of sick people. But since there are more healthy people around than sick people, how can this psychology give a fair idea of the workings of the human mind? It struck him that it might be worthwhile to devote some time to the

study of *healthy* people.

'When I started to explore the psychology of health, I picked out the finest, healthiest people, the best specimens of mankind I could find, and studied them to see what they were like. They were very different, in some ways startlingly different from the average . . .

'I learned many lessons from these people. But one in particular is our concern now. I found that these individuals tended to report having had something like mystic experiences, moments of great awe, moments of the most intense happiness, or even rapture, ecstasy or bliss . . .

'These moments were of pure, positive happiness, when all doubts, all fears, all inhibitions, all tensions, all weaknesses, were left behind. Now self-consciousness was lost. All separateness and distance from the world disappeared as they felt one with the world, fused with it, really belonging to it, instead of being outside, looking in. (One subject said, for instance, "I felt like a member of a family, not like an orphan".)

'Perhaps most important of all, however, was the report in these experiences of the feeling that they had really seen the ultimate truth, the essence of things, the secret of life, as if veils had been pulled aside. Alan Watts has described this feeling as "This is it!", as if you had finally got there, as if ordinary life was a striving and a straining to get some place and this was the arrival, this was Being There! . . . Everyone knows how it feels to want something and not know what. These mystic experiences feel like the ultimate satisfaction of vague, unsatisfied yearnings . . .

'But here I had already learned something new. The little that I had ever read about mystic experiences tied them in with religion, with visions of the supernatural.

And, like most scientists, I had sniffed at them in disbelief and considered it all nonsense, maybe hallucinations, maybe hysteria—almost surely pathological.

'But the people telling me ... about these experiences were not such people—they were the healthiest people! . . . And I may add that it taught me something about the limitations of the small . . . orthodox scientist who won't recognise as knowledge, or as reality, any information that doesn't fit into the already existent science.'{2}

These experiences are not 'religious' in the ordinary sense. They are *natural*, and can be studied naturally. They are not 'ineffable' in the sense of incommunicable by language. Maslow also came to believe that they are far commoner than one might expect, that many people tend to suppress them, to ignore them, and certain people seem actually afraid of them, as if they were somehow feminine, illogical, dangerous. 'One sees such attitudes more often in engineers, in mathematicians, in analytic philosophers, in book-keepers and accountants, and generally in obsessional people.'

The peak experience tends to be a kind of bubbling-over of sheer delight, a moment of pure happiness. 'For instance, a young mother scurrying around her kitchen and getting breakfast for her husband and young children. The sun was streaming in, the children, clean and nicely dressed, were chattering as they ate. The husband was casually playing with the children: but as she looked at them she was suddenly so overwhelmed with their beauty and her great love for them, and her feeling of good fortune, that she went into a peak experience . . .

'A young man working his way through medical school by drumming in a jazz band reported many years later, that in all his drumming he had three peaks when he

suddenly felt like a great drummer and his performance was perfect.

'A hostess after a dinner party where everything had gone perfectly and it had been a fine evening, said goodbye to her last guest, sat down in a chair, looked around at the mess, and went into a peak of great happiness and exhilaration.'

Maslow described another typical peak experience to me later, when I met him at his home in Waltham, Mass. A marine had been stationed in the Pacific and had not seen a woman for a couple of years. When he came back to the base camp, he saw a nurse, and it suddenly struck him with a kind of shock that women are different to men. The marine had told Maslow: 'We take them for granted, as if they were another kind of man. But they're quite different, with their soft curves and gentle natures . . .' He was suddenly flooded with the peak experience. Observe that in most peak experiences (Maslow abbreviates it to P.E's, and I shall follow him), the person becomes suddenly *aware* of something that he had known about previously, but been inclined to take for granted, to discount. And this matter had always been one of my own central preoccupations. My *Religion and the Rebel* (1957) had been largely a study in the experiences of mystics, and in its autobiographical preface, I had written about a boring office job: 'As soon as I grew used to it, I began to work automatically. I fought hard against this process. I would spend the evening reading poetry, or writing, and would determine that, with sufficient mental effort, I could stop myself from growing bored and indifferent at work the next day. But the moment I stepped through the office door in the morning, the familiar smell and appearance would switch on the automatic pilot which

controlled my actions . . .' I was clearly aware that the problem was *automatism*. And in a paper I later wrote for a symposium of existential psychology,{3} I elaborated this theory of the automatic pilot, speaking of it as 'the *robot*. I wrote: 'I am writing this on an electric typewriter. When I learned to type, I had to do it painfully and with much nervous wear and tear. But at a certain stage, a miracle occurred, and this complicated operation was 'learned' by a useful robot whom I conceal in my subconscious mind. Now I only have to think about what I want to say: my robot secretary does the typing. He is really very useful. He also drives the car for me, speaks French (not very well), and occasionally gives lectures in American universities. 'He has one enormous disadvantage. If I discover a new symphony that moves me deeply, or a poem or a painting, this bloody robot promptly insists on getting in on the act. And when I listen to the symphony for the third time, *he* begins to anticipate every note. He begins to listen to it automatically, and I lose all the pleasure. He is most annoying when I am tired, because then he tends to take over most of my functions without even asking me. I have even caught him making love to my wife.

'My dog doesn't have this trouble. Admittedly, he can't learn languages or how to type, but if I take him for a walk on the cliffs, he obviously experiences every time just as if it is the first. I can tell this by the ecstatic way he bounds about. Descartes was all wrong about animals. It isn't the animals who are robots; it's us.'

Heaven lies about us in our infancy, as Wordsworth pointed out, because the robot hasn't yet taken over. So a child experiences delightful things as more delightful, and horrid things as more horrid. Time goes slower, and

mechanical tasks drag, because there is no robot to take over. When I asked my daughter if she meant to be a writer when she grew up, she said with horror that she got fed up before she'd written half a page of school-work, and couldn't even imagine the tedium of writing a whole book.

The robot is necessary. Without him, the wear and tear of everyday life would exhaust us within minutes. But he also acts as a filter that cuts out the freshness, the newness, of everyday life. If we are to remain psychologically healthy, we must have streams of 'newness' flowing into the mind—what J. B. Priestley calls 'delight or 'magic'. In developing the robot, we have solved one enormous problem—and created another. But there is, after all, no reason why we should not solve that too: modify the robot until he admits the necessary amount of 'newness', while still taking over the menial tasks.

Now I was much struck by Maslow's comment on the possibility of *creating* peak experiences at will. Because his feeling was that it cannot be done. 'No! Or almost entirely no! In general, we are "Surprised by Joy", to use the title of C. S. Lewis's book on just this question. Peaks come unexpectedly . . . You can't count on them. And hunting them is like hunting happiness. It's best not done directly. It comes as a by-product, an epiphenomenon, for instance, of doing a fine job at a worthy task you can identify with.'

It seemed to me that this is only partly true. I will try to explain this briefly.

Novelists have to be psychologists. I think of myself as belonging to the school known as the phenomenological movement. The philosopher Edmund Husserl noted that all

psychological acts are 'intentional'. Note what happens when you are about to tickle a child. The child begins to squirm and laugh before your hands have actually reached him. On the other hand, why doesn't it tickle when you tickle yourself? Obviously, because you know it's you. The tickling is not something *physical* that happens when your hands encounter flesh and make tickling motions. It seems to be 99% psychological. When the child screams with laughter, *he is tickling himself*, just as he might frighten himself by imagining ghosts in the dark. The paradoxical truth is that when someone tickles you, you tickle yourself. And when you tickle yourself, you don't tickle yourself, which is why it doesn't tickle.

Being tickled is a 'mental act, an 'intention'. So are all perceptions. I look *at* something, as I might fire a gun at it. If I glance at my watch while I am in conversation, I see the time, yet I don't *notice* what time it is. As well as merely 'seeing' I have to make a mental act of *grasping*.

Now the world is full of all kinds of things that I cannot afford to 'grasp' or notice. If I am absorbed in a book, I 'grasp' its content; my mind explores it as though my thoughts were fine, thin tentacles reaching every corner of the book. But when I put the book back on the shelf, it is standing among dozens of other books, which I have also explored at some time in the past. As I look at all these books, I cannot simultaneously grasp all of them. From being intimate friends, they have become mere nodding acquaintances. Perhaps one or two, of which I am very fond, mean more to me than the others. But of necessity, it has to be very few.

Consider Maslow's young mother getting the breakfast. She loves her husband and children, but all the same, she is directing her 'beam of interest' at making the coffee,

buttering the toast, watching the eggs in the frying pan. She is treating her husband and children as if they were a row of books on a shelf. Still, her energies are high; she is looking forward to an interesting day. Then something triggers a new level of response. Perhaps it is the beam of sunlight streaming through the window, which seems to shake her arm and say: 'Look—isn't it all wonderful?' She suddenly looks *at* her husband and children as she would look at the clock to find out the time. She becomes self-conscious of the situation, using her beam of interest to 'scan' it, instead of to watch the coffee. And having put twice as much energy into her 'scanning', she experiences 'newness'. The mental act of looking *at* her family, and thinking: 'I am lucky', is like an athlete gathering himself for a long jump, concentrating his energies.

What happens if somebody returns a book that he borrowed from me a long time ago? I look at the book with a kind of delight, as though it were a returned prodigal: perhaps I open it and read a chapter. Yet if the book had stayed on my shelf for six months I might not even have bothered to glance at it. The return of the book has made me focus my beam of interest, like an athlete gathering for a leap.

When something occupies my full attention, it is very *real* to me. When I have put the book back on the shelf, I have un-realised it, to some extent. I have pushed it back to a more abstract level of reality. But I have the power to realise it again. Consider the mental act I make when I feel glad to see the book again. I 'reach *out*' my invisible mental tentacles to it, as I might reach out my hand to a friend I am delighted to see, and I *focus* my beam of interest on it with a kind of intensity—the kind of intentness with which a sapper de-fuses an unexploded

bomb.

We do this 'real-ising' and 'un-real-ising' all the time—so automatically that we fail to notice that *we* are doing it. It is not just 'happening'. Like the athlete gathering himself to leap, it is the deliberate compression of mental muscles.

All this suggests that Maslow is mistaken to believe that peak experiences have to 'come' without being sought. A little phenomenological analysis, like the kind we have conducted above, reveals that the P .E. has a structure that can be duplicated. It is the culmination of a series of mental acts, each of which can be clearly defined.

The first pre-condition is 'energy', because the P .E. is essentially an overflowing of energy. This does not mean ordinary physical energy; Maslow points out that sick people can have P.E's as easily as healthy ones, if the conditions are right. If you say to a child: 'I'll take you to the pantomime tonight if you'll tidy your bedroom', he immediately seethes with a bustling energy. The normally boring act of tidying a room is performed with enthusiasm. And this is because he—figuratively—'takes a deep breath'. He is so determined that the tidying shall be satisfactory that he is prepared to devote attention to every square inch of the floor. And the 'mental act' that lies behind this is a certain concentration and 'summoning of energy', like calling 'All hands on deck'. If I am asked to do a job that bores me, I summon only a small quantity of energy, and if the job is complicated, I skimp it. If I am determined to do it thoroughly, I place the whole of my interior army and navy 'on call'. It is this state—of vigilance, alertness, *preparedness*—that is the basis of the peak experience.

Healthy people—like Maslow's housewife—are people with a high level of 'preparedness'? This can be expressed

in a simple image. My 'surplus energy' is stored in my subconscious mind, in the realm of the robot: this is like money that has been invested in stocks and shares. Nearer the surface of everyday consciousness, there are 'surplus energy tanks', energy which is ready-for-use, like money in my personal account at the bank. When I anticipate some emergency, or some delightful event (like a holiday) which I shall need energy to enjoy to the full, I transfer large quantities of 'ready energy' to these surface tanks, just as I might draw a large sum out of the bank before I go on holiday.

'Peakers' are people with large quantities of energy in the ready-energy tanks. Bored or miserable people are people who keep only small amounts of energy for immediate use.

But it must be borne in mind that both types of people have large amounts of energy available in their '*deep* storage tanks' in the realm of the robot. It is merely a matter of transferring it to your 'current account.

In a paper called 'The Need to Know and the Fear of Knowing', Maslow describes one of his crucial cases.

'Around 1938, a college girl patient presented herself complaining vaguely of insomnia, lack of appetite, disturbed menstruation, sexual frigidity, and a general malaise which soon turned into a complaint of boredom with life and an inability to enjoy *anything*. Life seemed meaningless to her. Her symptoms closely paralleled those described by Abraham Myerson in his book *When Life Loses Its Zest* ... As she went on talking, she seemed puzzled. She had graduated about a year ago and by a fantastic stroke of luck—this was the depression, remember—she had immediately got a job. And what a job! Fifty dollars a week! She was taking care of her whole unemployed family

with the money and was the envy of all her friends. But what was the job? She worked as a sub-personnel manager in a chewing-gum factory. And after some hours of talking, it became more and more clear that she felt she was wasting her life. She had been a brilliant student of psychology and was very happy and successful in college, but her family's financial situation made it impossible for her to go on into graduate studies. She was greatly drawn to intellectual work, not altogether consciously at first because she felt she *ought* to feel fortunate with her job and the money it brought her. Half-consciously then she saw a whole lifetime of greyness stretching out ahead of her. I suggested that she might be feeling profoundly frustrated and angry simply because she was not being her own very intelligent self, that she was not using her intelligence and her talent for psychology and that this might well be a major reason for her boredom with life and her body's boredom with the normal pleasures of life. Any talent, any capacity, I thought, was also a motivation, a need, an impulse. With this she agreed, and I suggested that she could continue her graduate studies at night after her work. In brief, she was able to arrange this and it worked well. She became more alive, more happy and zestful, and most of her physical symptoms had disappeared at my last contact with her.'

It is significant that Maslow, although trained as a Freudian, did not try to get back into the subject's childhood and find out whether she experienced penis envy of her brothers or a desire to murder her mother and marry her father. He followed his instinct—his feeling that creativeness and the desire for a *meaningful existence* are as important as any subconscious sexual drives.

Anyone who knows my own work will see why Maslow's

approach appealed so much to me—and why mine, apparently, appealed to Maslow. My first book, *The Outsider,* written when I was 23, was about people like Maslow's girl patient-men driven by an obscure creative urge that made them dissatisfied with everyday life, and which in some cases—T. E. Lawrence, for example—caused them to behave in a manner that seemed masochistic. The book sprang from my own obsession with the problem of 'life failure'. Auden wrote:

> 'Put the car away; when life fails
> What's the good of going to Wales?'

Eliot asks in *The Rock:* 'Where is the life we have lost in living?' And Shaw says of the Ancients in *Back to Methuselah:* 'Even at the moment of death, their life does not fail them.' Maslow's patient was suicidal because she felt she was losing her life in the process of living it. Quite clearly, we were talking about the same thing. I had asked repeatedly in *The Outsider*: '*Why* does life fail?' Maslow was replying, in effect: Because human beings have needs and cravings that go beyond the need for security, sex, territory. He states it clearly in the preface to the Japanese edition of *Eupsychian Management,* asserting that 'human nature has been sold short, that man has a higher nature which is just as "instinctoid" as his lower nature, and that this higher nature includes the need for meaningful work, for responsibility, for creativeness, for being fair and just, for doing what is worthwhile and for preferring to do it well.'

I must outline my own approach to this problem, as I explained it in subsequent correspondence with Maslow. *The Outsider* had developed from my interest in the

romantics of the 19th century—Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Wagner, Nietzsche, Van Gogh. What fascinated me was their *world rejection*. It was summed up by Villiers de 1'lsle—Adam's hero Axel in the words 'Live? Our servants can do that for us.' Axel asserted that 'real life' is always a disappointment. The heroine, Sarah, has a long speech in which she speaks of all the marvellous places they might visit now they have found the treasure. Axel replies that the cold snows of Norway *sound* marvellous, but when you actually get there, it's just cold and wet" L. H. Myers had made the same point with fine precision in *The Near and the Far*, where the young Prince Jali stares at a splendid sunset over the desert, and reflects that there are two deserts: one that is a glory to the eye, and one that is a weariness to the feet. If you tried rushing towards that sunset, you would only get your shoes full of sand. It seems impossible to grasp 'the promise of the horizon'. And it was this feeling of despair about the near and the far—the feeling that they can never be reconciled—that led to so many early deaths among the romantics: suicide, insanity, tuberculosis. Obermann, in Senancour's novel of that name, says that the rain depresses him, yet when the sun comes out it strikes him as 'useless'. *This* is life-failure.

But man's achievement is to have created a world of the mind, of the intellect and imagination, which is as real in its way as any actual country on the map. Sir Karl Popper, *in* one of his most important papers, calls it 'the third world.'{4} The first world is the objective world of things. The second world is my inner subjective world. But, says Popper, there is a third world, *the world of objective contents of thoughts*. If some catastrophe destroyed all the machines and tools on this earth, but *not* the libraries, a new generation would slowly rebuild civilisation. If the

libraries are all destroyed too, there could be no re-emergence of civilisation, for all our carefully stored knowledge would have gone, and man would have to start regaining it from scratch. Teilhard de Chardin calls this 'third world' the noosphere—the world of mind. I t includes the works of Newton, Einstein, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Plato; it is the most important part of our human heritage.

A cow inhabits the physical world. It has almost no mind, to speak of. Man also inhabits the physical world, and has to cope with its problems. But he has built civilisation because *the physical world is not enough*. Nothing is so boring as to be stuck in the present. Primitive man loved stories for the same reason that young children do. Because they afforded an escape from the present, because they freed his memory and imagination from mere 'reality'. Einstein made the same point: '. . . one of the strongest motives that lead men to art and science is to escape from everyday life, with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness. . . A finely tempered nature longs to escape from personal life into the world of objective perception and thought; this desire may be compared to the townsman's irresistible longing to escape from his noisy, cramped surroundings into the silence of high mountains. . .'{5}

But my central point is this. Man is a very *young* creature: his remotest ancestors only date back two million years. (The shark has remained unchanged for 15,000,000 years.) And although he longs for this 'third world' as his natural home, he only catches brief glimpses of it. For it can only be 'focused' by a kind of mental eye. This morning, as I cleaned my teeth in the bathroom a fragment of Brahms drifted through my head and caused

that sudden feeling of inner-warmth. The person labelled 'Colin Wilson' ceased to matter: it was almost as if I had floated out of my body and left him behind, as if the real 'I' had taken up a position somewhere midway between myself and Brahms. In the same way, when I am working well, I seem to lose my identity, 'identifying' instead with the ideas or people I am writing about. But very often, I cannot even begin to focus the 'third world'; the real world distracts me, and keeps my attention fixed on its banal 'actualities' like some idiot on a train who prevents you from reading by talking in a loud voice.

All the same, this 'third world' is a *place;* it is there all the time, like China or the moon; and it ought to be possible for me to go there at any time, leaving behind the boring person who is called by my name. It is fundamentally a world of pure *meaning*. It is true that my small personal world is also a world of meaning; but of trivial, personal meaning, distorted and one-sided, a worm's eye view of meaning.

It is man's evolutionary destiny to become a citizen of the third world, to explore it as he might now explore Switzerland on a holiday.

It is impossible to predict what will happen to human beings when that time comes: for this reason. Meaning stimulates the will, fills one with a desire to reach out to new horizons. When a man in love sees the girl approaching, his heart 'leaps'. When I hear a phrase of music that means something to me, my heart leaps. That 'leap' is vitality from my depths, leaping up to meet the 'meaning'. And the more 'meaning' I perceive, the more vitality rushes up to meet it. As his access to the world of meaning increases, man's vitality will increase towards the superman level; that much seems clear .

Boredom cripples the will. Meaning stimulates it. The peak experience is a sudden surge of meaning. The question that arises now is: how can I *choose* meaning? If Maslow is correct, I can't. I must be 'surprised' by it. It is a by-product of effort.

At this point, I was able to point out to Maslow a possibility that he had overlooked, a concept I called 'the indifference threshold' or 'St Neot margin'. It is fundamentally a recognition *that crises or difficulties can often produce a sense of meaning when more pleasant stimuli have failed*. Sartre remarks that he had never felt so free as during the war when, as a member of the French Resistance, he was likely to be arrested and shot at any time. It seems a paradox: that danger can make you feel free when peace and serenity fail to arouse any response. It does this by forcing you to concentrate.

I stumbled on this concept in the following manner. In 1954, I was hitchhiking to Peterborough on a hot Saturday afternoon. I felt listless, bored and resentful: I didn't want to go to Peterborough—it was a kind of business trip—and I didn't particularly long to be back in London either. There was hardly any traffic on the road, but eventually I got a lift. Within ten minutes, there was an odd noise in the engine of the lorry. The driver said: 'I'm afraid something's gone wrong—I'll have to drop you off at the next garage.' I was too listless to care. I walked on, and eventually a second lorry stopped for me. Then occurred the absurd coincidence. After ten minutes or so, there was a knocking noise from *his* gearbox. When he said: 'It sounds as if something's wrong', I thought: 'Oh *no!*' and then caught myself thinking it, and thought: 'That's the first definite reaction I've experienced today.' We drove on slowly—he was anxious to get to Peterborough, *and by*

this time ... so was I. He found that if he dropped speed to just under twenty miles an hour, the knocking noise stopped; as soon as he exceeded it, it started again. We both listened intently for any resumption of the trouble. Finally, as we were passing through a town called St Neots, he said: 'Well, I think if we stay at this speed, we should make it.' And I felt a surge of delight. Then I thought: 'This is absurd. My situation hasn't *improved* since I got into the lorry—in fact, it has got worse, since he is now crawling along. All that has happened is that an inconvenience has been threatened, and then the threat withdrawn. And suddenly, my boredom and indifference have vanished.' I formulated then the notion that there is a borderland or threshold of the mind that can be stimulated by pain or inconvenience, but not pleasure. (After all, the lorry originally stopping for me failed to arouse a response of gratitude.) I labelled it 'the indifference threshold' or-after the place I was travelling through at the time-the St Neot margin.

All that had happened, of course, was that the threat of a second breakdown had made me *concentrate my attention.* I spent a quarter of an hour listening intently to the engine. The threatened 'crisis' made me use my focusing-muscle, instead of allowing it to remain passive. Relaxing it—when he said we could probably make it—caused a rush of pleasure.

The same applies to Sartre. The constant danger of arrest kept him at a high level of *alertness,* of tension. Maslow's girl patient became so bored with her job in the chewing gum factory that she allowing the focusing-muscle to go permanently flaccid.

If you allow the will to remain passive for long periods, it has the same effect as leaving your car in the garage for

the winter. The batteries go flat. When the batteries go flat, 'life fails'. These 'focusing muscles' must be used if we are to stay healthy, for they are the means by which the mind focuses on values, just as the eye muscles enable the eye to focus on distant objects. If we fail to use them for long periods, the result is a kind of mental shortsightedness, a gradual loss of the feeling of the reality of values, of meaning. This explains what happens if you watch television for too long, or read a very long book on a dull winter day until your eyes are aching. Your 'meaning focus' relaxes as your interest flags, and if you then go for a walk, everything seems oddly meaningless and dull. It just 'is', and it doesn't arouse any response.

The Greek poet Demetrios Capetanakis wrote in the early forties: ' "Well," I thought when the war started, trying to hope for the best, "it will be horrible, but if it will be so horrible as to frighten and wake up the mind, it will be the salvation of many. Many are going to die, *but those who are going to survive will have a real life, with the mind awake*" . . . But I was mistaken . . . The war is very frightening, but it is not frightening enough.'

The same thought struck me when I read the article Camus wrote for the resistance paper *Combat* when the Germans were being driven out of Paris.{6} It is called 'The Night of Truth' and is full of noble phrases. The skyline of Paris is blazing, he says, but these are the flames of freedom. 'Those who never despaired of themselves or of their country find their reward under this sky . . . the great virile brotherhood of recent years will never forsake us . . . man's greatness . . . lies in his decision to be stronger than his condition', and so on. But Simone de Beauvoir's novel *The Mandarins* begins shortly after the liberation, and Camus is one of the characters. And they

drift around the nightspots of St Germain and drink too much and smoke too much and waste time on pointless adulteries. What had happened to the Night of Truth?

The answer is simple. Without the danger and injustice to keep the mind alert, they allowed a kind of inner-laziness to descend.

But didn't Camus *remember* their feelings about a completely different kind of future? The answer is: in the real sense of the word, no. Real memory brings a sense of meanings and values with it. False memory recalls the 'facts', but without their inner content of meaning. It must be squarely recognised that man suffers from *a very real form of amnesia*. This is not a figure of speech but a reality. For the 'meaning' depends upon the mind's power of 'focusing'.

Must we, then, draw the pessimistic conclusion that mankind needs war and injustice to prevent him from lapsing into a condition of boredom, or at least, of preoccupation with trivialities? The answer, fortunately, is no. 'Focusing' is a muscle, and it can be strengthened like any other muscle. Graham Greene, in an essay I have often quoted, describes how, in his teens, he sank into a condition of extreme boredom and depression, during which life became meaningless. He tried playing Russian roulette with his brother's revolver, inserting only one bullet, spinning the chambers, pointing it at his head and pulling the trigger. When there was just a click, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of delight, and a sense of the meaningfulness of life. The situation is fundamentally the same as in my 'St Neot margin' experience in the lorry, except that Greene's concentration was more intense, because the negative stimulus was greater. At a later stage, I discovered that a mild peak experience could

easily be induced merely by concentrating hard on a pencil, then relaxing the attention, then concentrating again ...After doing this a dozen or so times, the attention becomes fatigued—if you are doing it with the right degree of concentration—and a few more efforts—deliberately ignoring the fatigue—trigger the peak experience. After all, concentration has the effect of summoning energy from your depths. It is the 'pumping' motion—of expanding and contracting the attention—that causes the peak experience.

Another interesting point arose when I was lecturing to Maslow's class at Brandeis University in early 1967. I was speaking about the peculiar power of the human imagination. I can imagine trapping my thumb in the door, and wince as if I had actually done it. I can go to see a film, and come out of the cinema feeling as if I have been on a long journey. Even so, it must be admitted that imagination only provides a dim carbon copy of the original experience. I may try to recall a particularly happy day, and even re-experience some of its pleasures; but compared to the original experience, it is like paste jewellery compared to the real thing. The hero of Barbusse's novel *Hell,* trying to recall the experience of watching a woman undress, admits: 'These words are all dead. They leave untouched, powerless to affect it, the intensity of what was'. Proust, tasting a madeleine dipped in tea, recalls with sudden intensity the reality of his childhood: but that is a fluke. He cannot do it by an ordinary act of imagination.

Yet the matter of sex appears to be an exception to this rule. A man can conjure up some imaginary scene with a girl undressing, and he responds physically as if there *were*

a girl undressing in the room: his imagination can even carry him to the point of a sexual climax. In this one respect, man has completely surpassed the animals: here is a case where the mental 'act' needs no object . . .

At this point, Maslow interrupted me to point out that this is not quite true; monkeys often masturbate. I asked him if he had ever seen a monkey masturbating in total isolation, without the stimulus of a female monkey anywhere in the vicinity. He thought for a moment, then said he hadn't.

Even if he had, it would not have basically affected my point. If monkeys can do problems for fun, perhaps they have more imagination than we give them credit for. But the interesting point is that in the matter of sex, man can achieve repeatedly what Proust achieved momentarily tasting the madeleine: a physical response *as if* to reality. Absurd as it sounds, masturbation is one of the highest faculties mankind has yet achieved. But its importance is in what it presages: that one day, the imagination will be able to achieve this result in *all* fields. If all perception is 'intentional', due to a 'reaching out', a 'focusing', on the part of the perceiver, then it ought to be possible to reconstruct any reality by making the necessary effort of focusing. We have only been kept from this recognition by the old, false theory of 'passive perception' .

Anyone who did chemistry at school will recall what happens if you mix sulphur and iron filings, and then heat them in a crucible. A small area of the sulphur melts and fuses with the iron. At that point, you can remove the flame of the Bunsen burner; the reaction will continue of its own accord; the glow slowly spreads throughout the mixture until the whole crucible is red hot, and the end

result is a chunk of iron sulphide. The same process goes on in the mind when we become deeply interested in anything. The warm glow produced by favourite poetry or music is often the beginning of this fusing process.

We are all familiar with the process of a wider glimpse of 'meaning' leading to the revitalising of the will. This, in fact, is why people need holidays. As life drags on repetitively, they get tired; they stop making effort; it is the *will* that gets run down. The holiday 'reminds' them of wider meanings, reminds them that the universe is a vast spider's web of meaning, stretching infinitely in all directions. And quite suddenly they are enjoying *everything* more: eating, reading, walking, listening to music, having a beer before dinner. The 'meaning' sharpens the appetite for life—that is, the will to live.

It is our misfortune that we are not equally familiar with the reverse process: that a deliberate increase in willed concentration can *also* start the 'fusion' process working. This is, in fact, common sense. The deeper my sense of the 'meaningfulness' of the world, the fiercer and more persistent my will. And increased effort of will leads in turn to increased sense of meaning . It is a chain reaction. So is the reverse, when 'discouragement' leads me to stop willing, and the passivity leads to a narrowed sense of meaning, and the gradual loss of 'meaning' leads to further relaxation of the will. The result is a kind of 'down staircase' of apathy. On the other hand, any intense glimpse of meaning can cause a transfer to the 'up staircase'. This is most strikingly illustrated in an experiment that Maslow's colleague, Dr. A Hoffer, carried out with alcoholics.{7} Hoffer reasoned that alcoholics may be people of more-than-average intelligence and sensitivity. Because of this, they find that life is too much

for them, and they drink because at first it produces peak experiences. But as often as not it doesn't; then they drink more to increase the stimulus, and become involved in guilt and depression. Hoffer tried giving these alcoholics mescalin-producing a far more powerful 'lift' than alcohol—and then deliberately induced peak experiences by means of music, poetry, painting—whatever used to produce P.E's before the subject became alcoholic. The startling result was that more than 50 % were cured. The peak experience is an explosion *of meaning*, and meaning arouses the will, which in turn reaches out towards further horizons of meaning. The alcoholic drinks because he wants peak experiences, but he is, in fact, running away from them as fast as he can go. Once his sense of direction had been restored, he ceased to be alcoholic, recognising that *peak experiences are in direct proportion to the intensity of the will.*

And what should be quite clear is that there is no theoretical limit to the 'chain reaction'. Why does a man get depressed? Because at a certain point, he feels that a certain difficulty is 'not worth the effort'. As he becomes more discouraged, molehills turn into mountains until, as William James says, life turns into one tissue of impossibilities, and the process called nervous breakdown begins. Having recognised that the cause of the trouble lies in the collapse of the will, there is no theoretical reason why the ex-alcoholic should come to a halt with the achievement of 'normality'.

There is, of course, a practical reason. The will needs a *purpose*. Why do we feel so cheerful when we are planning a holiday—looking at maps, working out what to pack? Because we have long-distance purpose. One can understand how Balzac must have felt when he first

conceived the idea of creating the *Comédie Humaine*, the excitement of working out a series of novels about military life, a series about provincial life, a series about the aristocracy. . . 'Building castles in the air', this activity is called; but with a little effort, they actually get built. Man seems to need long-range purpose to get the best out of himself. And once the alcoholic has achieved 'normality' again, he may well say: 'All right, where do I go from here?'

If this were true, it would represent a kind of dead end. For undoubtedly, our civilisation tends to deprive us of the kind of long-range purpose that our pioneer ancestors must have enjoyed. But it provides us with something else: the ability to live on the plane of the mind, the imagination.

And there is a still more important matter we have over-looked: the mind's capacity to *reach out* for meaning. This is perfectly illustrated by a story told in Romain Gary's novel *The Roots of Heaven*. In a German concentration camp during the war, the French prisoners are becoming increasingly demoralised: they are on a down-staircase. A man called Robert devises a way to arrest the decline. He suggests that they imagine an invisible girl in the billet. If one of them swears or farts, he must bow and apologise to the 'girl'; when they undress, they must hang up a blanket so she can't see them. Oddly enough, this absurd game works: they enter into the spirit of the thing, and morale suddenly rises. The Germans become suspicious of the men, and by eavesdropping they find out about the invisible girl. The Commandant fancies himself as a psychologist. He goes along to the billet with two guards, and tells the men: 'I know you have a girl here. That is forbidden. Tomorrow, I shall come here with these guards, and you will hand her

over to me. She will be taken to the local brothel for German officers.' When he has gone, the men are dismayed; they know that if they 'hand her over', they won't be able to re-create her. The next day the Commandant appears with his two soldiers. Robert, as the spokesman, says: 'We have decided not to hand her over'. And the Commandant knows he is beaten: nothing he can do can force them to hand her over. Robert is arrested and placed in solitary confinement; they all think they have seen the last of him, but weeks later, he reappears, very thin and worn. He explains that he has found the way to resist solitary confinement—their game with the invisible girl has taught him that the imagination is the power to reach out to *other realities*. realities not physically present. He has kept himself from breakdown by imagining great herds of elephants trampling over endless plains . . . The irony, in the novel, is that it is Robert who later becomes a hunter of elephants. But that is beside the point. The point is that the will *can* make an act of reaching towards meaning, towards 'other realities'.

In phenomenological terms, what actually happened when the prisoners began apologising to the imaginary girl? First of all, they threw off their apathy and entered into a communal game. It was like a coach-load of football fans whiling away a tedious journey with community singing. But having raised their spirits by entering into the game, they also *reminded themselves* of circumstances in which they would normally be 'at their best'. Gorky's story *Twenty Six Men and a Girl* may be regarded as a parable about the same thing: the twenty-six over-worked bakers keep up their spirits by idealising the girl, treating her as a goddess. . . . And thereby *reminding themselves* of the response appropriate to a goddess.

And this leads naturally to a concept that has become the core of my own existential psychology: the Self-Image. A man could not climb a vertical cliff without cutting handholds in the rock. Similarly, I cannot achieve a state of 'intenser consciousness' merely by wanting to; at least, it is extremely difficult without training. We tend to climb towards higher states of self-awareness by means of a series of self-images. We create a certain imaginary image of the sort of person we would like to be, and then try to live up to the image. 'The great man is the play-actor of his ideals,' says Nietzsche.

One of the clearest expositions of the self-image idea can be found in a story called *The Looking Glass* by the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. A young man who has lived all his life in a small village in Brazil is called up for military service. In due course he becomes a lieutenant. When he returns home in his uniform he is the envy of the village; his mother calls him 'My lieutenant'. One of his aunts is particularly delighted with him: she invites him to her remote farm, and insists on addressing him as 'Senhor Lieutenant'. Her brother-in-law and all the slaves follow suit. At first, the youth is embarrassed; he *doesn't feel like* a lieutenant. But gradually he gets used to the idea. 'The petting, the attention, the deference, produced a transformation in me. . .' He begins to feel like a lieutenant. But one day, the aunt goes away to the bedside of a sick daughter, and takes the brother-in-law with her. The lieutenant is left alone with the slaves. And the next morning, they have all deserted, leaving him alone.

Suddenly, there is no one to feed his ego. He feels lost. In his room there is an enormous mirror, placed there by his aunt. One day he looks in the mirror—and his outline seems blurred and confused. The sense of unreality

increases until he is afraid he is going insane. And then he has an inspiration. He takes his lieutenant's uniform from the wardrobe and puts it on. And immediately, his image in the mirror becomes solid and clear. His feeling of sanity and self-respect returns.

Every day thereafter, he puts on the uniform, and sits in front of the mirror. And he is able to stay sane through the remaining week before his aunt returns . . .{8}

Machado subtitles his story 'Rough draft of a new theory of the human soul'. And so it is, for a story written in 1882. His hero explains to his auditors that he believes man has two souls: one inside, looking out, the other outside, looking in. But this is crude psychology. He means that the subjective 'I' gains its sense of identity from actions and outward objects. But this implies that the 'inner me' remains unchanged. This in turn implies that the shy, nervous 'inner self' is the permanent substratum of one's more confident layers of personality, and this is obviously untrue. Shyness is simply a disinclination to express oneself out of fear that it will turn out badly; confidence—such as he gained through the petting and admiration—is the ability to act decisively.

The key sentence is: 'The petting, the attention, the deference, produced a transformation in me.' For this type of transformation, I coined the word 'promotion'. It is, in effect, a promotion of the personality to a higher level. All poetic experience is a 'promotion' experience, since it raises the personality to a higher level. One has a sense of becoming a stronger, or more mature, or more competent, or more serious person.

If he had been a lieutenant for several years, being alone in the house would not have eroded his sense of identity. The trouble is that he is young, and that he is

only just trying-on a new personality, the 'Senhor Lieutenant'. The image of himself in the looking glass provides the reinforcement he needs.

The resemblance between this story and Romain Gary's story of the prison camp need hardly be pointed out. In both cases, moral decline is arrested by *reminding oneself* of something that re-creates the self-image. The weakness of Machado's theory of two souls becomes clear when we consider that Robert keeps himself sane in solitary confinement by an effort of inner-strength, of imagination, not by evoking a more 'successful' level of his personality. The elephants are an image of freedom. The sensation of freedom is always accompanied by a feeling of *contraction* of one's inner-being. Such a contraction occurs when we concentrate intently upon anything. It also occurs in sexual excitement, and explains why the orgasm is perhaps the most fundamental—at least the most common—'promotion' experience.

Donald Aldous, the technical editor of a well-known record magazine, told me a story that makes the role of the self-image even clearer. Before the war, the B.B.C. hired a famous conductor to broadcast a series of concerts. They were to be relayed from the new soundproof studios. The orchestra had never played there before, and the rehearsals lacked vitality. They explained that the studio was too dead: they could not hear the echo of their own playing. Donald Aldous was given the interesting job of arranging a system of loudspeakers around the walls that relayed the sound back to the orchestra a split second after they had played it, like an echo. As soon as they could 'hear themselves', the playing of the orchestra improved enormously.

What is at issue in all such cases is a certain inner-

strength. Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House* tells Ellie Dunne that as a young man, he 'sought danger, hardship, horror and death'—as captain of a whaler—'that I might feel the life in me more intensely'. That is to say, he sought conditions that would keep him at a high level of tension and alertness, so as to develop the inner-muscle of concentration. And note that the function of this muscle is to produce a sense of inner-freedom. When it is feeble, I am easily bored, depressed, made to feel sorry for myself. I am a moral hypochondriac. When it has been strengthened by a long period of alertness and effort) I feel equal to most emergencies, and this is the same as to say that I feel inner-freedom .

The self-image notion is of immediate relevance to Maslovian psychology. And here we touch upon the very heart of the matter, the most important point of all.

Let us consider the question: what is the mechanism by which a 'self-image' produces 'promotion'? The answer is: it provides me with a kind of artificial standard of objective values. It gives me a sense of external *meaning*. Why did the peak experience under mescalin cure the alcoholics? Because the peak experience is a flood of meaning, obviously pouring in from outside. As it pours in, you ask yourself the question: Why doesn't this happen all the time, if the meaning is always there? And the answer is obvious: because I allow the will to become passive, and the senses close up. If I want more meaning, then I must force my senses wide open by an increased effort of will. We might think of the senses as spring-loaded shutters that must be forced open, and which close again when you let them go.

It must be clearly understood that we live in a kind of

room of subjective emotions and values. If I am not very careful, the shutters close, and I lose my objective standards. At this point, I may wildly exaggerate the importance of my emotions, my private ups and downs, and there is no feeling of objective reality to contradict me. A child beset by misery is more bewildered than an adult because he has nothing to measure it by; he doesn't know how serious it is. As soon as his mother kisses him and says, 'There, it doesn't really matter ... ', he relaxes. If I get myself 'into a state' about some trivial worry, and then I hear that some old friend has died of cancer, I instantly 'snap out' of my black mood, for my emotions are cut down to their proper size by comparison with a more serious reality.

Moods and emotions are a kind of fever produced by lack of contact with reality. The shutters are closed, and the temperature in the rooms rises. It *can* rise to a degree where it becomes a serious fever, where the emotions have got so out-of-control that reality *cannot* break in. These are states of psychotic delusion—or perhaps merely of nervous overstrain. The characteristic of these states is exaggeration: every minor worry turns into a monstrous bogey. Inevitably, I cease to make efforts of will—for the will is at its healthiest when I have a firm sense of reality and of purpose. And we have seen what happens when the will becomes passive: the vital forces sink, and, at a certain point, physical health is affected. The 'existential psychologist' Viktor Frankl—of whom I shall speak at length later—remarked on 'how close is the connection between a man's state of mind—his courage and hope, or lack of them—and the state of immunity of his body', and tells a story that makes the point forcefully. Frankl was a Jew who spent most of the war in a German concentration

camp:

'I once had a dramatic demonstration of the close link between the loss of faith in the future and this dangerous giving up. F—, my senior block warden, a fairly well known composer and librettist, confided in me one day: "I would like to tell you something, Doctor. I have had a strange dream. A voice told me that I could wish for something, that I should only say what I wanted to know, and all my questions would be answered. What do you think I asked? That I would like to know when the war would be over for me. You know what I mean, Doctor—for me! I wanted to know when we, when our camp, would be liberated and our sufferings come to an end." "'And when did you have this dream?" I asked.

"'In February, 1945", he answered. It was then the beginning of March.

"'What did your dream voice answer?"

'Furtively he whispered to me, "March thirtieth."

'When F— told me about his dream, he was still full of hope and convinced that the voice of his dream would be right. But as the promised day drew nearer, the war news which reached our camp made it appear very unlikely that we would be free on the promised date. On March twenty-ninth, F— suddenly became very ill and ran a high temperature. On March thirtieth, the day his prophecy had told him that the war and suffering would be over for him, he became delirious and lost consciousness.

On March thirty-first, he was dead. To all outward appearances he had died of typhus.'{9}

Frankl's composer friend was physically near the end of his resources; this is why the collapse of his will made such a difference. (Frankl also mentions the unprecedentedly high death rate in the camp between Christmas 1944 and

New Year 1945, because so many prisoners had pinned their hopes on being home for Christmas.) It took a year of work in the chewing-gum factory to deplete Maslow's girl patient to the point where she ceased to menstruate. Normally healthy people possess a 'cushion' of energy to absorb shocks and disappointments, and this cushion is identical to the 'surplus energy tanks' of which we have spoken. It is maintained by will power fired by the sense of meaning. We are only aware of this *direct* action of the will upon the body in physical extremes: for example, if I am feeling sick, I can disperse the sickness by 'snapping out' of my feeling of nausea and summoning subconscious forces of health. If we were more clearly aware of this connection between 'positive consciousness' and physical health, we would treat mental passivity as a form of illness. Another anecdote of Frankl's—from the same book—may be said to provide the foundation of an 'attitude psychology' closely related to Maslow's. The prisoners were transferred from Auschwitz to Dachau. The journey took two days and three nights, during which they were packed so tight that few could sit down, and half starved. At Dachau, they had to stand in line all night and throughout the next morning in freezing rain, as punishment because one man had fallen asleep and missed the roll call. Yet they were all immensely happy, laughing and making jokes: *because Dachau had no incinerator chimney*.

To summarise: man evolves through a sense of external meaning. When his sense of meaning is strong, he maintains a high level of will-drive and of general health. Without this sense of external meaning, he becomes the victim of subjective emotions, a kind of dream that tends to degenerate into nightmare. His uncontrolled fantasies

and worries turn into an octopus that strangles him.

Man has evolved various ways of preventing this from happening. The most important is religion. This *tells* a man that certain objective standards are permanently true, and that his own nature is weak and sinful. The chief trouble with authoritarian religion is that it works best for intellectually-uncomplicated people, and fails to carry much conviction for the highly sophisticated and neurotic—who are the very ones who need it most.

In certain respects, art succeeds where religion fails. A great symphony or poem is an *active reminder* of the reality of meaning: it provides a stimulus like an electric shock, re-animating the will and the appetite for life. Its disadvantage is that we all assume that art is 'subjective' by nature, that it tells us about the emotions of the artist, not about the objective world. And so 'when life fails', the effectiveness of art diminishes.

Men of imagination have always tended to use the self-image method to prevent them from becoming victims of the octopus of subjectivity. It is essentially a method for pushing problems and disappointments to arm's length. Yeats has described how, when he was sure no one was looking, he used to walk about London with the peculiar strut of Henry Irving's Hamlet. In *Heartbreak House,* Hector whiles away an idle moment by pretending to fight a duel with an imaginary antagonist and then making love to an imaginary woman. But the self-image also plays a central role in all human creativity. The young artist, lacking certainty of his own identity, projects a mental image of himself that blurs into an image of the artist he most admires. Brahms's self-image is half-Beethoven; Yeats's is half-Shelley. And the ultimate value of their work—its inner-consistency and strength—depends upon

how deeply they commit themselves to acting out the self-image.

According to Freud and Karl Marx, fantasy is an escape from reality and responsibility. According to Maslow, fantasy is the means by which a determined man masters reality. 'Reality' is the key word in existential psychology. It poses no philosophical problems. It means objective meaning, as opposed to subjective values. Eliot wrote: 'We each think of the key, each in his prison', implying that there is no escape from one's subjective prison. Blake knew better: he agreed that 'five windows light the caverned man', but added that through one of them, he can pass out whenever he wants to. That is to say that by an effort of reaching out to meaning, he can re-establish contact with reality. The situation could be compared to a child who becomes confused during a game of blind man's buff, but who has only to remove the bandage in order to re-orient himself to the room. And the most important point for psychotherapy is that he can do this *by an act of will*. Mental illness is a kind of amnesia, in which the patient has forgotten his own powers. The task of the therapist is to somehow renew the patient's contact with reality.

The first thing that will be observed about this 'third force psychology' I have outlined is that it is a great deal more optimistic than that of Freud, or even Jung. It implies that *all* human beings are closer to more intense states of consciousness than they realise. Somewhere in his autobiography, Stephen Spender remarks that everyone nowadays is neurotic, because it is inevitable at this stage in civilisation. Maslow's feeling seems to be that neurosis is definitely abnormal, and that there is no reason why

most people should not be capable of a high level of mental health and of peak experiences.

Among intelligent people, our cultural premises are certainly largely responsible for the prevailing pessimism. The Victorians went in for moral uplift and the belief in man's higher nature. Darwin and Freud changed all that. Darwin showed that we do not need the postulate of a creator to explain why man is superior to the ape. Freud denounced religion as a delusion based upon the child's fear of the father, and asserted that neurosis is due to the frustration of man's animal nature—specifically, his sex drives. After the First World War, despair and frustration became the keynote of literature; the optimists of the previous decade—Shaw, Wells, Chesterton—became almost unmentionable. In science, philosophy, psychology, there was an increasing tendency to 'reductionism'—which Arthur Koestler has defined as the belief that all human activities can be explained in terms of the elementary responses of the lower animals, such as the psychologist's laboratory rat. This reductionism should not be construed as a materialistic jibe at idealism—although it often looks like that—but as *a desire to get things done)* accompanied by the fear that nothing will get done if too much is attempted. Maslow told me once that a respectable psychologist had leapt to his feet at a meeting of the American Psychological Association, and shouted at him—Maslow—'You are an evil man. You want to destroy psychology.' The irony of the story is that by the time Maslow told it to me, he was president of the American Psychological Association! The old reductionist climate began to change in the early sixties. In Europe, the school of existential psychology was already well established. Sir Karl Popper—one of the original founders of the school of

Logical Positivism—was arguing that science is not a plodding, logical, investigation of the universe, but that it proceeds by flashes of intuition, like poetry. Popper's most distinguished follower, Michael Polanyi, published in 1958 his revolutionary book *Personal Knowledge,* a carefully reasoned attack on the 'timetable or telephone directory conception of science'—i.e. the view that all future books on science could be written by an electronic brain, if it was big enough. Polanyi stated that what drives the scientist is *an increasing sense of contact with reality*—that is to say, precisely what drives the poet or the saint. In biology, the old rigid Darwinism began to relax; in 1965, Sir Alister Hardy, an orthodox Darwinian, and Professor of Zoology at Oxford, asserted in his Gifford Lectures that the genes might be influenced by telepathy, and that certain biological phenomena are only explainable on the assumption of some kind of 'group mind'. 'Reductionism' was breaking apart. It was in 1968 that an American publisher suggested to me that I should write a book about Maslow. I asked him how he felt about the idea, and he approved—pointing out, at the same time, that another friend, Frank Goble, was also writing one. I decided to go ahead all the same, and Maslow patiently answered the questions I threw at him through 1969, although a heart attack had slowed him up considerably. At my suggestion, he made a pile of tapes, full of biographical and personal details, some for publication, some not. Meanwhile, I was reading my way steadily through a hundred or so papers he had sent me, dating back to the early thirties, when he was working on monkeys with Harry Harlow. But when I started writing the book, in Majorca, in the autumn of 1969, I realised that it was going to be more difficult than I had expected. I had

intended to make it a straight account of Maslow's life and work, a short book that would stick to my subject. But, after all, Viktor Frankl was also part of the subject, and so were Erwin Straus, Medard Boss, William Glasser, Ronald Laing, and many other existential psychologists. Worse still, it was hard to keep myself out of it, since Maslow's work had exerted so much influence on my own ideas, and since we had been engaged in a fragmentary dialogue for the past ten years.

In June, 1969, I told Maslow in a letter that it looked as if my book about him was going to be part of a larger book about the revolution in psychology, and asked more questions, which he answered on tape. A few days before this last batch of tapes arrived, I received a letter from his secretary telling me that he had died of a heart attack on June 8, 1970. Listening to his voice, it was hard to get used to the idea that he was dead.

I am still not certain whether this is the best way to write the book; but I can see no other. In this introduction I have tried to give a sketchy outline of the ideas that preoccupied Maslow—and myself—during the past ten years. In the first part of the book, I have tried to give a picture of the major trends in psychology from its beginnings in the 19th century, through the Freudian revolution, down to Maslow. Part Two deals exclusively with Maslow; it is the book I intended to write to begin with. Part Three discusses existential psychology in general, and attempts to state some general conclusions about the movement. Inevitably, this is the most personal part of the book, and may be regarded as a continuation of this introduction. The ultimate question is not one of psychology so much as of philosophy, or even religion.

Viktor Frankl talks about 'the existential vacuum', writing: 'More and more patients are crowding our clinics and consulting rooms complaining of an inner emptiness, a sense of total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives'. I coined the term 'nothingness neurosis' to describe this state. But in discussing it, I have tried to avoid generalisations, and to remain faithful to the phenomenological—the descriptive—method. That was always Maslow's own approach.

II

Higher Ceilings for Human Nature

'MY STORY BEGINS in 1932 when I was working with Harry Harlow on delayed reactions in monkeys', says Maslow, in his paper on 'The Need to Know and the Fear of Knowing'. 'Why did they work at this boring problem? It soon became clear that it wasn't just the bit of food that they got as a reward for their patience. They would work almost as successfully for a bit of bread that they didn't much care for. . . Furthermore, often they would successfully solve the problem and then casually throwaway the food reward, which, according to the motivation theory of that time, was the *only* reason for working at the problem and seeing it through. From conversations about these puzzling happenings emerged Dr Harlow's suggestion that I try little blocks of wood as a lure instead of food. When I did this it was found that the monkeys worked almost as well, though for a shorter period of time. Apparently we could count on the animals to work at these problems and solve them for reasons that had little to do with hunger and food. . . Later on Harlow and various of his students [performed] a brilliant series of experiments which showed that monkeys would work hard and persistently to solve simple puzzles without any external reward; that is, just for whatever satisfactions are inherent in the puzzle-solving itself.'

This was not only counter to the various motivation theories of the time: it seems to contradict our ordinary

human common sense. The sort of people who enjoy solving mathematical problems, or even doing *The Times* crossword puzzle, are of a certain type—intellectuals you might call them. The majority of human beings find this kind of problem-solving a bore. As to animals, their major interest seems to be in food and other such physical matters. Says Grey Walter in his book *The Living Brain* (1953), 'The nearest creature to us, the chimpanzee, cannot retain an image long enough to reflect on it, however clever it may be at learning tricks or getting food. . .' And the same assumption is inherent in Sir Julian Huxley's distinction between three levels of existence: first, dead matter, which possesses no freedom or capacity to change itself: next, living matter, from amoebas to chimpanzees, which possesses a certain degree of freedom, but which is trapped by its environment, completely dependent upon it for stimuli; third, the human level, which possesses a *new dimension of freedom,* the ability to think, to imagine, to plan. 'Unable to rehearse the possible consequences of different responses to a stimulus, without any faculty of planning, the apes and other animals cannot learn to control their feelings, the first step towards independence of environment and eventual control of it', says Grey Walter, underlining Huxley's point. Sartre says about a character in *Nausea:* 'When his cafe empties, his head empties too.' And that, according to Huxley and Walter, describes the lower animals. How can we reconcile all this with monkeys who will solve problems for the fun of it?

And this trait—consuming curiosity—was not confined to monkeys. Maslow observed that young pigs show similar tendencies. The weaker ones—who had difficulty commandeering a teat at feeding time—hung around the

mother and behaved in a generally timid manner. But the stronger and healthier pigs seemed to take pleasure in exploring. If the door of the pen was left open, they would venture outside and poke around. If the door was closed they became alarmed and frantically tried to get back in; but the discouragement never lasted for long; when the door was left open again, they couldn't resist it. Closely related to this is an observation made by W. F. Dove:{36} that if chickens are allowed to choose their own diet, a small percentage of them prove to be *good choosers;* they instinctively select the food that they need in order to grow. The poor choosers would choose food that looked or smelled good, but which was, in fact, bad for them. If the food chosen by the good choosers is forced on the poor choosers, they also begin to grow large, healthy and more dominant, although they never reach the same level as the good choosers.

What seems to emerge from these observations about monkeys, pigs and chickens is that there is a fundamental drive in healthy creatures towards knowledge, power, insight. It seems natural for the healthy creature to strive to get healthier, and its choices are, in general, good for the rest of the species. Neurosis must be regarded as a kind of 'stabilising' of these vital impulses, in the worst sense; they reach a state of balance, of stasis.

But although he knew about the curious behaviour of Harlow's monkeys in 1932, his training and outlook prevented him from grasping its significance. Harlow was one of Maslow's professors. 'He hired me to do this very dull and repetitive work'—intelligence-testing various primates, from lemurs to orang-outangs. The method was simple. In front of the apes' cage a table was placed, so

the animal could reach it. On this table were two cups, turned upside down. The ape was shown a piece of food—a banana, perhaps—and then it was placed under one of the two cups, which were out of the animal's reach. Then, after a certain time, the cups were pushed within its reach. If the animal lifted the right cup, it was given the banana; if it chose the wrong one, it wasn't. This 'delayed reaction test' was a rough measure of intelligence, and it was tried out on dozens of animals dozens of times. The paper was published in the *Journal of Comparative Psychology* in 1932, with the names of Harlow, Maslow and Harold Uehling on it. The twenty-four-year-old Maslow was delighted to find his name in print. 'This was a great moment, and I think then I got hooked . . . The awesome feeling of having contributed to the advancement of knowledge, even if it was the tiniest bit—just one coral in a whole coral reef of knowledge.' It may be that we owe the inception of Maslow's life work to the generosity of Harry Harlow in naming him as co-author of the paper, for before that, he found the work thoroughly boring, and now, with this 'reinforcement stimulus' (as Watson would call it), he went back to New York, and spent the whole summer holiday repeating the experiments—hundreds of them—with every primate in the Bronx Park Zoo. (Bertha, who helped him, must have been surprised by this sudden access of enthusiasm.) He had tasted print, and the sensation was pleasant: he wrote up his findings, and the paper appeared later that year, again with Harlow's name on it (although Harlow did no work on it). Maslow was interested to note that baboons, although anatomically lower than many other forms of ape, showed a surprising level of intelligence; perhaps this ranks as his first original 'discovery'. His next experiment was to cross-check an

observation made by C. S. Sherrington, that dogs would not eat dog meat. Maslow didn't believe it, but it proved to be true—most dogs would eat horse meat or practically any other kind, but not dog meat. When the flavour was disguised in various ways, about 50% would eat it. But Maslow concluded that there was no evidence of an 'emotion of disgust' behind the rejection, and that therefore there was so far no evidence that dogs could experience the emotion of disgust. This conservative conclusion seems to tell us something about Maslow at the time. For the moment, he was in love with science, with its cool, clean, odourless world of objective knowledge, its freedom from the trivialities of human emotion. After the emotional problems of his childhood and teens, it must have seemed to possess the beauty of a religion. What did it matter if the experiment led to no particular conclusion, if it was just an isolated fragment of knowledge that was never fated to join a coral reef? The pleasure lay in the knowledge itself.

I do not wish to labour this point, but it deserves a certain emphasis. The non-scientist tends to feel a total lack of sympathy for the 'purist' type of scientist, the kind who wants knowledge for its own sake, and does not object to being called a materialist. Such a man seems to have more than a touch of the monster about him. But this is a failure to recognise that there is an *emotional* relief in being cool and objective, in leaving behind the messy confusion of everyday life and contemplating the world of facts and ideas; it brings a momentary touch of immortality. Facts ignite the imagination, as the young H. G. Wells discovered. And the facts of psychology fired Maslow's imagination.

The next two papers continued the monkey studies in

the same plodding way; one concerned the food primates preferred—oranges, nuts, bananas, etc.—and the other confirmed that primates learned better and more quickly if the reward was one of their favourite foods. This is the kind of experiment that made Bernard Shaw remark scornfully that scientists spend weeks proving in the laboratory what ordinary people know by common sense. But Maslow regarded it as a step forward, since it showed him that a reaction that he had taken for lack of intelligence may actually be indifference to the offered reward. His next paper was what he called 'a stupid master's dissertation' on memory, the kind of thing that Ebbinghaus did with nonsense words. Maslow had wanted to do something on language—he had been excited by *The Meaning of Meaning*—some kind of study of 'exciting' and 'unexciting' words. His professor—Cason—turned this down flat, because it wasn't 'psychological' enough. He also turned down the idea of a dissertation on the effects of music. Maslow asked *him* to suggest something, and the 'Learning retention' paper was the result. It is interesting solely as illustrating what an academic psychologist considered to be 'good psychology' in 1932; Maslow had to make lists of three-'letter words on a hundred cards—nine to a card. His students were shown each card for ten seconds, then a white card for five seconds, then asked to repeat the nine words he had just read. A bell was rung occasionally, to see how far it destroyed concentration. The conclusion drawn from all this was that when students did their learning and repeating under the same conditions, they did better than if conditions varied: another way of saying that students learn better when not distracted. Maslow was understandably sceptical about the value of his paper, but submitted it for publication when

Cason nagged him about it. 'I didn't want to publish it because it was too crappy', but to his embarrassment, the editor accepted it, 'which shows how crappy the publications were in those days'. He sneaked into the library one day, extracted his dissertation, and threw it out of the window; he even tore out the file card. The first really original piece of research arose out of the early monkey experiments. By this time, he had met Adler; but he was by no means sure in his mind whether Adler's dominance theory went deeper than Freud's sexual theory. 'Somehow which one I had read last seemed more convincing.' While testing the monkeys for intelligence, food preferences and so on, he had filled pages with observations of their behaviour. And the two things that struck him most were the dominance behaviour and the non-stop sex: 'the screwing. . . went on all the time.' There was a strict hierarchical structure, with a highly dominant monkey, and then less dominant monkeys, in a descending scale, with the more dominant bullying the less dominant. The sexual behaviour was unusual, in that it seemed so indiscriminate: males mounted females or other males, and females mounted males and other females. And one day, when brooding on the problems of this simian Sodom, the answer burst on him—a perfect example of what Koestler calls 'the Eureka process': the sexual behaviour *was* dominance behaviour. The dominant monkeys mounted the less dominant ones, and the sex made no difference. Maslow concluded that Adler's psychology covered the facts more convincingly than Freud's. When he told Adler about his observations, Adler urged him to publish them. The paper, 'Individual Psychology and the Social Behaviour of Monkeys and Apes' is perhaps the most interesting of all these early papers,

and may be regarded as the logical first step in the development of Maslow's own psychology. There had been plenty of minute observation of the behaviour of apes—Kohler's classic *Mentality of Apes* had appeared as early as 1918—but very little on dominance, and still less on sex. In American universities, at any rate, sex was regarded with puritanical distaste, and a professor had been dismissed at Wisconsin not long before, for having sexual questionnaires. In spite of this atmosphere of disapproval, Maslow went ahead. He made some curious observations of the patterns of dominance. If two monkeys were left together, one established dominance, and if food was dropped down a pipe into the cage, it was the dominant monkey who got it. In groups of three, the dominant monkey bullies the next dominant one, who immediately takes it out on the least dominant of the group. If a highly dominant monkey is added to a group of two, the 'middle' monkey becomes far more pugnacious towards his inferior, even if he wasn't so before. Significantly, it is the middle animal who initiates the bullying of the subordinate animal; (parallels with human behaviour immediately suggest themselves.) When a fourth animal is added to the group, the behaviour is even more significant. The first three show a tendency to gang-up on the new arrival, unless he is exceptionally dominant. A normally non-dominant monkey (perhaps a young one) may lead an attack on the new arrival—even though the new arrival may have been previously the dominant one of the two. In the event of the newcomer being beaten-up by the rest of the group, he would then remain subordinate to all the monkeys in the group. In that case, Maslow observed, the previously inferior monkey would behave with extreme ferocity, 'as if making up for all the enforced and irksome

dominance to which she had been subjected for the entire length of the experiment'. Altogether, the monkeys seemed to exhibit traits that among human beings would be called 'fascist'. (Although it may be as well to remember that Maslow was observing zoo monkeys, who are inevitably frustrated; monkeys in their natural habitat are a great deal less preoccupied with sex and dominance.) Maslow concluded that, for monkeys at any rate, 'the Adlerian interpretation. . . is much closer to the facts' than Freud's, and suggested that the reason the primates—including man—do not go 'into season' like other animals is that dominance behaviour has gradually superimposed itself on behaviour determined by hormones. (This may explain the high level of homosexuality among men and apes; sexual genes and dominance genes have got mixed up, so to speak.) He also pointed out that homosexuality among monkeys is not to be regarded as a 'perversion' because it has nothing to do with the sex drive, and that what previous observers had thought to be prostitution among monkeys—a female allowing herself to be mounted in exchange for food or other goods—was again merely an example of dominance behaviour: she has made it clear that she is subordinate, and is then permitted to share the food.

The last section of this paper is the most significant for Maslow's future development. He observes that the higher one goes up the monkey scale, the less ferocity is involved in the dominance. Among baboons and monkeys, most of the sex occurs in the usual animal position, with the subordinate animal bent over. In the higher apes—chimpanzees, orang-outangs, gorillas—face-to-face sexual behaviour was more frequent. In chimpanzees, where dominance is of a friendlier type, expressed by

teasing rather than violence—the face-to-face position is frequent. Whereas in monkeys the dominant animal uses his position to tyranise, in chimpanzees the dominant animal tends to be a protector .

Maslow had stumbled into a field that fascinated him: what might be called the Nietzschean field—although he thought in terms of Adler rather than Nietzsche. It could be said that 1935 to 1940 were his Adlerian years. This does not imply that he ever turned his back on Adler: fundamentally, he remained an Adlerian; but a point came where he passed beyond the dominance theory, recognising that in 'the upper reaches of human nature', it turns into something else.

During these years, 1935-37, he was in a state of inspired excitement, feeling that he had now discovered what psychology is really about—it is not surprising that he felt no interest in Thorndike's researches on genes and culture. 'I worked my ass off—just working, working, working, day and night.' 'I had all these dreams about being famous, shaking the world and so on. And then just while I was writing up these papers for publication, Solly Zuckerman's book came out in England—*The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*—and my judgement was right; it *did* make a big splash—it was a famous book, terribly important one. The only thing I can say is my work was a hell of a lot better. Because he did his in that one situation, which has now proven to be quite artificial . . .' Maslow seems to have confused his dates slightly here; his work on monkeys was done between 1931 and 1935; Zuckerman's book appeared in 1932, three years before Maslow's important paper on Individual Psychology and monkeys. But no doubt Maslow is expressing the basic truth of the matter—that Zuckerman had beaten him past the

post, and that his own work, in many respects, went deeper than Zuckerman's; this must have been a frustrating feeling for a young psychologist hoping to shake the world. In any case, the knowledge of the value of his own work increased his self-confidence. 'I could hardly talk myself out of the fact that this was the best thing that had been done in that department, and that I was a bright young man.' And in 1969, he still felt that the full significance of his work had not yet been grasped. 'What these data reveal, I think is still not visible. . . for instance, to Bob Ardrey{37} or to the ones who've written about the naked ape and instinct and so on.'

The next major step came around 1936. He had evolved a new theory of evolution from his researches, with dominance playing the central role, rather than sexual selection (although this was never published). Inevitably, he began to speculate on how far there was a close correlation between sexuality and dominance in human beings. In spite of a certain amount of opposition from professors who may have suspected his motives,{38} he began a series of Kinsey-type interviews with college women (although, of course, Kinsey's first investigations were not made until 1938, possibly inspired by Maslow). He chose women rather than men because (a) men tended to boast, and otherwise distort their evidence, and (b) women proved to be capable of greater frankness than men, once they had made up their minds to take the plunge. Besides, 'the whole thing was more fun-illuminating for me, the nature of women, who were certainly, to a shy boy, still mysterious. ...' These results, published as *Dominance-feeling. Personality and Social Behaviour in Women* in the *Journal of Social Psychology* in 1939, and as *Self-esteem and Sexuality in Women* in the

same journal in 1942, are certainly among Maslow's most fascinating and original work. What he set out to do was to compare ratings for dominance with ratings for sexuality—the latter including promiscuity, lesbian experience, masturbation and sexual experimentalism (fellatio, etc.) His basic finding can be baldly stated: sexuality was directly related to dominance. Highly dominant women were more likely to masturbate, sleep with different men, have lesbian experience, and so on. There was a closer correlation between these things—promiscuity, masturbation, etc.—and dominance feeling than between these things and sex-drive. A medium-dominance or low-dominance woman might have a high rating for sex drive, but her sexual experience was usually limited. Low-dominance women (who were difficult to get into the study group) tended to think of sex as being mainly for child-bearing; one low-dominance woman who knew she could not bear children refused sex to her husband, even though she had a strong sex drive. Low-dominance women tend to think of sex as disgusting, or as an unfortunate necessity for producing children, to dislike nudity and to regard the sexual organs as ugly. (High-dominance women usually like seeing, touching and thinking about the penis, and regard it as beautiful.)

The choice of men follows similar patterns. High-dominance women like dominant males, and prefer unsentimental, even violent, lovemaking—to be swept off their feet rather than courted. She wishes to be forced into the subordinate role. One highly dominant woman (whom Maslow admitted to be his most neurotic subject), spent years hunting for a man of superior dominance and married him. Years later, she was as much in love with him as at first. 'She actually picks fights in which he becomes

violent and which usually end in virtual rape. These incidents provide her with her most exciting sexual experiences.

Medium-dominance women tend to be scared of highly dominant males, although some degree of dominance is preferred; they want a husband and father rather than a lover, a 'homey' man, adequate rather than outstanding. The low-dominance women tended to be shy and distrustful about men, while still wanting children; they were found to prefer low-dominance males, 'the gentle, timid, shy man who will adore at a distance for years before daring to speak.' While high-dominance women tend to be realists about sex, middle and low-dominance women want romance, poetry, dim lights and illusions. When these women are driven to promiscuity by high sex-drive, feelings of guilt are tremendous and may lead to thoughts of suicide.

The orgasm also seemed to be directly related to dominance. Here again, the findings are fascinating. One highly dominant nymphomaniac, who could have an orgasm merely by looking at a man, admitted to not having had orgasms with two lovers because they were weak. 'I just couldn't give in to them.' Another high-dominance woman who scorned her husband, tried not to have orgasms with him; when she had one—because her sex-drive was high—she concealed it from him.

The sexual behaviour of a highly dominant lesbian seemed entirely determined by dominance. She was a female Don Juan, seducing a string of girls, preferring girls who were taller than herself, and who were beautiful and feminine. She was initially attracted to girls who disliked her, or were aloof. 'She systematically, over a long period of time, gets them to tolerate holding hands, embracing,

kissing, etc. The climax comes at the moment when she first induces orgasm in her partner. 'At such times I get a feeling of smug power, and of great satisfaction.' Her own orgasms come much later in the history of the relationship and are definitely not the primary goal in the seduction. That is to say, once again, that homosexuality and dominance seem to be closely related. Maslow also observed in dominant males that the real satisfaction came in causing an orgasm rather than in having one, dominance being established by the partner's ecstasy and loss of control.

In medium and low-dominance women, the orgasm tended to depend upon a feeling of being loved, upon security. Medium-dominance women tended not to experience orgasm with less dominant husbands. In two cases, the husband had to be instructed in suitable dominance behaviour—probably throwing her on the bed—after which orgasm became possible.

In general, it seems women need to feel their position to be subordinate to the man's, to ensure sexual satisfaction. High-dominance women reported masturbation fantasies of being possessed by huge negroes, athletic men, even animals—the latter, as it were, imposing humiliation.

Some of Maslow's casual asides, not directly related to his theme, are of equal interest—for example, that among Jewish women, dominance tended to be high, but so did virginity. This was not a matter of religion—few of the subjects were religious—but probably of 'compensatory dominance' for belonging to a cultural sub-group. (I would imagine there is also a purely genetic factor here: the Jewish preoccupation with purity of race appears in the form of puritanism, sexual self-control.) Of equal interest

is the observation that although progressive education or sophisticated parents may instill a more frank and open attitude to sex, it did not seem to affect sexual behaviour much: i.e. it would seem that sexual behaviour is an inherent factor, dependent on place in the dominance hierarchy rather than training or education.

All this tended to increase Maslow's feeling that such matters are 'instinctoid' rather than learned reflexes, conditioned by training. What he was doing, in fact, was to move steadily away from behaviourism, with its assumption that the human being is a kind of machine that can be conditioned to think or behave in any given way, towards a view in which most human behaviour is determined by factors coming from 'inside', so to speak. This was a conclusion that had already been suggested by the totally different personalities of his two children. The view he was increasingly inclined to take was the 'holistic' one: that the human creature begins as a kind of acorn, with all the characteristics of the fully grown tree already inside it, so to speak.

But perhaps the most significant sentence in the whole paper on female sexuality occurs in the section on 'Security and Self-Esteem':

'Since our society tends to general insecurity, the average citizen may be expected to be fairly insecure. Wertheimer has pointed out that any discussion of dominance must be a discussion of insecure people, that is, of slightly sick people. Our data show this to be true. *Study of carefully selected psychologically secure individuals indicates clearly that their sexual lives are little determined by dominance-feeling*'. (My italics.)

And this was the core of the problem that, from now on, would dominate Maslow's thinking. He had rejected

the Freudian all-purpose sexual theory of neurosis in favour of Adler. Now Freud, as we have seen, regarded cultural activities as a sublimated form of sexuality, 'psychosexuality' (he might have said pseudo-sexuality), and when Jung protested that this view would lead to an annihilating view of culture, Freud replied: 'And that is just the curse of fate against which we are powerless to contend.' Adler was never such a severe reductionist as Freud, but the struggle for dominance—what might be called a sense of superiority—*does* occupy the central place in his thinking. Should one, then, regard the friendly teasing through which chimpanzees express dominance as a sublimated form of the aggressive urge? And is human culture psycho-aggressiveness? For Freud, neurosis is repressed sexuality, for Adler, repressed will-to-power. But did Adler's view of neurosis cover *all* the facts any better than Freud's did? What about the monkeys who solved problems for fun? Or, to get down to essentials, how about Maslow himself? Socially speaking, his dominance was in the medium bracket. Intellectually, it was high—very high indeed. He kept asking himself—even in his last years: 'If I was so timid and frightened and depressed and unhappy as a young man, how come I was able to have courage enough to stick my neck out so much and to be a revolutionary, and contradict everybody? One would think, to read my stuff, that I was a very courageous man, but not so.' And this problem was as obvious to him in 1942 as in 1969. And his intellectual honesty made him disinclined to accept the simple hypothesis that this was sublimated dominance. Besides, he had always noticed the way that he seemed to possess a kind of instinct for seeking out favourable conditions for his intellectual self-expression—ever since he had 'gravitated' to the Brooklyn

High School, the only good college preparatory school in Brooklyn. ('I bypassed all sorts of closer high schools, but in some blind way I just sought this place out.') This same instinct had worked throughout his career. According to any of the current psychologies, it was simply a misnomer to call it an 'instinct'. But if it wasn't an instinct, what was it? The problem, as he recognised later, was of 'criteria for judging needs to be instinctoid'.

By this time—late 1942—the book *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* had put Maslow on the map; it remained a standard textbook for years. And since it aimed at being a standard textbook, in the tradition of MacDougall's *Outline of Abnormal Psychology* (1926), it avoided any startling innovation (although the fact that it contains a chapter on *the normal person* can now be seen to be significant). The sex research had caused remarkably little stir, and the same was true for some absorbing work in 'anthropological psychology'—research into such questions as why Eskimoes stay in the north and appear to actually *prefer* difficult conditions. But in July, 1943, there appeared the first thoroughly and typically 'Maslovian' paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (in the *Psychological Review* for July), and its impact was immediate. It was the paper in which he expounded his theory of the 'hierarchy of needs'; it stated on the first page: 'Human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of prepotency. That is to say, the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more prepotent need. Man is a perpetually wanting animal. . .'

What Maslow states in this paper is the essence of his life work. First, there are basic needs. In order to be comprehensive, he starts back in the physiological needs, such as the salt content, sugar content, protein content of

the blood stream. These physiological needs amount to the need for food. A creature that has never had a full stomach is incapable of conceiving any other need—and conversely, is incapable of realising that the satisfaction of the need for food would not lead to a state of permanent bliss.

When hunger needs are satisfied, 'safety needs' now emerge: the need for freedom from pain or fear, the need for a regular routine that will give a sense of a predictable, orderly world. (And here we come back to Karen Horney, as Maslow points out that injustice or unfairness in the parents make the child feel unsafe.) Although adults can handle their fears better than children can, various safety needs persist into adulthood—the need for regularity of employment, protection from criminals, etc. Maslow points out that compulsive-obsessive neuroses are a result of the persistence of childish fears into adulthood; a woman who cannot bear a speck of dust in her house is a mild example of such a neurosis. The dust is not really a danger or even a nuisance, but the safety need remains at an exaggerated, childish level that demands compulsive regularity and order. Next on the list come love needs, which include the 'belongingness needs'. A person with a fair degree of security—let us say, with a stable place of abode and a regular income—now begins to feel keenly the need for friends, for a sweetheart or wife or children, for a place in his group. Maslow observes that it is the thwarting of these needs that is the chief cause of maladjustment in our relatively well-fed and well-housed society.

Here Maslow seems to be apologising for Freud—for after all, his diagnosis of sex as being at the root of neurosis is 90% accurate in the modern world. Even so,

The Ladder of Selves

COLIN WILSON

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The Search for Power Consciousness is a book outline by Wilson that has never before been published.

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Preface to The Ladder of Selves

by Chris Nelson

The following chapters are excerpted from Colin Wilson's book *Mysteries*, first published over twenty years ago and now out of print.(1) A sequel to Wilson's best-selling *The Occult, Mysteries* continues his examination of the paranormal, exploring subjects like magic, multiple personality, ESP, ancient legends, UFOs, psychology, and the nature of time. The work is encyclopedic in scope, surveying whole fields of knowledge and spanning mankind's history. But a central theme runs through it all, an idea that anyone familiar with Wilson's work will recognize immediately. To use one of Wilson's own aphorisms: man is like a grandfather clock driven by a watch spring. His potential is practically limitless, yet more often than not he either squanders his energy or simply never recognizes what he is capable of. This straightforward observation has led Wilson into just about every subject matter we human beings find interesting: sex, crime, psychology, philosophy, science, the supernatural, art, and even liquor in *A Book of Booze*. The reason for the wide-ranging applicability of his central ideas is simple: they represent a fundamental insight into the essential nature of mankind, of what we are and what drives us. More specifically, Wilson is a student of consciousness. In their essence his ideas concern man's psychology.

Since his first book, *The Outsider,* Wilson has been fascinated by what the American psychologist Abraham Maslow called the "peak experience". This is the moment when a flash of insight or a moment of intensity infuses us with a sense of well-being and provides a vantage point from which we become suddenly aware of our tremendous potential. The "Ladder of Selves" discussed in the following chapters is an image Wilson uses to conceptualize man's capacity to sink to depths of depression and rise to heights of awareness that defy everyday comprehension. Each rung of the ladder represents a different degree of intensity of consciousness. At the lower levels, consciousness is diffused and poorly focused. It is in this state that depression sets in. At the higher levels, man's consciousness operates with much greater efficiency, and perceptions are more profound, flavored with an awareness of the

richness and depth of life. Somewhere in the middle of the ladder, perhaps nearer to the bottom, man's everyday consciousness resides.

There is little point in detailing the ladder of selves concept further in this preface; the following chapters do this with the precision and clarity that mark all of Wilson's writing. But it is worth commenting briefly on the relationship between his ideas and those of the current psychological paradigm in order to underscore their relevance.

The concept of consciousness has taken a back seat in modern psychology. Since its inception as a field of study, psychology has struggled for acceptance as a science dealing in quantifiable data, with practical applications yielding positive results. And from the beginning it has been touch and go, with the field producing conceptual paradigms that have a core of illuminating truth, but which lack the exactitude of mathematical equations. No one can reasonably claim that Freud's theories of sexual repression are remotely similar to laws of nature; we cannot say that all men have oedipal complexes in the same way we say water always boils at 100˚ C. Nevertheless, as much as we may argue the flaws in his theories, Freud struck upon a general truth about the importance of subconscious motivations in human beings. There is nothing quantifiable about this recognition, but most people would agree it has provided us with immensely valuable insights into human nature.

But in their desperate scrabble for acceptance by a predominantly materialistic science, psychology and psychiatry have become increasingly fixated on *physiology* — and more specifically on chemical reactions in the brain as the source of the whole spectrum of characteristics that makes us human. One natural outcome of this materialistic fixation is the increase in prescription psychotropic drug use. There are drugs for depression (such as the popular Prozac), anxiety and panic attacks, social phobia and schizophrenia. And while there appears to be a relationship between consciousness and the balance of neurotransmitters in the brain, there are fundamental questions to be answered regarding the nature of this relationship.

For example, depression has been associated with low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin. A neurotransmitter is a kind of chemical messenger that bridges the synapses between neurons in the brain. Prozac, part of a family of drugs known as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), prevents serotonin from being reabsorbed too quickly by the brain, before it has time to make the connections it needs to make with other areas of the brain. For some people (but interestingly, not all), the drug alleviates feelings of depression.

But what is obvious from most everyone's personal experience is that depression often occurs as the result of an *outside* cause, such as the death of a loved one. In such cases, it is clear that if the experience of depression is expressed in the brain as a decrease in the availability of serotonin, then it is the *perception of loss* on the part of the affected individual that alters the chemical ratios in his brain. In other words, perception itself alters brain chemistry. (2) Consciousness is key in this equation, as it is in virtually every aspect of human experience. But it is far more difficult to quantify than the number of serotonin receptors in the brain, and so is paradoxically ignored when it should be the primary object of study.

An article in the journal *Science* entitled, "Can the Placebo Be the Cure?", highlights this problem.(3) In 1998, the American pharmaceutical company Merck announced its invention of an antidepressant medication called MK-869. Promising early trials indicated the drug would be a major medical and financial success. Yet despite this, within a few months the company scrapped its plans to release MK-869 as an antidepressant. The *Science* article suggests that the "placebo effect", an obstacle frequently encountered by researchers testing the efficacy of psychotropic medications, was to blame. In Merck's case, what happened was that further studies indicated depressed patients given a placebo — the equivalent of a "sugar pill" with no medical effect — improved almost as much as those on MK-869. The results were significant enough to fatally undermine confidence in the new drug.

Researchers Irving Kirsch and Guy Sapirstein suggest that even "proven" antidepressants may owe at least part of their efficacy to the placebo effect.(3,4) But what exactly is the "placebo effect"? This is a question of central importance, for its *result* is an

improvement in physical and mental condition without the aid of materialistic intervention, even in the case of clearly physiological diseases like cancer.(5) What seems clear is that the placebo effect is an artifact of consciousness, an instance in which a patient's *belief* affects his physical well-being. As such it provides us with a glimpse of the hidden powers of the mind.

Yet, as one respondent to the *Science* article wrote: "The history of medicine is strewn with examples of the ameliorative and curative effects of suggestion, belief, and expectations, as punctuated by such familiar figures as Anton Mesmer in the late 1700s. It is difficult to find such a reliable phenomenon that has lacked scientific attention."(6) The reason for this is that our materialistic science experiences acute unease when confronted with consciousness, which presents at least the appearance of having non-material qualities. As mentioned earlier, it is much easier to study interactions between known chemical compounds (for example, Prozac and serotonin) than it is to isolate consciousness and study its effects on the material world. Parapsychology has begun to explore this relationship, and quantum physics has acknowledged that it exists. Ironically, psychology, created expressly to study consciousness, has shied away from the challenge.

This is why the work of Colin Wilson is more important than ever. The broad scope of books like *Mysteries* provides a far more comprehensive tableau of human experience from which to form theories than the more limited subject matter of modern science. (And it is arguable that no psychological theory — no *scientific* theory — will be complete until it incorporates the evidence for the paranormal.) But what further distinguishes Wilson's work from the strictly materialistic approach is his emphasis on consciousness itself, on the individual as an active, integral part of his own experience. The philosopher Edmund Husserl's idea of the intentionality of consciousness, which Wilson discusses in the following chapters, demonstrates that man's mind does not have to be passive. In fact, the mind is active whether we're consciously directing it or not. In a state of misery, the mind is still actively describing the world, projecting all sorts of philosophical assumptions and selectively editing perceptions. The fallacy is that we feel at the mercy of these perceptions. The truth is that

perception is much more pliable, much more *suggestible* than we are prone to believe, and that if it is not taken in hand by a healthy consciousness it is just as liable to go its own way and focus exclusively on the misery in the world.

This understanding of the mechanisms of consciousness is absolutely essential for any treatment of mental illness, and it is precisely what is missing from modern psychology.

Wilson's work is excellent at giving the conscious mind a set of instructions and a perspective from which to see the world — even in times of misery and dejection. As the following chapters illustrate, Wilson has used his own methods on himself to good effect. And in the same vein, he writes in the final chapter of *Mysteries:*

"Edmund Husserl was the first major philosopher to realise that concepts can enslave us only as long as we are unaware of their existence. As soon as the philosopher has identified and 'stained' them, as a biologist stains germs, they become harmless. Moreover, he recognised that the ability to be enslaved by concepts is a proof of the tremendous creativity of the human mind. And if we can once grasp that creativity, we can use our concepts to set us free." (7)

In the following chapters Wilson provides us with the concepts that are key to this process of liberation.

Endnotes for Preface To Ladder of Selves

1. Wilson, Colin. *Mysteries*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1978.

2. It seems possible that at a certain point, a "vicious circle" effect takes hold, with brain chemistry reinforcing the experience of depression, thereby making it far more difficult to shake off the depression. Herein lies at least one possible rationale for using a drug to escape the depression.

3. Enserink, Martin. Can the placebo be the cure? Science 1999;284 April 9: 238-240.

4. Kirsch, I, Sapirstein, G. Listening to Prozac but hearing placebo: a meta-analysis of antidepressant medication. Prevention & Treatment, 1998, Volume 1, Article 0002a, June 26, 1998.
5. See, e.g., Zajicek, G. The placebo effect is the healing force of nature. The Cancer J. 1995;8 (2):44-45.

6. Kazdin, Alan E. Letter to Editor. *Science*; 284:1999 May 7: 913.

7. *Mysteries*, p.621

The Ladder of Selves

By Colin Wilson

At the time when I was still collecting materials for this book, I had a nasty but curiously fascinating experience: a series of attacks of 'panic anxiety' that brought me close to nervous breakdown. What surprised me most was that I was not depressed or worried at the time. I was working hard, and therefore under a certain amount of strain, but I seemed to be taking it all in my stride. For the past eighteen months I had been involved on the editorial board of a kind of encyclopedia of crime; but as every meeting ended in disagreement, it began to look as if the whole project would have to be abandoned. Then, at short notice, the publisher decided to go ahead. Suddenly, everything had to be completed in a few months; and I, as co-ordinator, was asked to produce around a hundred articles — 3,000 words each — at a rate of seven a week. I began to work at the typewriter for eight or nine hours every day and tried to unwind in the evenings with a bottle of wine and a pile of gramophone records.

One day, a couple of journalists came to interview me. In fact, they did most of the talking. They were young and enthusiastic, with a tendency to interrupt one another. When they left, at about two in the morning, my eyes were glazed with boredom, and I felt as if I'd been deafened with salvos of cannon fire. This, I later realised, was the trouble. When you become bored, you 'let go'; you sink into a kind of mental torpor, allowing your inner-pressure to leak away as if you were a punctured tyre. The next day they came back for another session with the tape recorder. When they left I felt too dull to do any work; instead I took the opportunity to perform a number of routine household chores.

That night, about 4 a.m., I woke up feeling unrested and lay there thinking about all the articles I still had to write, and the books I ought to be writing instead. Anxiety hormones began to trickle into my bloodstream, and my heartbeat accelerated. I actually considered going to my workroom and starting another article — then realised that if I did *that*, I'd really be letting things get on top of me. Lying there, with nothing else to think about, I felt my energies

churning like a car being accelerated when the engine is in neutral. It was rather like feeling physically sick, except it was the emotions that were in revolt. When it was clear that I was not going to improve the situation by ignoring it, I tried making a frontal assault and suppressing the panic feeling by sheer will power. This proved to be a mistake. My face became hot, and I felt a dangerous tightness across the chest, while my heartbeat increased to a point that terrified me. I got up, went to the kitchen and poured myself a glass of orange juice. Then I sat down and tried to soothe myself as I might try to calm a frightened horse. Gradually, I got myself under control and went back to bed. As soon as I was in the dark, the process started again: rising panic, accelerating heartbeat, the feeling of being trapped. This time I got up and went into the sitting-room. I was inclined to wonder if I was having a heart attack. Quite clearly, *something* had gone wrong. The panic kept rising like vomit; the calm, sane part of me kept saying that it was absurd, some minor physical problem that would resolve itself within twenty-four hours. Like nausea, it came in waves, and between each wave there was a brief feeling of calm and relief.

The attack differed from nausea in that there was no point in giving way to it and making myself sick. This panic caused energy to disappear, like milk boiling over in a saucepan. There was a vicious-circle effect; the anxiety produced panic, the panic produced further anxiety, so the original fear was compounded by a fear *of* fear. In this state, it seemed that any move I made to counter the fear could be negated by more fear. In theory, the fear could overrule every attempt I made to overrule it. Like a forest fire, it had to be somehow contained before it destroyed large areas of my inner-being.

I *had* experienced something of the sort in my teens, but without this sense of physical danger. One day at school, a group of us had been discussing where space ended, and I was suddenly shocked to realise that the question seemed to be *unanswerable*. It felt like a betrayal. It suddenly struck me that a child's world is based on the feeling that 'Everything is OK.' Crises arise, apparently threatening your existence; then they're behind you, in the past, and you've survived. Or you wake up from a nightmare, and feel relieved to realize that the world is really a decent, stable sort of place. The universe *looks* baffling, but somebody, somewhere, knows all the

answers... Now it struck me that grown-ups are, in this respect, no better than children; they are surrounded by uncertainty and insecurity, but they go on living because that's all there is to do.

For years after that insight, I had been oppressed by a sense of some terrible, fundamental bad news, deeper than any social or human problem. It would come back with a sudden shock when life seemed secure and pleasant — for example, on a warm summer afternoon when I saw a ewe feeding her lambs, looking a picture of motherly solicitude, unaware that both she and her lambs were destined for someone's oven.

Now, as I sat in the armchair and tried to repress the panic, I realised that it was important *not* to start brooding on these fundamentals — our total ignorance, our lack of the smallest shred of certainty about who we are and why we are here. That way, I realised, lay insanity, a fall into a kind of mental Black Hole.

I suppose that what seemed most ironical was that I had always felt that I understood the cause of mental illness. A couple of years before I had written a book called *New Pathways in Psychology* in which I had argued that mental illness is basically caused by the collapse of the will. When you are making an effort, your will re-charges your vital powers as a car re-charges its battery when you drive it. If you cease to will, the battery goes flat, and life appears to be futile and absurd. To emerge from this state, all that is necessary is to maintain *any* kind of purposeful activity — even without much conviction — and the batteries will slowly become re-charged. That is what I had said. And now, struggling with the panic, all the certainty had vanished. Instead I found myself thinking of my novel *The Mind Parasites*, in which I had suggested that there are creatures that live in the depths of our subconscious minds, draining our vitality like leeches. That seemed altogether closer to what I was now experiencing.

Finally, I felt sufficiently calm — and cold — to go back to bed. I lay there, staring at the grey square of window to keep my mind from turning inward on itself; some automatic resistance seemed to have awakened in me, and I suspected that the daylight would make the whole thing seem as unimportant as a bad dream. In fact, I woke up feeling low and exhausted, and the 'bad-news' feeling persisted

at the back of my mind as I worked. But the effort of writing another article made me feel better. In the evening I felt drained, and the fear began to return. I suspected myself of wanting to ignore something frightening and felt myself sinking into depression as into a swamp. I would make an effort, rouse myself to mental activity, and suddenly feel better. Then something on television or in what I was reading, would 'remind' me of the fear; there was a kind of inner jerk, like a car slipping out of gear, and the panic was back.

The articles still had to be written; in fact, a few days later, the editor rang me to ask if I could produce ten during the next week instead of the usual seven. An American backer was waving his chequebook and demanding speed. Since I had decided against the temptation to back out of the project, I stepped up my production to an article and a half a day. I was treating myself like a man with snake-bite, forcing myself to keep walking. Gradually, I was learning the tricks of this strange war against myself. It was rather like steering a glider. An unexpected flash of fear could send me into a nose dive; a mental effort could turn the nose upward again; sometimes this could happen a dozen times in an hour, until continued vigilance produced a feeling of inner-strength, even a kind of exhilaration. It was likely to be worst when I let myself get over-tired. Three months later, on a night-sleeper from London, I woke up with a shock, and the panic was so overpowering that I was afraid I might suffer cardiac arrest. At one point, I seriously considered getting off the train at the next stop and walking — no matter where. Then, in one of the periodic ebbs of panic, I forced myself to repeat a process I had taught myself in previous attacks; to reach inside myself to try to untie the mental knots. While I was doing this, it struck me that if I could soothe myself from panic into 'normality', then surely there was no reason why I shouldn't soothe myself *beyond* this point, into a still deeper state of calm. As I made the effort to relax more and more deeply, I felt the inner turmoil gradually subside, until the spasms ceased; then I pressed on, breathing deeply, inducing still greater relaxation. At the same time, I told myself that I was sick of being bullied by these stupid attacks, and that when I got home the next day I was going to do a perfectly normal day's work. My breathing became shallow and almost ceased. Suddenly, it was as if a boat had been lifted off a sandbank by the tide; I felt a kind of inner jerk and floated into a state of deep quiescence. When I though about this later, it struck me that I had

achieved a state that is one of the basic aims of yoga: Rilke's 'stillness like the heart of a rose'.

Slowly, I began to understand the basic mechanism of the attacks. They began with a fatigue that quickly turned into a general feeling of *mistrust* of life, a loss of our usual feeling that all is (more or less) well. Then the whole thing was compounded by the old problem of self-consciousness. If you think about itching, you begin to itch. If you brood on a feeling of sickness, you feel sicker. Consciousness directed back on itself produces the 'amplification effect' which is the basis of all neurosis (i.e. the harder a stutterer tries not to stutter, the worse he becomes). If I woke in the middle of the night and tried *not* to feel tense, my heartbeat would accelerate and the panic would begin. I had to develop the trick of turning my attention to some everyday problem, as if saying to myself, 'Ah yes, how interesting'. Once I had learned to do this, the attacks became easier to avert. It was a great comfort to me when a friend who had been through the same kind of thing told me that, even without treatment, the condition cures itself after eighteen months.

When I tried to think out the basic reasons for the panic, I had to acknowledge that my trouble was a certain 'childishness.' When a child is pushed beyond a certain limit of fatigue or tension, its will surrenders. Some instinctive sense of fair-play is outraged, and it declines to make any further effort. An adult may also feel like surrendering to a problem, but common sense and stubbornness force the will to further effort. As an obsessive worker, I am accustomed to drive myself hard. Experience has taught me that when I get over-tired, the quickest way to recovery is often to drive myself on until I get 'second wind.' But to do this effectively, you need the full support of your subconscious mind, your deep sense of inner-purpose and meaning. In this case, I was trying to push myself beyond my normal limits — by writing the equivalent of a full-length book every three weeks — and some childish element in my subconscious had gone on strike. It was sitting with folded arms and a sullen expression, declining to do its proper work of re-charging my vital batteries. And so, when I passed a certain point of fatigue, I would discover that there was no more energy to call on. It was like descending a ladder and discovering that the last half dozen rungs are missing. At which point I would force my conscious will to interfere; a thing it is reluctant to do, since the subconscious

usually knows best. I had to tell myself that I was being bloody stupid; that in my younger days, I worked far harder as a navvy or machine operator than I have ever worked as a writer, and that writing for a living has made me lazy and spoilt.

The panic, then, was caused by a lower level of my being, an incompetent and childish 'me'. As long as I identified with this 'me', I was in danger. But the rising tension could always be countered by *waking myself up fully* and calling upon a more purposive 'me.' It was like a school mistress walking into a room full of squabbling children and clapping her hands. The chaos would subside instantly, to be succeeded by a sheepish silence. I came to label this 'the schoolmistress effect.'

I had always known that Gurdjieff was right when he said that we contain dozens of 'I's'. The aim of his method is to cause some of these 'I's' to fuse together, like fragments of broken glass subjected to intense heat. As it is, consciousness passes from one to the other of our 'I's' like the ball in a Rugby game. Under these conditions, no continuity is possible, and we are at the mercy of every negative emotion.

The schoolmistress effect made me recognise a further fact about these multiple 'I's' — that they exist inside me not only on the 'Rugby field', or horizontal plane but also at different *levels*, like a ladder. All forms of purposive activity evoke a higher 'I'. William James pointed out that a musician might play his instrument with a certain technical virtuosity for years and then one day enter so thoroughly into the spirit of the music that it is as if the music is playing *him*; he reaches a kind of effortless perfection. A higher and more efficient 'I' takes over. Gurdjieff's 'work' is based on the same recognition. His pupils were made to drive beyond their normal limits until the moments of 'effortless perfection' became everyday occurrences.

J. G. Bennett gives an interesting example in his autobiography *Witness*. He was staying at Gurdjieff's Fontainebleau Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, and Gurdjieff himself was in charge of the 'exercises', based on Dervish dances. The aim of these exercises is to arouse man to a higher degree of alertness, to enable him to gain total control of his 'moving centre'; they involve

an incredibly complicated series of movements — sometimes doing quite different things with the feet, the hands and the head. (To get an idea of the problem involved, try the old trick of rubbing your stomach in a circular motion with one hand and patting yourself on the head with the other.) Bennett was suffering from dysentery and feeling physically exhausted. One day, he found himself shaking with fever. ‘Just as I was saying to myself: “I will stay in bed today,” I felt my body rising. I dressed and went to work as usual, but this time with a queer sense of being held together by a superior Will that was not my own.’ In spite of extreme exhaustion, he forced himself to join in a new and particularly difficult series of exercises. They were so complicated that the other students dropped out one by one; Bennett felt that Gurdjieff was willing him to go on, even if it killed him. And then: ‘Suddenly, I was filled with an influx of an immense power. My body seemed to have turned into light. I could not feel its presence in the usual ways. There was no effort, no pain, no weariness, not even any sense of weight.’

The exercises were over, and the others went off for tea. Bennett went into the garden and began to dig.

"I felt the need to test the power that had entered me, and I began to dig in the fierce afternoon heat for more than an hour at a rate that I ordinarily could not sustain for two minutes. I felt no fatigue, and no sense of effort. My weak, rebellious, suffering body had become strong and obedient. The diarrhoea had ceased and I no longer felt the gnawing abdominal pains that had been with me for days. Moreover, I experienced a clarity of thought that I had only known involuntarily and at rare moments, but which was now at my command. I returned in thought to the Grand Rue de Pera and discovered that I could be aware of the fifth dimension. The phrase ‘in my mind’s eye’ took on a new meaning as I ‘saw’ the eternal pattern of each thing I looked at; the trees, the plants, the water flowing in the canal and even the spade, and lastly my own body. I recognised the changing relationship between ‘myself’ and ‘my pattern’. As my state of consciousness changed, ‘I’ and my ‘pattern’ grew closer together or separated and lost touch. Time and eternity were the conditions of our experience, and the Harmonious Development of Man, towards which Gurdjieff was leading us, was the secret of true freedom. I remember saying aloud: ‘Now I see

why God hides Himself from us.' But even now I cannot recall the intuition behind this exclamation."

This vision of the 'eternal pattern' behind trees and plants brings to mind Boehme's mystical experience when he walked in the field and saw 'the signature of all things', as if he could see the sap rising in the trees and plants. But Bennett went one stage farther still. He went for a walk in the forest and met Gurdjieff; Gurdjieff told him:

"The real complete transformation of Being, that is indispensable for a man who wishes to fulfill the purpose of his existence, requires a very much greater concentration of Higher Emotional Energy than that which comes to him by nature. There are some people in the world, but they are very rare, who are connected to a Great Reservoir or Accumulator of this energy. This Reservoir has no limits. Those who can draw upon it can be a means of helping others. Suppose a man needs a hundred units of this energy for his own transformation, but he has only ten units and cannot make more for himself. He is helpless. But with the help of someone who can draw upon the Great Accumulator, he can borrow ninety more. Then his work can be effective."

Farther in the forest, Bennett recalled a lecture of Gurdjieff's leading disciple, Ouspensky.

"He had spoken about the very narrow limits within which we can control our own functions and added: 'It is easy to verify that we have no control over our emotions. Some people imagine that they can be angry or pleased as they will, but anyone can verify that he cannot be astonished at will.' As I recalled these words I said to myself: 'I will be astonished.' Instantly, I was overwhelmed with amazement, not only at my own state, but at everything I looked at or thought of. Each tree was so uniquely itself that I felt I could walk in the forest forever and never cease from wonderment. The thought of 'fear' came to me. At once I was shaking with terror. Unnamed horrors were menacing me on every side. I thought of 'joy', and felt that my heart would burst from rapture. the word 'love' came to me, and I was pervaded with such fine shades of tenderness and compassion that I saw that I had not the remotest idea of the depth and range of love. Love was everywhere and in

everything. It was infinitely adaptable to every shade of need. After a time, it became too much for me; it seemed that if I plunged any more deeply into the mystery of love, I would cease to exist. I wanted to be free from this power to feel whatever I chose, and at once it left me."

Bennett's experience is a particularly striking example of what, in *The Occult*, I have called 'Faculty X'. When we say we *know* something to be true, we are lying. 'Ten people died last night in an air crash.' 'Yes, I know.' We *don't* know. The rescuers trying to free the bodies from the burning wreckage knew. For the rest of us, this knowledge is a poor carbon copy. And how can I claim to 'know' that Mozart wrote the Jupiter symphony? I cannot even grasp that Mozart really existed. If I walk into a room in Salzburg in which Mozart actually played, I might, if I were in the right mood, come a little closer to grasping that he actually lived. But I would still be a long way from 'knowing' it.

There are two ways in which I might 'know' that Mozart existed. I might sit in a room where he had played and deliberately induce a mood of deep calm, perhaps by some form of 'transcendental mediation'. *Then* I could grasp it, for I would have slowed my sense down, arrested their usual frantic forward rush. Or I might grasp it in a sudden flash of intuition, as I run my fingers over the keyboard he actually touched. To do this requires intense concentration; it is the mental equivalent of leaping a six-foot fence. And there is a third method, rather less satisfactory than those two, yet also less difficult. I might immerse myself in Mozart's music, read books about his life, study his letters. Art has the power of inducing a degree of Faculty X. This is why human beings invented it. As we immerse ourselves in some composer's creative world, those inner 'leaks' that drain so much of our energy gradually close up, and our inner-pressure rises. We experience the 'magic carpet' effect, floating up above our own lives, seeing human existence as a panorama spread out below. The main problem with this kind of consciousness is that it makes it hard to come back to earth, and we find everyday reality futile and disgusting. Undiluted Faculty X has the reverse effect; it strengthens our power to cope with everyday reality by raising our inner-pressure.

Gurdjieff clearly possessed some curious ability to arouse hidden powers in other people. I have quoted elsewhere the episode in which Ouspensky describes how Gurdjieff began to communicate telepathically with him in Finland. (1) There can be no doubt that Gurdjieff had achieved some degree of control over his Faculty X. Yet this control seems to have been only partial. This becomes plain from an anecdote in *Gurdjieff Remembered* by Fritz Peters, who knew Gurdjieff from boyhood. During the war, Peters was an American GI, and in 1945 he was experiencing severe strain and depression. In Paris, he called on Gurdjieff in a state verging on nervous breakdown. Gurdjieff persuaded him to lie down, but after a few minutes Peters went to look for Gurdjieff in the kitchen. Gurdjieff refused to give him aspirin, but began to make coffee.

""He then walked across the small room to stand in front of the refrigerator and watch me. I could not take my eyes off him and realised that he looked incredibly weary — I have never seen anyone look so tired. I remember being slumped over the table, sipping at my coffee, when I began to feel a strange uprising of energy within myself — I stared at him, automatically straightened up, and it was as if a violent electric blue light emanated from him and entered into me. As this happened, I could feel the tiredness drain out of me, but at the same moment his body slumped and his face looked grey as if he was being drained of life. I looked at him, amazed, and when he saw me sitting erect, smiling and full of energy, he said quickly: 'You all right now — watch food on stove — I must go...' "

He was gone for perhaps fifteen minutes while I watched the food, feeling blank and amazed because I had never felt any better in my life. I was convinced then — and am now — that he knew how to transfer energy from himself to others; I was also convinced that it could only be done at great cost to himself.

It also became obvious within the next few minutes that he knew how to renew his own energy quickly, for I was equally amazed when he returned to the kitchen to see the change in him; he looked like a young man again, alert, smiling, sly and full of good spirits. He said that this was a very fortunate meeting, and that while I had forced him to make an almost impossible effort, it had been — as I had witnessed — a very good thing for both of us.

Gurdjieff's whole 'method' depends on forcing people to make unusual efforts, to release their 'vital reserves'. The effort of helping Peters apparently *reminded* Gurdjieff of something he had partly forgotten — how to call upon his own vital reserves. After his efforts to help Peters he looked exhausted: 'I have never seen anyone look so tired.' Being forced to help Peters awakened his own vital energies. So it would seem that Gurdjieff — in spite of the tremendous vitality that impressed everyone who met him — was not in permanent and habitual control of his own 'strange powers'.

It seems clear that, as Peters believed, Gurdjieff knew the secret of transmitting his energy directly to other people. Many 'healers' seem to possess this ability. There is a well-authenticated story concerning the 'monk' Rasputin and the Tsarina's friend Anna Vyrubova. In January 1915, Anna Vyrubova was involved in a railway accident; her head was trapped under an iron girder and her legs badly crushed; in hospital, the doctor declared that there was no hope for her life. Rasputin heard of the accident twenty-four hours later — he was in disgrace at the time — and rushed to the hospital. Ignoring the Tsar and Tsarina, who were by the bedside, he went over to the unconscious woman and took her hands. 'Annushka, look at me.' Her eyes opened and she said: 'Griogry, thank God.' Rasputin held her hands ad stared intently into her eyes, concentrating hard. When he turned to the Tsar and Tsarina, his face looked drained and exhausted. 'She will live, but she will always be a cripple.' As he left the room, he collapsed in a faint. But Anna Vyrubova's recovery began from this moment.

The question we have raised here is of central importance in the life of every human being: the question of how to gain access to our 'vital reserves'. The tensions of modern life mean that most of us suffer from a constriction in the pipeline that carries our vital energy supply. My experiences of panic attack made me aware that it can become a matter of life and death. The panic tends to feed on itself, and I was like the driver of a car whose accelerator has jammed at top speed. In this condition I was aware of the frightening possibility of hypertension leading to 'exhaust status' and cardiac arrest. As I learned the basic tricks of controlling the attacks, I also gained a certain insight into the problem of vital reserves.

One of our highest human attributes is our power of concentration. But it involves a major disadvantage. When I concentrate on something, I *ignore* everything else in the universe. I lock myself into a kind of prison. If I stay in this prison too long, I begin to suffocate. This is what happens when we overwork or become obsessed by some trivial worry. We forget the universe that exists outside us until it becomes only a distant memory. Even when the task is finished, we often forget to re-establish contact and open the windows. The inner watch spring can get so overwound that we become permanently blind and deaf.

This is one of the worst habits we have developed in the course of our evolution. There is a parable of two Zen monks who encounter a girl waiting at a ford; one of them picks her up and carries her across the river, then sets her down on the farther bank. Ten miles farther on, the other monk bursts out: 'How could you do that? You know we're not allowed to touch women.' 'Put her down,' says his companion, 'You're still carrying her.' Most human beings carry a dozen invisible burdens.

The tendency is dangerous because our mental health depends on the 'meaning' that comes from the world around us. Meaning is something that walks in through the senses on a spring morning, or when you arrive at the seaside and hear the cry of the seagulls. All obsession cuts us off from meaning. My panic attacks began when I had overwound the watch spring and lost the trick of unwinding it. I was like a man slowly suffocating to death and, what is more, suffering because I was gripping my own windpipe.

It is important to realise that this throttling effect is quite automatic. It is the result of an aspect of the mind that I have called 'the robot', that unconscious servant who performs all the automatic tasks of everyday life. The 'robot' is now typing this page for me, while the 'real me' does the thinking. When I am feeling energetic and cheerful, the robot stays in the background, and I walk around with my senses wide awake. As I get tired, the robot takes over more and more of my functions, and the reality around me becomes less and less real. If I become nervously exhausted, the robot takes over completely and life becomes a permanent unreality. If, in this state, I am subjected to further pressures instead of being allowed

to unwind, anxiety escalates into panic. It is the robot whose accelerator is jammed in the top-speed position.

I have always been fascinated by the way that shock or crisis can release us from the ‘suffocation’, bursting open the locked windows and often producing an almost mystical vision of meaning; my first book, *The Outsider*, discussed many such cases. There was, for example, the experience of Nietzsche on a hill called Leutsch; he describes it in a letter to his friend von Gersdorff:

"Yesterday an oppressive storm hung over the sky and I hurried to the top of a nearby hill... At the summit I found a hut, where a man was killing a kid, while his son watched him. The storm broke with tremendous force, gusting and hailing, and I had an indescribable sense of well-being and zest, and realised that we actually understood nature only when we must fly to her to escape our cares and afflictions... Lightning and tempests are different worlds, free powers, without morality. Pure will, without the confusion of intellect — how happy, how free!"

Even more significant is the experience of the modern Hindu saint Ramakrishna. He describes his first mystical ecstasy:

"I was suffering from excruciating pain because I had not been blessed with a vision of the Divine Mother... life did not seem worth living. Then my eyes fell on the sword that was kept in the Mother’s temple. Determined to put an end to my life, I jumped up and seized it, when suddenly the Mother revealed herself to me... the buildings... the temple and all vanished, leaving no trace; instead there was a limitless, infinite shining ocean of consciousness or spirit. As far as the eye could see, its billows were rushing at me from all sides... I was panting for breath. I was caught in the billows and fell down senseless."

From this time onward, the mere name of the Divine Mother could send Ramakrishna into *samadhi*, a trance of ecstasy.

In both these cases, the release was preceded by a sense of oppression and narrowness, the ‘overwound watch spring’ effect. Their senses were closed, so that both were suffering from ‘meaning starvation’. Human beings accept lack of meaning with

stolid fatalism, as an animal accepts illness and pain. So the release comes like a thunderclap, like a sudden reprieve from death, bringing a sense of overwhelming joy and gratitude, and the recognition that meaning is always there. It is we who close our senses to it.

Once a man has experienced this revelation, he can never wholly forget it. He may still be subject to moods of fatigue and depression; but always, at the back of his mind, there is the memory of a paradoxical truth: *that men are far stronger than they suspect*. Their energies seem limited, their powers circumscribed, only because in some strange, unconscious way, they set the limits themselves.

As my own energies became more constricted by the panic attacks, I had to learn to become conscious of these mechanisms. I was particularly intrigued by the 'schoolmistress effect'. The 'schoolmistress' seemed to be a higher level of my being, which became operative when I shook off my panic and forced myself into a state of vigilance and wakefulness. It reminded me of the experience of an academic friend who was subject to moods of depression and self-doubt. One summer holiday, he came to see us looking completely transformed; he had lost weight and radiated vitality. I asked him what had happened. He explained that his doctor had ordered him to lose weight and the thought had filled him with a sense of defeat. However, he tried eating less and walking to the university, and to his astonishment found it less difficult than he had expected. As the weight melted away his optimism increased; he began to feel that *all* problems could be solved with a little common sense and determination. He looked back on his earlier self with pitying condescension. A 'higher level' had taken control, and he felt it to be realer and truer than the old self.

Obviously Ramakrishna's attempt at suicide had produced a more powerful version of the 'schoolmistress effect' and raised him to a higher level still. On the other hand, boredom and lack of purpose tend to produce the opposite effect: surrender to a conviction of weakness and general unworthiness. (As all sociologists know, this condition incubates crime.) If we revert to the image of a whole series of 'selves', arranged like the rungs of a ladder, we may say

Three: What is Cosmic Consciousness?

In 1901, a British doctor named Richard Maurice Bucke published one of the classics of mysticism, *Cosmic Consciousness.* In 1873, Bucke (who was a close friend of Whitman) climbed into a hansom cab to drive home after a long evening with friends, reading Wordsworth, Shelley and Whitman. In a mood of deep serenity and insight, he suddenly found himself surrounded by a 'flame coloured cloud', which made him think for a moment that some building was on fire. Then he realised the flame was inside himself, and experienced a lightning flash of 'illumination', of the 'Brahmic splendour' of the universe. In his book, he argues that animals possess 'mere' consciousness, while only man possesses self-consciousness. But there is another form of consciousness, as far above that of self-consciousness as self-consciousness is above the ordinary consciousness of animals. His book studies dozens of examples of Cosmic consciousness, from the Buddha to Whitman.

But Bucke couldn't actually define cosmic consciousness in any meaningful way. Let's see if we can do better.

William James quoted Bucke in his *Varieties of Religious Experience.* But James himself has an excellent essay called 'A Suggestion about Mysticism' which hits the nail on the head. James suggests that mystical experience is not different *in kind* from ordinary consciousness, but is merely an extension of ordinary consciousness, and that even alcohol can produce a mild but valid mystical experience. He gives three of his own experiences, of which this is the most significant. 'In one instance I was engaged in conversation, but I doubt if my interlocutor noticed my abstraction. What happened each time was that I seemed all at once to be reminded of a past experience, and this reminiscence, ere I could conceive or name it distinctly, developed into something further that belonged with it, this in turn into something further still, *leaving me amazed at the sudden vision of increasing ranges of distant fact* of which I would give no articulate account.' (My italics.) He goes on to say that his 'vision' increased so fast that words could not possibly keep up with it.

Note also that he does not speak of seeing some distant ‘mystical’ vision, but of ranges of distant fact.

You could draw the lesson of James’s experience by saying that we think of ‘consciousness’ as a perception of individual things — that book, that teacup, etc. In fact, when we are bored, we seem to be *stuck* among objects like a fly on fly paper. (Sartre calls this ‘nausea’.) But James’s comments offer a new insight: that consciousness is, by its very nature, *relational,* like a spider’s web.

In ‘normal consciousness’, it is as if we are aware of ourselves in the centre of the web, and a few strands stretching around us, connecting us to objects. But when we are happy and excited — for example, setting out on holiday — our excitement seems to cause vibrations to spread down the web, and we get this feeling of connectedness. In moments of great illumination mystics feel that everything in the universe is connected to us by invisible threads.

Now since this book is as much about myself as about other people, let me add a personal anecdote. A few years ago I had spent the night at Dartington school after lecturing, but made the mistake of staying up too late discussing ideas, so that when I went to bed I didn’t sleep a wink. Finally, at about 5.a.m, I decided that I may as well sneak down to my car and drive home to Cornwall. But when I turned the key, the engine turned over very sluggishly, and went slower and slower, making me realise that a new battery I had recently purchased was a dud. I thought: Oh well, I’ll just have to sneak back indoors, try and doze until 8 o’clock, have breakfast, then persuade someone to drive me to the nearest garage to buy a battery... But first, I decided to sit there for a quarter of an hour, allowing the battery to get its breath back, then try again. To my delight, this time the engine 'caught', and with immense relief, I drove away.

Now I noticed that this relief caused a kind of mini-cosmic-consciousness — that is, as the dawn brightened, everything seemed unutterably fascinating, and my head buzzed with flashes of insight that connected to other insights, and gave me a constant sense of 'seeing further. ' I was seething with ideas and insights.

I realised that if the engine had started with the first turn of the key, I would have driven off, yawning and wondering how long it would take me to get home, *and not thinking beyond this.* I.e. I would have remained in 'worm's eye consciousness', a kind of tunnel vision. As it was, the threatened inconvenience *woke me up* to wider prospects and gave me a form of bird's eye consciousness.

The lesson was quite clear. The main reason we fail to achieve 'bird's eye consciousness' most of the time is that we keep our eyes *lowered* to immediate problems. We need to *remember* to try and raise them. This is obviously a point of major importance. Why did Maslow's students keep on having PEs once they began discussing them with one another? Because discussing these PEs made the students raise their eyes beyond our usual worm's eye view.

Perhaps the most important single discussion of'cosmic consciousness' ever written is a chapter in Ouspensky's *New Model of the Universe* called 'Experimental Mysticism.' Ouspensky does not reveal the way he achieved his states of 'higher consciousness', but I suspect it was simply through nitrous oxide, which William James also used.

Ouspensky also describes how, as soon as he went into a higher level of consciousness, he found it quite impossible to say anything about it because saying anything would require saying everything — because everything is connected together: 'everything is explained by something else and in turn explains another thing. There is nothing separate... In order to describe the fist impressions, the first sensations, it is necessary to describe all at once. The new world with which one comes into contact has no sides, so that it is impossible to describe first one side and then the other. All of it is visible at every point... ' I.e. bird's eye consciousness.

Another fascinating observation is that time seemed to slow down. He began a sentence with the words 'I said yesterday', and the word 'I' aroused a thousand ideas about the mystery of individuality; the word 'said' aroused a thousand ideas about the mystery of communication; the word 'yesterday' aroused a thousand thoughts about time. And by that time, he had forgotten what he was going to say anyway.

Looking at an ashtray, he felt that it was a kind of key to the universe, and he tried to write down on paper what he was 'seeing.' Later, he discovered he had written a single sentence:

'One could go mad from one ashtray.'

There is much else in this chapter of Ouspensky that deserves discussion, especially what he says about precognition, but I'll come to this later in speaking of the paranormal.

In his poem 'Under Ben Bulben', Yeats talks about how, 'when a man is fighting mad'

'Something drops from eyes long blind,
He completes his partial mind,
For an instant stands at ease
Laughs aloud, his heart at peace. ' (My italics.)

This is not unlike Dostoevsky's experience when he was reprieved from the firing squad. But it is so important because it recognises that ordinary consciousness is somehow *incomplete,* like the moon in its last quarter. You know the whole moon is really there, yet you can stare as hard as you like and you still can't see it. In these moments of illumination, the whole moon suddenly becomes visible: the 'partial mind' momentarily becomes the whole mind, and we feel god-like. It is vitally important to realise that 'ordinary consciousness' is incomplete. In fact, to put it more crudely, *everyday consciousness is a liar.*

As a schoolboy, Robert Graves also experienced something of the sort; he says that, sitting on the roller behind the cricket pavillion, he quite suddenly 'knew everything.' He says that he didn't literally 'know everything' (i.e. the date of the battle of Borodino), but that this was a point of view that *made sense of everything* (a bird's eye view.) It was still there when he woke up the next morning, but when he tried to write it down, he began to correct and cross out, and it gradually faded, giving way to 'the light of common day.

But Graves adds an important gloss to this experience. He speaks of a boy in the class called Smilley who could instantaneously see the answer to complex mathematical problems. The mathematics

master, Mr Gunn, hated this and caned him until he behaved more 'normally.'

Now in fact, many such people exist, including two mentally deficient twins in a New York hospital. They can go on quoting huge prime numbers at one another for hours. A prime is a number that cannot be divided exactly by any smaller number. 3, 5 and 7 are primes; 9 isn't because it can be divided by three. But there is no way of working out whether some huge number is a prime, except by painfully and slowly dividing every smaller number into it. Yet these twins — like hundreds of other calculating prodigies — can sit there quoting twenty digit primes at one another. In some odd way, they are hovering over the whole number field, like a bird, and doing something that is, scientifically speaking, impossible.

There is a part of our mind which *knows* things that the ordinary conscious self does not know. I have experienced this many times. In the 1960s, returning from Scotland and prepared for a very long drive to the Scottish border, I suddenly realised that it was far closer than I had imagined — by 50 miles — and that by mid-afternoon I could probably reach the house of an old friend in Leeds. This so filled me with pleasure and optimism that I again went into a kind of mini-cosmic consciousness as I drove along, my mind bubbling with exhilaration. But as we drove down through the Lake District I had a very interesting experience. I could not only see the vast hills on either side of the road, but in some odd way I could sense the hills that lay beyond them, as if part of my mind was a quarter of a mile up above the car. The sceptical commentator will say: 'Pure delusion', or at least, mere 'feeling.' Yet I had a very clear sense that it was far more than this: that in some odd way, it was as if a spider web was stretching around me in all directions, and that by focusing on any given 'strand', vibrations would travel down the strand to provide me with objective information.

Four: The Near and the Far

Now I want to return to our historical survey, for this book is an attempt to place this 'quest for transcendent consciousness' in its historical context, to explain why I feel so convinced that we are now on the brink of a breakthrough in the evolution of consciousness.

The 1890s saw the Romantic quest end in gloom and defeat. After that marvellous beginning, when Wordsworth felt 'bliss was it in that dawn to be alive', all the optimism evaporated. Dowson summarised that mood of elegiac sadness when he wrote:

'The fire is out, and spent the warmth thereof
This is the end of every song man sings...'

The poets of Yeats's 'tragic generation' certainly believed in those glimpses of bliss that illuminate the human spirit, and bring a sense of freedom; but they felt we have no control over them. The spirit of man is like an oxy-acetylene flame that can burn under water. But sooner or later, the water will close in and extinguish it.

In the 20th century, this mood of sadness and defeat turned into something more like gloomy stoicism. In Villers de Lisle Adam's *Axel,* the hero says contemptuously: 'As for living, our servants can do that for us.' He is declaring that 'real life' is too crude and stupid to be worth the effort. In *Ulysses,* James Joyce seems to have 'sold out' to brute matter; yet the Night Town scene is full of a kind of violent rage, as if he is shaking his fist at the world of matter — like Dylan Thomas raging against the dying of the light.

The dilemma is expressed with unusual clarity in L. H. Myers' novel *The Near and the Far.* In the opening chapter, the young Prince Jali looks out from the battlements of a castle in the capital of Akbar the Great; he and his family have travelled there for a great conference. As he looks over the desert towards the magnificent sunset, Jali reflects that there are *two* deserts, one of which is a glory to the eye, and the other of which is a weariness to the foot. And there is no way of bringing these two together. If he now rushed downstairs

and ran towards the sunset, he would merely get his shoes full of sand. The ‘near and the far’ remain irreconcilable.

What happened in the first half of the 20th century was that the sad defeatism of the 1890s gave way to a kind of *stoicism.* Camus says that Sisyphus has to keep on rolling a rock uphill, and watch it roll down again for ever — yet, he says, we must imagine Sisyphus happy, because in spite of physical servitude, he still possesses *internal freedom.* (He is echoing Byron’s Prisoner of Chillon: ‘Eternal spirit of the chainless mind/ Brightest in dungeons...’) In short, you might say that existentialism — the name given to this attempt to create a ‘philosophy of human existence’ — is Romanticism Mark 2. It *is* based on a recognition of human freedom — for example, Sartre made the interesting comment that he had never felt so free as when he was in the French Resistance, and was likely to be arrested and shot at any moment — but it takes it for granted that human life is totally meaningless.Hemingway summarised his own version of this ‘existential stoicism’ when he wrote ‘A man can be destroyed but not defeated. '

But what if — like myself — we have a powerful bias in favour of being neither destroyed *nor* defeated?

Philosophically speaking, I have devoted all my writing life to trying to create a kind of ‘Romanticism Mark 3' — a positive existentialism, that declines to accept this ‘premise of meaninglessness’ that is found in Sartre, Camus, Foucault, Derrida and other fashionable thinkers of the past fifty years. This ‘new existentialism’, based upon the phenomenological method of Husserl, is the intellectual foundation of my own ‘optimistic existentialism.

Before the end of this book, I will ask the reader to take a deep breath plunge into the history of modern philosophy, to grasp precisely what went wrong.

Five: The Paradoxes of Nihilism

In 1957, Kenneth Tynan reviewed Samuel Beckett's play *Endgame.* He obviously hated it, but his review consisted merely of an amusing parody of Beckett's style. Why? Obviously, because Tynan did not even know where to begin to attack Beckett's pessimism. Being faced with pessimism is rather like finding your path blocked by a large chunk of concrete. Unless you can get your crowbar underneath it, it is virtually immoveable.

This is the main problem with nihilism. We attempt to refute most propositions by trying to demonstrate their lack of logic, but the assertion: 'Life is self-evidently meaningless' seems to defy logic. Or at least, it is hard to see how to begin contradicting it. To the comment 'Well I don't think so', the pessimist replies: 'No, you are still suffering from the optimistic illusion — you don't see as deep as I do.'

You can find the essence of pessimism in a remark made the by hero of Senancour's *Obermann,* a famous 19th century novel about a sensitive recluse: 'The rain depresses me, yet the sunlight strikes me as pointless.' Here we can see the problem. He is suffering from Auden's 'life failure' — 'What's the good of going to Wales?'

Around the turn of the century, two Russian writers went to extremes of pessimism. Andreyev wrote a whole series of novels and stories to demonstrate that life is grotesquely meaningless, while in his novel *Breaking Point,* Artsybashev actually makes *all* the characters commit suicide. But then, even the kindly humanist Chekhov was deeply pessimistic; Leo Shestov says of him: 'Stubbornly, despondently, monotonously, during his entire period of literary activity, Chekhov did one thing only: in one way or another he killed human hopes.'

The most massive attempt to create a philosophy of pessimism is Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea.* One of Schopenhauer's main arguments is that human beings are always experiencing powerful desires, yet when they get what they want, they quickly lose interest in it. (Shakespeare said much the same thing.)

Schopenhauer sees us all as driven by short-term emotions that really amount to illusions, and which leave us empty and drained, facing the sheer meaninglessness of the universe.

Yet note one thing: that although Schopenhauer and Beckett seem to feel that life is about as bad as it can be, neither of them would dream of putting his hand in the fire. They are pragmatic enough to know that life with a burnt hand is a great deal worse than life without one.

Now the truth is that we all swing between extremes of optimism and pessimism every day. When we are bubbling with energy and looking forward to some pleasant experience, it seems self-evident that life is wonderful. When we get tired, it suddenly begins to seem obvious that all effort is a waste of time. It is as if an invisible weight oppressed our spirits. In a lovely poem called 'Dejection — An Ode' Coleridge writes about gazing at the moon and the stars, and adds:

'I see them all, so excellently fair,
I *see,* not *feel,* how beautiful they are.'

The problem is obviously a *feeling* — or rather, lack of feeling.

In an essay called 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', Graham Greene describes how, as a teenager, he also plunged into this 'affectless' state (as psychologists call it). He would look at something that others describes as beautiful, and would see, visually, that it was beautiful; but he would feel nothing whatever — just a kind of grey dullness inside.

In this state, Greene found a revolver belonging to his brother, and went out on the Berkhamsted Common and played Russian Roulette — put one bullet in it, spun the chambers, then pointed it at his head and pulled the trigger. When there was just a click, he describes experiencing an overwhelming feeling of joy and relief. 'It was as if a light had been turned on...and I felt that life contained an infinite number of possibilities.

In other words, the shock induced an episode of mini-cosmic consciousness.

But the really interesting phrase is: ‘It was as if a light had been turned on.‘ If you go into a dark room and turn on the light, you see *what was there all the time.* In the same way, in *The Lawless Roads,* Greene admits that some situation of crisis — ‘induced in me something I had not even suspected — a love of life.’

And his whiskey-priest, on the point of being shot by a firing squad, suddenly realises: ‘It would have been so *easy* to be a saint.’

If you go into an art gallery that is badly lit, you can’t see the pictures properly. Yet you don’t declare that they are therefore bad pictures. This is what the pessimistic philosopher asserts about life. Edmund Husserl grasped the basic answer when he recognised that *consciousness is intentional.* When you ‘see’ something, it doesn’t just walk in through your eyes. You have to fire your attention at it, like an arrow. If you look at your watch without this act of ‘intentionality’ (i.e. absent mindedly) you don’t see the time, and you have to look again. (Husserl will be discussed at length later.)

When Greene said that he saw that life contained an infinite number of possibilities, he meant that he felt free to choose between them. Tiredness diminishes our consciousness of freedom, and extreme tiredness — combined with depression or ‘negative feedback’ — makes us feel that there are no possibilities, that freedom is an illusion.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus states that the most fundamental problem of man is whether we all ought to commit suicide. He states his feeling that life is basically ‘absurd’ (i.e. meaningless.) He explains what he means when he says that we go to work, come home, go to work, come home, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday... etc., until one day, the consciousness of ‘the Absurd’ dawns upon us. But clearly, all that he means is that when we suddenly feel tired and discouraged, it all seems futile. (Sartre calls it ‘nausea.')

But then, when we get into this state, we are simply failing to put into it what Granville Barker calls ‘the secret life.' When Graham Greene pulled the trigger, he was suddenly flooded with the secret life. This is what Chesterton calls ‘absurd good news. ‘ It is the recognition of freedom.

Samuel Beckett remarked that, as a young man, he stayed in bed all day because he couldn't see any reason for getting up. This reveals clearly that his pessimism is closely connected with lack of energy. Similarly, T. S. Eliot suffered from deep depressions about a disastrous marriage, and added to his natural tendency to aesthetic 'world rejection', this produced *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men.*

In fact, the 'mechanisms of pessimism' are very simple and obvious.

Each of us has a robot inside us who acts as a kind of valet. When I learn something new — like driving a car or learning to type — I have to do it painfully and consciously. But my robot valet soon takes over, and proceeds to type or drive the car far more efficiently than 'I' could. He will even drive me home when I am tired, and I can't even remember the drive.

The trouble is that he not only takes over tasks I want him to do, like driving and talking French. He also takes over things I *don't* want him to do. I listen to a symphony and am deeply moved; the tenth time I listen, the robot is listening too and I don't enjoy it as much. I like to joke that I have even caught him making love to my wife. This robot is what Gurdjieff means when he says we are mechanical. He tried to devise methods of forcing his pupils to make far more effort, to foil the robot. But he was rather pessimistic about our chance of defeating it permanently.

This leads me to one of my own central insights. You might say that, in our normal healthy state we are roughly 50% 'robot', and 50% 'real you.' When I am tired and low, I become 51% robot and only 49% 'real me.' On the other hand, when I am happy and full of energy, I am 49% robot, and 51% 'real me.'

Now consider what happens if I am so permanently tired that my *normal* condition is only 49% 'real me' and 51% robot. Because I see the world as a duller place, I cease to make so much effort, so my vital batteries get low. This makes it look duller still, and makes effort seem even more pointless. If I am not careful, I go into 'negative feedback', when I become 55% robot and only 45% real me. This is a highly dangerous state, because I now feel so low that

all effort seems pointless, and I may slide downhill into mental illness — such as catatonia — and become a kind of vegetable.

On the other hand, if I use the insight of my 'peak' states — when I am 51% 'real me' — to keep me at a high level of drive and optimism, I may achieve states in which I am 52% or 53% real me.

It is also immensely important not to attach too much importance to temporary setbacks, and above all, to avoid the stupid habit of allowing ourselves, when discouraged, to start looking into the future and seeing it as a series of possible disasters and defeats. 90% of our problems are self-created. This is what the Hindu scripture means by 'the mind is the slayer of the real.'

Now one consequence should be perfectly clear. If I can reach a high enough level, *nothing* can ever cause me to backslide. I shall be on such a level of vitality — *seeing* the sheer fascinating-ness of the world from a bird's eye view — that I can now adjust to the worst that fate can throw at me, so to speak.

In *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky makes Ivan say that the world is so lousy that he just wants to give God back his entrance ticket. Yet he also makes Alyosha say: 'There is a strength to overcome *anything.* ' Ivan's gloomy view is basically a worm's eye view. Yet we can also see that it is possible to achieve a bird's eye view that would be *permanent.* In short, we have proved — mathematically, so to speak — the possibility of that next step in evolution, in which we permanently reach a higher stage.

I have another useful concept that explains what goes wrong with us when we are tired. I call it the 'What-is-worth-the-effort level' (Whittle for short, although the letters don't quite match-up.) When you have a low Whittle threshold, you feel that nothing is worth doing. People with a high Whittle threshold are interested in everything, and life strikes them as self-evidently fascinating. From what has been said above, we can see that Samuel Beckett is simply a man with a low Whittle threshold. So when he tells us that life is futile and absurd, he is merely stating that he has a low Whittle threshold — which is much like telling us that he has toothache. The reply is: I'm sorry to hear it, but so what?

Six: The Hidden Self

Literary pessimism is not too difficult to dispose of. But for most of the characters I discussed in *The Outsider* the problem is not so simple. Ivan Karamazov talks about 'giving God back his entrance ticket' because of the horror he feels about human cruelty. For Van Gogh, it was a choice between the Eternal Yes of the 'Starry Night' and the 'Eternal No' of 'Misery will never end.' In the 20th century, the sheer scale of the political horrors has made us far more conscious of Eternal No.

Having looked at the advocates of Eternal No, let us look more closely at Eternal Yes.

T.E.Lawrence describes setting out on one of those 'clear dawns that wake up the senses with the sun, while the intellect, tired after the thinking of the night, was yet abed. For an hour or two, on such a morning, the sounds, scents and colours of the world struck man individually and directly, not filtered through or made typical by thought...'

This is obviously the basic 'poetic' mood, the mood in which all poets, from Hesiod to Rupert Brooke, have felt that the world is a miraculous place — like London seen from Westminster Bridge by Wordsworth, 'all bright and glittering in the smokeless air. '

Recent discoveries in 'split brain physiology' enable us to understand all this scientifically. Even in the 19th century, it had been recognised that the two halves of our brains have different functions. The speech function resides in the left half of the brain, and doctors observed that people who had received damage to the left brain became inarticulate. The right side of the brain was obviously connected with recognition of shapes and patterns, so that an artist who had right-brain damage would lose all artistic talent. One man could not even draw a clover leaf; he put the three leaves of the clover side by side, on the same level.

Yet an artist with left brain damage only became inarticulate; he was still as good an artist as ever. And an orator with right brain

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DEDICATION

To Professor G. *Wilson Knight*

At about the same time I realized that what my instincts most desired to attain was precisely the reverse of what Schopenhauer's instincts wanted, that is to say, *a justification of life,* even where it was most terrible, most equivocal and most false; to this end, I had the formula *Dionysian* to hand.
– NIETZSCHE, *The Will to Power,* 1005

Nothing is easier than to judge what has substance and quality; to comprehend it is harder.
– HEGEL

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