

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

BY

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INTRODUCTION

If this book ever gets noticed it is going to make a lot of people very angry. And the question has to be asked why should I write a book that I know is going to make people angry. Well the answer is that human civilization has got to the stage where it is apparent to us all that there are real problems ahead for us. The world is overpopulated with humans and the amount of arable land is declining and will continue to decline as climate change becomes more extreme, and as well the amount of food available in our oceans is declining due to over-fishing and toxicity due to pollution. It is inevitable that in the future humans will be fighting over food and water and when you throw countries with nuclear weapons into that mix then the consequences will be terminal for the human race. It is clear to me that if the human race goes on with our current values then our own destruction is inevitable. But the fact is that even though we can see that we are headed for disaster it is inconceivable that we can make the changes necessary to guarantee our own survival. The changes would involve a fundamental reversal of our attitudes towards economic growth and consumption of resources; in a nutshell we would have to reduce our global footprint to the point where we can coexist and live in harmony with nature. And that is never going to happen while the current vested interests (military-industrial complex, political parties and religions) are still running the show. So yes, this book is going to make a lot of people unhappy, but you will find that all those unhappy people are without exception those who in one way or another have a vested interest in preserving the status quo and driving the human race on towards its inevitable doom.

FETAL DREAMS AND THE SOURCE OF DESIRE

An article in *New Scientist* (9 May 2015) entitled “*Yum, yum, a gulp of nutritious womb milk*”, highlights the obvious fact that desire develops almost immediately after fertilization. Researchers have found that during the first 11 weeks after fertilization, before the mother’s nutrient-rich blood supply is plumbed in, the lining of the uterus directly secretes large amounts of glucose as glycogen directly into the womb. The glycogen is abundant in the recesses of the womb lining, where it is broken down into smaller molecules that are absorbed into the placenta. We will see later in this article just how important emotionally the loss of the placenta is to the new born but it will also be of interest just how much the oral cavity (mouth), tongue, taste buds and jaw have developed during this first trimester of gestation, meaning that there cannot be the slightest doubt that the embryo is actually drinking and enjoying this “womb milk”, and in fact this must be the first and primary enjoyable experience at the beginning of life.

Between 5 and 6 weeks, a light touch to the mouth area causes the embryo to reflexively withdraw its head. The embryo has brainwaves by 6 weeks, 2 days. By 7 weeks, cell groupings resembling taste buds appear on the tongue and hiccups begin. The jaw bone begins to develop. Also by 7 to 7½ weeks, nephrons, the basic filtration units in the kidneys, begin to form which means that fluid is passing through its body. By eight weeks, touching the embryo can produce jaw movements as well as other movements. The embryo now possesses more than 90 percent of the structures found in the adult. By 9 weeks thumb sucking begins and the fetus may swallow amniotic fluid. The fetus can also grasp an object, move the head forward and back, open and close the jaw, move the tongue, sigh, and stretch.

It has been known for decades that the fetus in utero spends most of its time in a state akin to REM (Rapid-Eye-Movement) dreaming sleep. There also seems to be little doubt that this state of sleep is a key factor in the development of the central nervous system (Roffwarg, Muzio & Dement, 1966). This article will examine the complementary theory of Michel Jouvet that the fetal dreams are actually responsible for programming the developing brain in utero. If we combine Jouvet’s theory about fetal dreams with the theory of neurobiologist and philosopher Jean-Didier Vincent concerning the Biology of Passions we come up with a clear concept of what is being programmed into the developing brain. We shall also look at the writings of a variety of theorists and psychoanalysts including those of Françoise Dolto, and Jacques Lacan concerning the source and nature of desire with a view to arriving at some sort of understanding of our psychological heritage.

Dreams as genetic programming

Michel Jouvet advanced the theory that certain genetic programs are periodically reinforced in the brain and this reinforcement first establishes and then maintains the functionality of the synaptic circuits responsible for our psychological heritage. He felt that such a system had the advantage of reestablishing certain circuits that may have been altered by epigenetic factors, that is factors not strictly determined by our genes. This genetic reprogramming occurs during the phase of sleep he called 'paradoxical sleep' also known as REM (Rapid Eye-Movement) sleep, which is generally considered to be the time when we dream (Jouvet, 1992).

Jouvet advanced three keys for unlocking the enigma of paradoxical sleep. Firstly that dreaming mechanisms require a lot of energy through the consumption of oxygen. Secondly the likely reason why the so-called 'cold-blooded' animals, namely fishes, amphibians and reptiles do not appear to engage in paradoxical sleep is that their nerve cells continue to divide throughout the life of the animal. This is contrary to the situation with homothermal animals, that is animals that maintain a constant body temperature independent of their external environment. The third key in relation to the latter species, namely mammals and birds, is that the more immature they are (in utero or in vivo) the more something resembling paradoxical sleep (referred to as 'active sleep') becomes important.

According to Jouvet, there are many studies that show a positive correlation between the immaturity of the nervous system and the fragility of the thermoregulation system of the neonate mammal, and the increased proportion of time spent in paradoxical sleep. A human neonate will spend 50 to 60 percent of its sleep-time in paradoxical sleep. A kitten or baby rat can spend up to 80 or 90 percent of its sleep-time in paradoxical sleep. This significant increase in paradoxical sleep has also been found to apply in utero for the fetuses of many mammal species. Jouvet points out that it is precisely at the time the nervous system is finishing its initial maturation and genetic programming that the amount of paradoxical sleep, which in due course will become dreaming sleep, attains its greatest proportions. After this initial maturation process the amount of paradoxical sleep gradually decreases. This has to be a very significant phenomenon.

Jouvet's primary research as a neurophysiologist was to locate the mechanisms in the brain responsible for paradoxical sleep. According to him the topography of neurons (more than likely cholinergic) that constitutes the endogenous generator of the activity ponto-geniculo-occipital (PGO) of dreaming has been defined precisely. It is situated in the reticular formation of the pons in the brain stem. The routes are also known whereby the PGO activity reaches the centers for motor ocularity, which causes the rapid-eye movements of dreaming sleep. The ascending paths leading to the cerebral cortex, either directly or via an intermediate thalamic relay, have been equally defined with great precision.

By blocking the inhibitory system which prevents motor discharges during paradoxical sleep, Jouvet found that a sleeping cat will perform certain characteristic behavioral patterns as if it is acting out its dreams. The animal will get up quickly and start walking as if it is stalking an imaginary prey. It will then stop and demonstrate the characteristic gesture of catching a fish. Other stock actions can quickly follow. It may demonstrate fear with its ears back, or open its jaws wide in the snarling hiss of feline rage, or even feign an attack with quick backward movements of its paws and biting movements in thin air. It will also groom itself by licking its paws and flanks but it can equally start licking the perimeters or floor of its cage.

Jouvet stresses that these behaviors occur without any external visual or auditory stimulus, and thus indicate that the dream is a programmed activity of the brain. In this context, he recalls a remark made by Piaget that a dream resembles a game inside the brain.

Jouvet fundamentally poses the perennial question of nature versus nurture. If dreams are a genetic programming mechanism for the brain, then they would be responsible for the individual variations in the instinctive activities and behaviors of animals as well as being responsible for human personality traits to the extent that they are innate or inherited. That is to say, that part of our psychological heritage which can not be attributed to our environment, our culture or learning. If Jouvet is correct, the importance of dreams during our formative years cannot be overemphasized and our dreams continue to iteratively program the subtlest reactions of our waking consciousness throughout life.

Fetal movements are without doubt the expression of motor discharges caused by the genetically programmed formation of synapses during the maturation of the central nervous system, according to Jouvet. It is impossible to deny the influence of the environment in utero in the behavior and compartment of the neonate, and it is equally certain that the genetic program plays a predominant role in the stereotypical movements of approach to the mammary, of twitching and sucking which occur during periods of paradoxical sleep in the neonate.

For Jouvet, it is difficult to understand how a definitive genetic program established at the end of the initial maturation period can efficiently organize future innate behaviors given the plasticity in modifications of the synaptic connections induced by environmental causes. Furthermore, the definitive genetic program of hundreds of billions of synaptic connections would require a great many more genes than are known to exist in the genome. For these reasons, the concept of a recurrent or periodic genetic programming appears more satisfactory. This endogenous periodic process would excite at regular intervals the synaptic structures responsible for the recognition and processing of stimuli which produce stereotypical innate behavior. An obvious candidate for such a periodic genetic programming is paradoxical sleep.

However, Jouvet also raises various questions about his theory. There is no proof of the existence of paradoxical sleep in the vertebrates (fishes, amphibians, or reptiles) although fishes and amphibians do display the alternative states of activity and repose, and variations of electrical activity can be detected in the brains of sleeping reptiles. The question therefore arises as to how the brains of these other species are programmed if not through paradoxical sleep.

Another major doubt is the proposition that the sleep of the mammal in utero is not true paradoxical sleep but merely the forerunner of paradoxical sleep. This sleep of the fetus has been termed active, and is characterized by movements that reflect the intrinsic property of each motor element to activate strongly without central coordination. The ontogenesis pre- and post-natal is accompanied by a transition, the limits of which are uncertain, between the end of the genetic programming by neurogenesis of the central nervous system and the appearance, at first slowly and then more rapidly, of a new mode of programming effected by paradoxical sleep.

Jouvet also raises the issue that the suppression of paradoxical sleep through the use of certain drugs does not seem to produce any symptoms that can be attributed specifically to the absence of paradoxical sleep. He cites the case of patients being treated for narcolepsy or depression who take drugs for several months (inhibitors of monoamines oxydases and tricyclic antidepressants), which suppress totally or almost totally their paradoxical sleep. Also the literature concerning the retention of learning and paradoxical sleep seems to contain a similar number of positive and negative results, according to Jouvet. These results certainly do not prove that paradoxical sleep is responsible for an iterative genetic programming process. However, they do suggest that it is illusory to test the effects of paradoxical sleep deprivation on a genetically heterogeneous population because each member can react in a different fashion.

The final, and potentially major, concern is caused by the fact that some people dream a great deal and others claim to dream very little, if indeed at all. Jouvet quotes in English a statement by Mayr: "Genetic variability is universal, a fact which is significant not only for the student of morphology but also for the student of behavior. It is not only wrong to speak of the monkey but even of the rhesus monkey... The time has come to stress the existence of genetic differences in behavior... Striking individual differences have been described for predator-prey relations, for the reactions of birds to mimicking or to warning colorations, for child care among primates, and for maternal behavior in rats. It is generally agreed by observers that much of this individual difference is not affected by experience but remains essentially constant throughout the entire lifetime of the individual. Such variability is of the greatest interest to the student of evolution, and it is to be hoped that it will receive more attention from the experimental psychologist than it has in the past..." (Mayr, 1958)

Jouvet's book was written prior to the controversy about paradoxical sleep introduced by Solms in 1997. By studying patients with neurosurgical lesions, Solms was able to differentiate REM sleep, as defined by purely physiological criteria, from dreaming, a psychological process. These two processes occur simultaneously, but that does not mean that they are one and the same thing. Solms makes two assertions. He found that patients with lesions in the brain stem continued to dream. This fact is very surprising because as outlined above, the work of Jouvet is based on PGO activity being responsible for initiating paradoxical sleep. By the same token, other patients that had lesions in the parietal and frontal lobes of the brain did not dream at all. Solms concluded that the anterior structures of the brain are essential for dreaming, but not the structures in the brain stem (Bléandonu, 2002).

Following the work of Solms it becomes even more reasonable to assert that the fetus is actually dreaming in utero. The fact is that by the third trimester of gestation the anterior regions of the brain of the human fetus are largely developed. Taking the work of Jouvet, Roffwarg et al. and Solms together, it is highly likely that the active sleep of the fetus is a key factor in the development of the central nervous system (including the anterior regions of the brain), which means that it is a genetic programming mechanism for our innate behavior and psychological heritage.

The dreaming aspect of REM sleep becomes an extension or continuation of the original active sleep. Fetal dreams commence at a time when the central nervous system is substantially developed and is in the nature of a window into our genetic programming. Dreaming is not of itself a programming

mechanism, but as a result of our dreams, we can get a glimpse of what our genetic programming is all about. To dream or not to dream becomes a non-essential phenotype of the genetic code which some of us experience but others do not, and recalls the statement made by Mayr above concerning the individual differences in our psychological heritage. In this way we can still assert, consistent with the theory of Jouvet, that our innate passions are being genetically programmed in utero during the active sleep.

A biological basis for desire

Jean-Didier Vincent advances a concept of a fluctuating central state on which he founds a biological explanation for passion (Vincent, 1986). In a later work, he speaks of opposing processes (Vincent, 1996). The evolution of the species consists of a progressive increase in the number of intermediaries between information coming from the external world and factors responsible for our actions. The degree of liberty or free will of the animal increases with the number of these intermediaries. But it is because of the liquid element, and the substances transported therein, which introduces a solution of continuity in the organization of cells that this liberty or free will is possible. His approach to explaining the passions is therefore preceded by a study of the body's humors, that is to say the liquid elements of the organism and the substances which, in opposing and fluctuating processes, permit the communication

Dispersed throughout the body, either scattered or grouped within glands, specialized cells introduce into the blood stream secretory products or hormones. These cells are called endocrine to distinguish them from the exocrine glands which secrete their sugars and liquids externally or in the digestive system (sweat glands, salivary glands etc) The endocrine glands are a familiar element in the anatomical landscape. Some of the better known ones are the thyroid gland, the gonads or sex glands, the hypophysis, and the pancreas. The same gland generally contains many types of cells. The anterior hypophysis, for example, contains at least five types of cells which each secrete one or more hormones. The endocrine pancreas, as distinct from the exocrine pancreas which has a digestive function, secretes three hormones; Insulin which reduces the amount of sugar in the blood, glucagon which increases the amount of sugar, and somatostatin which inhibits the two preceding secretions. The same hormone can be secreted from different sources. Many hormones secreted by the digestive tract are also released in the brain. The walls of the digestive system is an extended gland with a large repertoire of endocrine secretions; the gastro-intestinal hormones. Other organs and tissues, while not directly endocrine glands, also are capable of secreting hormones (liver, kidneys, blood cells etc). The nervous system itself also acts as a multifunctional gland liberating neurohormones and neurotransmitters with hormonal actions.

In general terms Vincent explains that the hormones have a double function. On the one hand, by assuring communication between the cells, they integrate the chemical and physiological functions to maintain a constant state, and adapt the responses of the organism to changes in the environment. On the other hand, they are indispensable for the complete and harmonious development of the neonate, the growth of the individual, and the proper functioning of the bodily organs in adulthood. For the most

part the hormones are directly synthesized from the genetic code and their presence and interaction within the brain and body of the organism is in the nature of programming determined by the genetic code.

Again in general terms Vincent states that desire is located somewhere between joy and need, profit and loss. The satisfaction of a need that leads to reinforcement is the basis of learning theories. Desire also holds a central place in Freudian psychology based on need and the experience of satisfaction. But more than need, it is perhaps the sense of lack, the anticipation or simulation of need, which is at work in a sustained feeling of desire.

One of the primary characteristics of a desiring behavior pattern is found in the association between an affective or emotional component and the anticipation of the outcome of the action. Vincent tells us that this involves visceral manifestations and hormonal secretions that offer a veritable somatic translation of the emotion. The emotional landscape that accompanies a desiring behavior pattern is the hallmark of desire, and demonstrates the difference from a simple instinct, that is an affective desert by comparison. It is suggested that fetal dreams are responsible for the affective or emotional component of desire that occurs simultaneously with the programming of the hormonal milieu in utero. The affective or emotional component is our psychological heritage.

The catalogue of substances that contribute to the central fluctuating state is extensive. For example a noradrenergic pathway acting in the brain of a female rat will cause her to accept the advances of a male rat. By the same token, luteinizing hormone releasing hormone, in conjunction with the male hormones, will transform a timid hamster afraid of an aggressive female into an intrepid and willing lover. Acetylcholine modulates the activity of the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system. The morphine peptides, the receptors for which abound in the cerebral cortex, regulate the level of sensory input. Finally there are the neuropeptides, the list of which never ceases to grow, that are the ingredients of our central nervous system and whose workings are often mysterious.

The multiplicity of chemical substances is not the only complicating factor. The dispersion of nerve terminals, their interdependency, and the magnitude of their numbers contributes to the confusion. The same nerve terminal can liberate many substances; dopamine for example as well as cholecystokinin. In addition this amine is not only liberated at the terminal level but equally within proximity of the cell bodies at the dendrite level. Dopamine is also capable of controlling its own release.

Vincent speaks of a non-specific activation for which dopamine is responsible. This non-specific activation is a general phenomenon that applies to all behavioral patterns or components independent of sensory input. This is desire devoid of all specificity and, as such, is considered as the foundation of spontaneity. However, for this desire to have full and optimal effect it has to attain a level above which its operation is harmful. Lesions of the hypothalamus that interrupt the operation of the dopaminergic fibers of the reticular formation which communicate with the anterior regions of the brain, will cause an animal not only to cease to eat and drink, but also to display a state described as akinesia or catalepsy. The animal loses all spontaneity (shows zero desire), ceases to move and retains the posture in which it is put by the experimenter.

The lateral hypothalamus is also considered to be a pleasure center in the brain. Vincent refers to Panksepp's definition of the lateral hypothalamus as a 'goad without goal', a non-specific prod. As an adjunct to desire, the prod activates the appropriate behavior. The choice of behavior is determined by the principal object present in the environment. Given that the conditions of the interior milieu are right (hormones, composition of the blood etc) the vision or scent of a consenting female will cause the animal to copulate, or the presence of food will stimulate the animal to eat. When the lateral hypothalamus is stimulated electrically, the behavioral response will be determined by the nature of the stimulus present. In this regard it is considered that the lateral hypothalamus maintains a non-specific behavioral tension.

The lateral hypothalamus is also a site for auto-stimulation. A rat that is wired in such a way that it can electrically stimulate this part of its own brain by pressing on a lever will soon become addicted to the sensation. It becomes incapable of denying itself this pleasure. A starving animal that has the choice of two levers, one which will furnish food and the other which will allow it to auto-stimulate, will choose the latter even at the cost of its own life. The animal is insatiable and shows no signs of becoming accustomed to the pleasure. Depriving it of the lever is the only way to stop it. The lateral hypothalamus is not the only pleasure center in the brain. There are others in the limbic and striatal structures of the anterior brain and in the brain stem.

Auto-stimulation and the pleasure derived from it will have no physiological significance if it cannot be combined with a natural action. Consequently it has been found that electrical stimulation of all these sites of auto-stimulation induces, depending upon the place and conditions, all the behaviors of which a rat is capable; sniffing, eating, drinking, grooming, transporting and collecting objects, digging, copulating, killing mice, gathering its young. Vincent says that it is hard to escape the idea that neuronal circuits developed according to plans laid out in the genetic code, revised and corrected by learning, are responsible for these different behaviors.

Vincent tells us in his later work (Vincent, 1996) that the same hormone seems to be at work in religious and mystical ecstasy that plays a large part in sexual orgasm. In both cases there is a massive liberation in the hypothalamus of the hormone oxytocin. This same hormone can also act as a neurotransmitter in the neuronal networks implicated in the regulation of functions of attachment and to social memory. Oxytocin is effectively a neurohormone synthesized by the hypothalamus and liberated by the anterior hypothysis at the time of breast-feeding; its secretion being in the form of pulsating discharges as a reflexive response to the suckling of the baby causes a periodic ejection of milk. This substance is also liberated inside the brain at the level of nerve terminals in the hypothalamic and limbic (preoptic and septum) system. A massive secretion occurs at the moment of orgasm for both sexes.

In explaining love from a biological point of view Vincent says that there exists a need for an 'other' just as there is a biological need for water or for proteins, and this need for an other is what constitutes the desire called love. For the biologist, the state of being in love is only a particular form of the central fluctuating state, as it expresses the presence of the other in external space. The sexual partner epitomizes the other. The state of being in love is accompanied by a transformation of the body for both parties. The role of the sexual glands is a determining factor. The sexual hormones act directly on neuronal receptors

in the brain. Hormones such as prolactin and luteinizing hormone are concerned with the genesis of being in love. However, the secretion of the sex glands alone does not bring about this state of being in love. Desire is universal and is tied up with the proper functioning inside the brain of the desiring systems of which sexuality is just one aspect. Love represents a fusional state in which the individual can realize its own unity with the other. And in the case of humans, language becomes the essence of love in which the sexual organs play a minimal role. In other words, over and above the secretion of hormones and the fluctuating state of the central nervous system as a matter of pure biology, love is also intimately dependent on our psychological heritage.

In addition Vincent cites with approval a passage by Freud that there are many other types of love apart from the common conception of sexual love constituted by a sexual union. We can't separate the love of self, parental and familial love, friendship and the love for humankind in general any more than we can separate attachment to material objects and to abstract ideas and causes because all these varieties of love are expressions of one and the same tendency; a tendency that in certain cases invites a sexual union but in many other cases is directed towards other ends. The word love brings about a synthesis in language of a multiplicity of significations. They all express in one way or another the operation of desire which brings us back to a biological need for the other, and a sense of lack as part of our psychological heritage.

Vincent maintains that our subjectivity, that is to say, our psychological heritage is derived from the body of the mother. An infant knows its mother even before meeting her. A new born rat, crawling and blind, finds its way with the certainty of someone who knows to the maternal mammary. To detach it from its mother is a sensation comparable to picking a fruit from a tree. If its sense of smell is destroyed, or if the maternal mammary is washed with detergent, it is no longer able to find the mammary. However if the maternal mammary that has been washed with detergent is then covered with amniotic fluid collected at the time of birth, the newborn rat is again able to find its way to suckle. The mother rat instinctively licks the amniotic fluid from its newborn and licks its own mammary, so that her young are attracted to the mammary by the odor.

If the natural odor of the amniotic fluid is changed by injecting a lemon flavor into the uterine environment some time prior to birth, the baby rat will elect to attach itself to a lemon flavored mammary if forced to choose between several mothers. The story does not end there. The male adult demonstrates the same affinities towards a female with a lemon flavored vagina. The male adult will take twice as long to ejaculate with a female rat that does not exude a scent of lemon. Vincent argues for a perfume of infancy which will play a key role in the sexual attachments of the adult, whether male or female. It seems clear, at least, that the heterosexual male will seek to find in the female the olfactory image of its mother, an image derived originally from the amniotic fluid. Vincent refers to the conclusion drawn by Chateau that there exists in the brain of the mother and the infant a biogrammar that fixes, of which the rules of syntax determine language, the behavior of attachment between mother and infant. These are the constituents of our psychological heritage; programmed emotions, gestures and language that form the base of what sociolinguists call intersubjectivity.

In his later work, Vincent reminds us that the study of grammar amounts to the analysis of true functions (expansion, coordination, subordination etc) to the point where it is no more absurd to talk of the physiology of language than it is to talk of its genetic origin. (Vincent, 1996) A statement by Paul Guillaume is quoted with approval that it is a banal fact that the advent of vocal reactions is under the influence of the general infantile state, of emotions and needs. In the initial period of life the cry corresponds to suffering, to physical discomfort and to hunger; later to more complex feelings of displeasure. One can distinguish at the end of the second postnatal month cries characteristic of desire, impatience and deception. Later other vocal reactions develop with the state of well-being and agreeable excitement. The direct action of the affective state on the vocal organ does not find its expression simply through the cry of an infant; potentially here lies the natural root of developed language. It is impossible to separate the acquisition of language with its related affects and emotions. Language merges into our psychological heritage and, according to Jouvett's theory, is programmed into the brain of the fetus during paradoxical sleep.

Life before birth

It is never too early to speak of a human being, declared Françoise Dolto at the end of the 1970s. It is an être de parole (a being capable of communication) even as a fetus, and it is easy to understand why a mother and father speak to the fetal person who is in the uterus of the mother. Dolto explains what she means by an être de parole: a being who has a need to be spoken to, to be addressed directly, a being for whom language is essential, vital, because it has a thirst for communication and knowledge. This is the human being from the beginning to the end of its existence. For the infant the need for communication is as necessary as nourishment for the metabolism of the body. Dolto was convinced of the existence of a symbolic function peculiar to humankind. As vital as our vital functions, this factor is at work during the life of the fetus in utero at the very heart of the exchanges between the mother and her progeny. The fetus is not just living, it is desiring, perceiving, communicating and memorizing. At the heart of the fetal night it has joys and torments, it knows happiness and unhappiness. It is a communicator in the making (Canault, 2001).

Dolto formulated the concept of an unconscious archaic memory of life in utero. A memory of an affective relation with its umbilical cord, of its liquid environment immersed in amniotic fluid, with the placental envelopes. In other words a memory of its universe at the time; the matrix, that is to say the maternal womb. The fetus in effect bathes in the amniotic fluid. That archaic image of self linked to its mother in utero, symbolizes in the infant unconscious its basal security. This unconscious archaic memory of life in utero is, according to Dolto, also the beginnings of the unconscious image of the body for the being to be born. These are the concepts that make up our psychological heritage, that Jouvett would have us accept is programmed into the brain by the paradoxical sleep of the fetus. By the same token Dolto speaks of sleep in the adult as a state of natural regression to the fetal stage.

For Dolto every human being is a desiring subject. Human beings aspire to communicate from conception onwards. The unconscious image of the body is the concept which permits Dolto to take into account a continuity of being, before and after birth, which is the subject. What separates the body of the infant from the body of the mother, and makes it viable, is the umbilical cord and its ligature. The umbilical originates the body schema within the confines of an envelope that will become the skin (the placenta and the envelopes contained in the uterus having been cut away). The image of the body, made up partially of the rhythms, the warmth, the sonorities, the fetal perceptions, finds itself abruptly modified with the change in perceptions at birth, in particular the loss of the passive auditory pulses of the double heartbeat that the fetus heard in utero. This modification is accompanied by the advent of breathing through the lungs, and the activation of the peristalsis of the digestive tube which, when the infant is born, emits the meconium accumulated during the fetal period. The umbilical scar and the loss of the placenta, a fact in the course of human destiny, can be considered as the prototype of all the experiences that will be called castrations (including genital). This first separation should be called umbilical castration. It is contemporaneous with birth, and it is the foundation, in the modalities of joy and anguish which accompanied the birth, of the infant's subjective relations of desire for others (Dolto, 1984).

The first attachment

The expulsion of the placenta is hardly talked about in most prenatal groups that prepare the mother for the birth, but the infant is born with the placenta. Almost a half an hour can pass before the expulsion of that thick spongy mass, beautiful for some, formidable for others, with a very particular odor. The expulsion of the placenta often surprises the mother because of the pain and the contractions that it reinvoques. Mothers often consider that it's all over when the baby is delivered. Doctors and midwives on the other hand monitor with vigilance the expulsion of the placenta, for if retained in the uterus, even with modern medicine, it can be a source of important complications, at times even dramatic. The echoes from the birthing room can be a matter of life and death.

But what is actually delivered? Is it simply an anatomical mass, an organ which no longer has a function, and is only of interest to research laboratories and to the cosmetics industry. Or is it a profoundly intimate companion which is no longer of use to us, from which we are forced to separate by nature, and which, after the first loss, that of the amniotic fluid, prefigures the first lost object, and evokes the paradise lost common to so many, if not all, originating myths (Rapoport, 1989).

The placenta, the perfect union between two beings, rises to a state that no other organ can equal. It can not be considered as a parasite and is in the nature of a transplant, expressed by both organisms and rejected by neither. It is the symbiosis and parabiosis of two beings united in the flesh, and yet the blood remains separate. The placenta is the seat of all the transfers of nutriment or waste product, oxygen, carbon dioxide, sugars, lipids, proteins and vitamins. The placenta plays an active role; it is the indispensable relay between the two organisms. At its peak in the thirty-fifth week of gestation, the maternal blood flow to replenish the villousities will attain thirty-six litres an hour (Clément-Faraut, 1989).

Certain analysts maintain that, at the outset, the infant sees itself and thinks of itself as being one with the mother. That it is not the mother who incorporates the infant into herself, but it is the infant that achieves unity with the mother, and lives as if it is a part of the maternal body, just like a leaf on the branch of a tree. When one studies what occurs between the maternal circulation and the fetal circulation, it is clear that the placenta creates a barrier, a frontier, strictly delimiting two territories; certain substances pass through the placental barrier, and others are stopped. The placenta is an obstacle to the unification fantasy, the desire to be at one with the loved one, a fantasy fundamental to humankind. In playing this role as obstacle it is also an organ protecting the fetus from the mother (This, 1989).

After the birth the mother does not disappear. She is there, attentive, taking care of the infant. It is precisely the placenta that has disappeared. The cut is located at this level, between the infant and that part of itself. So why do we so often describe the birth as a separation between mother-infant? Why don't we talk of an umbilical cord that has to be sliced between the mother and the infant? Instead it is necessary to cut the umbilical cord. Everything happens as if the umbilical cord unites the mother and the infant, as if they communicated with each other, as if the umbilical cord was in the nature of a mirror where each is a reflection of the other, that each is the double of the other and yet, at the same time, contained within the other (This, 1989). The placenta is actually an amputated limb of the neonate, and as such remains in our psychological heritage as a phantom.

The fetus is inside; but this 'inside' is already an 'outside' because its sensory organs are continually informing it about what is happening from afar. We know that it is listening attentively when it is awake, perceiving from a distance, obtaining information about everything that is happening in its neighborhood, in what we could call its territory. Listening to our words, participating in its own way, living in a world structured by language. The mother eats curry and the amniotic fluid has a curry taste. The fetus is permanently savoring this liquid; it drinks two and a half litres per day, and we know that its tongue, its mouth and the upper part of the esophagus are constellated with gustatory papillae that will disappear at the time of birth. Because of the placental function, the infant, so tiny and weak, has an astonishing power of attraction, and of suction of liquid elements and of their dissolved content. It is this power of suction that causes the milk to rise in the maternal breast. The placenta is the window for the fetus to the world outside preparing the fetus for its future life. Because of its operation the fetus is neither inside nor outside (This, 1989).

Now we can appreciate the anguish of birth, the emergence from the primordial aquatic milieu when it exits from the amniotic fluid; the leap into a world where its lungs come into play, where it has to breathe air in order to survive. The trauma of birth is not separation from the mother per se but the strangeness of this new milieu so strikingly different. Lacan attributes to this moment the anguish of birth, inherent in life, inevitable, an anguish which can project its shadow for the rest of life. The infant has lost in this adventure of birth that part of itself from which it becomes separated, discarded, abandoned, the 'book of flesh' that was the placenta engaged in signifying relations with the mother and the external world. The important thing is to know that this abandoned object is at the base of all that is desirable in life, because now it has disappeared, it instills in reality a sense of lack, of an emptiness (This, 1989).

If the subject that is born situates itself and constitutes itself in a rapport with the Other, because it is born to the extent that it is represented by the signifier (the signifier brings the subject into existence because it only has meaning as a signifier for other signifiers), we have to recognize with Lacan that, in this operation, something remains which becomes 'object-cause of desire', the lost object where the function of cause can take root (This, 1989).

Therefore at the base of subjectivity, in front of all other objects, at the horizon of being, there is this object irretrievably lost, and the desire functions inside a bubble which, although burst, still contains the trace of what it originally enclosed inside the envelope. We desire because we have been deprived of the liquid world, of our envelopes, of our placenta. This means that the experience of that severance marks the subject in all its development, the relation of subject to object being always felt as unsatisfying. It can not bring contentment, it can not bring security. The object will always be the cause of desire, according to Lacan, the cause of an unsatisfied desire. "Where the Thing was, one could say, I have to be" because we are desiring subjects. A fact of nature divides us... in order that we may be born (This, 1989)

Desire according to Lacan

Lacan's theory of desire stems originally from the ideas of Plato that on the one hand desire is fundamental movement of living beings and that the soul is the living principle, and on the other hand that desire implies the essentially psychic process of memory. The body, which is only capable of grasping what is actual and immediate, is incapable when confronted with a void or emptiness of experiencing the feeling of repletion or of being satiated. It is only the soul that can 'have contact' with what is presently absent, because the soul possesses the memory of a repletion that has already been experienced. This is why there is no bodily desire. Only the soul can, by virtue of memory, anticipate the pleasure that an object that is missing can procure, and instigate, by that anticipation, the movement towards the object; this is what desire consists of. Desire is incapable of being reduced to a bodily affectation. It is essentially a movement of the soul towards a satisfaction previously experienced (Baas, 1992) Plato's theory is therefore enhanced by the theory put forward by Jouvett, that we are born with this satisfaction previously experienced as part of our psychological heritage that has been programmed into our memory by fetal dreams. What Plato refers to as our soul is what Jouvett would consider our psyche that is based in our fetal dreams.

For Lacan, over and above desire in terms of an articulated desire towards a desired object, there is the Thing. In terms of a lost object the Thing recalls the Freudian concept of an 'experience of satisfaction' to be understood certainly as an original experience. For Freud there is certainly the original experience of the mother, of which the memory traces constitute a sort of dissolved image in the psyche of a satisfying object. This image determines the elaboration of desire and engages the subject to find what is lost according to a logic of identity. If we follow the maze of representations, the associative knots, the fantasies and the dreams we will always find ourselves there; the body of the mother. This is what,

according to the Freudian tradition, will give a meaning to the 'lost object', the body of the mother is the embodiment of the Thing (Baas, 1992)

Lacan attempts a transcendental theory of desire. To the question what is there in the subject which renders the loss possible from which the desire proceeds, Lacan employs this word - the Thing - precisely because the Thing is not discernible, even less representable, because to give a content to this thing means that one has already entered into the game of the signifiers, one has already confused the thing with the desired object, the Thing is already reduced to something desirable for its own sake. Consequently the Thing is above the signifying game through which operates the desiring function of the subject, even if – or rather – because it is the condition which renders the game possible. For Lacan, the Thing is '*hors-signifié*' which means impossible to signify. The loss is anterior to what is lost. This means that if there is desire, and if the desire permeates all the detours of the substitutive process, of the signifying metonymy, it is not by virtue of the loss of some origin of sorts, but it is precisely because the loss is itself the origin. That is why the object of desire, the desired object, is always an object that has been found again. The Thing is the loss itself, the fundamental and original lack, a pure lack which constitutes the subject in terms of being a divided subject (Baas, 1992).

It is necessary therefore to distinguish the desired object and the 'object which is the cause of desire'; the latter, always qualified in these terms by Lacan, is what he refers to as *l'objet a*, which literally means the object 'a' in lower case. The letter A stands for Other (*Autre* in French). *L'objet a* is always designated as an object separated, detached, from whatever may be the desired object, the maternal breast, the feces, the voice, or the regard. It is not reducible to the desired object, nor is it identifiable with the subject of the desire, the desiring subject. It is simply articulated by the desiring subject which is itself a subject divided. This division comes about in the subject because its desire proceeds from nothing tangible, but only from the pure lack of the Thing. It is the lack of the Thing which bars the subject from desire. No matter how desire expresses itself, always articulated within it is the fantasy of *l'objet a*. The fantasy of the lack renders possible the synthesis of the faculty of desiring and of the empirical desired object (Baas, 1992).

Before the separation, that is before birth, there is neither subject nor object. It is the separation which produces at the same time both the subject and the object. Alienation and separation are therefore the constituents of the subject. In Lacan's theory the subject does not come into existence until approximately six months after birth with the commencement of the mirror stage. The loss therefore occurs at a time prior to formation of the subject, and therefore logically prior to the feeling of desire itself. The desire can only abstract itself from the signifying order in which it is constituted. In desire derived from the signifying order there is a sort of small remainder which rises up from the (anterior) pure lack, that is to say *l'objet a*. (Baas, 1992). Lacan's theory therefore reinforces the theory of Jouvett. Evidently the fetal dreams have no subject per se. The fetus is dreaming of its circumstances in utero which provide for it a psychological heritage. It is only after birth when the umbilical cord is cut, and the subject begins to constitute itself, that desire comes into play. Because the loss preceded the subject we can understand Lacan's assertion that *l'objet a* exists only in the fantasy of desire and not in reality.

The Thing is not an object of this world and is not a part of this world, even if it is true that the world is what constitutes itself for the subject through the network of signifiers. Nor is the fetal dream experience of the placenta and the fetal envelope of this world. It truly predates the advent of the subject itself. The Thing, or the pure lack, here occupies the place of an unconditioned absolute, in as much as it is from what desire proceeds, and yet it can not be articulated by this desire through a signifier. To cover the Thing, the pure lack, by a signifier is to constitute a 'myth' according to Lacan. Thus for example, (and evidently it is not important what example) to identify the Thing as the body of the mother is a myth to use Lacan's word, that is to say with exactitude, the transcendental illusion (Baas, 1992). What the fetus experienced in its dreams was of another world. What the fetus lost was the aquatic milieu in the amniotic fluid, the link with the mother via the placenta and the umbilical cord. However, to say this is obviously to reenter the world of signifiers. We are again in the grip of the transcendental illusion. It is actually impossible for us to conceive the precise nature of the fetal dream of its intrauterine experience, which is why it will always be for us a pure lack.

The myth consists of giving a figure to the Thing (it is the figure, the mythical figure of the great maternal goddess), but it also consists – and this is why it is an illusion – in supposing a consistent or substantial reality behind the figure, a reality of which the figure can only be an appearance or the symbolic manifestation (it is the body of the mother in the supposed experience of the original satisfaction). In order to avoid such an illusion, it is necessary, opposed to the myth, to affirm that behind the figure there is nothing, that there is nothing else than the Thing, that is to say the pure lack (Baas, 1992). The fetal dream can not be proved as a fact. The content of fetal dreams is not of this world and has no place in the order of signifiers which we take to be reality. From the point of view of a living subject, the fetal dream that forms the base of our psychological heritage is precisely what Lacan suggests – nothing. Nothing, that is, in the sense of no thing. And yet it is the fantasy...

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WHAT AILS US

In his book *The Outsider*, Colin Wilson has collected many examples from literature and human history of prominent men (yes unfortunately he gives no example of a prominent female) who have felt themselves somehow alienated from society. They are the loners, the literary geniuses like Joyce, Blake, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, as well as prominent religious, political and military figures who have all lamented in their writings or autobiographies their fears, their insecurities and their disgust for human society as well as for themselves. Colin Wilson spent years researching this topic in the Reading Room of the British Museum and as he himself was one of these outsiders, it will not surprise us to learn that during this time he was “sleeping rough”, that is to say he was sleeping outdoors, on Hampstead Heath in a sleeping bag. He has produced a book that is well written and packed with quotations to illustrate his point. He offers at the end of the book no real reason why these outstanding men should have suffered from this feeling of loneliness, depression and alienation nor why the great bulk of human society who are actually the “also rans” in terms of human and literary history seem to go through their lives without having any such misgivings that there is actually something sick and rotten not only at the very core of ourselves, but at the very core of Western industrialized materialistic society.

In this chapter I am going to explain to you as briefly and simply as possible that this festering sore in the heart of all of us that leads us collectively as nations to wage war with monotonous regularity with other nations or ideologies that we see as a threat to our own values or economic interests, and as individuals to perpetrate an almost infinite variety of insults, assaults, violence and trespasses on our fellow human beings as well as the lesser creatures and indeed on the this fragile planet the degradation of which will almost certainly bring about our own extinction. At the heart of all of us there is not only a hatred of ourselves and others but indeed of the planet where we find ourselves living. The only difference between us and the Outsiders that Colin Wilson quotes is that they were famous and articulate enough to express their distress, whereas the rest of us aren't capable of saying anything that anyone else wants to hear, and we content ourselves with suffering in silence and just trying to make the best of a bad lot. As a general rule we may appear to be happy. We get by on substance abuse. There are still plenty of things that can make us laugh. We even know from time to time experiences of love and ecstasy. Most of us are nowhere near as lonely and unhappy and alienated as these Outsiders. All in all life is quite good. Then there are a large proportion of us that are probably even more lonely and miserable than the Outsiders. They at least were famous and had a unique creative drive which got them through. A large proportion of us don't have that. These are the drunks, the drug addicts and the insane who are content to wallow in their wretchedness and don't have the intellect to even analyze what went wrong.

The problem in a nutshell is that we were all born into this world thru the birth canal of our mother. Once we emerge our umbilical cord is cut and from that moment onwards we experience pain. Not just physical pain but emotional pain. This new situation does not seem to be anywhere near as good as the one we just left. We can't return there. That's not an option. We start to hate the world we are born into and we figure that this traumatic change of circumstances must be somehow our own fault. The physical scar where the umbilical cord was cut remains with us the rest of our lives, as does the emotional scar in our psyche. All we know is that we have been castrated and thrown into this horrible world.

In addition our sensuality has been completely destroyed. We find ourselves abruptly transported from a watery world that was absolute bliss and total security to a new life in the open air. This new place, smells differently, tastes differently, feels totally different in as much that there is a total loss of blissful contact. We may as well be on a different planet. Our immediate reaction is hatred for our new abode. This is the first time we have experienced this feeling. From that moment on we have become

sadomasochistic monsters. It is the feeling you would get now if all of a sudden you were transported through a portal and all at once found yourself naked on the planet Venus. In other words the world we are born into is an alien place for us, and we hate it.

However we soon regain the mother's body and of course the nipple. It doesn't seem such a bad place after all. For a fair percentage of us some of the primary sensuality that was destroyed returns. Not all of it but enough for us to continue to feel some semblance of the conditions in the womb. The taste and smell of the female genitalia will give us back some of that primary pleasure. For baby boys this is of course all perfectly natural, but those baby girls that regain some of this primary pleasure in the female genitalia will of course have lesbian sex preferences in later life.

Most baby girls and a goodly percentage of baby boys will not regain that primary pleasure in the female genitalia. However their sadomasochistic tendencies will kick in and they will find a secondary sexual attachment to the male penis which arises mainly out of their castration complex as a result of their umbilical cord being cut. The placing and look of the umbilical cord has definite similarities to the penis and so it is reasonable to believe that they can invest sensually in that organ as a replacement for the placenta and umbilical cord that has been severed. In addition the sadomasochism will cause this group to invest sensually in the image of the penis as a weapon, that can be used to penetrate others or on the other hand to be penetrated by others. In other words this group will actually see sexual intercourse as a pleasurable occupation even though the source of this pleasure is no longer the primary sensuality that they enjoyed in the womb, but rather they have been lucky enough to get libidinal pleasure from the act of copulation. The taste and smell of the female genitalia will however be repugnant to them.

Then there is a large proportion of this latter group who will not derive secondary libidinal pleasure from the act of penetrating or being penetrated by the penis, and their sadomasochistic tendencies will cause them to regard the penis purely as a weapon to inflict pain. They will engage in a great deal of sexual activity but for reasons which are actually the opposite of pleasure. They are now in the area of actually wanting to punish or be punished by the penis either because of their hatred for others or hatred for themselves, and indeed as a general hatred for the world and the entire human race. In addition there is a large proportion of this sub-group for whom the sadomasochistic tendencies become completely desexualized. Rather their motives will now be to dominate, humiliate and control others or in turn to be dominated, humiliated or controlled. I call this a sub-group only but in fact up to 60% of the entire human race find themselves in this category. If these are your motives then your "will to power" or your will to be dominated will manage to find an outlet in the infinite variety of social and family and workplace and religious and political situations in human civilization. A person motivated to become president of his/her local Bridge Club is motivated by sadomasochistic "will to power" every bit as much as the person motivated to become President of the U.S, or the Cardinal motivated to become Pope of the Catholic Church. In each case their motivation is essentially what makes us human beings "evil". Their "will to power" has arisen because they did not regain any of their primary sensuality that they experienced in the womb. They are now motivated purely by their sadomasochistic tendencies and their hatred for the world and all the people in it. They have found a satisfactory compensation for the devastation of losing their primary sensuality however simply by getting into a position of control over others.

For the woman who knows only the masochistic desire to be penetrated by a penis, whether she attaches sexual pleasure to it or pain, her compensation will take three forms 1) narcissistic desire for herself as being someone that a man would want to penetrate 2) the desire to have a baby that will be a compensation for the pleasure she lost at birth 3) desire for security.

It will be obvious to everyone that the feminine hormones kick in after birth which make the female sexually attractive to the male. For the baby girl that has suffered the destruction of her primary sensuality and thinks she has been castrated as a result of her umbilical connection to the mother being severed, it is not hard to understand that she will be encouraged by social conditioning as much as anything else to direct whatever secondary desire she may begin to feel towards herself. This in addition to the growing

conviction that if she is “pretty” then she will become sexually attractive to a man with a penis who will penetrate her. She will be encouraged to have a doll as a matter of family conditioning and her infantile fantasy will turn towards the thought that to have her own baby will in some way make up for the fact that her own sensuality has been destroyed. Even if she does retain some primary sensuality and has subliminal desire for the female vagina, again as a general rule her social conditioning will ensure that those lingering desires remain subliminal, because her secondary desires springing from her sadomasochism will be much louder and more compelling in her psyche. For with sadomasochism she now has the dual compulsion of being mounted controlled and penetrated by a male, and in addition she has the sadistic impulses to have a baby of her own that she can control and manipulate. The baby will become a compensation to her, some sort of extension to her own ego that has been so convincingly effaced when her primary sensuality was destroyed at birth. This desire for compensation is of course the so-called “maternal instinct.”

The annihilation of her primary sensuality will also cause the baby girl to become more preoccupied with her personal “security”. To start out in life with such an emotional trauma will of course make security a priority for all human beings of both sexes. But it is not as devastating for the baby boy because as his male hormones kick in and he starts to regain some of his primary sensuality anyway, he will not only be allowed but will actually be encouraged to regard the female vagina as a desirable object. His original desire for the conditions in the womb of the mother can then transfer seamlessly to the female vagina as the source of that desire. That is not to say that a lot of secondary sadomasochism will not also be at work in a male that has regained some of his primary sensuality. His desire for security can still manifest itself in later life with the pursuit of wealth and power etc. But not as much as the males who do not regain any of their primary sensuality, and are repulsed by the female vagina, and who later in life are driven only by the pursuit of wealth and power as a substitute.

It is this later type of male that is similar to the situation of the baby girl. Her desire for security is now comparable to the desire of the male for extreme wealth and power. This is why we come across so often the situation where a female will marry a male who is bald, fat and ugly, but who is wealthy enough to provide her with the security she craves. There’s no real reason for me to enlarge on this. There are an infinite number of variations on this theme. The general principle is plain. All pursuit of material wealth by both the male and the female has to do with the devastating loss they suffered at the time of birth.

So now I shall summarize as succinctly as possible the many examples of the mentality of “the outsider” that Colin Wilson has collected in his book. This is Colin Wilson’s research, not mine. I do not pretend to have read all these books. Nor do I intend to give a detailed summary of each book that Colin Wilson mentions. This book of mine is not intended to be learned and erudite. It is intended to state the case as simply and clearly as possible. I want it to be the sort of book that ordinary people can read.

Wilson commences by considering a social problem. He cites a little known book by Henri Barbusse, *L’Enfer*, (Hell in English) The hero is walking down a Paris street, he sees a woman, they exchange a few words and then they go off together to her place to have sex. He says: “Then I went through the banal scene. It passed like a sudden hurtling down. Again, I am on the pavement, and I am not at peace as I had hoped. An immense confusion bewilders me. It is as if I could not see things as they were. I see too deep and too much”.

This is a man who is not named in the novel. He has “no genius, no mission to fulfill, no remarkable feelings to bestow.” He has nothing, and he deserves nothing yet in spite of it he *desires* some sort of *recompense*. (Italics are mine) He doesn’t care for religion, for him philosophic discussions are altogether meaningless. Nothing can be tested, nothing verified. He asks “Truth – what do they mean by it?” He has now taken a room in a “family hotel”. He is there on his own vaguely thinking about some past love affair and then he thinks: “Death, that is the most important of all ideas.” Then he notices a spy-hole high up in the wall in his hotel room and finds a new distraction of observing what is happening in the next room on

a daily basis. One night he excites himself to hysteria watching a woman undress, but the next day when he attempts to recreate the excitement of the scene in his imagination it all goes very flat.

I let myself be drawn into inventing details to recapture the intensity of the experience.

'She put herself into the most inviting positions.'

No, no, that is not true.

These words are all dead. They leave untouched, *powerless to affect it, the intensity of what was.*

In the novel our nameless hero eventually finds himself at some sort of a literary soiree where a writer is entertaining his audience by recounting the plot of a novel he is writing which just happens to include this situation which he actually found himself in of peeping into the neighboring hotel room. The audience are fascinated but the Outsider is filled with gloom. The novelist expounds: "Man stripped of his externals is what I wish to show. Others stand for imagination.... I stand for truth". Our Outsider is not impressed even though he has himself supposedly found himself in such a situation in real life:

I, who had penetrated into the very heart of mankind and returned, could see nothing human in this pantomimic caricature. It was so superficial that it was false.

Obviously the Outsider is preoccupied with sex, but he is driven to pursue it like some sort of neurotic compulsion to repeat. He is getting no pleasure out of it whatsoever. In addition we learn earlier in the novel that he is obsessively preoccupied with crime and disease. He recounted at a dinner party a gory story about an actual court case where the accused had raped and strangled a young girl. All through his story he is observing the effect on the company of the revolting details, and took particular delight in the fact that "A young mother, with her daughter by her side, has half got up to leave, but cannot drag herself away".

Wilson sums up the point that Barbusse is trying to make in this novel. Be it remembered that it was entitled *Hell*:

The Outsider's case against society is very clear. All men and women have these dangerous, unnamable impulses, yet they keep up a pretense to themselves, to others; their respectability, their philosophy, their religion, are all attempts to gloss over, to make look civilized and rational something that is savage, unorganized, irrational. He is an Outsider because he stands for Truth.

What Wilson says in general terms is true enough. However to my mind this Outsider has a specific complaint. Even though he is driven to pursue sexual encounters and is constantly fantasizing about it, when it comes to actually having sex it gives him no pleasure whatsoever. If anything he comes away disillusioned and depressed. This is quite clearly a man who has not regained the same pleasure that he experienced when he was in his mother's womb. It was after he was born that things started to go bad for him. His whole life is engaged in the vain and hopeless pursuit of the *Paradise Lost*. This is obviously a fictional character, but such a person as this is getting no joy out of life and will inevitably end up suiciding, or committing some violent sex crime and his best case scenario is to limp on through life with the aid of substance abuse. This unfortunate derives no pleasure whatsoever in keeping up the appearances of being happy. He is not interested in the pretense.

Why should this particular Outsider be specifically yearning for the Truth. This suggests does it not that he feels that the life he is leading is a lie. He is driven to look for sexual encounters although he derives no pleasure from them whatsoever. He knows that there is something seriously lacking not only in his life

but in the lives of all those around him who are likewise going through the pretense of having fun. His problem is obviously that he suspects there is some secret he does not know which will explain his own particular version of hell on earth. And the reason why he suspects that there is something else is that "He sees too deep and too much." That is to say he has an insight that there really is a secret that will explain it all.

In the next chapter we shall be dealing with *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by none other than Adam Smith, the founder of Western economic thought. You shall see just how much this aspect of pretense, and keeping up appearances actually figures in our moral values and our ethics. Indeed you will find that all our moral values have actually evolved not only to contain this "savage, unorganized, irrational" part of our nature, but indeed they are there for the better working of our economy, that is to say further amassing all the wealth into the hands of the elite.

Colin Wilson quotes several passages from the book by H.G. Wells *Mind at the End of Its Tether*. The general purport of what Wells says is that "A harsh queerness is coming into things".

The reality glares coldly and harshly upon any of those who can wrench their minds free... to face the unsparing question that has overwhelmed the writer. They discover that a frightful queerness has come into life... The habitual interest of the writer is his critical anticipation. Of everything he asks: To what will this lead? And it was natural for him to assume there was a limit set to change, that new things and events would appear, but that they would appear consistently, preserving the natural sequence of life. So that in the present vast confusion of our world, there was always an assumption of an ultimate restoration of rationality. It was merely the fascinating question of what forms the new rational phase would assume, what over-man, Erewhon or what not would break through the transitory clouds and turmoil. To this the writer set his mind. He did his utmost to pursue that upward spiral... towards their convergence in a new phase in the story of life, and the more he weighed the realities before him, the less he was able to detect any convergence whatsoever. Changes had ceased to be systematic, and the further he estimated the course they seemed to be taking, the greater the divergence. Hitherto, events had been held together by a certain logical consistence, as the heavenly bodies had been held together by gravitation. Now it is as if that cord had vanished, and everything was driving anyhow to anywhere at a steadily increasing velocity... The pattern of things to come faded away.

To state the case in a nutshell, everything was turning to shit for poor old H.G. He was expecting some sort of apocalyptic change any time soon, and this queer change didn't just apply to human life but to all self-conscious existence. It was like life was coming to an end. He became convinced of the ultimate disaster that confronts the whole world. In some way mind and nature were no longer running in parallel. "Our loves, our hates, our wars and battles, are no more than phantasmagoria dancing on that fabric, themselves as insubstantial as a dream".

Just think about that last statement for one moment. Our loves, our hates, our wars and battles are all phantasmagoria. Does this look like he is associating parental love, romantic love, fraternal love and even your love of hiking on a sunny day, with our hates and our wars and our battles. All of it queer, unreal and unsatisfactory. I liked also the line in the paragraph quoted above that the link or force that was holding it all together for him – "Now it is as if that cord had vanished". A subliminal reference to his umbilical cord, I would suggest. Life now seems to him to be no more than a dream; it is not real.

Actually in that particular pamphlet Wells promised to give his reasons for arriving at such a dismal conclusion. But he was not able to deliver on this promise, because he himself had no inkling of the cause of his malaise. He ends the pamphlet with the rhetorical question: Can civilization be saved?

Colin Wilson tells us that his pamphlet must be considered the most pessimistic single utterance in modern literature, along with T.S. Eliot's "Hollow Men".

If the conclusions he has reached negate his own past life, and the possible futures of all the human race, where do we go from there? Well's thesis is that we have never been going anywhere – we have been carried along by our delusions, believing that any movement is better than none. Whereas the truth is the reverse, *no movement*, is the final answer, the answer to the question: What will men *do* when they see things as they are?

Here is this word "Truth" again. The life we are leading is a pretense and a lie and seems to have no value or meaning whatsoever. Nothing is worthwhile and yet we have no idea why this should be so, and why we continue to soldier on. The truth we crave is the secret why we continue to do what we are doing. As Barbusse said: Truth, what do they mean by it?

Well's pamphlet becomes all the more urgent when we consider what his life's work had been up to that time. Colin Wilson summarizes:

Wells was very definitely an Insider most of his life. Tirelessly he performed his duty to society, gave it good advice upon how to better itself. He was the scientific spirit incarnate: reviewing the history of the life and drawing conclusions, reviewing economics and social history, political and religious history; a descendant of the French Encyclopedists, who never ceased to compile and summarize. From him: Truth, what do they mean by it? would have elicited a compendious review of all the ideas of truth in the history of the seven civilizations. There is something so shocking in such a man's becoming an Outsider that we feel inclined to look for physical causes for the change: Wells was a sick, a tired man, when he wrote *Mind at the End of Its Tether*. May we not accept this as the whole cause and moving force behind the pamphlet?

Wells himself declared his conclusions to be "objective" and so we may assume that what he was suffering from was a total collapse of his investment in the scholarly life he was leading. That is to say, he no longer felt the drive to continue pushing himself to produce his learned and literary output. In the final chapter of this book we are going to thoroughly examine what Schopenhauer had to say about *The World as Will and Representation*. We will find that Schopenhauer precedes and predicts Well's dismal conclusions almost with a vengeance. World as Will and Representation? I wonder if that could mean that Wells had somehow lost his "will" to produce, and that now Wells was able to see the world for what it was – a total sham. His loves, his hates, his wars and battles were mere phantasmagoria. The truth is that while we have the "will" to actually do something – anything - climb mountains, write books, play golf, beat our wife, make a million dollars, cross the Sahara on foot, become a Preacher Man – we don't have a problem. The only small hitch is that "will" actually comes to us, if we are lucky, as a result of our sadomasochistic tendencies and our hatred for the world we were born into. Once the "will" fails us however, then we can see the world for the hell that it is. At that point all that is left is melancholia and suicide.

It is precisely the destruction of our primary sensuality, that is to say the capacity to enjoy what we had in the womb, that gives us an ego, via our sadomasochism and hatred for the world. Without this ego, this will, we would go all our lives with the mentality of a fetus. We would not even have the desire to feed ourselves. We would simply lie there in a vegetative state and know no other impulse than to have oral sex with our mother. It is the destruction of the primary sensuality, and the development of

sadomasochism which makes human life and human civilization possible. The ultimate conclusion is therefore that human civilization is founded on hate.

That is not to say that there is not a great deal of good and pleasurable things in life. Our first sentiment upon being born is that we have died and gone to hell. That is to say our birth is a near death experience with extreme and enduring suffering. But as we grow up to adulthood this experience only remains as a subliminal death wish, and for the vast majority of humans they are completely unaware of their initial trauma. Their death wish will however manifest itself in their religion for example where they will believe that when they die they will escape the suffering of this mortal life and go to another place where they will be blissfully happy for all eternity. Also for the most part their masochistic tendencies will turn in on themselves and lead them to believe that suffering is good. For instance the stricture of Jesus of Nazareth “to turn the other cheek” if we are struck is actually a masochistic sentiment but in religious doctrine it will be preached as a “good” thing to do. That is to say if you turn the other cheek in this life you will be rewarded by going to a happy place after you die.

Then there is all the social conditioning and media marketing that we are bombarded with from our birth till our death that is constantly reinforcing the notion that life is “good” and that there are an infinite number of commercial products available that are “good” for us and will give us pleasure. The fact is that all our initial impulses of hate and sadomasochism remain in the unconscious all our lives and the great majority of us think that “life is not that bad” and some of us indeed think that life is “good”. A substantial percentage of humanity are miserable and are fully aware of their misery, but they do not have the slightest inkling of an idea whence springs their misery. Then the occasional unique individuals who surface in life and literature such as Schopenhauer for example who are acutely aware that there is something rotten somewhere in our psyche but even he couldn’t put his finger on it precisely.

Wells wrote another interesting book relevant to our enquiry with his *The Country of the Blind*. Here his theme was “in a country where everyone is blind the one-eyed man is king”. Actually it is the other way round. It is a case of a country where only one man knows he is sick in a civilization where everyone else is convinced they are sane and healthy. This all gets into deep and meaningful stuff first advanced by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard who wrote about the system negating the individual which led directly into the philosophy of Existentialism.

Jean-Paul Sartre was one of the leading exponents of Existentialism in his work *La Nausée* about a quiet living academic, named Roquentin, who lived alone in a Hotel in Le Havre. He recounts several attacks of nausea that came upon him inexplicably in apparently normal and mundane situations. Once he was beside the sea and he picked up a flat stone to skim on the water. He says that suddenly “I saw something which disgusted me; I no longer know whether it was the stone or the sea”. He dropped the stone and walked off. In his journal he sets out to discover what it was that had affected him in that way. He has other attacks. In a crowded café he is afraid to look at a glass of beer. “But I can’t explain what I see. To anyone. There: I am quietly slipping into the water’s depths, towards fear”. Another time the braces of the café owner makes him nauseous. His description is portraying the image of “darkness and dirt”.

...the nausea is not *inside* me; I feel it out *there*, in the wall, in the suspenders; everywhere around me. It makes itself one with the café; I am the one who is within it.

Then someone puts on a record. The music soothes him. He says “I am in the music. Globes of fire turn in the mirrors, encircled by rings of smoke”. Colin Wilson rationalizes it as “the old familiar aesthetic experience; art giving order and logic to the chaos”. But the question remains why he should be experiencing these attacks where not only are the most common and banal objects unreal, but they are actually fearful. These ordinary objects were seriously upsetting him, that is to say making him nauseous. He stares at the root of a chestnut tree:

I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished, and with them, the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble points of reference men have traced on their surface. I was sitting... before this knotty mass, entirely beastly, which frightened me... It left me breathless. Never, until these last days, had I understood the meaning of *existence*. I was like the others... I said with them: The ocean *is* green, that white speck up there *is* a seagull, but I didn't feel that it had existed... And then suddenly existence had unveiled itself. It had lost the look of an abstract category; it was the very paste of things; this root was kneaded into existence... These objects, they inconvenienced me; I would have liked them to exist less imposingly, more dryly, in a more abstract way...

It would be easy to say that Roquentin was simply going insane, that he is sick mentally, and the rest of us don't have to worry further about it because we are sane and healthy. But are we?? Sartre comes to the conclusion: *L'homme est une passion inutile* which Shakespeare would probably translate as *Humanity is much ado about nothing*, and I also offer my own translation for what it's worth *Humanity is a wasted exercise*. And the reason for this is of course that all life outside the womb is ultimately unsatisfactory.

Similar sentiments are expressed by the protagonist of the novel by Albert Camus, *L'Étranger* (The Stranger). This is an Algerian, that is to say a foreigner in France, who shows no grief when his mother dies, he is unable to feel love, and he is completely indifferent about defending himself when a charge of murder was brought against him for the shooting of an Arab that was actually in self-defense. His problem is this overwhelming feeling about the *unreality* of life. He can't even work up enough motivation to defend himself in court although he knew that if he were found guilty he would be sentenced to death. We get the impression he was actually willing himself to be put down. On the eve of his execution he reflects on his life.

With death so near, mother must have felt like someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start life again... And I too felt ready to start life again. It was as if this great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and gazing up at the dark sky... I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel so like myself ... made me realize I had been happy, that I was happy still. For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained to hope was that, on the day of my execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators, and that they should greet me with howls of execration.

To fully appreciate the works of Hermann Hesse, and in particular *Steppenwolf*, we have to note a theme which runs through all his novels and which he sets out in a small book entitled *Glimpse into Chaos* which contains two essays on Dostoyevsky's novels, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot*. According to Hesse the future would see the coming of "the Russian man" which is some kind of Existentialist monster, that no longer has human values and rejects all thought.

He reaches forth beyond prohibitions, beyond natural instinct, beyond morality. He is the man who has grasped the idea of freeing himself, and on the other side, beyond the veil, beyond *principium individuationis*, of turning back again. This ideal man of the Karamazovs loves nothing and everything, does nothing and everything. He is primeval matter, monstrous soul-stuff. He cannot live in this form; he can only pass on.

Time and space precludes a full examination of all Hesse's novels but there is a very pertinent passage in one of Hesse's earlier novels *Demian* which Colin Wilson describes as Hesse's answer to *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I actually should put this brief passage on the title page of this current book for it encapsulates the entire thesis that is here presented.

The life of everybody is a road to himself ... No man has ever yet attained to self-realization, yet he strives after it, one ploddingly, another with less effort, as best he can. Each man carries the remains of his birth, slime and eggshells, with him to the end.

Please take a minute to re-read the above passage several times....

So now we are ready to move on to Hesse's most important work in terms of stating the problem of the Outsider. The actual story is quite unimportant. It is the journal of Harry Haller, an intelligent and cultured middle-aged man living on his own with his books and his gramophone. He is bored and apathetic about life. On rare occasions he can experience something akin to bliss from the music of Mozart, but apart from this the rest of his experiences barely attain the temperature of lukewarm. His days are a never-ending succession of banalities.

Then one night he has some sort of a dream experience where he enters the "Magic Theater". He is warned at the outset that this theater is "not for everybody" a kind of "enter at your own risk" admonition. At the entry a man with a sandwich board hands him *A Treatise of the Steppenwolf* which of course is actually an exercise by him in self-analysis. Haller is a person divided: a civilized man and a wolf-man. The civilized man is the quiet-living intellectual who loves his books and his music. Then there is the lawless savage who loves the world of darkness who yearns to kill and rape women. The wolf-man has nothing but contempt for bourgeois civilization and its values. These two opposing sides to Harry's nature are in a state of constant struggle and enmity, and only occasionally can any synthesis be achieved in that euphoric state while listening to Mozart.

This Steppenwolf ... has discovered that... at best he is only at the beginning of a long pilgrimage towards this ideal harmony... No, back to nature is a false track that leads nowhere but to suffering and despair... Every created thing, even the simplest, is already guilty, already multiple... The way to innocence, to the uncreated and to God, leads on, not back, not back to the wolf or the child, but ever further into guilt, even deeper into human life... Instead of narrowing your world and simplifying your soul, you will have at the last to take the whole world into your soul, cost what it may.

The rest of the novel is not worth recounting. Hesse was stating a fundamental dichotomy in his own nature for which he had no real solution. There are however his subtle insights that this dichotomy somehow stretches right back to the time of his birth, that he has some very violent and cruel tendencies buried deep in his nature which the civilized side of him is struggling to keep in check and that these dark tendencies are generating an overwhelming feeling of guilt. Hesse actually has Harry Haller decide to take up ball-room dancing and listen to jazz of all things, and he enters into an improbable three way sexual entanglement probably fueled by smoking opium which he is supposedly finding pleasurable. This new "life of the senses" and bisexuality solves nothing and most certainly doesn't convince us that Harry has achieved the "salvation" which he craves.

T.E. Lawrence aka Lawrence of Arabia actually lived the life of an Outsider rather than simply writing about it. It is not necessary for us to know his full biography. A brief passage from Colin Wilson's book will suffice.

At the outbreak of war, Lawrence was posted to Egypt as a Staff Captain in the Maps Branch of the Intelligence Service. He found it boring, and when an opportunity came to take part in the rebellion being fomented by King Hussein of Mecca against the Turkish government of Arabia, Lawrence sailed for Arabia without bothering to tell his Intelligence chiefs what he intended to do. He quickly made himself indispensable in the revolt; as the adviser of Faisal, King Hussein's son, he steered it to success in a period of less than two years. His book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is a record of those two years.

Those two years were the highlight of Lawrence's life. He completely lost belief in himself. He campaigned for some years to establish the Arab right to their own country, and he enlisted in the Tank Corps as a private, and later in the R.A.F. He was killed in a motor bike accident in 1935. A schoolmaster acquaintance to whom he showed *The Seven Pillars* summed up his character.

Reading this book has made me suffer. The writer is infinitely the greatest man I have ever known, but he is terribly wrong. *He is not himself*. He has found an "I" but it is not the true "I", so I tremble to think of what may happen. *He is never alive in what he does*. There is no exchange. He is only a pipe through which life flows. He seems to have been a very good pipe, but to live truly one must be more than that.

Essentially Lawrence did not regard himself as a soldier and he was able to have a brief brilliant period as an inspired preacher. Even here he had frequent periods of disillusionment and misery because he did not actually believe in the ideas he was preaching. He is like the poet who is in love with the idea of being in love. He was possessed by the idea of having a cause.

If I had been an honest advisor of the Arabs, I would have advised them to go home and not risk their lives fighting for such stuff...

Once the battle was won everything went totally flat for him, as it had been before. He was a loner, who didn't have the ability to arrest his thoughts. He shunned intimacy and affection for other human beings.

The lower creation I avoided, as a reflection upon our failure to attain real intellectuality. If they forced themselves on me, I hated them. To put my hand on a living thing was defilement, and it made me tremble if they touched me or took too great an interest in me... The opposite would have been my choice if my head had not been tyrannous. I lamented myself most when I saw a soldier with a girl, or a man fondling a dog, because my wish was to be as superficial and as perfected, and my jailer held me back.

We see from this passage that he found physical contact with other creatures, whether humans or the lesser animals, quite repulsive. Elsewhere he says: "I could not approve creation." He was always looking at all God's creatures from the outside. He was enthusiastic for the Arab cause precisely because it professes contempt for the material world and anti-human world negation which was the antithesis of Western bourgeois values that he loathed. That is to say his desire for "this mortal coil" seems to have completely failed him. There are passages in his book where he seems to derive almost a sadistic pleasure in his emotional detachment to the violence and bloodshed. Indeed the violence and the danger seemed to get his mind off the unreality of his life. And he had an enormous capacity to endure, even enjoy, physical pain.

...We put it to them... how life in the mass was sensual only, to be lived and loved in its extremity. There could be no rest houses for the revolt, no dividend of joy paid out. It's spirit was accretive, to endure as far as the senses would endure, and to use each such advance as a base for further adventure, deeper privation, sharper pain. Sense could not reach forward or backward. A felt emotion was a conquered emotion, an experience gone dead, which we buried by expressing it.

It seems the only thing that could again give him any sort of thrill comparable with what he felt in the desert campaign was the need for speed, which eventually led to his undoing in the motor bike accident. His skull and ribs were smashed beyond any hope of recovery. A lesser man would have died on the spot or soon after. His prodigious vitality and his ability to endure extreme pain and privation kept him alive for another three days. Even at the end he was determined not to deprive himself of the pleasure of suffering.

The life of famous Dutch painter Vincent Van Gough also gives us valuable insight into this theme that life is a living hell that is to be endured rather than enjoyed. All his life he lived on the edge of nervous crises and towards the end went insane. He began to paint at age 28 and at age 36 he bungled his own suicide and shot himself in the stomach with a revolver, missing his heart, and it took him two days to die. His parting words "misery will never end".

He had similar problems to those T.E. Lawrence. He was irritable by disposition and suffered from nervous depression. At age 16 he left the parental home in Holland and by age 20 he was in London where he had his first unhappy love affair. This reinforced his tendency to brood. He returned to his parental home for a year where he found nothing but irritation and intolerance. Then he went back to London to again attempt to persuade this girl to marry him, again to no avail.

The following year he had a crisis of mysticism which led him into the slum quarter in London where he was stirred by a deep feeling of pity for the poor and downtrodden. At this point he actually decided to become a pastor, like his father. His parish was in Borinage in Belgium amongst the miners and he felt compelled to give away to his flock all his own money and belongings and thus ended up even poorer than the miners. This actually ended badly because the mining community although they were poor were not impressed with their pastor who saw himself as a saint actually suffering extreme poverty and deprivations for them. He was just out of place here as he was in the bourgeois milieu in Holland with his family. The miners actually complained about his "eccentricities" to his superiors and he was recalled. A painting from the last years of his life entitled "Memory of the North" depicts the scene of this mining community with a red winter sun partially obscured by sludgy green-grey cloud, it is a sulfurous light with twisted scraps of cloud tinted with the sun and spreads over the grimy houses of the miners in the foreground. We can assume that his religious period drove him even deeper into a mood of desolation and depression.

He started to study drawing which gave him some satisfaction but then came his next unhappy love affair which ended so badly he was suicidal. This girl was actually his cousin and her family was trying to protect her from this "wild man". He called at their house to see her and was told she was not at home. He noticed that they were about to sit down to dinner and there was a place set for her at the table. He held out his hand towards a candle and asked: "Let me see her as long as I can hold my hand in this flame". The candle was snatched away and he was allowed to see her on this occasion but it was the last time he was allowed to go near her.

A year later he started painting in earnest and now he was frequenting fallen women in the streets. He actually took in a prostitute who was pregnant and what few friends he had left were scandalized and abandoned him. Even this affair ended badly as well. For a time in Paris he became productive as a painter, and his brother Theo was supporting him. But his own nervous tension drove him to leave Paris and live in the south of France. He was too explosive and irritable to live with anyone. There occurred the famous

incident where he attacked Gauguin with a razor and then later cut off his own ear which he presented to some local prostitute in a matchbox.

He was hospitalized for a period after that. He continued to paint and his canvases are highly valued precisely because they reflect the atmosphere of strain and foreboding of a person who is mentally deranged. These were no longer realistic landscapes. The colors are bolder and are almost screaming at us and the trees, cornfields, houses etc are all distorted to give the effect that they are burning upwards like flames. His still-lives have an extraordinary dynamic quality. His famous painting of the "Yellow Chair" for example that prompted the remark from Gauguin: "No one ever painted a chair like that before".

Colin Wilson reminds us that although we think of Van Gogh as a famous painter, the fact is that he lived for almost four decades and it was only the last eight years of his life that he regarded himself as a painter. For the first thirty years of his life he suffered from extreme nervous tension and depression and he lived with no direction and sense of purpose whatsoever. What "love affairs" he had were disastrous and display his pronounced masochistic and suicidal tendencies. Similar to T.E. Lawrence he experienced an intense religious awakening which was really a desperate attempt to give himself some sense of purpose. His own sensitivity made him acutely aware not only of the misery in his own life but also the hopelessness and misery of his fellow men and women. This was not a person that could accept the compromise of living the lie of a bourgeois existence and amassing material wealth and all the paraphernalia and trappings of suburban life that the great majority of us find so comforting and fulfilling.

It is clear that the central problem for all these Outsiders is that of "attachment" – they have not been able to become attached to (that is to say have a need for, derive pleasure from) the ways and uses of the material world. The core issue here is that the attachment to all material objects is simply an emotional compensation for us after having been detached from our mother at birth. The question of attachment to material objects goes hand in hand with our need for security which is simply a different way of stating the case.

There is the famous Russian ballet dancer, Vaslav Nijinsky, who left a *Diary* recording his mental state and the problems in his life. He was born in 1890 and was a delicate and sensitive child passionately attached to his mother. There were various tragedies and traumas in his family life not the least of which was the desertion of his father at a time when his brother had had a serious accident and had been rendered an imbecile.

At age nine he was accepted into the Imperial School of dancing in St Petersburg which meant that he was enjoying the support of the Tsar. By age 20 he was a celebrity in Russia and was playing leading roles opposite the prima ballerina. He fell under the spell of a patron of the arts named Diaghileff, who was a physically unattractive man and a unscrupulous, hard-headed businessman who was passionate in his mission of "artistic savior" with the primary aim of satisfying his homosexual desires.

His first interest in Nijinsky was sexual: Nijinsky speaks of their meeting in his *Diary*: "I disliked him because of his too assured voice but I went with him to seek my luck [to Diaghileff's hotel room]... At once I allowed him to make love to me... I hated him, but pretended to like him because I knew that my mother and I would die of starvation otherwise."

It is interesting that in fact there was no question of him and his mother dying of starvation at that stage. He was a leading dancer at the Mariinsky Theater and if they had money problems at all it was simply because he and his mother were now living beyond their means. Nijinsky accepted Diaghileff's proposition to join his newly formed ballet company which opened with the first Russian Ballet season in Paris in 1910. Nijinsky was hailed by the critics as "le dieu de la danse" and both he and Diaghileff were international celebrities. After a few years and further successes of the Russian ballet throughout Europe the rot started to set in.

Nijinsky found the overheated emotional atmosphere of the Diaghileff *ménage* a strain; Nijinsky had a deep-rooted religious tendency that made the unending theater atmosphere of art and sensuality unsatisfying to him. He quarreled with Diaghileff several times; he was getting tired of the “artist and lover” business. In these quarrels, Stravinsky always supported Diaghileff; Nijinsky, after all was only a brainless child prodigy, while Diaghileff was the Connoisseur, the Artist with a capital A.

In 1913 Nijinsky took a sea voyage without Diaghileff. He married a young dancer in Buenos Aires. When Diaghileff found out about it he sent Nijinsky a telegram dismissing him from the Russian ballet. His marriage to the young ballerina was turbulent and confusing. She was Hungarian and at that time Hungary was at war with Russia. They tried to live with her relatives in Budapest but they were hostile to Nijinsky and were bent on destroying their marriage. He was trying to set up his own ballet company but his artistic nature was totally unsuited to cope with all the trivial administrative and logistical not to mention financial problems that that would entail. His mental state was deteriorating and he was being haunted by visions of dead soldiers. Nonetheless he managed to play in the ballet season in New York in his own production.

In 1917 he moved with his wife and child to St Moritz. He began to write the Diary which was pretty much a rambling exposition of his own confused mental state. He admired some big thinkers like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche but he was far from developing any coherent philosophy of his own. His marriage to Madame Nijinsky was strained to say the least. On two occasions he was physically violent with her, but mostly she complained that “he seemed like a stranger”. On at least one occasion his wife was told that Nijinsky was in the village exhorting the people to go to church. The servant who told her this apparently knew Nietzsche as a child and he added: “Mr. Nietzsche used to behave like that just before he was taken away”. His study was full of drawings colored in red and black “like a bloodstained mortuary cover”. He told his wife: “They are dead soldiers’ faces. It is the war...” In fact the First World War had ended by this time and he had taken no part in it. He seemed to have been haunted by these images of dead soldiers’ faces in the abstract, as if he was lamenting the plight of all humanity.

Finally, there was the incident of the “marriage with God”. He had been asked to dance; in front of a crowded audience, he stood and stared for nearly half an hour. “The audience behaved as if hypnotized” his wife records. Finally he told them: “I will dance you the war, with its suffering and death... the war which you did nothing to prevent, so for which you are responsible”. “His gestures were all monumental. The public seemed to be petrified”. He danced them a sort of choreographic counterpart of Picasso’s “Guernica”.

Not long after this a psychiatrist in Zurich told his wife: “You must try to be brave... Your husband is incurably insane”. That same day her family who had just arrived in Zurich called the police and had them come and remove “the madman”. This triggered a catatonic attack from which he never recovered. He spent several years in sanatoriums after that staring into space.

From his Diary we learn that he was preoccupied with the fact that he had done “bad deeds” although it is not known that he had done anything particularly bad or discreditable. He was said to be very sincere with a Prince Myshkin-like simplicity. His affliction was clearly this general sense of guilt which is one of the primary consequences of the trauma of birth. The sadomasochistic impulses and the hatred for the world may not be conscious at all by the time we reach adulthood, but they are there embedded in the base of our unconscious mind nonetheless and will drive us to seek “salvation” even if we have not done anything bad at all. Our guilt literally comes from the fact that we may have bad or evil thoughts. These are the same feelings of guilt that will drive women into a nunnery or men into holy orders. It is the source of the religious impulse in general. Some extracts from his *Diary*:

I do not want the death of the senses. I want people to understand. I cannot cry and shed tears over what I write, but I cry within me.

I will tell the truth, and others will continue what I have begun. I am like Zola, but I want to speak, and not write novels. Novels prevent one from understanding feeling.

I am in a trance, the trance of love. I want to say so much and cannot find the words... I write in a trance, and that trance is called *wisdom*. Every man is a reasonable being. I do not want unreasonable beings, and therefore I want everyone to be in a trance of feelings. The whole life of my wife and all of mankind is death...

I want... to heal my wife, but I cannot be healed. I do not want to be healed. I am not afraid of anything except the death of wisdom. I want the death of the mind. My wife will not go mad if I kill her mind. The mind is stupidity, but wisdom is God.

Nijinsky seems to have taken on himself the burden of guilt for all the soldiers killed in the wars, but obviously to suggest that he was in anyway responsible for the war between Russia and Hungary or for the First World War would be absurd. The fact is that when he entered the world his initial reaction was precisely that he had been cast into a war zone. The hell of the battleground came to be symbolic in his mind of the hell he felt as a new born baby. He was not given sufficient secondary desire for the material objects of the world, nor for the sensual pleasure in his wife's genitalia, to enable him to derive some pleasure out of life after all. He only knew the hell of a destroyed primary sensuality from the date of his birth till the date of his death. As quoted above: "The whole of my wife and all of mankind is death..."

I believe I suffered more than Christ. I love life and I want to live, to cry but cannot – I feel such pain in my soul – a pain which frightens me. My soul is ill. My soul, not my mind. The doctors do not understand my illness... Everybody who reads these lines will suffer... My body is not ill, it is my soul that is ill.

Colin Wilson makes the important point that an Outsider is not a freak, it is just that he is "more sensitive than the 'sanguine and healthy-minded' type of man"; that is to say he has a lower threshold of pain and misery. The average person has "a life", that is to say there are many things that they care about and that motivate them. These are the things that compensate them for living in this valley of tears; that make life worth living after all. This includes other people whether or not family members that give them pleasure or gratify their sense of responsibility and duty, but also includes their job, their wealth, their ambitions, and an infinite number of material objects such as their shoes, their cars, their golf clubs, their arsenal of guns, their wardrobe full of fine clothes. Everything in the material world is a compensation for what was lost at birth. Most people actually find such compensations to a greater or lesser extent and therefore they consider themselves happy. It is only the Outsiders who find that all these compensations offered in the real world do not actually compensate them for what they lost at birth. As a consequence they have no attachments, and this is the cause of their misery and alienation. As Keats says:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain...

The famous psychologist William James in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience* wrote about and actual experience that he himself had.

Whilst in a state of philosophic pessimism, and general depression of spirits about my prospects, I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight... when suddenly there came upon me,

without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence. Simultaneously, there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient I had seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day... moving nothing but his black eyes, and looking absolutely non-human. This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other. *That shape am I*, I felt, potentially. Nothing I possess can defend me from that fate if the hour should strike for me as it struck for him. There was such a horror of him, and such a perception of my own merely momentary discrepancy from him, that it was as if something hitherto solid in my breast gave way, and I became a mass of quivering fear. After this, the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before.

William James was a man who to all intents and purposes was a success in life. He was the brother of Henry James the famous novelist, and they came from a distinguished and wealthy family. Interestingly though his father Henry James Sr. had a similar experience which he would come to interpret as a Swedenborgian "vastation," a stage in the process of spiritual regeneration. This experience was an apprehension of, in his own words, "a perfectly insane and abject terror, without ostensible cause, and only to be accounted for, to my perplexed imagination, by some damned shape squatting invisible to me within the precincts of the room, and raying out from his fetid personality influences fatal to life."

Colin Wilson points out that in Hindu and Buddhist scriptures the word "bondage" is the equivalent of the Christian notion of "sin". For Christians the original sin is what has brought about our bondage in this life and this is precisely what the adherents of this religion seek salvation from in the next life. The experience of William James that he describes above carries with it the notion of absolute and inescapable bondage to the horrors of this world. He felt he was staring into the face of the *essence of evil*.

In our own attitude, not yet abandoned, of impartial onlookers, what are we bound to say of this quarrel? It seems to me that we are bound to say that morbid mindedness ranges over the wider scale of experience, and that its survey is the one that overlaps. The method of averting one's attention from evil, and simply living in the light of the good, is splendid as long as it will work... But it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy comes; and even though one be quite free of melancholy oneself, there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine...

It is not necessary to go too much into the personal biography of Friedrich Nietzsche in order to understand his message as an Outsider. He started out it seems both as a fervent Christian and militantly atheistic. He wrote to a friend when he was twenty-one years of age: "If Christianity means belief in a historical person or event, I have nothing to do with it. But if it means the need for salvation, then I can treasure it". So we see here a fervent desire for salvation, but salvation from what one may ask. Conventional Christians have called him "poisonous and detestable" but is he really searching for something so shockingly different from them?

Evidently Nietzsche was riddled with this uneasy feeling of guilt which the Christians also feel and explain with their doctrine of Original Sin. That is to say when Eve seduced Adam into eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. But we now know that this feeling of guilt in all of us actually stems from the feeling of devastation that we are greeted with immediately upon being born into the world. The desire for salvation that Nietzsche felt so strongly was simply a primary desire to be saved from the horror of living in this world. Salvation for him would have been simply to have his umbilical cord reconnected and for him to be stuffed back into his mother's womb. But unfortunately by the time he was putting his anguish into words he had become a grown up, and reinsertion into his

mother's womb was no longer an option. So now all he was aware of was this need for salvation from his current predicament. Not only was the world he found himself in giving him no real pleasure or enjoyment, but in addition he had all these subliminal impulses of hatred, loathing and self-hate that he had to deal with. This is what was making him feel guilty, and this is what he desperately needed to be saved from.

Then Nietzsche came across in a second hand store a book by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. This book was called (in English) *The World as Will and Representation*. Arguably one of the most dismal and negative tomes about the human condition ever written, and the young Nietzsche was transfixed. Nietzsche says about this book: "Here, where every line cried renunciation, denial, resignation, here I saw a mirror in which I observed the world, life and my own soul in frightful grandeur. Here there gazed at me the full, unbiased eye of the Art, here I saw the sickness and healing, exile and refuge, heaven and hell. The need to know oneself, even to gnaw at oneself, laid a powerful hold on me..." Schopenhauer had given him the clue how he might find his own personal salvation here on Earth. From then on Nietzsche's road to salvation would become the *will to power*. Like Schopenhauer before him Nietzsche began to see this will to power manifesting itself in all aspects of human civilization and society. Essentially we are all sadomasochistic monsters striving to dominate and be dominated. Life was a painful and meaningless Eternal Recurrence and in order to rise above it (read "find salvation") Nietzsche *could no longer be man*; he had to become Superman.

Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be an ocean to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean.

I teach you the Superman. He is the ocean; in him can your contempt be overwhelmed. What is the greatest thing you can experience? It is the hour of great contempt. The hour in which even your happiness is loathsome to you, and your reason and virtue likewise. The hour in which you say: What is my happiness worth? It is poverty and uncleanness and despicable ease. Yet my happiness should justify being itself... Not your sin but your sufficiency cries unto heaven, your niggardliness even in sin cries unto heaven...

Nietzsche's Superman concept has been misinterpreted in countless different ways. The Superman has been seen as a humanistic monster, and Nietzsche himself almost encouraged his critics to think of him as the antichrist. Famously the Nazi's took the notion as justification for creating the "master race". Much of Nietzsche's writings are that of a prophet and a seer. Most of what he says seems to be a poetic rave that has no real bearing on reality. However his message throughout is crystal clear. There is something really rotten in the human race that soils us and binds us and somehow we have to locate it and overcome it.

'He who seeks may go astray. All solitude is sin', says the herd. And long were you yourself of the herd.

The voice of the herd still lingers in you, and when you shall say: 'I no longer have a common conscience with them', it shall be grief and pain to you.

You call yourself free? I would hear of your master-thought, not of your escape from the yoke.

Are you a man that should escape from the yoke? Many have cast off all their values when they cast off their servitude.

Free from what? How does that concern Zarathustra? Let your eye answer me frankly: Free *for* what?

... a day will come when loneliness shall weary you, when your pride shall writhe and your courage gnash its teeth. In that day you shall cry: I am alone.

A day shall come when you shall see your high things no more, and your low things all too near; you shall fear your exaltation as if it were a phantom. In that day you will cry: All is false.

There are emotions that seek to slay the solitary; if they don't succeed they must perish themselves. Are you able to be a murderer?

Colin Wilson points out that one of the major issues for the Outsider is that of identity. "The Outsider is not sure who he is. 'He has found an "I", but it is not his true "I". His main business is to find his way back to himself". And this is precisely the point in relation to the devastation that we feel at the time of birth. It is the process of surviving thru that devastation and again deriving some gratification in the new world we find ourselves in which actually formulates our ego. It is precisely the sadomasochistic tendencies and the hatred for ourselves and others which determines the goals and motivations to formulate the "I". Our sadistic tendencies will find an infinite number of channels both sexual and nonsexual which can be classified generally under "will to power." Such a person will have a very strong and dominating ego. On the other hand our masochistic tendencies will see expression in a desire to be subjugated, controlled and punished and again this can lose any resemblance whatsoever to sexual activity. Such a person will have a very weak and vacillating ego and would normally be the sort of person who would join a religious movement in later life where there are all sorts of rituals for chastisement and penitence.

In his *Confessions* Leo Tolstoy reveals a side to himself that we would not normally suspect. He seriously poses the questions: "What is life? Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there any meaning in life that can overcome inevitable death?" He was arguably the most famous writer in any language, but it is true he was putting in the mouth of some of his characters certain searching questions which could indicate that these were the types of issues that were weighing upon him in real life. In *War and Peace* the Peter Bezhukov character asks "What is good?... What does one live for? What am I? What is life and What is death?" And at a later stage in the same novel Peter observes of the soldiers in the firing squad that the soldiers *are not aware of the nature of what they are doing*. It is as if this institutionalized cruelty and "man's inhumanity to man" is inextricably bound up in the meaning of life itself. As the author Walter Pater observes in *Florian* "all living creatures are involved in 'a vast web of cruelty' no matter how gentle and humane they may be".

In his *Confessions* Tolstoy says he actually suffered the same sort of attacks that Roquentin suffered in the novel *La Nausée* of Jean-Paul Sartre described earlier. "Five years ago something very strange began to happen to me. At first I experienced moments of perplexity and arrest of life, as though I did not know how to live or what to do... Then these moments of perplexity recurred oftener and oftener..." Which became a full on identity crisis: "I felt that what I had been standing on had broken down, and that I had nothing left under my feet. What I had lived on no longer existed, and I had nothing left to live on". A strange situation to be sure. Practically everybody in the world knew who Tolstoy was except Tolstoy himself.

To bring home the absurdity of life, Tolstoy cites an Eastern fable of a man who clings to a shrub on the side of a pit. There is an enraged beast at the top and a dragon at the bottom. Two mice are even gnawing at the base of the shrub. He knows he is doomed and then he notices some drops of honey on the leaves of the shrub. He reaches out and starts licking the honey while he awaits his fate. The point of the parable being of course that from the point of view of all the self-satisfied bourgeoisie, life is only a problem if you lack appetite for the honey. It is really so little, and yet they find it so satisfying.

Tolstoy also wrote a short story *Memoirs of a Madman* where there was a lot of autobiographical material. The hero relates that he has just been examined and certified sane, but only because he had

been able to restrain himself and had not given himself away. He describes an “attack” he had as a young child when he heard about the Crucifixion. The cruelty made him break down: “I sobbed and sobbed and began knocking my head against the wall”. He describes his revulsion for “sexual impurities” in his teens. He then describes his first attack. He was in a carriage on a long journey to buy a property and he woke up in the carriage “with a feeling that there was something terrifying”. Later that night the terror returned: “Why have I come here? Where am I taking myself?... I am running away from something dreadful and I cannot escape it. I am always with myself, and it is I who am my tormentor... Neither the Penza or any other property will add anything or take anything from me: and it is myself I am weary of and find intolerable and a torment. I want to fall asleep and forget myself and cannot. I cannot get away from myself”. It is interesting that he was on his way to buy a property, named Penza, which of course is the classic compensation that the normal person will find for the loss of his/her sensuality at birth and to provide the “attachment and security” that they crave. When this fictional “madman” complains “I am always with myself, and it is I who am my tormentor” we can read in this classical sentiments of masochism and self-hatred.

What is life for? To die? To kill myself at once? No, I am afraid. To wait for death till it comes? I fear that even more. Then I must live. *But what for?* In order to die? And I could not escape from that circle. I took up the book, read, and forgot myself for a moment, but then again, the same question and the same horror. I lay down and closed my eyes. It was worse still.

We can see at once the “madman’s” problem. He had no appetite for those few meagre drops of honey that all the rest of humanity were lapping up with such gusto.

Interestingly Tolstoy developed his own version of Christianity later in life which was a revival of Manicheism. The Manicheans were an extreme Christian sect in the Middle Ages who believed the sex act was evil, even and especially for the reproduction of the species. The spirit world is good and of God and the material world is evil and of the devil. They actually starved people to death who were dying in order to speed them on their way to salvation and hasten their exit from this Satanic cesspit we call life on Earth.

A few events in Dostoyevsky’s life have to be taken into account in order to understand his character. Dostoyevsky’s father was a landowner and he was killed by his own peasants one day when he was drunk. They killed him obviously with extreme prejudice by crushing his testicles. The peasants were able to disguise the fact that he was murdered by violent means and they were never brought to justice.

Dostoyevsky achieved fame with his first novel at age 24, but three years later he was arrested for being involved in a nihilistic plot. He was sentenced to death, but was then pardoned at the last moment and exiled to Siberia for ten years. He and the others arrested with him were quite certain they were going to die and at least one of them went insane as a result of the fear and pressure. His life seemed to be one long rollercoaster ride of brilliant successes followed by catastrophes. His dealings with the fairer sex revealed him to be abnormally weak and stupid, and yet he was capable of extraordinary spiritual strength as well when extricating himself from his disasters.

Colin Wilson says that Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* is the first major treatment of the Outsider theme in modern literature. Literally the title in Russian is *Notes from Under the Floorboards* which is implying that it has been written by something that is not even human, a beetle or a cockroach. The book starts out with the words: “I am full of spleen and repellent...” For the first 50 pages he rambles on about how loathsome he finds himself, but in addition he also makes it clear that he actually gets pleasure from his suffering.

... it is just in this same cold, loathsome semi-mania, this same half-belief in oneself... this same poison of unsatisfied wishes... that there lies the essence of the strange delight I have spoken of.

It is actually a diatribe against the philosophy of Hegel and Leibniz that “all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds”. Reason governs all; men are cogs in a great machine that makes the ultimate Good. I will be revisiting this philosophy in the next chapter with the moral treatise of Adam Smith, the founder of the modern capitalist economy, but Dostoyevsky wants none of it. His beetle-man, with his bad teeth and his beady eyes is defending the right of the individual to opt out of all this pretense: “To hell with your System. I demand the right to behave as I like. I demand the right to regard myself as *utterly unique*”. We can see in the passage that follows just how prophetic the beetle-man was in relation to the good of human civilization when we ponder on just how many wars the free-world (led by the USA) has been involved in (read gratuitously caused) in recent years. In fact modern capitalist economies thrive on war. A prolonged peace would mean stagnation leading into spiraling depression.

To maintain theories of renovating the human race through Systems... is about the same thing as to maintain that man grows milder with civilization. Logically, perhaps, this is so; yet he is so prone to Systems and abstract deductions that he is forever ready to mutilate the truth, to be blind to what he sees or deaf to what he hears, so long as he can succeed in vindicating his logic... Civilization develops in man nothing but an added capacity to receive impressions – that is all. And the growth of that capacity increases his tendency to seek pleasure in spilling blood. You may have noticed that the most enthusiastic blood-letters have always been the most civilized of men...

At this point we recall that point made earlier by Walter Pater’s *Florian* that “all living creatures are involved in ‘a vast web of cruelty’ no matter how gentle and humane they may be”. Anyone that can seriously argue that this is the best of all possible worlds is quite simply a self-deluded hypocrite. Human society is based on consumption and that means war and destruction. The will to power of the individual members of society manifests itself as a massive herd instinct at the national level to destroy and subjugate the neighbor. And then this becomes the herd instinct of nations to join together as “allies” to destroy and subjugate the common enemy. Their propaganda will call the enemy “evil” and that it has to be vanquished, but in fact they are merely projecting their own evil impulses onto the enemy.

If you say that everything – chaos, darkness, anathema – can be reduced to mathematical formulae – then men will go insane on purpose to have no judgement, and to behave as he likes. I believe this because it appears that man’s whole business is to prove that he is a man and not a cog-wheel... And perhaps, who knows, the striving of man on earth may consist in this uninterrupted striving for something ahead, that is, in life itself, rather than some real end which obviously must be a static formula of the same kind as two and two make four – I am sure that man will never renounce the genuine suffering that comes of ruin and chaos. Why, suffering is the one and only source of knowledge.

The beetle-man ends his book by letting us know that he is proud of the fact that he has chosen not to engage in this farce called human civilization and the best he can do is simply to deny society altogether and do nothing at all. The only solution is to sink into a contemplative inertia. In announcing this attitude to life, Dostoyevsky is mirroring the philosophies of Kierkegaard who at that stage was not known outside of Denmark and Nietzsche that was not known outside Germany. Dostoyevsky develops these themes in several of his novels, notably *Crime and Punishment*, *Devils*, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot*. The

message is all in the same vein – there is something rotten at the heart of human society and at the base of the human individual will. Something that has to be overcome, the need for salvation. Famously Rashkolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* thinks he can solve his malaise if he just takes the definitive act – a gesture of defiance - of murdering an old pawnbroker.

... a sort of savage energy gleamed suddenly in his feverish eyes and his wasted, yellow face. He did not know or think where he was going, but had one thought only: 'that all this must be ended today... that he would not return home without it, because he would not go on living like that'.

The visionary poet William Blake claims to have spent more time conversing with the spirits than with real human beings. He once claimed indeed to have seen the ghost of Julius Caesar. To the normal man in the street, and especially in modern times, he would be dismissed as a lunatic. Another visionary, Emanuel Swedenborg, claimed to have made a complete tour of heaven and hell. Their motivation seems to be to evade the misery and degradation of this world by seeking solace in an imaginary world of visions. According to Blake:

I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it's a hindrance and not action; it is as the dirt upon my feet, no part of me. 'What,' it will be questioned, 'when the sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire, something like a guinea?' Oh no, no, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying: 'Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty.'

George Fox was one of the greatest religious teachers England produced in England. He was the founder of the Quaker movement. In his day he was famous from one end of the kingdom to the other. Like Blake he had developed the faculty for seeing visions as a solution to the problems he was having finding attachment and satisfaction with the real world in which he found himself.

As I was walking with several friends, I lifted up my head and saw three steeple house spires, and they struck at my life. I asked them what that place was; they said 'Lichfield'. Immediately the word of the Lord came to me, that I must go thither... As soon as they were gone, I stepped away, and went by my eye over hedge and ditch until I came within a mile of Lichfield; where, in a great field, shepherds were keeping their sheep. Then I was commanded by the Lord to pull off my shoes. I stood there, for it was winter, but the word of the Lord was like a fire in me. So I put off my shoes and left them with the shepherds; and the poor shepherds trembled, and were astonished. Then I walked about a mile, and as soon as I got within the city, the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 'Cry: Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield.' So I went up and down the streets, crying with a loud voice: Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield. It being a market day, I went into the market-place, and went up and down in several places of it, and made stands crying: Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield, and no one touched nor laid hands upon me. As I went down the town, there ran like a channel of blood down the streets, and the market-place was a pool of blood... so when I had declared what was upon me and cleared myself of it, I came out of the town in peace about a mile to the shepherds, and there I went to them, and took my shoes, and gave them some money, but the fire of the Lord was in my feet and all over me that I did not matter to put my shoes on any more... After this a deep consideration came upon me, for what reason I should be sent to cry against that city: Wo to the bloody city of Lichfield... But afterwards I came to understand that in the Emperor Diocletian's

time, a thousand Christians were martyred in Lichfield. So I was to go, without my shoes, through the channel of blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs, which had been shed over a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets.

Colin Wilson points out that George Fox was more fortunate than most of the other Outsiders he documents in as much he was able to find an escape (salvation) from his malaise in the fervor of his faith. Raskolnikov for example in *Crime and Punishment* would have been delighted to have performed such a definitive act as George Fox did that day in Lichfield. George Fox had something that all the Outsiders lacked and that was confidence and conviction. For the rest of them the world is a dismal and revolting place where they can't bring themselves to find anything worthwhile. The point is of course that George Fox was just as disenchanting with the real world as they were but he was able to rise above it by changing his vision of the external world. He could act once he saw himself walking barefoot through the streets running with the blood of Christian martyrs. This gave him the chance to channel his hatred for the world into the more legitimate and socially acceptable pastime of descrying the appalling atrocities committed there by the Romans a thousand years earlier. Of course at that stage he didn't even know exactly why he was calling for the damnation and destruction of the citizenry of Lichfield, and the massacre of the martyrs seems more like a convenient rationalization after the event. His initial rant seems more like a subconscious hatred for the human race in general.

In the early days of his crusade Fox admits that he wasn't exactly filled with the fire of the Lord. He was a frustrated preacher searching for the right pulpit. He must have had the same state of mind that T.E. Lawrence had before he found the Arabian campaign. They both found the ersatz substitute for the real thing.

... at Barnet a strong temptation to despair came upon me... and some years later I continued in that condition, and fain would have it put from me. And I went to many a priest to look for comfort, and found no comfort from them... From Barnet I went to London, where I took a lodging and was under great misery and trouble there, for I looked upon those who professed religion in London, and I saw all was dark and under the chain of darkness... And I had an uncle, one Pickering, a baptist... yet I could not import my mind to him, nor join with him, for I saw all, young and old, where they were.

When Fox was in the full fervor of his campaign one of his favorite ploys was to go into established Churches and interrupt the service. He would let the parishioners know in no uncertain terms that the world was corrupt and deluded. He became one of the chief enemies of the established Church. He could see no good at all in the "visible Church" and he thought that the priests were neither devout nor strong-willed. Needless to say he was often set upon by a furious mob, indeed it was quite apparent that he was enjoying the ill treatment.

But the people fell upon me in a great rage, struck me down and almost stifled me and smothered me, and I was cruelly beaten and bruised by them, and their hands, Bibles and sticks. Then they hauled me out, though I was hardly able to stand, and put me into the stocks, where I sat for some hours; and they bought dog whips and horse whips...

Ultimately this must be seen as Fox's primary motivation. He was just a run of the mill sadomasochist. The sadistic side of his nature sought Nietzsche-type will to power in subjugating a group of followers who would harken unto him and fear his message of fire brimstone and damnation, and the masochistic and self-hatred side of his nature sought to be beaten and whipped to punish him for whatever it was he

must have done that causes him to have this unbearable and overwhelming sense of guilt. He didn't know himself whence came this sense of guilt anymore than he knew exactly why he started his rant at the citizens of Linchfield, walking barefoot thru the streets running with symbolic blood. The truth is the blood had nothing to do with the martyred Christians but was in fact symbolic of the blood that was shed when his umbilical cord was cut.

The other visionary that Colin Wilson documents is the English poet, Blake, who was a classic Outsider, way ahead of his time inasmuch as he preceded Nietzsche by 70 years or more, and yet he had this attitude of looking upon the human personality and the human condition as the enemy that had to be overcome. When the human personality comes into contact with "the world" that's when the pretense begins. The human personality enmeshes our higher self, our soul, in a web of lies and deceit, and we no longer know what is true and what is false, but also what is bad and what is good. The only way to overcome this veil of deceit is through meditation and introspection and then we encounter some wondrous revelations. Blake is most exceptional even amongst Outsiders in that he had a docile and loving wife and a happy domestic situation even though he never achieved any public recognition thru his life and those that did know him considered him to be a crank and a madman. He considered himself to be a genius and he had no real need for fame.

I have mental joy and mental health
And mental friends and mental wealth
I've a wife I love and that loves me
I've all but riches bodily.

Blake was concerned to attack not only the fundamentals of religion and develop his own solution of salvation through mysticism, but also he was questioning the fundamental "reality" of the world and from the very beginning he was advocating his own particular brand of Solipsism, this is the doctrine that the only thing we can be certain of is that we exist, and that the external world and everybody in it actually exist in our own mind.

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.

Another unusual thing about Blake as an Outsider is that he reveled in the uplifting and spiritual enjoyment of sex. Unlike Tolstoy, Nietzsche and T.E. Lawrence for example, not only did he not find sex to be dirty, degrading and revolting, but he was anticipating D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by a century and a half and preaching that the physical act of sex can lead us to visionary insight. A sure way to get to know God is through heightened sensuality and carnal pleasure.

... to catch for thee girls of mild silver or of furious gold
I'll lie beside thee on a bank and view their wanton play
In lovely copulation, bliss on bliss, with Theotormon.

Colin Wilson tells us that this was not mere libertinism. Blake was truly advocating sensual pleasure as a religious doctrine.

How can one joy absorb another? Are not different joys
Holy, eternal, infinite? And each joy is a love.

Clearly then Blake was driven to deny the world where he found himself even though he was clearly getting a lot of pleasure out of life, and this is the primary pleasure of the womb I am talking about here. He evidently retained a strong sensual desire for the female genitals and had no feelings of revulsion or guilt about the act of copulation. He is not the sort of Outsider that would normally be driven simply by their hatred of the world and the pleasures of the flesh to yearn for salvation. Nor was he feeling the barren and sterile isolation and soul-destroying mundanity of living in human society like the Steppenwolf. The only explanation for it is the one he himself gives. He had come to know the essential secret about "the creation" thru divine inspiration. As Plato would put it – he had come up out of the cave and had seen the light.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt. This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. ...If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' chinks of his cavern.

Blake was writing as a seer and a visionary. His phrases and images are not without mysticism and ambiguity. But the meaning is still very clear. There is something we don't know about the tree of life (read the tree of knowledge of good and evil) but the time is coming when we shall know the secret, our doors of perception will be thrown wide open and then we will be in a position to regain paradise precisely through heightened enjoyment of sex. In another passage Blake tells us that "five windows light the caverned man", meaning our five senses from which we can experience sensual delight and note the womb imagery with the "caverned man", and for the moment we have to seek our carnal pleasures on the sly as it were "for stolen joys are sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant". That's true as well as far as it goes. But the fact is for everyone like Blake who can truly get his kicks by subverting the established taboos of sex there are thousands perhaps millions of other humans who can either take it or leave it, or indeed find only torment and repulsion from it. While this veil is pulled over our eyes, the bulk of humanity who, unlike Blake, are not able to lap up those small drops of honey, are writhing and twisting in agony and are directing their anguish into outlets of hatred, war and strife.

Go, tell the human race that woman's love is sin
That an eternal life awaits the worm of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come...

Blake himself recognizes, indeed he is telling us, that the rest of us are not born with his capacity to enjoy life. He was a man for whom the earth really moved when he was having sex. And yet notwithstanding that he was getting so much enjoyment out of life he was quite clear that on the whole, for the rest of us, "not to be born is the best thing, and death is better than life". Now at last he is echoing the sentiments of the other Outsiders. Note however that he is saying "not to be born" is the ultimate. And of course he is right there. He himself would have been even happier if he had been allowed to stay in his mother's womb. And as that was possible and he was cast out into this valley of woe, then there is only one thing for it and that is to seek a precipitous death. Because the way things are at present, Blake himself and the rest of us as well are still in this state of bondage as a result of our own ignorance as to the cause of our suffering. There is a shadow hanging over us. Colin Wilson describes it thus: "The Spectre is invisible, like a shadow, but when he has the ascendancy in man, everything is solid, unchangeable,

stagnant, unreal". Little did Blake or Colin Wilson suspect that the Spectre is merely the limb that they lost at birth – their own placenta.

Each man is in his spectre's power
Until the arrival of that hour
When his humanity awakes
And casts his spectre into the lake...

Colin Wilson in his final chapter recounts the story in the book *Axel* by De Lisle Adam which more or less epitomizes the Outsider quandary. This aristocratic couple had just found blissful love and rather than ruin the moment they decide to suicide. Axel says to his loved one "As for living, our servants will do that for us", meaning of course that it is the mundane world which is the spoiler to all chance of absolute happiness. To live on and suffer all the inconveniences and trivial annoyances not to mention the endless boredom, to grow old together and almost certainly see their passion for each other gradually dissipate, was simply not worth the bother. Life is for the lesser mortals, the servants who have no higher aspirations.

In the vault of Axel's castle, Sara and the young count Axel stand clasped in one another's arms. Sara has just shot at Axel with two pistols at a distance of five yards, but missed him both times. Sara rhapsodizes about the 'world' which they now hold in their hands: the markets of Bagdad, the snows of Tibet, the fjords of Norway, 'all dreams to realize. But Axel, 'grave and impenetrable', asks her: "Why realize them?... Live? No, our existence is full. The future? Sara, believe me when I say it – we have exhausted the future. All the realities, what will they be tomorrow in comparison with the mirages we have just lived?... The quality of our hope no longer allows us the earth. What can we ask from this miserable star where our melancholy lingers on, save pale reflections of this moment?... It is the Earth – don't you see – that has become illusion. Admit, Sara, we have destroyed in our strange hearts the love of life... To consent, after this, to live would only be a sacrilege against ourselves. Live? Our servants will do that for us... Oh, the external world! Let us not be made dupes by the old slave... who promises us the keys to a palace of enchantments, when he only clutches a handful of ashes in his black fist... Sara is convinced; they drink the goblet of poison together and die in ecstasy.

The world that Axel wanted to leave was actually the human condition. Like Sartre and many others have said one way or another: it's other people that is the problem. Another visionary, Thomas Traherne clearly states the stages of his own disillusionment with the world in his book *Centuries of Meditation*. He starts out with how he saw the world as a child.

All appeared new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful... I was entertained by the works of God in their splendor and glory; I saw all in the peace of Eden... The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped nor ever was sown... The dust and stones of the streets were as precious as gold... And young men were glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty...

But for Traherne these "imitations of immortality" were only short lived.

It was eclipsed... by the customs and manners of men. Grit in the eye or yellow jaundice will not let a man see those objects truly that are before it. And therefore it is requisite that we should be as very strangers to the thoughts, customs and opinions of men in this world... They all prized things I did not dream of. I was weak and easily guided by their example.

We shall have more to say on this aspect of the thoughts, customs and opinions of men in the next chapter when we examine the *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* written by the founding architect of western capitalist society, Adam Smith. And as for Traherne's assertion that we humans do not "see" those objects that are right in front of us then we shall be examining *The World as Will and Representation* by Arthur Schopenhauer in the fourth chapter. Schopenhauer built up his entire system of philosophy precisely on this point, and he was a pivotal influence on Friedrich Nietzsche who may have eclipsed him in fame but in terms of original thought must be considered strictly as Schopenhauer's disciple. All these great thinkers it seems are just echoes of the Pelagian heresy. Pelagius was known as the arch-heretic because he denied St. Augustine's doctrine of original sin. According to Pelagius: "Everything good and everything evil... is done by us, not born with us... we are begotten without virtue as without vice, and before the activity of our own personal Will, there is nothing in man but what God has stored in him". It didn't take much to be considered an arch-heretic in those days evidently. All Pelagius was saying is that we don't come already programmed with evil inclinations because Adam ate an apple from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil thousands of years ago. Before we are born we are without evil and it is only after we are born and our personal Will kicks in that we actually turn to the bad. Pretty radical stuff. He was lucky he was only expelled from Jerusalem and forced to live in exile in Egypt. This is how Traherne explains his own take on the Pelagian heresy.

And that our misery proceeds ten times more from the outward bondage of opinion and custom than from any inward corruption or depravation of Nature; and that it is not our parents' loins so much as our parents' lives, that enthralls and blinds us.

We can see that Traherne was truly aware that we had a problem and he pretty well had divined the possible cause of it. He had figured out that it was after being born that the rot sets in. The only thing that he had not explained was the precise psychological and emotional conditions that cause the Will to stir initially and then rise to irrepressible dictator of our destiny in later life. Truly as Traherne states, our parents' loins per se are not the problem. The problem only comes when we are forcibly separated from our mother's loins and have no option but to make our way in the world with our parents and the other "grown-ups". Traherne found his own solution to his quandary simply by renouncing bourgeois society and becoming a wandering ascetic. Schopenhauer would have applauded his decision and Adam Smith would have scathingly dismissed him as a malcontent, an ingrate, and would have called his sanity into question.

When I came into the country, and being seated among the silent trees and meads and hills, had all my time in my own hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in search of happiness, and to satiate that burning thirst which nature had enkindled in me from my youth. In which I was so resolute that I chose rather to live upon ten pounds a year and to go in leather clothes, and feed upon bread and water, so that I might have all my time clearly to myself...

It would be hard to find anyone who has stated the case better than this. Fellini has done just as well with his film *La Dolce Vita*. The fact is that despite all the hype and craving for pleasure and stimulation that we find all around us in this life, we are all aware in our heart of hearts that it is a very dull mundane

and unprofitable exercise in the long run. Especially with our inbuilt obsolescence in the form of old age that creeps up on us all, where even the fleeting and ephemeral drops of honey that we may be able to lap up when we are young, inexorably slides into stale and sterile monotony of the nursing home. Another good commentary on the intrinsic worth of life comes from Søren Kierkegaard.

The Gods were bored, so they created man. Adam was bored because he was alone, so Eve was created... Adam was bored alone, then Adam and Eve were bored together; then Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel were bored *en famille*, then the population of the world increased, and the people were bored *en masse*. To divert themselves, they conceived the idea of constructing a tower high enough to reach the heavens. This idea itself is as boring as the tower was high, and constitutes a terrible proof of how boredom had gained the upper hand.

So there you have it. Life is boring and is not worth of living. But wait a minute. Isn't Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita* a superbly ironical and intelligent commentary on the human civilization. With all the pain and suffering that we all will experience at some stage in our life, even if it is just towards the very end, and with all the evil and anger and hatred that we see all around us, not to mention the need for capitalist countries to be constantly in a state of war so they can keep the economy buoyant, and all the "man's inhumanity to man", and the millions and millions of humans who have been needlessly slaughtered by some warmongering dictator, or at our present time, by the most warlike and aggressive nation of them all, the United States of America, notwithstanding all that bad stuff, is Kierkegaard right when he dismisses the world as totally boring. Yes, life is ultimately a fallen paradise, but if you want to experience a world where everybody is blissfully happy, a world for example where we are all living in pods and still reveling in total sensuality like we were originally in the womb, that is when I think we would really be living in a world where boredom would reign supreme. Of course we wouldn't actually be aware that we are bored, and that would be a good thing, but unfortunately we wouldn't have the drive to go out and find the means to feed ourselves. We would simply die in that state of bliss and we would never be the wiser.

The other essential aspect of this world, no matter how bad, chaotic, and downright depraved it seems to be at times, is that there exists this wonderful concept called humor. We have been given the capacity to make jokes at our plight, to lighten the load so to speak, and there is one thing that is absolutely certain and crystal clear; if we were put into this world to truly suffer, if it really is hell on earth as some of the Outsiders maintain, then God most certainly would not have allowed us a sense of humor. For some of us it's a great place, for most of us it's not that bad, then you have got the countries like Syria and Iraq for example that we ourselves have turned into a living hell, but all of us have been given the capacity to make light of our adversity and try to find the funny side of it. The God that created us is not evil *per se* just because It created a world that abounds with evil, hatred and suffering, but we can take it as absolutely certain that It has a warped sense of humor. The irony is that we have been given the gift of life; but there is a down side. Life is impossible without evil, hatred and suffering. So suck it up!

For a humorous example of how an Outsider can solve the problem that nothing is worthwhile doing in this world, so better to renounce the whole thing, is provided by W.B Yeates. This also touches on the dilemma of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. It is *the act of willing* that is important, regardless of whether it could be considered "good" or "bad" and regardless of whether it is likely to return serendipity or disaster. Yeates tells a story of a young man called Daniel O'Leary who was at the theater one night watching *Romeo and Juliette* and he was finding the acting of both the male and female roles thoroughly uninspiring.

Suddenly this thought came into my head: What would happen if I were to take off my boots, and fling one at Mr... and one at Miss... ? Could I give my future life such settled

purpose that the act would take its place, not among whims, but among forms of intensity?... “You have not the courage,” I said, speaking in a low voice. “I have,” said I, and began unlacing my boots...

Not much of an act of willing you might think. But the significance of it is just as profound as what Raskolnikov was trying to do. This young man says “Could I give my future life such settled purpose...” Dostoyevsky’s beetle-man in *Notes from the Underground* would have given anything to have been able to report he had done this. Or as J. Alfred Prufrock would ask “Do I dare disturb the universe?”

No account of the mentality of the Outsider would be complete without the ideal *Existenzphilosophie* of Gurdjieff who died in 1950 at age 70 and left a twelve hundred page long exposition of his method which is so obscure that it is virtually unreadable. He hated the thought that academics and dilettantes would be able to read his *opus magnum* and could consequently claim to “understand Gurdjieff”. Fortunately he had some literate followers who have related their experiences about the great man. Basically Gurdjieff was not interested in ideas, only results. He set his pupils and followers various disciplines and exercises only known to him and thenm. The point being that we are all so embalmed and enmeshed in delusions that we have no free-will and are non-human machines. His method was to awake his followers from their torpor by setting them very arduous and sometimes even physically dangerous tasks and exercises and demanding their absolute obedience in carrying them out totally spontaneously. His system was primarily to break down this tendency to sleep and behave mechanically. The aim of his system was to assist his disciples to achieve “maximum intensity” and thus attain the limit of man’s possible evolution. Evidently Gurdjieff was helping his disciples to overcome their inability to act just like many of the other Outsiders we have come across. The most interesting thing about him was his own complete contempt for recognition and accolades from the bourgeois world. He wasn’t interested in playing their game at all and had nothing but contempt for their superficial and meaningless lives. Whatever else he was, he was no hypocrite. He had a favorite parable.

There is an Eastern tale that speaks about a very rich magician who had a great many sheep. But at the same time this magician was a very mean. He did not want to hire shepherds, nor did he want to erect a fence about the pasture where the sheep were grazing. The sheep consequently often wandered into the forest, fell into ravines and so on, and above all, they ran away, for they knew that the magician wanted their flesh and their skins, and this they did not like.

At last the magician found a remedy. He hypnotized his sheep and suggested to them, first of all, that they were immortal and that no harm was being done to them when they were skinned; that on the contrary, it would be very good for them and even pleasant; secondly he suggested that the magician was a *good master* who loved his flock so much that he was ready to do anything in the world for them; and in the third place, he suggested that if anything at all were going to happen to them, it was not going to happen just then, at any rate not that day, and therefore they had no need to think about it. Further, the magician suggested to his sheep that they were not sheep at all; to some of them he suggested that they were lions, to some that they were eagles, to some that they were men, to others that they were magicians.

After this all his cares and worries about the sheep came to an end. They never ran away again, but quietly awaited the time when the magician would require their flesh and skins. This is a very good illustration of man’s position.

To understand this tale we have to know Gurdjieff’s attitude to attachment. He preached: “Man is attached to everything in life; attached to his imagination, attached to his stupidity, attached even to his

suffering – possibly to his suffering more than anything else.” We make take attachment to mean originally the attachment that the fetus originally had with the mother. All the things Gurdjieff mentions (that is everything in life) are merely secondary attachments to replace or compensate us for the primary attachment that we lost at birth. But we don’t even know that this is the case, and herein lies the delusional nature of our situation; we are like the sheep that have been hypnotized into thinking that these secondary attachments are fundamentally meaningful and important, and nothing could be further from the truth. These attachments are mere representations of the “thing” that was lost at birth. But more on this when we get to Schopenhauer in a later chapter. Again according to Gurdjieff:

He must free himself from attachment. Attachment to things. Identification with things keeps alive a thousand ‘I’s’ in a man. These ‘I’s’ must die in order that the big I may be born. But how can they be made to die?... It is at this point that the possibility of awakening comes to the rescue. To awaken means to realize one’s nothingness, that is, to realize one’s complete and absolute mechanicalness, and one’s complete and absolute helplessness... So long as a man is not horrified at himself, he knows nothing about himself.

Gurdjieff concludes his system with the exhortation:

One must die all at once and forever...

Just like those sheep would be well advised to wake up from their hypnotized and delusional state and get the hell out of there. Talking about sheep (that is to say the faithful religious flock) this is how St. John of the Cross expressed exactly the same sentiments as Gurdjieff.

I live, but there’s no life in me
And in such a hopeful way
I die because I do not die.

The same message has been voiced over and over again in different ways by prophets, preachers, mystics, and even founders of religions and yet Joe and Alice Blow from Kokomo go right on with their meaningless and absurd existence rapaciously slurping up what little drops of honey they may come across, and without the slightest insight into their bizarre situation of being deluded into believing that what is “good” is not only “bad” but is derived from their very worst psychological impulses. What follows is what Gurdjieff thought of “objective reason”, I include it here because in the next chapter you will learn that Adam Smith bases all human moral values precisely on this notion of “objective reason”. You the reader, will look at this following passage and see that Gurdjieff talks about “providing food for the moon” as well as this weird knew organ called *Kundabuffer*, and conclude that Gurdjieff was “nuts” but nothing could be further from the truth. In this bizarre upside down world we live in not only do we think our evil impulses good, but we also think our irrational thinking is rational. Such is the extent of the delusion. Gurdjieff was a great deal closer to the truth than that pillar of western capitalist practicality, the great Adam Smith. Interestingly this “organ” called *Kundabuffer* not only has the effect of making us “perceive reality topsy-turvy” but also it continues to operate to keep us in a delusional state after the organ itself has long since been removed, and it operates as a form of buffer to shield or protect us from the shock of actually learning the true state of affairs. The *Kundabuffer* is none other than the placenta – that phantom organ we all once had and which was cut away from us at birth.

But human beings were, not unnaturally, irritated by this completely subject-role they were expected to play in the solar system. As they began to develop 'objective reason' (Gurdjieff's fourth state of consciousness), their chafing became a danger to the existence of the moon. A special commission of archangels decided to put a stop to the development of objective reason. So they implanted in man an organ, called *Kundabuffer*, whose special function was to make men perceive fantasy as actuality. And from that day onward men have been enmeshed in their own dreams, and admirably serve their function of providing food for the moon. Unfortunately, their inability to see things objectively is leading them to self-destruction at an appalling pace. It is necessary for at least a few men to develop a new kind of consciousness, to develop it slowly, painfully, instinctively, without understanding what is happening to him.

THE MORALITY OF ADAM SMITH

Adam Smith's famous book *The Wealth of Nations* is universally considered to be the theoretical foundation of modern Western capitalist economies. It is an excessively dull long-winded and repetitive tome and according to Michel Foucault the essential ideas in this book were plagiarized from the theory of various French theorists. One gets the impression from his book that he is a thinker of limited originality that has virtually an infinite capacity to produce a never ending dialogue stating the obvious. But perhaps his genius, if it could be called that, is that he came to be recognized as the guru of good hard-headed practical bourgeois consumerism. His economic theories may be considered the commercial equivalent of Jeremy Bentham's political theory of the "the greatest good for the greatest number". Whatever is approved in the market, and is in demand by the consumers, is good, and of course anything that is not appreciated by potential consumers, is worthless. You can't argue with this logic in the economic sense, but the fact is that this same Adam Smith, before he became a famous and influential economist, was actually a moralist.

The Theory of Moral Sentiments that he wrote before *The Wealth of Nations* is just as verbose and repetitive as *The Wealth of Nations*, and it will not surprise us to learn that he pretty much came up with the same sort of criteria for "good" or "evil" acts as he had for consumer products; if it is highly regarded in human society it is "good" and if the citizens won't have it at any price then it is "evil". Thus far his theory is of course obvious, and as a practical view of morality it probably can't be refuted, but that is as far as he takes it. This is the father of modern western market economy, surely it must have entered his mind that the sentiments and values of the ordinary citizenry actually depend on what they are "taught" to think, and indeed on what they are "told" to think; that is to say that the entire value system of a society depends on "marketing". Adam Smith of course knew this perfectly well. He didn't mention it because he wasn't actually writing a treatise on morals *per se*, he was actually spearheading the marketing of morality. If you actually want to find out the truth about good and evil, do not bother to read his book. He was the problem, not the solution. When he was writing the Church was still very powerful but it was losing its hold over the burgeoning merchant and middle classes. Still for all classes of society the church was still the main player engaged in the "marketing" of morals, and throughout his book Adam Smith pays lip service to the Church that these moral sentiments that the reasonable man finds to be "good" also have the endorsement of the Author of Nature, aka God. What else would one expect, indeed, from a bourgeois mentality par excellence. No one knew better than he the importance of reinforcing the power of the Church over the masses in order to keep society on the straight and narrow track.

Smith was able to expand his sociological and moral theories into a comprehensive economic worldview in *The Wealth of Nations*. He looked upon the economy as an entity unto itself which behaved according to its own innate laws, and similarly he regarded humankind as social beings who live and act in concert. Smith was convinced that it was precisely the workings of the economy which was responsible for the structure of our society as well as our moral values. Smith was a leading light in the so-called School of Scottish Philosophy. At that time there were several very influential philosophers and thinkers in Scotland who wrote on similar themes, and collectively they make up this school of thought. According to them, there are certain innate 'propensities' in the human makeup. They argued that the Author of Nature had implanted these propensities in mankind, and as a result human society was directed by some divine plan which was ultimately rational, although it was not always readily apparent to us what the ultimate rationale may actually be.

It is characteristic of Smith's thought that human society is being led along by an Invisible Hand that is drawing us inexorably from a 'rude' or primitive state to a civilized state regardless of what may be the conscious intentions and goals of the individuals that comprise that society. The natural and seemingly insatiable wants of the individuals collectively create the industry of humankind. This creates unstoppable productive forces like agriculture and manufacture that are molding us into a civilization, and dictating its characteristics. The result of these productive forces are to be seen in the gradual rise in the standards of living. And as far as Smith was concerned this must be seen as *the ultimate good*.

Adam Smith starts with the emotion of sympathy or pity that we all feel for some other person, whether we know them personally or not, when we are told of some misfortune or loss they have suffered. This emotion is dealt with in the first part of his book *Of the Propriety of Action* and it supposedly comes from *Sense of Propriety* that we all have, regardless of how selfish we may actually be. This sense of what is proper is apparently innate in all of us, and so we quite naturally feel sorrow for someone else who has suffered a great sorrow, although admittedly not perhaps to the same extent as the unfortunate who is suffering directly. Here again the sense of propriety will kick in and will cause us to have the appropriate amount of pity that is reasonable in the circumstances. Obviously the virtuous and humane people will feel this emotion of compassion and pity more deeply than the greatest ruffian, but he also will not be completely incapable of feeling it. And our sense of propriety dictates that we should and do feel this emotion of sympathy and pity even though we ourselves may have nothing to gain materially from being seen to be sympathetic or compassionate to the unfortunate who is suffering.

Admittedly we will only be prompted to feel compassion and pity if the sufferer is himself/herself displaying the appropriate amount of grief or sorrow commensurate with the extent of the calamity. If we find someone who is weeping and wailing too much over some grief that has befallen them, or is showing an inordinate amount of anger over some injustice that they have endured, then in those circumstances our sense of propriety will cause us to have less pity or compassion for them than we otherwise might have had. The way this sense of propriety works is that it enables us to imagine what it would be like if we ourselves had suffered that calamity, and once we realize how stricken we would be if it had really happened to us, then we are in turn able to express the amount of pity and compassion that is reasonable and appropriate in all the circumstances.

When delicate people or people with a weak constitution see beggars in the streets covered with sores and ulcers, their sense of propriety will cause them to react with horror at the thought that they themselves could be likewise in such a pitiful condition and indeed they will experience an itching or uneasy sensation themselves, and they will then generate the appropriate amount of sympathy and compassion for these poor unfortunates. He doesn't specify whether it would be appropriate under the circumstances to give the beggars any money, and from the moral point of view their duty has been fulfilled by having the proper amount of pity. No doubt the itch will quickly abate as they pass on by. It seems the same sort of thing happens even for people with a robust constitution if they look upon someone else with sore eyes. Their own eyes become sore and perhaps even start to water, and this will enable them to feel the appropriate amount of pity.

On this subject of sympathy, Smith dismisses the 'self-love' theory that nothing is more pleasing for us human beings to find that our fellow citizens have exactly the same thoughts

feeling and emotions as we do. And of course nothing shocks us more when we find that someone else doesn't share our emotions and feelings. It all gets down to this matter of self-love. When we find a fellow-feeling with our neighbors concerning the basic values and emotions then we can feel assured that should we find ourselves in a position of difficulty or peril, our neighbors will be solicitous to come to our aid because we can know that they feel sympathy for our predicament. By the same token should we find ourselves surrounded by people who don't share our basic notions of propriety then we are thrown into a panic because we can know that we are on our own against the world, and we can rely on no sympathy from them should we get into difficulties, in fact we might even anticipate that they will go out of their way to hinder our rescue.

Smith states that the 'self-love' theory can't be right because often the pleasure or pain that we experience on finding ourselves mutually sharing the emotions and values of others, or at odds with others, often arises completely spontaneously or in quite frivolous situations where we have not had the opportunity to really assess how their sympathy or lack thereof can affect our own interests. He says for instance that nothing mortifies us more if we try to tell a joke in public and nobody laughs; that is to say they don't see the point of the jest as clearly as we do. For him this is an example of the pain we experience when we find ourselves in the company of people that don't share our fundamental values. And of course the pleasure we derive when everyone laughs heartily at the joke could not be more agreeable; their sentiments are evidently in correspondence with our own and their mirth is in the nature of a mutual applause.

Another example he gives of the pleasure we derive from having mutual sympathy and values as others occurs when we have read a book or a poem so often that we no longer get any pleasure from it ourselves, but we can regain that pleasure by now reading it to someone else who shares our values, and the mutual sympathy that exists between us will then enable us to regain that original pleasure from observing the delight this other person is experiencing from the sheer novelty of the work. The other's amusement enlivens our own pleasure and is most agreeable to us. Needless to say nothing vexes us more if this other person doesn't share our own enthusiasm for the work and we may find ourselves so disappointed as to take no more pleasure in continuing to read the work to this cretin.

Of course he recognizes that these factors may not be the sole cause of the pleasure we get from the correspondence of our sentiments with others, and in general it would be fair to say that when someone else sympathizes with us it will enliven our joy, and should we find ourselves actually grieving some loss or calamity then the sympathy of others will most certainly alleviate that grief. For this reason we are always more anxious to communicate to our friends our disagreeable passions than our agreeable passions because then their sympathy will give us more satisfaction. Of course this is a two-edged sword because we are all the more shocked when they don't show us the appropriate amount of sympathy. "How are the unfortunate relieved when they have found out a person to whom they can communicate the cause of their sorrow? Upon his sympathy they seem to disburthen themselves of a part of their distress; he is not improperly said to share it with them".

This notion of sympathy becomes for Smith the way in which we judge the actions and passions of others. If we find ourselves being able to sympathize with the other person, that is to say if that other person is displaying the amount of grief, anger or resentment that we consider appropriate in the circumstances then we can be assured that this is a person who is acting with propriety. But nothing vexes us more if we find someone expressing excessive grief or excessive

passion than is warranted given the nature of the misfortune that has befallen him/her. "The man who resents the injuries that have been done to me and observes that I resent them precisely as he does, necessarily approves of my resentment. The man whose sympathy keeps time to my grief, cannot but admit the reasonableness of my sorrow". This extraordinary capacity that Smith had of stating the obvious and then elevating it to a 'law of Nature', that is to say a law ordained by God, demonstrates perfectly the shallowness and unoriginality of his thought, and the tragedy of it is precisely that this is the way the grand architects of modern civilization actually think. There is no depth in it at all, no insights into the actual cause of human morals, it is simply a blatant exercise in laying down the rules of what is appropriate to the lowest common denominator in human society; it is as it were spiritual junk food.

This notion of his that in a well ordered society the other must appreciate a work of art, a poem or a painting exactly as I do, must laugh at the same joke and indeed show the same degree of mirth that I show, must display the same amount of grief at the death of a loved one that I would display in a similar case, in order for me to judge that the other is behaving with 'propriety' is the basis of his entire moral system. How about this gem for a circular argument: "To approve of another man's opinions is to adopt those opinions, and to adopt them is to approve of them". Is it any wonder that this notion has arisen in the United States of America, the mecca of capitalist thought and ideology, that the freedom of the individual is paramount provided that you don't do or say anything that we, the people, disapprove of. Smith's well-ordered society does not have individuals who have opinions that are anti the prevailing ideology. In Smith's morality for instance it is perfectly proper for all citizens to horde firearms, and indeed even to openly carry firearms, and be ready to use them against any other person who poses a threat to their person, their loved ones or their property, because these are precisely the values we approve of in our neighbors because they are our opinions as well; and this notwithstanding the fact that on one of those stone tablets that Moses brought down from the mountain after talking to the burning bush it is specifically stated "Thou shalt not kill".

Admittedly in Smith's system if for instance we happen to find ourselves in a road-rage incident with our neighbor and he/she pulls out a gun and shoots us, then this would not be proper behavior because in this case our neighbor has not displayed the correct amount of rage that was appropriate in all the circumstances. But the fact is this modification of the God-given morality that we see in the United States where it is considered perfectly legitimate for any person who feels himself/herself threatened to just pull out a gun and start shooting is actually threatening to turn American civilization (for want of a better word) into anarchy because there is even a general sympathy for anyone to bunker down and start firing at law enforcement officers who are attempting to enforce a law that annoys them or restricts them in some way.

In Smith's system it is even possible to go further than having sympathy for the opinions or passions of another; in some circumstances we might even find ourselves admiring our neighbor. If our neighbor is just mouthing the same old hackneyed opinions that we ourselves have then of course we will be in complete sympathy with the other, but the other will not be deserving of any particular praise or admiration from us. Take for instance a case where the other describes something or somebody as 'beautiful' or 'ugly' and we are in complete agreement with this classification then we will of course have total sympathy for the other's opinion because it is obviously approved of by all the world, but we won't necessarily have any special admiration for the other for having pointed it out. What we admire in the other is when they can come up with

some special discernments or nuances in the general opinion that we had not already thought of. "It is the acute and delicate discernment of the man of taste, who distinguishes the minute and scarce perceptible differences of beauty and deformity... who excites our admiration and seems to deserve our applause: and upon this foundation is grounded the greater part of the praise which are bestowed upon what are called the intellectual virtues".

Smith says that when our neighbor's passion or judgement agrees with our own then we don't simply approve of it because it may be in some way useful to us, but rather we consider our neighbors judgment to be "true" or his/her passion to be "right". You can see in his own humble way Smith is giving us a very practical definition of what is 'truth' and what is 'justice'. Another person's opinion is 'true' if we agree with it; another person's action is 'just' if we agree with what was done. He also goes on to give a definition of 'good'. This of course depends on our taste. We approve of someone else's 'good' taste not because it may be useful to us in some way, but because we find it "as just, as delicate, and as precisely suited to its object". Simply stated, our neighbor has acted in good taste if we find, to our immense satisfaction, that he/she has the same taste as our own. How indeed could anyone pick holes in this logic.

In these matters of course Smith recognizes that a distinction has to be drawn between opinions or passions of a neighbor that affect us personally or have a direct bearing on some misfortune that has befallen us, and a neighbor's opinion or reaction to some object or work of art or even system of philosophy that can have no direct bearing on our own lifestyle or comfort. I will be more inclined to overlook the latter differences in opinion or taste because it is in no way disadvantageous to me or my loved ones "Though you despise that picture, or that poem, or even that system of philosophy, which I admire, there is little danger of our quarreling upon that account. Neither of us can reasonably be much interested about them. They ought all of them to be matters of great indifference to us; so that, though our opinions may be opposite, our affections may still be very nearly the same". Here again we find Smith's view of morality completely out of sync with modern western civilization. In the 20th Century neighbors are more likely to quarrel over different systems of philosophy than anything else. If you happened to be in America for instance in the decade following the Second World War you could well find yourself being charged with anti-American activities by showing any sympathy at all to the philosophy of Karl Marx. Let's just say that this part of Smith's reasoning on the fundamentals of morality has not withstood the test of time.

When a spectator is observing our suffering or misfortune, we expect that he/she will endeavor first of all to put himself/herself precisely into our situation as much as is humanly possible, and bring home to himself/herself every little circumstance of distress that we could possibly be going through. He/she should try to feel even the minutest incidents of our predicament, and then demonstrate that degree of sympathy as is appropriate as if he/she was actually the unfortunate victim of this misfortune and not myself. Of course it is recognized that a spectator could never completely feel the same degree of anxiety, pain or distress as the victim is experiencing, and the moral obligation of showing sympathy will be discharged if they simply make the effort to enter into our plight as much as is humanly possible. "Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned".

Also we will expect more sympathy from a spectator who is a close friend, than we would for instance from an assembly of strangers, and before the latter type of spectators we will

endeavor to show more tranquility before them, “and bring down our passion to that pitch which the particular company we are in may be expected to go along with. Nor is this only an assumed appearance: for if we are at all masters of ourselves, the presence of a mere acquaintance will really compose us, still more than that of a friend; and that of an assembly of strangers still more than that of an acquaintance”. Smith says that this is not an assumed appearance, but to my mind his notions of sympathy are all about keeping up appearances, and nothing but.

Smith brings his reasoning powers onto the amiable and respectable virtues. These are of two categories. You've got your virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity on the one hand, and your virtues of self-denial, of self-government, self-restraint which enables us to act in a dignified, honorable and proper manner. Someone with the former virtues will of course be those amiable souls who have the capacity to ‘reecho’ the sentiments of others. If the other is rejoicing then we will hear an echo from our virtuous soul of just the right amount of vicarious joy and if the other is grieving then we will hear just the right nuance of vicarious lament. “And for a contrary reason, how disagreeable does he appear to be, whose hard and obdurate heart feels for himself only, but is altogether insensible to the happiness or misery of others!” With the second class of virtues, the most virtuous will be those who have suffered a misfortune and have sufficient self-restraint to keep their overt grief and suffering down to a manageable level that we can cope with. We will most revere those sufferers who display “that silent and majestic sorrow, which discovers itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant, but affecting, coldness of the whole behavior”. In short if a bus runs over your big toe, you will get Adam Smith’s vote for most virtuous if you maintain the traditional British ‘stiff upper lip’. In Smith’s system I guess you would be permitted to quietly say something like: “Oh, I say, that bus just ran over my toe. Could somebody please call an ambulance.” Although these days, where everybody has a cell phone, the most virtuous would probably just dial 911 themselves.

Smith feels that the great teaching of Jesus Christ that we should love our neighbor as ourselves should be turned on its head. He doesn’t state on what authority he presumes to question the teachings of Jesus. Presumably this is simply a better way to phrase it if we are to have a just and well-ordered society. Smith feels we should love our neighbor as our neighbor is capable of loving us. He doesn’t seem to realize the can of worms he is opening here. He just seems to think that if we all did this we would all display just that correct amount of anger if our neighbor wrongs us, we would never attempt any greater vengeance, or desire to inflict any greater punishment “than what every indifferent person would rejoice to see executed.” If we all obeyed his maxim we would feel much more for the other than for ourselves, that is to say we would restrain our selfish instincts and indulge our affections for the other. In one sense he is probably right. The fact is that a great many people in this world actually hate themselves to a greater or lesser extent, and it is precisely these self-haters that cause all the aggression and violence towards the other as well. It is true then, that if we were all to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and love our neighbors as ourselves, then Smith’s well-ordered society would quickly disintegrate into an orgy of violence and destruction. Much better to set up a reasonable, well-adjusted and sympathetic other, and then propose that we should act and feel towards that other in the same way that he/she is ‘theoretically’ disposing of us. “The amiable virtue of humanity requires, surely, a sensibility, much beyond what is possessed by the rude vulgar of mankind... As in the common degree of the intellectual qualities, there is no abilities; so in the common degree

of the moral there is no virtue. Virtue is excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary.” Of course Smith is not talking about the ruling classes here, he is only talking about the common mass of humanity. They have no brains and no morals, and it is up to the ruling classes to set the yardstick as it were as to what they should be aiming for.

Smith then launches into a discussion about the distinction between virtue and mere propriety. We admire and celebrate truly virtuous actions, whereas we merely approve of persons who conduct themselves with propriety. It really doesn't advance his thesis that much. I mention it only because his reasoning contains the following statement which to my mind negates the point of his entire book. “Upon many occasions, to act with the most perfect propriety, requires no more than that common and ordinary degree of sensibility or self-command which the most worthless of mankind are possess of, and sometimes even that degree is not necessary”. It is just as well Smith knew a lot about economics, because he was never going to make it as a moralist.

The subtlety of Smith's reasoning is quite something to behold. He tells us that sometimes it may be necessary to express less passion outrage anger even though the injury that has been inflicted upon us is of the most serious and painful kind, and by the same token there may be times when the injury we have sustained is relatively slight and yet propriety dictates that we should express our anger or disapproval in the loudest terms imaginable. Here again it all gets down to the opinion of our fellow citizens. We must always bear in mind what they would expect from us in the circumstances, and if we do that then we can always be assured of acting 'decently'. “It is indecent to express any strong degree of those passions which arise from a certain situation or disposition of the body; because the company, not being in the same disposition, cannot be expected to sympathize with them. Violent hunger, for example, though upon many occasions not only natural, but unavoidable, is always indecent, and to eat voraciously is universally regarded as a piece of ill manners”.

Needless to say, even though sex is the most furious of all passions, any strong expression of our attraction for the opposite sex will always be indecent. He goes on to tell us that with these passions of the body, not only are onlookers incapable of entering into them to the same extent, that is to say sympathize with them, but even the person who has given vent to his/her uncontrollable desire will themselves will be left wondering what motivated them so strongly once their desire has been gratified. “The object that excited [this vulgar display of passion] ceases to be agreeable: even its presence often becomes offensive to him; he looks around to no purpose for the charm that transported him the moment before, and he can now as little enter into his own passion as another person”. We will see in the next Chapter when we deal with the philosophy of Schopenhauer that this last statement by Smith is possibly the only statement in Smith's entire book that Schopenhauer would agree with.

When we see bodily pain being inflicted upon someone else, although we might actually have an involuntary reflex of drawing back our own arm or leg when we see the blow fall on the victim, but still the actual pain that we feel is negligible and even though the pain suffered by the victim may be extreme, if he gives vent to a violent out-cry of pain we will consider his conduct unmanly and unbecoming and will invariably be led to despise him. Not so with calamities that befall the other where our imagination can enter into the case. For instance if the other has lost all his fortune, and will thus will suffer a great loss of dignity in the eyes of his friends not to

mention being reduced to penury and misery, or even if the other has been unfortunate in love and lost his mistress, then because our own imagination can enter into his loss, we can thus fully sympathize with him, and really feel for his loss, much more so than if the other had simply lost an arm or a leg.

Just like with pleasure, nothing is so soon forgot as pain. As soon as the pain subsides we ourselves can no longer have any real sympathy for the anxiety and anguish of it whether it was our own pain or seeing the other in pain. We have no sympathy at all for someone with the gout or with tooth-ache, even though they may be suffering the most exquisite pain. There may however be occasions when we are led to admire another person for the firmness of character they display in enduring pain. "The man who under the severest tortures allows no weakness to escape him, vents no groan, gives way to no passion which we do not entirely enter into, commands our highest admiration. His firmness enables him to keep time with our indifference and insensibility".

People under the throes of passions of the imagination, in particular lovers, have to always bear in mind that we others cannot enter into the depth of their emotions to any extent at all, and therefore if a lover finds himself/herself in some way jilted or wronged we will have no sympathy for them at all if they go overboard with their anger or grief. "The passion appears to every body but the man who feels it, entirely disproportioned to the value of the object; and love, though it is pardoned in a certain age because we know it is natural, is always laughed at because we cannot enter into it. All serious and strong expressions of it appear ridiculous to a third person; and though a lover may be good company to his mistress, he is so to nobody else." In short the lover should try to treat his/her own passion with 'raillery and ridicule', which means presumably if things go wrong in the relationship propriety demands that the lover simply writes the whole thing off as a bad joke.

Smith does recognize however that in the case of lovers passion, for the woman who is wronged it will lead her 'to the last ruin and infamy', and for the man, even though it is less catastrophic, "it is always attended with an incapacity for labor, a neglect of duty, a contempt of fame, and even of common reputation". For this reason other people tend to express sympathy and compassion for jilted lovers, even if they don't actually feel it, out of reasons of vanity more than anything else. They don't want to be seen to be heartless and unfeeling.

For similar reasons we should always be guarded when we talk of our own affairs, our own particular studies or areas of expertise. It is unlikely that these things will interest our interlocutor as much as they interest us. The fact that this rule of propriety is so little observed means we find one half of mankind making bad company for the other. "A philosopher is company to a philosopher only; the member of a club, to his own little knot of companions".

Smith classifies hatred and resentment as the unsocial passions and states that they are derived from the imagination. The problem with these emotions from the point of view of morality is that our sympathy is divided between whatever feelings of affinity we may have for the person who is under the sway of strong feelings of hatred or resentment and whatever feelings of sympathy we may have for the other who is being so forcibly hated or resented, that is to say the object of all this ill will. In keeping with his normal thesis Smith states that we can never feel the full sting of the provocation that has motivated all this hatred or resentment so the angry one would be well advised to temper the amount of passion displayed to moderate levels that we can feel comfortable with. At the same time the angry one should not be too

patient or mild in the angry passion displayed, for we cannot have sympathy for someone who is wanting in spirit. The angry one must therefore display just the right amount of passion if we are to judge this display of antisocial behavior proper in all the circumstances.

There is however one situation where to display hatred or resentment may be considered generous or even noble. “Magnanimity, or a regard to maintain our own rank and dignity in society, is the only motive which can ennoble the expressions of this disagreeable passion”. The current dictionary meaning for magnanimity is: “the virtue of being great of mind and heart. It encompasses, usually, a refusal to be petty, a willingness to face danger, and actions for noble purposes. Its antithesis is pusillanimity”. So a statesman for example, or a great lord, or even a substantial member of the merchant or ruling class can actually appear to be noble in expressing hatred or resentment. But even this comes with many provisos. Our anger or resentment must be “plain, open and direct; determined without positiveness, and elevated without insolence; not only free from petulance and low scurrility, but generous, candid, and full of proper regards, even for the person who has offended us. It must appear in short, from our whole manner, without our laboring affectedly to express it, that passion has not extinguished our humanity; and that if we yield to the dictates of revenge, it is with reluctance, from necessity, and in consequence of great and repeated provocations”. To give an example of a noble hatred or resentment in modern times we may cite the example of the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush who was angry with the President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, and gave as his reason for attacking Iraq “He tried to kill my daddy”. A better example of an ennobling resentment you could never hope to find.

Then there are the social passions – generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem. The impartial observer will invariably be pleased to see someone exhibiting these emotions towards another person who may be a complete stranger. It’s a bit hard to see how we could display mutual friendship or esteem to a complete stranger, but Smith tells us that if we do then we will have the complete approval of the indifferent spectator. When we witness these benevolent affections between our fellow humans it is always most agreeable to us, and this has got nothing to do with any advantage we might expect to derive from it. Uncharacteristically Smith seems to think that even the rudest and most vulgar of mankind will likewise rejoice in seeing others displaying these benevolent affections towards each other, that is to say it is not just polite society that has the sensibility and delicateness to be moved by this. He then seems to lose the track a bit here because he starts talking about love, both love of a couple for each other, and general familial love as being essentially the same passions as compassion and benevolent kindness even to strangers. One gets the impression often in reading Smith’s book that he is enamored with his own verbose writing style and just lets his hand go on penning words without giving any real thought to their meaning. As with his masterpiece *The Wealth of Nations* I guess he figured if he makes the book long enough and boring enough then people will just give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he has actually written something significant.

Getting back to the amiable social passions it so happens that even if we display excessive amounts of those, if we are excessively generous, or excessively compassionate or even if our mutual friendships are excessively cloying, we will never be totally disapproved by the indifferent spectator. It is true however that there are times when people going overboard with the social passions will be looked upon with an element of pity, but never aversion. There is a helplessness

in these people who are excessively generous or overly compassionate or who feel affection and friendship too strongly, which makes them weak and vulnerable to the fraudsters and the confidence tricksters in society who make a living precisely in seeking them out and preying on their goodness. It is for this reason that we pity them. In a sense they are actually too good for human society.

In addition there are passions somewhere in between the bad unsocial passions and the good social passions. These are what Smith calls the selfish passions. These include joy we display for our good fortune and grief we feel for our bad fortune. In other words this is an emotion uniquely relating to ourselves. The independent spectator is never going to find this kind of joy as ennobling and uplifting as impartial humanity and generosity as they relate to others; and because there is no third party involved who is the agent of our grief or resentment who may or may not be also entitled to our sympathy, the impartial observer is not going to find even excessive displays of grief due to our own personal loss anywhere near as disagreeable as a display of unjust anger or resentment. Human nature being what it is we find with these selfish passions that others will sympathize with our joy if it is small, and with our grief or sorrow if it is large. If for instance we have some stupendous windfall and all of a sudden we are lifted well above our normal position in society then many of the messages of congratulations from our friends may not be all that sincere. "An upstart, though of the greatest merit, is generally disagreeable, and a sentiment of envy commonly prevents us from heartily sympathizing with his joy". If he has got any brains at all he will temper his joy, and continue to dress and comport himself the way he used to, and not be too flashy and ostentatious with his new found wealth. He should have more sympathy for the envy we his friends are sure to feel and not try to aggravate that, than what his friends are expected to have in rejoicing in his good fortune. Only very rarely will the lucky upstart get this right, so in the normal course of events we will find the lucky upstart behaving in a most inappropriate manner and rubbing the noses of his circle of friends and acquaintances into his new found and totally unmerited wealth. Needless to say he will find no sympathy from his new acquaintances in the upper classes either who will most certainly not consider him their equal. He has burnt his bridges with his old friends and will most certainly not be able to make new friends and will end up in a state of habitual insolence.

The important principle is expressing great joy for the small and trivial pleasures of others. In polite society we express great joy and satisfaction for all the petty pleasures that fill the void of our daily humdrum life – we have complete sympathy with knowing who you dined with last night, what entertainment you saw, and all the rest of those frivolous nothings you can relate to us about who said what to whom etc etc. "Nothing is more graceful than habitual cheerfulness, which is always founded on a particular relish for all the little pleasures which common occurrences afford. We readily sympathize with it; it inspires us with the same joy and makes every trifle turn up to us in the same agreeable aspect in which it presents itself to the person endowed with this happy disposition". Well one thing can certainly be said for Adam Smith, he was certainly more optimistic about human society and civilization than were the Outsiders like Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Van Gogh. On the other hand it could well be the moralizing twaddle of Adam Smith that was reducing the Outsiders to abject horror and depression.

No matter how much joy and satisfaction we feel for the trivial and frivolous pleasures of others, it is exactly the opposite for their mundane and insignificant grievances. We will have no sympathy whatsoever for the man:

1. who is hurt if either the cook or the butler have failed in the least article of their duty;
2. who feels every defect in the highest ceremonial of politeness, whether it be shewn to himself or to any other person;
3. who takes it amiss that his intimate friend did not bid him good-morrow when they met in the forenoon, and that his brother hummed a tune all the time he himself was telling a story;
4. who is put out of humor by the badness of the weather when in the country, by the badness of the roads when upon a journey, and by the want of company and dullness of public diversions when in town.

To his credit Smith goes on to concede that even though we feel aversion when someone else is whining about such insignificant grievances, it doesn't always hinder us from coming up with our own uniquely subjective gripes which may be equally insignificant in the great scheme of things. Smith also recognizes indeed that there is a 'malice in mankind' that leads us to take delight in these petty misfortunes that befall others. This notion of a malice in mankind is quite insightful indeed and we will be seeing a lot more of this aspect when we get onto the theories of Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud in the next chapter.

Smith feels that where considerations of envy are not present, and where the joy that is displayed is not intemperate, we are more likely to fully enter into the joy of another person, than we are to enter into their sorrow. His argument here is heavily nuanced, but basically he seems to think that notwithstanding all the misery and depravity in the world, the greater part of his contemporaries, that is to say English gentlemen of the upper classes, are basically in good health, clear of debt and have a good conscience. Under these circumstances any added windfall that comes their way and further improves their circumstances will give rise in their case to a fairly frivolous or superficial sort of joy, and this is the sort of passion that the rest of us can readily feel sympathy for. "The greater part of men, therefore, cannot find any great difficulty in elevating themselves to all the joy which any accession to this situation can well excite in their companion".

On the other hand we do not easily enter into or share the sorrow of another. For instance if we go to a funeral our sorrow normally amounts to no more than an affected gravity, and likewise when someone is recounting their misfortune to us we will listen with gravity and attention, but we really don't feel any of this grief at all, certainly nowhere near to the extent to which the sufferer is feeling it. "How far are the languid emotions of our hearts from keeping time to the transports of theirs". Sometimes we may feel so guilty about our want of feeling and sensibility that we are able to generate a sort of artificial sympathy, that almost resembles true grief. For this reason we particularly admire the sufferer who, in the face of true adversity, is able to maintain a stiff upper lip or, even better, to actually make light of the trouble they are in and dismiss all their plight with light-hearted banter. "His firmness, at the same time, perfectly coincides with our insensibility. He makes no demand upon us for that more exquisite degree of sensibility, which we find, and which we are mortified to find, that we do not possess". The friends of Socrates all wept with genuine grief while he himself drank the hemlock with the gayest and most cheerful equanimity. We will feel nothing but contempt for the scoundrel who is weeping and wailing as he is brought up on the gallows to be executed, however if he is able to face his own death with valor and quiet resolution then even the most insensible of mankind will have some sympathy for him, no matter what his crimes may have been, or no matter how foolish his behavior to have brought him to this unfortunate pass.

According to Smith: "It is because we are disposed to sympathize more entirely with our joy than with our sorrow, that we make parade of our riches, and conceal our poverty". No mortal can conceive of or sympathize with our mortification if we find ourselves in economic distress, and it is for this reason that we endeavor to conceal it and dissimulate. Smith asks: "For what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth and power and preeminence?" He points out that even the meanest laborer manages to sustain himself and his family and sometimes have enough for superfluous conveniences, and on very rare occasions have something left over for vanity and distinction. Why therefore do we regard the lifestyle of these common people with such aversion, and our mortification if we are reduced to that state is worse than death. Often even the commoners sleep better and have better digestion. Why are we constantly driven to better our condition? The simple answer is vanity. We want to attract attention and approbation to ourselves. By the same token the poor man is ashamed of his poverty, and he feels that nobody is in the least bit interested in him. Normally the prosperous people won't even look at him, but if he is in such extreme distress that they are forced to look at him, then they will feel nothing but contempt for him and spurn him. "The fortunate and the proud wonder at the insolence of human wretchedness, that it should dare to present itself before them, and with the loathsome aspect of its misery presume to disturb the serenity of their happiness". Many middle class bourgeois types and even some billionaire types will balk at this statement by Smith, they will say that this is no longer the attitude of the prosperous classes these days, but the fact is that their current prosperity and self-satisfaction with their lifestyle is founded precisely on this attitude. This is Adam Smith saying this. The founding father of modern capitalist economy. If you want to understand why capitalist ideology is essential inhumane and evil, you need look no further than here. All ambition derives from the very worst instincts in human nature, and we shall see in the next chapter when we get on to the theories of Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud just what those instincts are. This is Friedrich Nietzsche's 'will to power' at work and it is putrid. That is to say, modern western human civilization is putrid. If you want any more proof about this you can go and read the rest of this chapter on "Of the origin of Ambition and of the distinction of Ranks" for yourself which is taken up with pages and pages of vacuous and sycophantic adulation of the royals and the noble classes which can be summed up quite simply – "Their shit doesn't stink".

Smith does recognize however that it is precisely this tendency in us all to admire the rich and powerful and to despise the miserable and the down-trodden which is actually corrupting our moral sentiments. It is because of this that as a general rule we seem to have two different models of what is 'good'. The adulation we have for the rich and powerful is pretty much the same as the adulation we should have for the wise and the virtuous and it is very easy to confuse the two. For this reason we tend to turn a blind eye to the follies and vice of the rich and powerful. It is only in very exceptional cases when their misconduct is so excessive and obvious that they can expect to receive any disapprobation from the rest of us. However for the person of meaner condition a single transgression of the rules of temperance and propriety will be universally resented and condemned. Smith was writing at a time when England had established Australia as a penal colony, and it was perfectly normal for petty criminals to be sentenced to a life of penal servitude for stealing a loaf of bread or poaching on the estate of some great lord. It is interesting that although the values in England had become 'morally corrupt' he doesn't make any attempt

to actually condemn the system. He is there simply as an indifferent observer just telling it the way it is.

It is fortunate for the good order and morals of society that the middle and lower middle classes, which make up the great majority of mankind, are not above the law and that therefore the surest road to success for them, that is the sort of success that they can reasonably expect to attain, is actually to be prudent, just, firm and temperate in all their daily transactions with their neighbors. For them the road to virtue and the road to success is one and the same road. "The good old proverb, therefore, That honesty is the best policy, holds, in such situations always perfectly true". What a wonderful society England was in those days. You had the royalty and the nobles who could do no wrong, under them you had the professional classes and the middle class that were honest and industrious and knew how to conduct themselves with propriety, you had a lower middle class who considered hard work the highest form of virtue, and then you had the wretched and contemptible destitute creatures that were really the only ones that made a penal system necessary. You only have to read a novel by Charles Dickens to appreciate that Adam Smith's assessment of English society in the 18th century was essentially correct. Modern western society has evolved and diversified it is true, and in some respects even more checks and balances have been introduced to try and regain this notion of virtue in our dealings with each other, but the fact remains that this is the nature of a rear-guard action to try to make an essentially evil society appear to be better, and in the United States of America which is the mecca of capitalist society there are only two guiding principles for defining virtue: 1) Greed is good; 2) Might is right. In that country the notion of virtue has become so corrupted that in fact the very meaning of the word has been reversed to its exact opposite.

Often it's not simply a case of approving or disapproving of another person's passions or actions. There are many circumstances we have to know whether it is appropriate to reward or punish what someone else has done for us or to us as the case may be. This in turn will depend on whether we feel gratitude to the other person for a particular service they have voluntarily rendered us or favor they have done for us, or on the other hand whether we feel resentment for a particularly odious act that some other person has done and which has disadvantaged us in particular. If we feel the gratitude we are under a moral duty to reward our benefactor as best we can. And this moral duty will not be satisfied unless we ourselves are the instrument of that reward. It is not enough to hear that our benefactor may have had a particular stroke of good luck in some other domain and simply felicitate or sympathize with this happy circumstance. Nor is our resentment satisfied if our enemy who has done us a bad turn suffers a particular misfortune or other accidental damage through circumstances not of our doing, although we may take some comfort (malicious pleasure) from knowing that this object of our resentment has received a comeuppance. In this case our hatred for our enemy may be satisfied, but definitely not our resentment. "Resentment cannot be fully gratified, unless the offender is not only made to grieve in his turn, but to grieve for that particular wrong which we have suffered from him. He must be made to repent and be sorry for this very action, that others, through fear of the like punishment, may be terrified from being guilty of the like offence". I particularly like this notion of exacting punishment in order to deter others (make them terrified even) from trying the same thing. Quite clearly Smith is here siding with the original Jewish notion of revenge – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – rather than the weak and insipid Christian notion of turning the other cheek. That's the wonderful thing about religion Western style. You will always be able to find

quotes in the Bible to justify your own take on morality, no matter how barbarous it may be from the point of view of the indifferent spectator. Of course in Smith's system this all just gets down to good political economy: the punishment of the criminal and setting an example to the public at large.

The moral aspect of it comes in with the stipulation that the object of this gratitude or resentment must be proper and approved of, that is to say that every impartial spectator in society must *entirely* sympathize with them. This of course is simply saying that any action is good if society approves of it or is bad if society disapproves of it. "To us, surely, that action must appear to deserve reward, which everybody who knows of it would wish to reward, and therefore delights to see rewarded: and that action must as surely appear to deserve punishment, which everybody who hears of it is angry with, and upon that account rejoices to see punished". It's very hard to argue with Smith's logic. I would simply point out that this is not therefor a system of absolute right and wrong, but is actually a system where whoever controls the media gets to dictate what is right and what is wrong; which is exactly what one would expect in a well-ordered Capitalist society, or indeed in a super well-ordered Nazi or Communist society. Nor should we be particularly surprised if we get different versions of what is good or bad depending on the prevailing ideology of the society.

So what is the situation when someone owes a debt of gratitude to some benefactor for a service or gift the motives for which we thoroughly approve of, and yet they fail to satisfactorily discharge that debt of gratitude should the means to deliver recompense become available. Shortly put, they owe someone a favor and they fail to return that favor should it be asked for. Such people are guilty of the blackest ingratitude; they are worthy of our hatred. But because it cannot be said that they have done any positive harm to anybody, they do not warrant our resentment. Ergo cases of simple ingratitude like this should not be punished. To try to oblige people by force to return a favor would be very improper indeed, and likewise it would be very improper for the benefactor to resort to violence to get the favor in return. These duties of beneficence come under the category of perfect and complete obligations because they rely purely on decency and sensibilities of those who owe the debt of gratitude, and their innate desire to do the right thing.

There is however one duty of beneficence, the breach of which can give rise to injury and therefore occasion resentment in the bosom of the wronged party; this virtue is justice and the violation of justice is injury. "The violator of the laws of justice ought to be made to feel himself that evil which he has done to another; and since no regard to the sufferings of his brethren is capable of restraining him, he ought to be over-awed by the fear of his own". This requirement of doing justice to our brethren is however a negative virtue, that is to say we can expect resentment and therefore punishment and revenge if we are unjust to others, but if we just do the bare minimum of merely abstaining from harming the estate of person of our neighbors then we can expect no positive reward or gratitude. "We may often fulfil all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing". This is actually a very profound and philosophical principle, although Smith himself would hardly have been aware of it, as we shall see in the next chapter when dealing with the philosophy of Schopenhauer that the highest good lies precisely in renouncing all attachments to this vicious, malicious, malignant growth that is human civilization. In that one simple line Smith captured the essence of the ascetic way of life.

Smith here is of course thinking just in terms of doing the minimum required by the law when he says “fulfill all the rules of justice” but in fact the literal meaning of his words are much wider. He had previously informed us that justice was a pure virtue and in fact even in current usage this is the meaning of the word ‘justice’. Of all the various words to describe human conduct and human civilization - words like ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘evil’, ‘virtuous’, ‘honorable’, ‘proper’ etc etc – only the word ‘justice’ stands out as having any absolute quality. All the other words have that relative aspect to them, what is ‘good’ in one society could be a heinous crime in another, and it is true that what is ‘justice’ in one society may be considered anything but ‘just’ in another society, still with this term ‘justice’ it is possible to arrive at the notion of absolute justice, where we could imagine some totally objective judge looking upon a scenario from afar, completely unbiased concerning the prejudices and values of the parties involved, and coming up with an absolute determination of what would be a ‘just’ result. Such an absolute notion of justice would be completely indifferent to the nationalities, the race, the religion, the gender etc etc of the parties involved, and as well it would be indifferent to the era or epoque or stage of development of the civilization where the issue has arisen. For instance the Catholic Church today has been able to admit that in the times of yore the various Inquisitions that were conducted amounted to acts of gross injustice even though at the time they were of course tribunals of justice par excellence.

This notion of ‘absolute justice’ can actually be brought to bear on all of Western civilization, and it will be found that the very essence of our civilization is based on gross acts of injustice that can never be expiated. At the core of our human society there are fundamental crimes against humanity and no amount of apologizing or monetary compensation after the event will be able to exonerate us. I am talking about the way modern Western society ‘colonized’ the Americas, Australia, Africa and many other places where the ‘savages’ lived. At some stage our modern Western society has to be weighed in the scales of ‘justice’ in this absolute sense, and if it is found guilty then it has to be severely punished. If there is such a thing as ‘absolute justice’ it is inconceivable that modern Western society can just live on forever, growing and prospering, founded as it on such dark and evil conduct. Western society really is a ‘goodly apple rotten at the heart’ and the only way to see that absolute justice is done is tear that rotten heart right out of it.

The gravity of what Western society did during that colonization era was impressed upon me very recently when I was reading an essay on *Death and Rebirth* by Arthur Schopenhauer. He was talking about metempsychosis, or the belief of various peoples, including the Hindus, of some form of reincarnation and the continuation after death of our consciousness in another living being. Schopenhauer said that even the aborigines of Australia believe in this and he cited a small excerpt of an article that appeared in *The Times* of 29 January, 1841 which relates to the execution of two Australian ‘savages’ for arson and murder. This is then an instance where from the point of view of the colonial (British) government they were simply metering out some famous British justice. The article was remarking on the lack of remorse shown by one of the savages. It would seem not only did he not show remorse, but he actually stared down his executioner with a belligerent and hostile look in his eye and showed not the slightest fear of death. According to the article: “The younger of the 2 prisoners met his end with a dogged and determined spirit, as it appeared of revenge; the only intelligible expression he made use of conveyed an impression that he would rise up ‘a white fellow’, which, it was considered, strengthened his resolution”. I am an Australian. I was born in Australia 30 December, 1950,

approximately 109 years after that belligerent and remorseless savage was executed as a result of British justice, and I can assert that I am the 'white fellow' that is going to put this matter right. If there is no such thing as 'absolute justice' then there is no point to life. It is inconceivable that our Creator should have made this representation, and no doubt many other representations besides, and for it to be totally pointless. Ergo absolute justice is the only real and tangible thing in it, and Western society is now going to get a taste of it. The spirit of Jimmy Blackfella has risen up *a white fellow*. Why do I say this? Because it is very plain to me that belligerent young savage that stared down his executioner more than a century and a half ago had exactly the same notion of 'absolute justice' that I have today. And what's more he had a much clearer idea of the bigger picture than Adam Smith who was no doubt sipping port wine in his club in England around the same time and pontificating about the wonders of English morality and justice.

Of course this is not even taking into account the annihilation of the other species and the degradation of the ecology of all countries as a result of the relentless and remorseless expansion of this vile and destructive force that is human civilization. When we are dealing with questions of 'absolute justice' then all these other atrocities have to be weighed in the balance, and a very severe chastisement imposed. No force this evil and destructive can expect to go on forever without being called to account. It literally destroys and consumes everything in its path and it has to be stopped.

Adam Smith says that humans can exist only in society and they have been admirably fashioned by nature for that purpose. Human society provides mutual assistance and mutual protection for all its members. It is not even necessary for there to any mutual love and affection amongst its members because the essential glue that holds society together is that of utility. A well-ordered society is just one massive commercial enterprise from which everybody derives a benefit to a greater or lesser extent. Society is "upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation". It is not hard to surmise then the ultimate foundation of morality for Adam Smith – 'good' is anything that enhances business and 'bad' is anything that impedes business. Society must have justice. "If there is any society among robbers and murderers, they must at least, according to the trite observation, abstain from robbing and murdering one another". Morality is the minimum amount of justice necessary in a human society that prevents its members from tearing each other apart. Acts of beneficence, such as charity, gratitude, mercy etc, as well as mutual affections like love and friendship, are purely 'ornamental' and are not strictly necessary provided the machinery is in place to enforce 'justice' and suppress the mutual hatred.

When we hear young or licentious people ridiculing our most sacred rules of morality we often don't have any need to ask ourselves whether it is right and proper for them to be punished. Just their general hatefulness and detestableness is sufficient reason for us to condemn them to be punished. But over and above the fact that we hate and detest them we have to take into consideration the general interest of society, and this is the fundamental reason why they are to be punished because ridiculing our moral principles will tend to introduce disorder and confusion into our society. Furthermore, because we have been made by Nature to be social creatures, then we are led to expect from every religion, and principally of course the Christian religion, that any acts which we commit in this life which are contrary to the general interests of our society, as well as any acts that tend to introduce disorder and confusion into our society, will be severely punished in the afterlife. In this way Nature herself has provided the ultimate safeguard to enable

human beings to continue to propagate and prosper as a social unit. Woe betide any person who thinks they can act contrary to the interests of our society and get away with it, because we will hunt you down even beyond the grave if necessary and see that you get your just deserts. This aspect of punishment in the afterlife is essential for a well-ordered human society in order to set the terrible example to those detestable individuals who would have the temerity to oppose us.

Smith lays it down as a principle that we should only feel gratitude towards an agent who has done us a good turn or given us pleasure by design, that is to say intentionally. By the same token we should only feel resentment against an agent who has set out to harm us. It is the intention of the agent in all cases that is important, and the agent will normally have to have sufficient self-awareness to become conscious of the fact that he/she is being rewarded on account of the beneficent act done towards us, or punished precisely for the harmful or hurtful act done toward us as the case may be. These principles have been followed and refined by British jurisprudence over many centuries and from the point of view of a treatise on morals may be taken as mundane and non-controversial. I would not have even included it were it not for the fact that Smith devotes a whole section of his book to this topic where once again he proves himself a master at stating the obvious.

Smith seems to think that we approve or disapprove of our own conduct in exactly the same way as we judge the actions of others. When we are judging others he says that we look at their situation as if we were actually the one who has been pained or pleased and then see if we sympathize or disapprove on the basis that if could really have happened to us. He just reverses the coin now and says that we approve or disapprove of our conduct if an indifferent spectator would likewise approve or disapprove of us. A more circular and fatuous argument you could never hope to find. In the next chapter when we deal with the theories of Sigmund Freud we will see that reason and the opinions of indifferent spectators have got nothing whatsoever to do with determining our passions and beliefs. All our core emotions and passions actually have a neurotic aspect to them and the only difference between a normal citizen and someone who is locked up in an insane asylum is that the normal citizen is able to keep his/her neuroses within acceptable social limits.

Ultimately all our morals are based on emulation and admiration of others. If we see someone who is very beautiful then we naturally want to be as beautiful as them. If we see someone who is particularly loved then we want to be loved as much as they are. As a general rule we fashion all our behavior on what we find to be admirable or praiseworthy in others. Smith's moral system, just like his economic system, is all about "keeping up with the Jones's". Our moral values depend upon what the Jones's think of us, just as much as our reputation in society depends upon whether we have as many cars and television sets as the Jones's have. "Their approbation necessarily conforms our own self-approbation. Their praise necessarily strengthens our own sense of praiseworthiness". Mind you vanity is the foundation of the most ridiculous and contemptible of vices – your vices of affectation and common lying. There is nothing more immoral than a woman with a bad complexion painting her face in order to receive compliments for her beauty, or a foolish liar who exaggerates his adventures in order to be applauded and admired by the company he is in, or the coxcomb who gives himself airs of rank and distinction in order to be seen as someone of importance. These are instances of people who are actually not worthy of praise but they are seeking it just the same, and so they are totally immoral.

By the same token we are prevented from committing even the most violent and horrific crimes because we cannot bear the thought that people will hate and detest us, and even if we can be assured that we can get away with our crimes so no one will ever know it was us, and even if we are certain that there is no righteous and all-knowing God who will take revenge for our crimes in the afterlife, it is precisely this dread we have that others will hate and detest us which will bring on a feeling of guilt that will poison our life.

We are almost completely impervious to even the greatest sorrows or misfortunes of our neighbor and often a relatively trivial misfortune of our own will send us into an excess of anger or remorse. Fortunately we all have this innate ability sit back at a distance in our imagination and look at these emotions from the point of view of a reasonable third party and this automatically corrects our emotions and passions even without our being consciously aware of it, a bit like our sense of sight automatically corrects our sense of distance and perspective for objects that are far away. This is a facility that the Author of nature has happily built into us so that we may be better citizens and all live happily together in a well-ordered society. After this reasonable adjustment of our emotions by the indifferent spectator in our imagination we automatically show more sympathy and compassion for the great misfortune of our neighbor and react to our own trivial setback in a more dignified fashion.

This notion of an independent observer in our imagination that tells us when our passions are proper or improper actually becomes Smith's definition of conscience. He makes the assertion that notwithstanding this immense love of self that we all have innately, all the generous people and a goodly proportion even of the mean-hearted ones would choose to allow a trivial misfortune to befall themselves if by so doing an immense calamity can be averted from being brought down on others. He gives the example that because of our conscience most of us would submit to losing a little finger if it meant that an earthquake could be prevented in China that would kill a hundred million people. A most remarkable proposition by any standards, but evidently the people of Smith's time had a much more acute sense of conscience than what we see in people these days. The proposition is of course totally absurd, but I would not be at all sure that I would forsake my little pinky finger in order to save one hundred million people whom I don't even know. This is how Smith expresses it: "When the happiness or misery of others depends in any respect upon our conduct, we dare not, as self-love might suggest to us, prefer the interest of one to that of many. The man within immediately calls to us, that we value ourselves too much and other people too little, and that, by doing so, we render ourselves the proper object of the contempt and indignation of our brethren". Clearly one part of his morality is correct: *we really do place very little store on the happiness or misery of people we don't even know.*

Smith manages to refine this proposition and concludes that we must never hurt another person even if by doing so we will gain a much greater benefit for ourselves. A poor man must never steal from a rich man even if the object taken is immensely more valuable in the hands of the poor man and the rich man may not have even been aware that he had it. This is the sacred rule upon which the whole security and peace of human society depends. The irony is of course in the well-ordered capitalist society of today the rich are constantly screwing over the poor, by both legal and illegal means, in order to turn a huge profit for themselves, and not only is this not immoral in Smith's system, but indeed this is the way it should be as decreed by the Author of nature aka God.

Smith denounces “those whining and melancholy moralists, who are perpetually reproaching us with our happiness, while so many of our brethren are in misery”. They seem to want to dampen the pleasures of the fortunate and impose a melancholy dejection on all of society, and this is totally unreasonable because on average throughout the world there is only one in twenty who is in abject poverty, stricken with famine or disease, or oppressed by a cruel and villainous dictator. You may as well be worrying about misery and suffering that is occurring on the moon, so irrelevant is it to Smith’s exalted view of human society. So although it is perfectly acceptable to take pride and delight in our own good fortune, Smith does favor the view of the Stoic philosophers when it comes to tempering our grief and passions as a result of any misfortune that may have befallen us, big or small. Any excessive display of emotion would be most improper.

Smith distinguishes the two cases when we examine our own passions – before we are about to act and after we have acted. He recognizes that very rarely in the heat of the moment and in the grip of a violent emotion we are going to have sufficient self-control to sit back and judge impartially on our predicament. After we have acted even though we are now able to analyze our conduct more objectively, often we are very reluctant to find fault with ourselves, and even if we are able to see that we have acted wrongly it’s not going to change things and at best can just amount to “vain regret and unavailing repentance”. Ergo self-deceit is the source of half the disorders of human life. But this is where the strength of human society comes to the fore. We are constantly being conditioned by the opinions of others as to what conduct is proper and what is not proper, and so if we ever find ourselves in the grip of a violent passion this preconditioning will more often than not ensure that we do not exceed the bounds of propriety. It is from this preconditioning by society that the general rules of morality are formed.

It is out of regard of these general rules of conduct that we derive a sense of duty. There is no hypocrisy or blamable dissimulation if a person in society acts properly not because they actually want to, but because they know it to be their duty to act that way. For instance a person who feels no gratitude for a great service done to him, will never the less endeavor to show gratitude. A wife who feels no love for her husband will feel a keen sense of duty to act as if she did love him, and will be careful, officious, faithful and sincere. “But upon the tolerable observance of these duties, depends the very existence of human society, which would crumble into nothing if mankind were not generally impressed with a reverence for those important rules of conduct”. We derive this reverence from the fact that these are rules of conduct laid down by God and any failure on our part to do our duty will be severely punished in the afterlife. Our capacity to reason as well as our philosophy are very clear on this point; we are obliged to do our duty because it is ordained by God. That is not to say that God is there solely to chastise us if we fail to do our duty. The author of Nature aka God has also built in a system of rewards which will flow naturally to us simply by acting appropriately. “What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence and circumspection? Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that in the whole of life these virtues should fail of attaining it? Wealth and external honors are their proper recompense, and the recompense which they can seldom fail of acquiring”.

Of course this notion of a general duty to obey the general rules of conduct laid down by society as its morality is principally a negative duty in as much as it is usually invoked to justify the punishment for someone who has wronged or injured someone else. We would like to think

the positive virtues of benevolence, gratitude, affection and the like spring not so much from a cold duty ordained by the Deity, but rather from the love of humanity generally that is innate to us. The husband who knows that his wife has no real affection for him and is being faithful and obedient to him simply as a result of a bare sense of duty and fear of God will hardly derive any real pleasure or satisfaction from the marriage. Likewise the son who sullenly performs all that is required from him as a result of filial duty will hardly cause his father's breast to swell with paternal pride. And even when it comes to punishing someone who has injured someone else, we would like to think that the injured party seeks the wrong to be punished not out of personal hatred or desire for revenge but rather has a dispassionate desire for the agent to be punished simply because a moral duty ordained by the Deity has been breached. The sole motivation of the person wronged is the sense of the propriety of punishing. When it comes to moral duties regarding material objects we should have no regard to the objects themselves if these objects are small and trivial, but rather concern ourselves to honor the general rule of conduct. For instance the miser who tries to save threepence here and a shilling there is acting properly with regard to the general moral duty to be thrifty and parsimonious the benefits of which are universally recognized. When the objects are very valuable then of course some moral value and passion can attach to those objects themselves because the general rule of conduct clearly endorses ambition and a general desire to better ourselves materially.

Utility, convenience and symmetry are the principle components of beauty, according to Adam Smith. The mere fact that a machine works well and produces what it was built to produce makes it beautiful in Smith's eyes. We are to understand this word machine in its widest sense to include anything constructed by human enterprise. A palace for instance will be beautiful precisely because the architecture is symmetrical and it provides the maximum comfort and convenience to its esteemed occupants. Smith prides himself in being the first to notice that it is precisely this fitness of the machine or the building to produce what it was intended for which ultimately is more important than the convenience or pleasure actually produced. He gives some bizarre example about a gentleman being upset if the chairs in his room are all in the middle whereas from the point of view of convenience they should all be arranged around the room with their backs to the wall. Even more inconvenient, and therefore disagreeable and ugly, is a slow running watch which loses two minutes every day. Such a watch we will sell for 2 guineas and buy a better one for 50 guineas which only loses one minute a fortnight, and this is not because it is vitally important to know the precise o'clock, but rather it is our desire to have a perfectly running machine. The same applies to the fad for gadgets of all kinds. People will walk around with their pockets stuffed with gadgets not because they vitally need the things those gadgets produce, but simply because they are enamored with having things that work properly.

This applies to the big things in life and not just to trinkets and gadgets. A poor man's son who is over-endowed with ambition and who is envious of the conveniences and luxuries of the rich will labor his entire life and endure all sorts of humiliations and hardships in order to be able to obtain these conveniences for himself, only to find that when he is old and burnt out in body and mind that the conveniences produced by the superior and illustrious equipage of the rich folk do not actually compensate for the lifetime of work and toil that has been expended to attain them. Smith offers the desert island test. If you are forced to live alone on a desert island would you prefer the big conveniences such as a palace or would you prefer the smaller gadgets of convenience like a tooth-pick, an ear-picker, or a machine for cutting the nails. Answer: Well you

would prefer the smaller conveniences of course because on a desert island there would be no one else there to be impressed by the fact that you live in a palace.

This fundamental 'deception' that nature imposes upon us, and which Adam Smith alone was able to see through by means of his desert island test, is actually the pillar upon which human society and economy is founded. "It is this deception that rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains, and made the trackless and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great highroad of communication to the different nations of the earth. The earth by these labors of mankind has been obliged to redouble her natural fertility, and to maintain a greater multitude of inhabitants". There you have it from the mouth of the founding father of Capitalism, the compulsive need for human society to go forth and fuck the Earth is based on a gross deception. In Smith's system of morality this of course is the ultimate good.

It's fortunate for the human race that the eye of the rich man is bigger than his stomach, because although in his greed and selfish imagination he himself is going to consume all the harvest of his extensive fields, in fact he can only consume little more than the poor laborers working for him and are engaged in maintaining his opulence and greatness, and so in this way the invisible hand that directs human economy ensures that the workers that are so essential to sustain the economic enterprise receive in their turn the necessities to sustain life. "When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seem to have been left out in the partition. These last too enjoy their share of all that it produces. In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway, possesses that security which kings are fighting for". This from the pen of a man who only a few paragraphs before had revealed the great deception at the base of human civilization. Is it any wonder that human society has got to the stage where the words 'good' and 'evil' have lost all meaning.

The prudent, the equitable, the active resolute and sober people are the beautiful perfectly running machines whereas the rash, the insolent, the slothful, effeminate and voluptuous (men) are deformed and ugly precisely because they are machines that are awkward and clunky. So you've got your beautiful useful people and your deformed useless people. Our approbation of virtue is precisely this perception of beauty in what is useful and practical. Smith's ear-picker is beautiful on account of its utility, but there has to be something more than just using our ear-picker when we want to which will garner for us the approbation that is truly virtuous. For instance if we forgo the immediate pleasure of using our ear-picker until such time that the wax has built up in our ears and then derive much greater pleasure from the use of the ear-picker, this would then become virtuous conduct on our part which would ensure the approbation of others. And it is the same with the person who is parsimonious and frugal and forgoes the immediate gratification of the senses with the long-term object of amassing a fortune. Such a person is virtuous and deserves our approbation and esteem. Indeed we will look upon such a person with wonder and admiration.

In the very next paragraph we are then told that generosity is also a virtue that will gain for us the approbation of others. This is not just any generosity however. "We are never more generous except when in some respect we prefer some other person to ourselves, and sacrifice some great and important interest of our own to an equal interest of a good friend or of a superior". This is the generosity of a soldier who gladly throws away his own life in order to preserve the life of his officer, even though of course he has no personal feelings or affection for the officer, and in fact if the officer were to die elsewhere he could not have cared less, but decides to sacrifice his life nonetheless in order to be seen as truly generous and gain the approbation of others. This can also attach to a person who is very ambitious to gain a certain office, but who then decides that someone else is more worthy than him to have this office, so he willingly steps aside and lets the better man have it.

Customs and fashion will also affect our judgement of what is beautiful. For instance we are accustomed to see a gentleman with certain insignificant objects of ornamentation on his suit of clothes, and if once we come across someone whose suit has no ornamentation then our eye will be struck that there is something amiss. Fashion is another matter. That is set only for people of high rank and gives us a notion of what is genteel and magnificent. Of course once the high and mighty drop a certain fashionable mode of dress invariably the inferior ranks will persevere with it being blissfully unaware of their meanness and awkwardness. Custom and fashion don't just determine the style of our dress and furniture, but actually extends to all our tastes – gastronomy, music, poetry, architecture etc. Although modes of dress tend to change very rapidly a lot of these attitudes that we have concerning good taste can last for decades or even centuries and the common man might get the impression that these rules of good taste have actually been founded on reason and nature, whereas in fact they are quite deluded, and these rules dictating our notions of what is graceful and beautiful are merely entrenched custom and fashion. Smith cites with approval a definition of human beauty where our every feature conforms precisely to the middle ground and a truly beautiful person, male or female, will be one whose features are uniform in every respect. "A beautiful nose, for example, is one that is neither very long, nor very short, neither very straight nor very crooked, but a sort of middle among all these extremes, and less different from any of them, than all of them are from one another". Similar considerations apply to every other feature of the human face and body. Smith cites examples where some feature actually does not exactly fit the average or middle mold and yet custom or fashion in that particular country has none the less decreed that it is beautiful. Most of these examples relate to the bizarre things the savages do to each other in the name of beauty.

He therefore concludes that human beauty does indeed rely on this notion of strict mediocrity in all our features, but with the proviso that there can be instances where custom has dictated that a certain extreme way of distorting the feature can still be beautiful if uniformly adhered to in that society. Still he is magnanimous enough to concede that the civilized Europeans are also susceptible to this nonsense. "But when they condemn those savages, they do not reflect that the ladies in Europe had, till within these very few years, been endeavoring, for near a century past, to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form of the same kind. And that, notwithstanding the many distortions and diseases which this practice was known to occasion, custom had rendered it agreeable among some of the most civilized nations which, perhaps the world had ever beheld".

Predictably Smith goes on to assert that our moral attitudes of approbation or disapprobation for conduct is also largely determined by custom and fashion, although not entirely. So even though custom and fashion can sometimes condone or applaud conduct (but not in Great Britain of course) that is absurd and fantastical, it could never be fashionable to have the morality of a Nero or a Caligula. These depraved Roman emperors are obviously extreme cases, for the rest of us, as with his notions of beauty, custom and fashion dictate that we will all observe the middle road of acceptable conduct that is expected of us according to our rank in society. Needless to say the middle road for the conduct of an aristocrat will be the high road and the middle road for the conduct of a peasant will be the low road. This notion of the 'golden mean' of conduct will of course vary depending on the age of the person concerned. "The extreme coldness, and dull formality, which are pardoned in old age, make youth ridiculous. The levity, the carelessness, and the vanity, which are indulged in youth, render old age contemptible".

Smith seems to think that there are natural sentiments of 'right' and 'wrong' which are entirely independent of custom and fashion. For instance he says that it is obviously the greatest barbarity to hurt an infant and yet there have been many countries, including the ancient Greeks who were not actually savages, where it is considered perfectly normal and proper for parents to abandon their children if they do not want to keep them. He upbraids great philosophers like Aristotle who encourage this custom and Plato who seems to condone it. He speaks from the point of view of a British gentleman who is quite satisfied that because of the innate sense of right and wrong in that most civilized country such a barbarous custom as that could never be adopted as morally acceptable. He was of course writing this twaddle a century before Charles Dickens was writing popular novels precisely satirizing the 'custom' of using child labor in the workhouses and as chimneysweeps etc. One can only surmise how bad it must have been for abandoned children, and children of poor families, in the United Kingdom in Smith's time.

Nature has endowed all humans with the desire or drive to provide the necessities of life. In addition to that is the desire to accumulate wealth, that is to say an overabundance of what is necessary to sustain life, and this arises quite naturally in human society from our desire for the respect of our peers and to be persons of rank and consequence. But wealth alone is not enough to ensure that we will enjoy the admiration of our peers, we also have to zealously guard our good reputation, and for this we require the moral virtue of Prudence. The greatest suffering comes from loss of reputation should we have the misfortune to fall from our high rung in the social ladder. "Security therefore is the first and the principal object of prudence. It is averse to expose our health, our fortune, our rank, our reputation, to any sort of hazard". Smith discusses at length his idea of a prudent man. One interesting point is that a prudent man will be very circumspect in expressing his opinions. It is even acceptable for a prudent man to lie, or at least not tell the whole truth, in situations where his reputation would suffer if the whole truth became public knowledge. In the same vein a prudent man will never be a great philosopher like Socrates or Voltaire who have made their reputation by showing a most improper and insolent contempt for all the decorums and niceties of human society. Such people set a very pernicious example to all the malcontents in society who try to emulate them and don't have their unique talent. Essentially a prudent man performs his duties quietly and efficiently and preserves the status quo.

Smith embarks on a perfectly vapid description of family affections and the niceties of friendship. We find statements like: "Men of virtue only can feel that entire confidence in the conduct and behavior of one another, which can, at all times, assure them that they can never either offend or be offended by one another. Vice is always capricious; virtue only is regular and orderly. The attachment which is founded upon the love of virtue, as it is certainly, of all attachments, the most virtuous; so it is likewise the happiest, as well as the most permanent and secure". And in this section we see the most complete statement of the 'master' and 'slave' morality that Friedrich Nietzsche later made famous, and this of course is the foundation of Capitalism in our era. I reproduce the paragraph without comment as it is supremely self-explanatory.

After the persons who are recommended to our beneficence, either by their connection with ourselves, by their personal qualities, or by their past services, come those who are pointed out, not indeed to, what is called, our friendship, but to our benevolent attention and good offices; those who are distinguished by their extraordinary situation; the greatly fortunate and the greatly unfortunate, the rich and the powerful, the poor and the wretched. The distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, are, in a great measure, founded upon the respect which we naturally conceive for the former. The relief and consolation of human misery depend altogether upon our compassion for the latter. The peace and order of society, is of more importance than even the relief of the miserable. Our respect for the great, accordingly, is most apt to offend by its excess; our fellow-feeling for the miserable, by its defect. Moralists exhort us to charity and compassion. They warn us against the fascination of greatness. This fascination, indeed, is so powerful, that the rich and the great are too often preferred to the wise and the virtuous. Nature has wisely judged that the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, would rest more securely upon the plain and palpable difference of birth and fortune, than upon the invisible and often uncertain difference of wisdom and virtue. The undistinguishing eyes of the great mob of mankind can well enough perceive the former: it is with difficulty that the nice discernment of the wise and the virtuous can sometimes distinguish the latter. In the order of all those recommendations, the benevolent wisdom of nature is equally evident.

Smith concludes by asserting that all the fine and grandiose sentiments that he has just espoused concerning family affection, friendship and virtue sometimes will have to be put on the back burner if there emerges an issue concerning the security "of those superiors upon whose safety often depends that of the whole society".

Needless to say the state or sovereignty into which we are born encapsulates all our selfish interests as well as all our benevolent loves and affections for friends and family, and thus it is to the state that we owe our primary duty, honor, admiration and allegiance. Any citizen who willingly sacrifices his/her life even for the mere vain glory of the state can be sure of acting with complete propriety. The citizen should see himself/herself as merely one of the multitude who is willing to sacrifice all "to the safety, to the service, and even to the glory of the greater number". By the

same token our love and admiration for our own country will often cause us “to view with the most malignant jealousy and envy, the prosperity and aggrandizement of any neighboring nation”. We have to be ever vigilant to ensure that our own nation will never fall to subjugation by our neighboring nations that are constantly working towards their own aggrandizement and overreaching for power. We can never rely on international laws of justice which are mere pretense and sham. “From the smallest interest, from the slightest provocation, we see those rules every day, either evaded or directly violated without shame or remorse”. The love of our own country is not derived from the love of mankind. It is entirely independent of it and often we have to be prepared to sacrifice the latter for the former.

We have to assume that God has designed and created the universe for the express purpose of providing the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Therefore the wise and virtuous citizens will readily sacrifice their own private interests for the greater good or advancement of society. It is inconceivable that God would have constructed the universe otherwise than for our greater good so even if some disaster, misfortune or misadventure befalls us we have to assume that this only has the appearance of a partial evil and if we had the benefit of all the knowledge of the Creator we would know that this apparent calamity was actually necessary for the universal good or the greater prosperity of the universe. In the absence of the most perfect knowledge therefore, if we find ourselves in danger, being tortured or facing death for the good of humanity or for the love of country, then at the very least we are expected to show the most perfect self-command and preserve our tranquility and composure. If a person behaves in such a way he (or she) can be assured of the warmest gratitude, admiration and approbation of his (or her) fellow countrymen. And even if he is a low-life criminal or highwayman, if he faces his just punishment with this sort of equanimity and self-command then some of this same approbation and admiration could also attach to him from the virtuous and proper citizens; that is to say his character won't be judged to have been completely lacking in all merit. “Self-command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the other virtues seem to derive their principal lustre”.

Smith refers to a system of morality that makes benevolence the highest and indeed the only virtue. However in this system acts of charity and philanthropy can only be virtuous if no self-interest can be detected in the motives of the person giving so generously to the less fortunate. He denounces the philanthropist who does acts of great generosity in order to enjoy the praise, approbation and esteem of humankind in general, and even if the acts of charity are done in order that the giver may enjoy some self-approbation, that is to say feel good about oneself, to be satisfied that I am a thoroughly good person. Smith approves of this system of morality in principle however he counsels: “Regard to our own private happiness and interest, too, appear upon many occasions very laudable principles of action”. As you can imagine he manages to rework the principles in this system so as to comply with his own system of morality where charity and benevolence are the highest good precisely because acts of great generosity to the less fortunate are always certain to gain for us the greatest amount of esteem, admiration, approbation and praise from our fellow citizens. Their admiration will be all the greater for the fact that they will conceive of us as being so enormously wealthy that we can divest ourselves of huge sums simply because it makes us feel ‘good’. Not only is great philanthropy and charity the highest virtue, but is also the pinnacle of success.

Smith discusses a system of moral philosophy that apparently had created quite a stir in his time – it was a book by a Dr Mandeville which satirized all this moral philosophizing and which

pointed out that everything we do in life has its basis in self-love, and therefore all the 'good' deeds such as benevolence, philanthropy and charity as well as anything done to advance our reputation, wealth or rank in society are all without exception considered virtuous because they are 'praise-worthy', and are in fact motivated by the vice of vanity. Smith dismisses this system as erroneous and goes to great lengths to distinguish the desire of acquiring honor and esteem by doing acts that are truly worthy of getting us the praise and admiration of others, and the vain and frivolous efforts of coxcombs and persons of no consequence to have praise heaped upon them by the public when they are not worthy of it. Smith dismisses as mere sophistry Dr Mandeville's claim that "private vices are public virtues". It is precisely our love of ostentation, the fact that everyone is constantly acting out of self-interest to better themselves and thus gain the esteem and admiration of our fellows that makes human society work, and in fact if we all turned into ascetics and shunned all the material luxuries, the pomp and circumstance of social rank, that we crave, then this would sound the death-knell for humanity. There would be no "love of magnificence, a taste for the elegant arts and improvements of human life, for whatever is agreeable in dress, furniture, or equipage, for architecture, statuary, painting and music..." Dr Mandeville's claim that everything was luxury, sensuality and ostentation and there was no real virtue was pernicious and destructive. After devoting a whole chapter to trying to distinguish his system of virtue from that of Dr Mandeville's, Adam Smith grudgingly concedes that there is probably some truth in it; one even detects a modicum of admiration on behalf of the founder of modern capitalist economy in Dr Mandeville's treatise. If this doesn't prove to you that human society is in fact a rotten pretense, regardless of all the highfaluting values we espouse to the contrary, then nothing will.

Smith also refers to the system of morality put forward by Hobbes. "Man is driven to take refuge in society, not by any natural love which he bears to his own kind, but because without the assistance of others he is incapable of subsisting with ease or safety. Society, upon this account, becomes necessary to him, and whatever tends to its support and welfare, he considers as having a remote tendency to his own interest; and, on the contrary, whatever is likely to disturb or destroy it, he regards as in some measure hurtful or pernicious to himself". Essentially then the virtues and vices can be ranged in two very broad categories, and everything that is virtuous can in some way be related to self-interest and everything that is evil can in some way be seen as jeopardizing the individual self-interest. Strangely Smith chooses to find this argument misguided, and he does so by pointing to one single virtue, that of sympathy, and says that here is a virtue in no way related to self-interest. He states that when we show sympathy to someone who has suffered a loss or misfortune we do so by imagining ourselves to be the sufferer or victim and it is for this reason, and this reason only, that we show sympathy. This argument is too fatuous to warrant any serious rebuttal. I can think of dozens of reasons why we might show sympathy to someone we know for motives of self-interest. Ornately designed sympathy cards are commercially available for every sorrowful occasion. Invariably we show sympathy to someone we actually know simply because it is the 'right thing to do', which means of course that our relationship with the aggrieved party would suffer if we did otherwise, and that would be contrary to our self-interest. Hobbes is right on the money as far as I am concerned, and to pick this one virtue of sympathy which is not even an emotion or passion but is just a superficial social custom, and to pretend that it refutes Hobbes' entire system is ludicrous.

Smith summarizes the “odious doctrine of Mr. Hobbes, that a state of nature is a state of war; and that antecedent to the institution of civil government there could be no safe or peaceable society among men. To preserve society, therefore, according to him, was to support civil government, and to destroy civil government was the same thing as to put an end to society. But the existence of civil government depends upon the obedience that is paid to the supreme magistrate. The moment he loses his authority, all government is at an end. As self-preservation, therefore, teaches men to applaud whatever tends to promote the welfare of society, and to blame whatever is likely to hurt it; so the same principle, if they would think and speak consistently, ought to teach them to applaud upon all occasions obedience to the civil magistrate, and to blame all disobedience and rebellion. The very ideas of laudable and blamable, ought to be the same with those of obedience and disobedience. The laws of the civil magistrate, therefore, ought to be regarded as the sole ultimate standards of what was just and unjust, of what was right and wrong”. Many moralists and theologians were at pains to refute Hobbes and they argued that there still must have been some notions of right and wrong before humans came together into societies with laws; even primitive man had the capacity to reason which enabled them to determine some actions ‘good’ and some actions ‘evil’. Smith agrees that primitive man had notions of right and wrong before they came together into civilized societies, but disagreed that they were able to work it out rationally using their intelligence, but rather they just had some innate and immediate sense or feeling for these matters.

This is actually a fairly sterile argument. Clearly before there were civilizations human beings were banding together in tribes. These tribes invariably had some sort of a leader or chieftain and there were some sort of rules that the members of the tribe were expected to obey, punishable by death, torture or expulsion. Most civilized societies seem to have started out in a kingdom of some sort under the control of a royal family. These kings or emperors invariably claimed that their rule was ordained by a Deity which gave them ‘the divine right of kings’. Obeying the king or obeying the Deity was pretty much the same thing. In those times as well if you disobeyed the king or the Deity you could expect death, torture or exile. Over the millennia, going as far back as the Greeks in the Western tradition, there have been philosophers who perhaps started to question whether there was something more to ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ than simply doing what you are told by the despot sitting on the throne. Hobbes was just a major player in that philosophical tradition. Adam Smith was not. Yet it is Adam Smith’s system of morality upon which modern capitalist morality is based.

Even though Smith thought that our ancestors, even before they became civilized, had some sense or feeling for what was right and wrong, he does not think that human beings have a moral sense, as has been argued by others, which acts like a sort of sixth sense similar to our normal senses of taste, hearing touch etc. He rather thinks our notion of virtue which arises whenever we show approbation or disapprobation for someone else’s conduct stems from this sentiment of sympathy that he thinks all humanity is endowed with. He even lists four different sources of sympathy that we might have in relation to someone who has done someone else a good turn or done something useful or noble. This is right at the end of his book where he has gone to great pains to argue that we do all these virtuous and benevolent things precisely because we seek the admiration, praise, respect and approbation of others. He doesn’t specifically state it, but presumable our sense and feeling for what is immoral stems also from this notion of sympathy, only this time it is our sympathy for someone who has suffered a loss or been injured or wronged

by someone else. There is one thing that can be said in Smith's favor; at least he is consistent. His system of morality may be the most vague, superficial and subjective, and self-serving explanation for 'good' and 'evil' that has ever been conceived, (just like sympathy itself is the vaguest and most artificial sentiment of which humans are capable) but he makes no bones about stating his belief that our morality stems purely from our existence as social beings, and ultimately whatever serves our own self-interest and that of our society is 'good' and whatever is harmful to ourselves or our society is 'evil'. This is no more, nor less, than what one would expect from an economist who was trying to portray human society as being something more than just a conglomeration of exploiters and consumers aka masters and slaves. His aim was to make the system workable, not to enlighten us about the true nature of 'good' and 'evil'. Not that he could have enlightened us even if he had wanted to because the knowledge of the cause of good and evil was something about which he was blissfully ignorant.

SCHOPENHAUER & FREUD

According to the *Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* human civilization “is neither rational nor good, but rather is an absurd, polymorphous, hungry thing that lacerates itself without end and suffers in each of its parts. None of us is in control even of our own nature; instead we are at the mercy of the blind urge to exist and propagate that stupefies us into accepting the illusion that to be a human individual is worthwhile”. People are “delusively individualized throbs of craving”, seen by Schopenhauer as “human bipeds” brought together only by “their vulgarity, pettiness, shallowness, feeble-mindedness and wretchedness”. For Schopenhauer “every grade of the will’s objectification fights for the matter, the space, and the time of another” so conflict and strife are inevitable in his animistic world view. His principal work was entitled *The World as Will and Representation* and his explanation for the world as representation part of his thesis is that everything strives to be, in the sense of striving to be a material object existing in time and space, and it is precisely this striving to be which is the cause of the strife and conflict. In this chapter I am going to demonstrate that what he was talking about was actually a striving to find a representation in all material objects of the ‘thing’ that was lost at birth, the attachment to the mother via the umbilical cord and placenta, and it is this representation that is the ‘thing-in-itself’ which the will is yearning to refind.

Academics who study Schopenhauer are at a loss to understand why his philosophy should be so pessimistic. He lived at a time that was relatively less troubled when compared to the upheavals that came later and he was financially independent all his life although he did suffer a substantial financial setback in early adulthood which meant that he had to live frugally in order to make ends meet. The fact is that Schopenhauer was acutely aware that there was something lacking in the human condition which no amount of material wealth, social intercourse and all the other trappings entertainments and diversions that come from living in society can ever compensate for. But he did not know the precise nature of that lack. Schopenhauer declares: “all striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one’s own state or condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satisfied”.

It was not until Sigmund Freud came along and developed psychoanalysis that it was first suspected that this lack was somehow built into our psyche, that we are all neurotic as a result of it, and that it was precisely this lack that was driving us into this frenzy for forming material and emotional attachments to somehow compensate for it. The definition of ‘normal people’ are those who are able to restrain their neuroses and compulsive behavior within normal limits; they are well-adjusted. But we are all driven by this lack none-the-less and Schopenhauer was the first to develop a whole system of philosophy around it. His opus major was called *The World as Will and Representation*. It is the lack that causes us to have will in the first place, and everything out there in the material world, every single object that we are attached to, is a representation or compensation for what is lacking; the first object; our attachment to the mother in the womb via the umbilical cord and placenta.

The human condition according to Schopenhauer:

All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfilment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfilment is short and meted out sparingly. But even the final satisfaction itself is only apparent; the wish fulfilled at once makes way for a new one; the former is a known delusion, the latter a delusion not as yet known. No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines; but it is always like the alms thrown to a beggar, which reprieves

him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. Essentially, it is all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear harm or aspire to enjoyment; care for the constantly demanding will, no matter in what form, continually fills and moves consciousness; but without peace and calm, true well-being is absolutely impossible.

Schopenhauer's announcement that the world is will, that is to say we are all creatures driven by will, is tied in with the notion of 'good' in as much as we are not creatures who will to do what is 'good', rather the good for us is precisely what we happen to be willing for; the good is simply the object of our will. This will does not depend on our powers of reason, nor do we even have to be conscious of the operation of our will, it is in our unconscious mind so to speak, and it is in the nature of an abstract wanting, striving, craving or desiring, and is completely insatiable. "Good" is defined as "fitness or suitability of an object to any definite effort of the will". So there you have it. We are driven by the insatiable will, and if as a result we find ourselves making the effort to attain something, or to attach ourselves to something or to incorporate something or to control something, then it is good. An "absolute good" or "highest good, *summum bonum*" would be "a final satisfaction of the will, after which no fresh willing would occur", but "such a thing cannot be conceived. The will can just as little through some satisfaction cease to will always afresh, as time can end or begin; for the will there is no permanent fulfilment which completely and forever satisfies its craving". We can possibly just tweak that a little, because in point of fact there is an absolute or highest good, but it is impossible for it to ever be attained as Schopenhauer says, because it would require a return to the womb. The will has to go on craving precisely because a return to the womb is no longer an option.

In addition it is not just humans and animals that are motivated by this will, but it is also manifested in plants and even inanimate matter like water and stone. "Everything presses and pushes towards *existence*, if possible towards organic existence, i.e. *life*, and then to the highest possible degree thereof". In relation to us humans we only experience two separate and distinct states of existence. We exist prior to birth in our mother's womb and when we are in this state we are not willing beings in as much as we are simply in a state of being and our continued survival is not an issue for us, nor do we have to do anything in order to go on being. Our will is a completely clean slate. In our waking state we are not even conscious of being. We actually spend 80% of our time dreaming however and no doubt aspects of our dreaming consciousness are beginning to emerge. Then there is our existence after birth, and for the rest of our life. All of a sudden our survival, our very existence, does depend on our own will. The day we are born is the day that our will comes into existence. It is precisely on that day that we become willing creatures in Schopenhauer's system and it is precisely on that day that we define the notion of 'good'.

Freud thought that the first object was the mother's breast, and it is equally valid to say that the first 'good' that we become aware of is the mother's breast as well. In order however for us to make this first attachment with the good in the external world, it was necessary for us to have already lost the primary good, the conditions in the womb. It is that lack that sends us searching. Schopenhauer thought that the goal of the will was to incorporate the self in the world, and this can be explained quite simply as the goal of the neonate to try to accommodate itself in its new environment. The neonate seeks to become embodied will in the world. Schopenhauer talks of the *Wille zum Leben* which has variously been translated as *desire to live* or *will to life*, but it is obviously much more than just a mere will to live or survive, it is this will to embody ourselves in this new and hostile environment. To incorporate ourselves in the world in the widest sense of the word just like we were incorporated in the body of our mother.

Every object in the external world becomes the phenomenal manifestation or objectification of the will because every object, animate or inanimate, is potentially something to which we can become

attached in order compensate us for the loss of the first attachment. It can be another person, a husband or wife or child, a car, a pet dog, an item of clothing, a Barbie doll or a set of golf clubs, it doesn't matter what it is, if we are attached to it then it is a manifestation of the will. The will is there as an insatiable craving to find again and replace the initial attachment that was lost, so obviously every potential attachment is a manifestation or representation of the will. Our will is to incorporate anything and everything that we can attach ourselves to, but of course, nothing actually gives us the total satisfaction and security as the first attachment, so we remain insatiable, and are driven to go on and on incorporating and attaching ourselves to new objects in the vain hope that we might at last feel ourselves satiated. The lack remains there for all of us in our unconscious mind, Schopenhauer himself, although he was acutely aware that the human condition involved some sort of primal lack, had no precise notion of its exact nature. All these objects, animate and inanimate, that we attach ourselves to are all aspects of the 'good' because they all represent individual strands of the general willing, but the willing itself can never be satiated, and this is what causes all the suffering in the world.

Even people living in the lap of luxury with every material benefit and convenience imaginable are still suffering because none of these attachments are ultimately satisfying their craving and they are driven to go on acquiring more and more things in a pointless and purposely hustle of accumulation for its own sake which can only end when they quit this mortal coil. Because of this subliminal suffering that we are all afflicted with "we have not to be pleased but rather sorry about the existence of the world".

Why we should be sorry, you may ask, if the great majority of us are not even aware that we are suffering, and none of us, not even Schopenhauer or Freud themselves, had any substantial knowledge of why we were suffering like this, life is not that bad you will say, from time to time it is even pleasurable, it is certainly not that bad that we should be sorry for our very existence. Well the short answer to this is that even though we are not aware of this suffering, this lack at the base of our psyche, it is precisely this unconscious suffering which is the cause of all the anger, hatred, cruelty, hunger for power etc etc, in short it is because we suffer that 'evil' is the cornerstone of human civilization, and 'good' is an illusion. Because of this suffering we are all actually sadomasochistic monsters, and all the aspects of human civilization that appear to unrelated to our essential sadomasochism are merely an artificial veneer that we have painted over everything in order to that we may feel 'good' about ourselves.

Schopenhauer was the first to really see through this veneer. He saw very clearly "a world of constantly needy creatures who continue for a time merely by devouring one another, pass their existence in anxiety and want, and often endure terrible afflictions, until they fall at last into the arms of death". Schopenhauer had nothing but scorn for the Judeo-Christian idea of a benevolent Creator that has set us up in a perfect world, or even the best of all possible worlds. He feels that these fatuous notions would not have occurred to anybody who had actually examined the evidence. Life is essentially tragic. He warns us not to be misled if we actually encounter a lot of comedy, where the irrational and insatiable will is not only affirmed but often laughed at and made benign. The fact that we are capable of laughing at ourselves from time to time does not mean that existence on the whole is quite good and generally amusing. "This is the life of almost all men; they will, they know what they will, and they strive after this with enough success to protect them from despair, and enough failure to preserve them from boredom and its consequences".

Likewise Schopenhauer was mercilessly critical of Emmanuel Kant's notion of the "categorical imperative". Essentially Kant, while denying the existence of God or a Creator, was still trying to argue in his treatment on ethics, that there were many rules of morality that we were obliged to obey and respect as an absolute duty. Schopenhauer asked the simple and obvious question whence comes this absolute imperative if not from a presupposed absolute being. Rather than a categorical imperative that demands we obey moral principles, Schopenhauer suggests that it is precisely this suffering that we all are afflicted with that gives rise to the notion of compassion, both for ourselves and others, which leads us into notions of benevolence simply in an effort to reduce or suppress the evil aspects and tendencies and to improve

our lot generally. It is out of compassion that notions of justice, philanthropy and love of humankind generally have arisen. The compassion comes naturally as a result of the early statement by Schopenhauer that we should feel sorry about our existence, and indeed sorry for ourselves.

Contrast Schopenhauer's notion of compassion with Adam Smith's notion of sympathy. These sentiments have the same result of producing notions of justice, benevolence, philanthropy etc and the only difference between the two systems is that for Smith we do these benevolent things because we seek, indeed crave, the admiration praise and respect of our neighbors and peers which is the crowning joy and genius of human civilization, whereas for Schopenhauer we do it because we feel sorry for ourselves and our neighbors and peers because we are all living in seething cesspool of anguish and despair. That is not to say that one of them is right and the other wrong. All we need do is ask precisely why, in Smith's system, we should be so driven to seek the praise and admiration of our contemporaries, and surely the answer to that is that we are all profoundly suffering, albeit unconsciously, and we seek the praise admiration and respect to cheer us up, as a compensation so to speak.

In relation to our bad or evil actions Schopenhauer was essentially a determinist in as much as the will born of suffering more or less urges us on blindly to crave compensation wherever we may happen to find it. Because of the will we are literally devouring ourselves and the world around us in a blind striving to obtain satisfaction. The anxiety and want has to find an outlet and crime, perversity and depravity, anything that may be branded immoral, are the inevitable result. Interestingly although he thought that we may be driven to do these things by the forces that are beyond our knowledge or control, he still felt that people who commit such anti-social acts should be held responsible for their actions, although his reasons for claiming this are not convincing. He invokes some notion of our intelligible character which will cause us to have a sense of responsibility for our actions. Clearly a patch that he applies as an afterthought in order to save his system from being completely pessimistic and socially unpalatable.

Schopenhauer doesn't offer much of a solution either on how we can get around this problem of being inexorably driven by a will even though we have no idea where we are being driven to or why we are being driven there, and when we get there we won't find it satisfactory anyway. He was one of the first European philosophers to embrace Hinduism and Buddhism and he really only borrows from these Eastern religions the notion that we can deny the will by renouncing all the material comforts and pleasures of this world and adopt ascetic practices. He did recognize as well that this also included ascetic practices in Christianity, although why he should have done this is totally illogical because in the Christian religion ascetic practices invariably involve self-mortification, self-flagellation and many other masochistic notions of self-punishment which are actually manifestations of the will having gained total mastery over the individual. But Schopenhauer is quite clear on the necessity for a "deliberate breaking of the will by refusing the agreeable and looking for the disagreeable, the voluntarily chosen way of life of penance and self-chastisement, for the constant mortification of the will".

In the Eastern religions on the other hands as a general rule ascetic practices are leading to this notion of nirvana where the goal is to erase all impressions of the self and of the material world from our mind and achieve a mental state of nothingness. This is the only way to overcome emotional pain and suffering which generates the will as a universal motivator in this futile existence that we lead. We attain salvation when we achieve this state of blissful will-lessness and this is the only way to deny or overcome the will. Schopenhauer also thought that it was also possible for certain individuals to see through the veil of the representations of the will in the external material world by means of a mystical experience and can thus 'quiet' the will within themselves alone. Why he should have felt this is not clear because he himself was not able to quiet the will within himself and he was the one who had spent his life writing about the will. Schopenhauer only got as far as asserting that "nothing else can be stated as the aim of our existence except the knowledge that it would be better for us not to exist", which clearly indicates that he himself had really not got very far in terms of denying or even quieting the will. So it's difficult to understand how

he could be so sure that other individuals would be able to do it. He simply relied heavily on statements by the Buddha as his own personal enlightenment by achieving Nirvana.

Schopenhauer lists the Four Noble Truths as taught by the Buddha:

They affirm the following: 1) Life is permeated by suffering and dissatisfaction. 2) The origin of suffering lies in craving or thirst. 3) The cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving. 4) The way to this cessation of suffering is through the Eightfold Path. This path is an ascending series of practices; the first two concern the right frame of mind of the aspirant, the next three concern ethical requirements, and the last three concern meditation techniques that bring serenity and release. The attainment of peace and insight is called nirvana, and upon its attainment the saint, at death, is not reborn.

Schopenhauer also says “absence of all aim, of all limits, belongs to the essential nature of the will in itself, which is an endless striving” and commentators point out that it is difficult to read into this the precise notion that all the people in the world are driven by the will in an endless striving for nonexistence. What they don’t understand is that this striving for nonexistence is actually a striving for the existence we had once in the womb. On several occasions Schopenhauer makes the statement that it would be “better not to have been born” which the same commentators interpret as it would be “better not to have lived” which is literally the meaning of nonexistence, whereas all Schopenhauer is saying is that it would be *better if we remained attached to our mother in the womb*. Fetal existence is a sort of nonexistence in as much as the fetus has no notion or consciousness of self, and is merely an extension or supplementary organ of the mother. There is here the same notion of a blissful will-lessness that the Buddhists called Nirvana, but it most certainly is not ‘nonexistence’. Ultimately we are all being led by the will in an endless striving to return into the womb, which is obviously impossible, so we are evidently going nowhere whilst suffering and devouring ourselves and the world around us on the way, which makes the whole exercise of life not only futile but also a malicious and perverse deception. Here in a nutshell is a complete explanation for Schopenhauer’s pessimism, and yet in modern times he is dismissed by the academics who study philosophy as something of an outsider or an oddity in the philosophical tradition because his system was way too negative and peevish. There was just nothing upbeat or trendy about him that our modern philosophers could get excited about.

Rather than recognizing that we are all striving ultimately for our own self-annulment or for nonexistence, which I have now interpreted as being essentially the blissful nothingness of the fetal state, it seems that most academics prefer to interpret Schopenhauer’s will to live as simply a “will to be”, that is to say a “will to exist or survive”. This is undoubtedly true as far as it goes, but the fact is that this is precisely the problem that we face at the moment of our birth when we are rudely and traumatically expelled from the mother’s womb. Were this not to happen and we stayed blissfully unconscious in the womb then we would never develop a will at all. It is the fact of all of a sudden being placed in a position where we do have to survive which actually starts us willing to find alternative attachments and means of support and sustenance. If we did not have that original nine months of carefree and blissful existence we would have no conception of what is even required to survive. We would be simply like any other limb or part of the mother’s body that would simply go putrid and rot if it was cut off. The fact that we have been swallowing amniotic fluid in the womb, and been dreaming about it, has given us an unconscious notion of what the mouth is used for and what it should do when it again strikes the mother’s flesh and her internal fluids in the form of milk from the breast. Our senses of smell, taste, touch and hearing are all fully developed and functioning at the time of our birth, that is to say they have already allowed us to appreciate the smells, tastes, and sensual touch of our mother’s body as well as the sounds both internal and external to her body. Even the sense of sight is capable of being developed to a large extent as a result of imagery in our dreams. By the time we are born we all have an unconscious sentiment about how

wonderful life is, and then when the calamity of birth comes, we are equipped with the will to try and regain this blissful state. We instinctively recognize that it is at least worth the effort to try to continue to exist. We instinctively know what happiness can be even though in point of fact we will go on striving our whole life through and never actually regain it.

Schopenhauer says that the will cannot be abolished by anything else except “knowledge” so evidently leading an ascetic life and striving to attain Nirvana, which is essentially the absence of knowledge and the absence of consciousness is not going to do it. He also says that certain individuals will be capable of attaining the knowledge through a mystical experience. So evidently he is saying that there is some sort of knowledge available which is related to the emergence of the will, and he himself doesn't actually know the precise nature of this knowledge. This proposition even has echoes in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. Didn't Eve, tempted by a serpent pick an apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and gave it to Adam to take a nice big bite. And wasn't this the original sin and the start of all our suffering. And wasn't it predicted that the day would come that we would actually learn about the true nature of good and evil, that is to say that the day would actually come when we would attain the knowledge. And in Schopenhauer's system isn't the will the actually instrument that drives us to commit all these evil acts? The conclusion is inescapable that if we can determine whence comes the will then we have also arrived at the knowledge of good and evil.

Well I think we can all agree that when we are a fetus in the womb of our mother we don't have any will. At that point we don't even have an individual self because we are physically attached to our mother, we are in a state of complete union with another. It is only after we are separated from our mother at birth that for the first time our will can arise, and the first operation of the will that we can determine is to latch on to the mother's breast. So that is where you are going to find the source of sin, and this is what constitutes the knowledge of good and evil both in the Biblical sense and in Schopenhauer's system. Schopenhauer was merely restating what has been fundamental in the Judeo-Christian tradition since the very beginning. Once you recognize that it is the act of being born and being detached from your mother, and deprived of the pleasure that you experienced for nine months in the womb, then you are in a position to work on ways and means to deny the will. Evidently that involves recognizing that all these material objects and earthy pleasures that we are striving for are mere compensations for the sensuality we enjoyed in the womb, that all these attachments that we make in this world to animate and inanimate things are merely trying to replace the original attachment that was lost at birth, and then to readjust our behavior and our priorities towards things that may help us to awaken our original blissful sensuality. Obviously a total reversion to the fetal state is not an option, but it is possible to precisely identify the conditions in the womb that originally gave us pleasure and to try to find counterparts in the real world that can perhaps awaken and titillate some of that primal sensuality.

For Schopenhauer this knowledge will lead us to a grasp of the thing in itself; for “this thing in itself, this substratum of all appearances, and consequently of the whole of nature, is nothing but what we know immediately and very intimately, and find within ourselves as will”. Recall in the first chapter we saw Lacan's theory of desire where the object of desire, the desired object, is always an object that has been found again The Thing is the loss itself, the fundamental and original lack, a pure lack which constitutes the subject. So we have Schopenhauer talking about the “thing in itself” which is the essence of all objects and which in some way actually defines or constitutes our will in relation to those objects, that is to say our attachment to those objects, and in Lacan we find The Thing which is somehow symbolic in all objects to which we are attached and which likewise defines us as a subject, that is to say an individual that has the will to find attachments. Quite clearly they are talking about the conditions in the womb, and specifically the placenta which was our original attachment to the mother, or indeed the lack thereof, which is the prime mover for our will. There really can't be any other explanation. This becomes even clearer for the fact that Schopenhauer always talked about the thing-in-itself in the singular and so did Lacan, and this can be distinguished from Kant who originally brought up this notion of the thing-in-itself

in all objects and referred to it in the plural meaning that each unique object had its own particular thing-in-itself, which is derived from Plato's ideas of fundamental form of all objects which can have nothing whatsoever to do with acting within ourselves as will, or defining us as a willing subject. Schopenhauer actually presents his philosophy as "the answer" to a tantalizing and vital riddle. That is to say there is some secret or enigma in life which not only causes us to act the way that we do, but which specifically relates to the knowledge of 'good' and 'evil'. According to the *Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*: "The riddle is, then: What is the inner nature of things, which the orderly relations among representations themselves do not reveal? Will's role is to provide the answer, to be that inner nature". Elsewhere he speaks of will as "the nearest and clearest phenomenon of the thing-in-itself", but it goes further than this. We look for the thing-in-itself which causes us to exercise our will in relation to an object, whether animate or inanimate, that is to say which causes us to become attached to it or to want to incorporate it, and that is none other than the lack of the conditions in the womb and the original attachment to the mother via the umbilical cord and placenta. The thing-in-itself in all our attachments is nothing other than a representation of the first attachment.

The answer to the riddle can be given in one paragraph once you know what you are looking for, Schopenhauer wrote voluminously around the subject only hinting at a solution to the riddle, because he himself didn't know the precise nature of the lack that gives rise to the will. How could he? He was the forerunner of Freudian psychoanalysis. His only means of knowledge was his own intuition. Still he was very clearly aware that there was indeed a riddle, and that in itself is enough to give his philosophy the mark of a genius. It's a riddle precisely because the will is unconscious. The *Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* explains it thus: "...at the core of every intentional action there is something which can be isolated from any representation of an end, and which we can grasp as subsisting independently of the framework of rationality which is constitutive of intentional action and of any other teleological structure".

You see if we had not already experienced the original attachment to the mother we would never know what attachment is; our brain would simply not have been programmed to do attachment. This is how Schopenhauer explains it:

We are not satisfied with knowing that we have representations, that they are such and such, and that they are connected according to this or that law, whose general expression is always the principle of sufficient reason. We want to know the significance of those representations; we ask whether this world is nothing more than representation. In that case it would inevitably pass by us like an empty dream, or a ghostly vision not worth our consideration. Or we ask whether it is something else, something in addition, and if so what that something is. . . . Here we see already that we can never get at the inner nature of things from without. However much we may investigate, we obtain nothing but images and names. We are like a man who goes round a castle, looking in vain for an entrance, and sometimes sketching the façades.

Schopenhauer comes tantalizingly close to actually stating the solution to the riddle of attachment to the thing-in-itself in the following passage where he uses metaphors of penetration and even reentering the birth canal. What else can he be alluding to other than the maternal womb when he suggests "a way from within stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate from without . . . so to speak a subterranean passage . . . which, as if by treachery, places us all at once in the fortress that could not be taken from without". We can see from this passage that Schopenhauer is actually suggesting that we have somehow already experienced the "thing in itself" in external objects that we are attached to already within ourselves, and the only logical explanation for this is that the thing-in-itself is our primary attachment to the mother that was cut away at birth.

Schopenhauer actually thinks that the thing-in-itself is a substance like thing and it is capable of possessing various physical properties which suggests that it is literally the umbilical cord and placenta. Elsewhere he states that without the "thing in itself" in objects, both animate and inanimate, we would be completely detached from the world like "a winged angel's head without a body", that is to say that our own body would be just like any other material thing we perceive: "its movements and actions... would be equally strange and incomprehensible". Clearly Schopenhauer is describing a situation where we start out in life attached to the mother, that attachment is forcibly and irreparably broken, we are confronted with a devastating lack, and from that moment on we are motivated to search for the thing-in-itself in other objects in order that we might attach ourselves to them. Whatever we are attached to in life has the thing-in-itself and in some way is able to recall or compensate for the first object that was lost, our attachment to the mother. Something of which we are 'inwardly' conscious enters these objects that we are attached to and this provided "a bridge between the inner and the outer worlds which otherwise remained separated by a bottomless abyss".

The academics tell us that between S19 and S29 of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer repeats at least 30 times his core proposition that the will is the thing in itself. This statement is completely counterintuitive unless we interpret it as meaning that the thing in itself of all objects to which we are attached is a representation of the primary attachment to the mother which is lost. All these objects are a replacement for the umbilical cord and placenta. They are individualized or idealized manifestations of the thing that was lost. This also explains the other aspect of the will according to Schopenhauer and that is that we are all striving for essentially the same thing. There are now seven billion humans on this planet and every single one of us have this same essential will motivating us and what's more we are all doing essentially the same acts of willing in an endless repetition. In fact all of human history has to be seen as minor variations on the one essential theme and we should "therefore recognize the identical in all events, of ancient as of modern times, of the East as of the West, and should see everywhere the same humanity, in spite of all difference in the special circumstances, in costume and customs". As one academic observes "the yearning which is the core of me and that which is the core of you are really one single yearning which is in a state of estrangement from itself". This pointless "striving" is everywhere alike in all of us, and is always essentially the same in each of us day in and day out throughout our entire life. We are all motivated by exactly the same lack; the only thing that every single one of us has in common, the fact that we were born of a mother. The will is a neurotic compulsion to repeat pure and simple; an endless search for the thing in itself.

Georg Simmel, writing in 1907, provides the following excellent summation of Schopenhauer's view: "I do not will by virtue of values and goals that are posited by reason, but I have goals because I will continuously and ceaselessly from the depth of my essence". This insistence by Schopenhauer that the will has got nothing to do with rational thinking is considered to be one of the most important aspects of his whole system. This must be contrasted with the system of Adam Smith who argued that in matters of morality we somehow take consultation with the disinterested rational spectator in our own breast. We shall see when we get on to the system of Sigmund Freud that Schopenhauer's version of our intrinsic motivations will be wholly vindicated by psychoanalytical observations. Moreover Schopenhauer says that I am conscious of myself not as a knower "but altogether as one who wills". So not only do I have no freedom of will but I am powerless to discover whether I could have willed to do other than I did on a particular occasion. We are back with that blind striving or craving to do things for reasons we know not what, in an effort to shore up this lack at the base of our psyche in a mad scramble to form attachments to all sorts of things animate and inanimate which ultimately we will find unsatisfying. All human existence is the quintessence of irrationality.

Schopenhauer thought that artists of genius were able to hold up a pure mirror to the objective nature of things and find a reflection of the kernel beneath mere representations. That is not to say that they were able to see the thing-in-itself but they were often able to see the inner significance in our

worldly attachments, and most importantly they were often more acutely aware of the underlying suffering and discord that afflicts us all, both individually and as a species. We have seen in the Chapter *What Ails us* that Colin Wilson in his book *The Outsider* nominates several artists of genius who all in one way or another were expressing the utter absurdity and incongruity of the human condition. Artists of genius are more sensitive to the underlying motivations of human beings, and they are more acutely irritated by the hypocrisy and artificiality of human morals and customs.

For example the poet Charles Bukowski who saw clearly the phoniness and shallowness of human existence and relied on alcohol as a salve to his wounded sensibilities, and was able to preserve a sense of humor notwithstanding several suicide attempts. Schopenhauer specifically says in relation to poetic drama that it doesn't have to accord with history and fact, nor does it need sweeping panoramas for action, but rather have "the truly depicted life of the individual in a narrow sphere that shows the conduct of men in all its nuances and forms . . ." In Bukowski's poems that of course includes the conduct of women as well. Another example would be an artist like Oscar Wilde who actually thought he could ride roughshod over the narrowminded and petty morality because the immensity of his genius made him larger than life and therefore indestructible. These artists of genius who are able to see through the veil of respectability that conceals the suffering and the tragicomic absurdity in the human condition are more likely to express their unique insights in their lifestyle rather than in their actual artistic output.

Schopenhauer also says that "the real self is the will to life" and this has invariably been interpreted by academics who study philosophy as a blind striving for existence and reproduction. It is true that there is a blind striving for existence in the will to life but it is not simply a motivation to go out everyday and find the necessities in order to survive, things like food, shelter and clothing etc. The will to life, the blind striving to survive, comes precisely from the trauma of birth, it starts when we find ourselves suddenly cast out into an alien world where our immediate and overwhelming impression is that of total annihilation. The will to life immediately kicks in when we find something familiar in the mother's breast and we form our first attachment in this new environment. A striving to reproduce, to procreate, only comes out of the will to life indirectly. As part of this total annihilation that we experience at birth there also arises in us, in conjunction with the will to survive, a hatred for our new environment which finds many channels to express itself including a hatred for others which gives rise to sadistic tendencies, and a hatred for ourselves which gives rise to masochistic impulses, suicidal tendencies and a death wish. Believe it or not, our striving to copulate with another actually arises precisely from these sadistic tendencies to mount another person and penetrate with the penis or masochistic tendencies to be mounted and penetrated with a penis. So now we can better understand Schopenhauer when he says

It may be said that the human being is concrete sexual impulse, for his origin is an act of copulation, and the desire of his desires is an act of copulation, and this impulse alone perpetuates and holds together the whole of his phenomenal appearance. It is true that the will to life manifests itself primarily as an effort to maintain the individual; yet this is only a stage towards the effort to maintain the species. . . . The sex-drive is therefore the most complete manifestation of the will to life.

For Schopenhauer sexuality was not only ubiquitous but for him personally it was a torment. Once we understand that the act of copulation is driven by sadomasochistic tendencies and the death instinct, it would be reasonable to assume that sexuality is actually a torment to us all at some level if we cared to admit it. Particularly for women who have to somehow find pleasure in the masochistic urge to be mounted and penetrated.

To quote the *Cambridge Companion*: "But Schopenhauer's metaphysics does not re-enchant the world. The 'meaning' he uncovers is bereft of comfort: the essence of things contains no rationality, no higher purpose, no final vindication of the world or of the self. The world, and humanity within it, merely

strives to be, in multiple instantiations, in perpetuity. Our inner nature, and that of the world-whole, pushes each of us hither and thither, overwhelms our efforts with its own larger striving, and leads us only into suffering". Even though he was so disparaging of the human condition, Schopenhauer thought that his "real philosophy" culminated in a "higher metaphysical-ethical standpoint". It has been said that "placed the ethical attitude at the centre and conclusion of his thinking." In other words with all his talk about the striving grasping rapacious will, and even though the 'notoriety' of his philosophy is grounded in the deep pessimism of his thought, he was still essentially grappling with the issue of 'good' and 'evil'.

In particular Schopenhauer was very concerned about the notion of 'salvation' which he saw as the denial of the will. I have already explained above his notion of denial of the will. That can be done through living an ascetic life, and also certain gifted individuals are in a position to gain knowledge of the will, and therefore be able to subvert its operation. Essentially then Schopenhauer is talking about gaining salvation through the knowledge of the cause of the will which is one and the same thing as knowledge of the cause of good and evil. The will causes good and evil in the world so just figure out what causes us all to be driven by the will in the first place and you have got the problem beat. As this is "the *worst* of all possible worlds" we have to deny the will that makes it so horrid. That means we have to deny everything that constitutes human existence. Salvation for Schopenhauer enabled him to expound the most important of all his truths "it would be better for us not to exist". The point he is emphasizing is that the human condition is a fallen state from the moment we are born. It is a lose-lose situation if you like. The moment we are born we lose the original bliss that we had in the womb being attached to the mother, and we will continue to lose throughout life as we are driven to make attachments with other objects which will all ultimately leave us unsatisfied. Just being born will cause the suffering to commence and there will be no end to it no matter how hard we strive to regain the original Paradise Lost. While we are alive we are permanently behind the eight ball, and there can be no hope of salvation until we know precisely why this is so.

I have already shown above how Schopenhauer's notion of morality is based on a need in all of us to show "sympathy" for our fellow sufferers, as none of us have attained salvation we have got to try to help each other make the best of a bad situation, and indeed this view of the nature of virtue and ethical conduct must be seen as a good deal more insightful than the system of Adam Smith or Emanuel Kant. The latter formulated his system of ethics with the presumption that "the inner and eternal essence of humans consist in reason" and Schopenhauer was able to show very convincingly that the insatiable striving grasping will has got nothing whatsoever to do with reason.

Schopenhauer must also be seen as a forerunner of Freudian theory with his insistence that our motives for performing actions with particular moral value are actually grounded in human psychology. However it is true that although Schopenhauer was able to give a more convincing account of sympathy in the moral dilemma, he does also make some statements about morality which echoes the statements of Adam Smith. He talks of the moral point of view which is a mixture of the agents' own affective responses to their actions as well as the supposed responses of an impartial observer to what they have done or not done as the case may be. If someone does a good deed then their own conscience will reward them with a feeling of self-satisfaction and as well it will "call forth the approbation and respect of impartial witnesses". Likewise a bad deed will bring forth in the wrong doer an inner self-censure or sting of conscience and will likewise result in disapprobation from impartial witnesses. This all sounds a bit superficial given the fact that we are driven by a remorseless and relentless will, and we have to wait till we get to the theories of Sigmund Freud to see how it is actually the worst aspects of the will, our sadomasochistic impulses and our death wish, which can actually turn in on us and hound us with feelings of guilt essentially as an exercise in self-torture.

Schopenhauer inexplicably also argued against moral sceptics who thought "there is no natural morality at all that is independent of human institutions". He actually disagreed with the psychological egoism notion where we are all driven by an egoistic desire for our own well-being, and that there was no

such thing as “voluntary justice”, “pure philanthropy” or “real magnanimity”, and in this regard he must be seen as even more naïve than Adam Smith who was at least able to see very clearly the role that the “dear self” plays in all our moral deliberations, although Smith of course didn’t hesitate to gild the lily by also adding that the supreme Deity just happened to completely endorse these exact same sentiments that he was proclaiming. Our morals are formulated by us and depend solely on the opinions of our fellow humans, and just by a happy coincidence they are ordained by God as well who will not hesitate to call us to account in the afterlife.

“The true sense of the tragedy is the deeper insight that what the hero atones for is not his own particular sins, but original sin, in other words, the guilt of existence itself”. Evidently for Schopenhauer the mere fact of existence involves guilt. The Spanish poet Calderón (*La Vida es Sueño*) expresses it thus: “For man’s greatest offence is that he has been born”. The tragedy of life is that we are all forced into seeking atonement for some offence connected with birth itself. It is inevitable therefore that we are going to have a foreboding that something is wrong with our life, or indeed that something has gone wrong in our life. Proof of this is to be found in the all-pervasiveness of this notion of the original sin. Not only does Christianity and Judaism determine obviously in a symbolic sense that the original sin occurred when the serpent tempted Eve to ask Adam to take a bite of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but also Sigmund Freud, who was not a believer, came up with his version of the original sin with the notion that our original sin was the slaying of the original chieftain of the tribe in some sort of symbolic acting out of the Oedipus complex. Evidently the feeling is there innate in all of us that some terrible crime has been committed that we should feel guilty about, so it is more or less irrelevant that, as no-one knows the precise nature of this crime, there should be various symbolic explanations about what went down. The fact is that there was never any crime committed either by ourselves or our original ancestors. Rather it was the trauma that we all had to endure at the precise moment that we were introduced into this world.

For the whole of our discussion, it is very significant and worth noting that the purpose of this highest poetical achievement is the description of the terrible side of life. The unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind, the triumph of wickedness, the scornful mastery of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent are all here presented to us; and here is to be found a significant hint as to the nature of the world and of existence. . .

At first sight the following statement from the *Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* looks perfectly true: “Schopenhauerian pessimism is an odd amalgam of Hellenistic, Christian, and Eastern influences, but its conclusion here is clear: the body and its urges are bad, are both guilty and delusive; and nature as a whole, becoming as a whole, is infected with that guilt and those delusions”. But this statement is only half right because it suggests that it is actually the established religions that have got it right and that there actually might be something to this original sin nonsense; that we really might have done something wrong in the eyes of God which condemns us to endless suffering and the need for atonement for as long as the human race exists. But we now know that this is not actually the case. The guilt and the suffering comes purely from the physical act of being born, and the physical consequences of us having to adapt to a new and alien environment after we are born. It is not laid down as a matter of law, or philosophy or religion that the human existence is somehow evil, dirty or impure and the only way to overcome the degradation is to denounce the human condition and look for salvation in the afterlife.

The point is that there is actually no such thing as ‘evil’ nor is there any such thing as ‘good’ in the abstract. These are concepts that have evolved from the established religions and from philosophy in an effort to make sense of the guilt and the suffering. They are not the cause of the guilt and the suffering. And in any event it was always intended that at some stage in the evolution of the human race we should

actually get the knowledge about the true state of affairs, and evidently from that point onwards we would be given the opportunity to work towards our own salvation right here on Earth. Obviously the first step towards overcoming the guilt and the suffering is to find out exactly what is causing it. Indeed just finding out that the established religions got it wrong puts us already halfway there towards finding a solution to the problem.

The will, for Schopenhauer, has four basic incentives. 1) egoism, which is the desire for an agent's own well-being; 2) compassion, which is the desire for another's well-being; 3) malice, which is the desire for another's misfortune; 4) an unnamed incentive, which is the desire for an agent's own misfortune. The first two have already been discussed. Essentially the desire for our well-being only arises as a reaction from the trauma of birth when we are suddenly confronted with that feeling of total annihilation. Obviously we had no desire for our own well-being before we were born. While we were in the womb our existence was synonymous with well-being. The compassion that causes us to do benevolent acts to others and to be concerned for the welfare of others arises precisely out of our unconscious awareness that they are suffering in this life just like us.

The third and fourth incentives are most instructive because in fact they anticipate Freud's finding that we are all basically sadomasochistic. Schopenhauer would have been able to see readily enough this sadistic desire to inflict harm on others in society, but it took a real insight to see that somehow this sadistic impulse gets turned in on ourselves as well, and we have a masochistic impulse not only to be harmed by others but also we will go out of our way to seek out our own misfortune and thus augment our own suffering. It was Nietzsche I think who first specifically described this propensity for our outward directed feelings of hatred and malice to actually do a backflip in our psyche which causes us to torture and punish ourselves. And then Freud developed the notion further with the complete theory of sadomasochism. At this point we may simply note that likewise with egoism, we had no feelings of malice towards others when we were a fetus in the womb, nor did we have this other mysterious impulse to actively seek our own misfortune. These components of the will could only have arisen after birth, and they could only have arisen when we first experienced hatred for the world, and that was when we were cast out of the womb, had our attachment to the mother brutally cut, and found ourselves all of a sudden in an alien, hostile and unpleasant environment.

In Schopenhauer's definition of egoism we see perhaps the basis of the "will to power" later developed by Nietzsche:

Everyone is himself the whole world, for everything objective exists only indirectly, as mere representation of the subject, so that everything is always closely associated with self-consciousness. The only world everyone is actually acquainted with and knows, is carried about by him in his head as his representation, and is thus the center of the world. Accordingly, everyone is all in all to himself; he finds himself to be the holder and possessor of all reality, and nothing can be more important to him than his own self. . . . In his subjective view a man's own self assumes these colossal proportions.

So what does Schopenhauer mean when he says the egoism of all willing subjects can assume colossal proportions. He means that given the choice between the destruction of the world or their own destruction, we egoists would choose the former. Ultimately our own ego, our own will is everything, and the world, that is to say all the rest of human civilization, not to mention all the lesser creatures, and the ecology and natural environment, is nothing. The world and everything it contains is just there for our satisfaction, to compensate us for the cataclysmic trauma we suffered at the outset. We would see the world self-destruct in an instant if it would mean that we can regain the paradise lost. Something of this propensity in all of us to put our own happiness above the continued existence of the whole world can be seen in the Armageddon type scenario in some established religions where the destruction of the world

and everyone in it is actually seen as the ultimate 'good' because it means that it will enable us to reenter Paradise.

Schopenhauer saw clearly that human civilization was just a bizarre tragic comedy where each one of us sees ourselves as the only real being, the center of everything, only our own well-being has any significance at all, we are the one most worthy of obtaining what we desire, and yet in point of fact we are just one among billions of willing subjects just like us, and each one of them views our interests and motivations with exactly the same indifference as we view theirs. Here is the source of all strife and conflict, and obviously because they want to do to us precisely what we want to do to them, that is to say to deny or thwart our will in favor of their own, brings us to define evil or wrong conduct, literally to stop us all from tearing each other apart. "This breaking through the boundary of another's affirmation of will has at all times been directly recognized, and its concept has been denoted by the word wrong".

It is our own egoism which leads to every nasty thing you could care to name: theft, slavery, injury, mutilation of others, murder, and even cannibalism. "Egoism can lead to all kinds of crimes and misdeeds, but the pain and injury thus caused to others are merely the means, not the end, and therefore appear here only as an accident". In other words we don't set out to specifically do evil deeds to others. Evil is just the collateral damage because others happened to come between us and the object of our willing. If we see that representation of the thing-in-itself in another object, whether animate or inanimate, we go for it, and we don't really care who gets hurt in the process, indeed we don't really care if the world gets destroyed in the process. We saw in the last chapter Adam Smith arguing unconvincingly against the Hobbesian view of the state, and it can be seen that Schopenhauer's notion of us all as insatiable willing subjects further reinforces the idea that the state is there precisely to punish bad behavior and to try to force us all to pull together for the sake of the common weal, rather than allow us to follow our natural instincts to act as barbarians where chaos, anarchy and the destruction of civilized society would be the inevitable result. Of course most of us are egoists with a small *e*, if you like, where our desire for our own well-being is contained within normal limits, but according to Schopenhauer there are extreme Egoists whose modus operandi is "Help no one; on the contrary, injure all people if it brings you any advantage". You may think that these extreme Egoists are few and far between, historical figures like Hitler or Stalin or Atila the Hun, but in fact there are plenty around still living, like a former President of the U.S. George W. Bush and his vice-president Dick Cheney as well as several other members of his cabinet, and of course Tony Blair.

Schopenhauer thought that extreme Egoism is the cause of various vices such as "intemperance, lust, selfishness, avarice, covetousness, injustice, hardness of heart, pride, arrogance, and so on" but he is surely mistaken here. These are the vices that all of us have to a greater or lesser extent depending on how much we are driven by the egoistic will. In addition he seems to think that you can distinguish the will of an egoist from those whose will drives them to seek to cause malicious harm to others. The egoists are indifferent to the effects of their behavior on others, whereas those that have a malicious will are morally depraved. The malicious ones are not just brutal but also they are "devilish". They take malicious joy at another's misfortune. The vices he lists that stems from this malicious ill-will towards others include "envy, disaffection, ill will . . . malicious joy at another's misfortune . . . perfidy, thirst for revenge, cruelty, and so on". These likewise are all vices that any of us can have to a greater or lesser extent, whether we are conscious of them or not, whereas Schopenhauer thought that malicious people need to recognize suffering in others, if not actually inflict suffering on others, in order to give their life any significance at all. Schopenhauer gives a wonderful description of the mind set of these truly wicked people and when you read it through you will see how well he was attuned to the sadomasochistic personality without the sexual component.

He [the wicked character] sees that, with fulfilment, the wish changes only its form, and now torments under another form; indeed, when at last all wishes are exhausted, the

pressure of will itself remains, even without any recognized motive, and makes itself known with terrible pain as a feeling of the most frightful desolation and emptiness. If from all this, which with ordinary degrees of willing is felt only in a smaller measure, and produces only the ordinary degree of dejection, there necessarily arise an excessive inner torment, an eternal unrest, an incurable pain in the case of a person who is the appearance of the will reaching to extreme wickedness, he then seeks indirectly the alleviation of which he is incapable directly, in other words, he tries to mitigate his own suffering by the sight of another's, and at the same time recognizes this as an expression of his power. The suffering of another becomes for him an end in itself; it is a spectacle over which he gloats; and so arises the phenomenon of cruelty proper, of bloodthirstiness, so often revealed by history in the Neros and Domitians, in the African Deys, in Robespierre and others.

Clearly he is talking in general terms about extreme character traits, and the fact is that there are aspects of this in all of us, because in the last resort we are all driven by this insatiable will that causes him to think so poorly of humanity in general. Indeed Schopenhauer thought that normal bitchiness in social intercourse like backbiting and gossiping and snooping on other people's affairs are all evidence of the malicious will at work. It's only when this ill will becomes the dominant trait in our personality that we can be classified as misanthropes. The interesting thing is that Schopenhauer thought that these wicked personalities display excessive will to life. In other words those who interpret his will to life as being simply a will to survive and to procreate are quite wrong. The will to life obviously is itself a fundamentally evil desire or motivation. The proof that he is talking about sadomasochism comes from the fact that he stresses that a wicked person "will often not shrink from great harm to himself in order to injure others". Even while incurring great harm to themselves they are able to "gloat" in exercising this power to harm others and cause them misery. Surely this goes beyond mere egoism or the desire for one's own well-being because at the same time that they are harming the other they may be doing equal or even more harm to themselves.

Evidently there is a more primary desire at work here than even finding compensation from the trauma of birth, there is most decidedly some sort of lust for revenge. These truly wicked people literally want to punish the world and everybody in it, themselves included. Surely this is a gut reaction that springs from a primal hatred for being born. The original sin was not a wrong that they or their ancestors or even the first man and woman committed. The original sin is the wrong that was done to them by bringing them into this world at all. And it is not possible for the wicked person to change. "The wicked man is born with his wickedness as much as the serpent is with its poisonous fangs and glands; and he is as little able to change his character as the serpent its fangs". Those that experience in the trauma of birth an excessive hatred for the world are inexorably driven by the need for vengeance, much of which is subsumed under the general will to power. To gain control over others is to avenge oneself on others.

That's not to say that Schopenhauer got it all right. One of the greatest holes in his philosophy is this notion of compassion. Yes given the basic thrust of his philosophy that we are all born into a world of misery and suffering due to circumstances beyond our control it is reasonable to assume that we are capable of feeling compassion for our fellow sufferers as well as ourselves. But he maintains that we owe the virtues of justice and philanthropy to these general feelings of compassion and this must be entirely erroneous. As for justice a more realistic explanation is the Hobbesian view that justice evolved to make human civilization workable, and without it we would all be literally tearing each other apart driven by our insatiable will to consume and destroy and gain mastery over others. As for philanthropy even the shallow morality of Adam Smith was able to explain that better in terms of our general desire to gain the praise, approbation and respect of others. If anything there is more egoism at work in the motivations of a philanthropist than there is in your ordinary garden variety tycoon driven by the will to power and the

will to acquire and accumulate which is pretty much the same thing. Show me a philanthropist who donates huge sums of money to 'charities' and takes no steps to bring this to the public knowledge then perhaps I will admit of exceptions to the general motivation of egoism. But say for instance even if you have a Siddhartha type tycoon who has amassed a fortune and then decides that life is still phony and meaningless and decides to give away everything to the poor and live an ascetic life, this still was motivated by the ego of the benefactor rather than by any great compassion that the benefactor has for the poor. The benefactor is giving everything away simply in an effort to find personal happiness and well-being in another direction. In any event this would be a one-off and an exceptional case and does not apply to the normal philanthropist who is actually looking for an enhancement of self-esteem and reputation in the eyes of the world.

Schopenhauer also foreshadowed Sigmund Freud in identifying a death instinct in all of us. He eulogizes death because the individual will condemns us to a life of suffering, and therefore we long for death as a welcome release. He says: "...it is far more correct to regard work, privation, misery, and suffering, crowned by death, as the aim and object of our life (as is done by Brahmanism and Buddhism, and also by genuine Christianity), since it is these that lead to the denial of the will-to-live". Effectively Schopenhauer regards life as some sort of punishment for the sin of existence, and so our life is no more than a rushing of the present into the dead past. The life of our body is only a constantly-deferred dying, an ever-deferred death. Although he doesn't specifically state it, we can see in Schopenhauer's longing for death the clear notion that what we are actually longing for is the return to some former state when we were supremely happy. It is only possible to assert that we are all suffering because of some lack in our life if we have some former state with which we can compare our current situation. You can only know you are suffering if you were once blissfully happy. You only have to look at the established religions to realize that this must be correct. Take the notion of Heaven in Christianity, the desire to live happily ever-after once we have quit this mortal coil. There is even built into this religion the desire of the faithful to hasten the destruction of the world, to pray for Armageddon, in order that the righteous may regain paradise. How else can this be explained other than by the fact that we were once happy, and now we are not. Schopenhauer is very clear on the notion that the suffering of the individual will induces it to improve its condition by willing its own destruction. There is in all of us a "death-wish".

But perhaps at the end of his life, no man, if he be sincere and at the same time in possession of his faculties, will ever wish to go through it again. Rather than this, he will much prefer to choose complete non-existence. . . . Similarly, what has been said by the father of history (Herodotus, vii, 46) has not since been refuted, namely that no person has existed who has not wished more than once that he had not to live through the following day. Accordingly, the shortness of life, so often lamented, may perhaps be the very best thing about it.

The futility of the will to life is that we are constantly being driven to form false attachments to objects both animate and inanimate. Here again this can only be true if we once had an attachment that was not false, and now all the other things we are insatiably driven to attach ourselves to are merely artificial attachments or compensations for the one true attachment that was lost. Here in a nutshell is the whole point of Schopenhauer's pessimism. We lose the only one true attachment right at the very outset of our worldly existence, and for our entire life through we will never find anything that will effectively replace it. The whole premise of life after birth is based on the impossibility of ever being truly happy again. The more we take life seriously, the more we strive and clamor for compensation and revenge, the more we are doomed to failure. The human condition is an absurd deception.

Dying is certainly to be regarded as the real aim of life; at the moment of dying, everything is decided which through the whole course of life was only prepared and introduced. Death is the result, the résumé, of life, or the total sum expressing at one stroke all the instruction given by life in detail and piecemeal, namely that the whole striving, the phenomenon of which is life, was a vain, fruitless, and self-contradictory effort, to have returned from which is a deliverance.

You would think that Schopenhauer would have been in favor of suicide as an option. Surely once you realize that life is just a pointless repetition of suffering then the logical thing would be to give it away as a bad joke. But actually he was opposed to suicide because he thought it as some sort of affirmation of the will to life. Clearly his thinking on this point is somewhat illogical unless you realize that this will to life, as already explained above, is actually based purely on our evil impulses, our sadomasochism and our death wish. Ultimately suicidal tendencies, the desire to self-destruct all come from self-hate and self-loathing, and that can only come about because our hatred for the world and everybody in it can actually turn in on itself and cause guilt, self-torment and the masochistic desire to punish and take revenge on oneself. It is in this sense that suicide is actually an affirmation of the will because it is the will, or as Nietzsche would say, the will to power, which has driven us to this extreme. It is the will run rampant if you like which has caused the suffering to become unbearable. We have fallen under the complete control of the will, whereas the solution in Schopenhauer's philosophy is to somehow thwart or deny the will by getting some sort of insight into what is causing it and thus taking steps to find our happiness and contentment elsewhere. Even though Schopenhauer states that suicide is not the solution to deal with the relentless suffering and misery of life, he nonetheless concedes that we all quietly admire someone who has had the gumption to put an end to it in that way. To suicide may not be a denial of the will as such, but still it is a courageous statement that the game is not worth playing at all. Schopenhauer particularly admires the ascetic who chooses slowly starve to death as a means of displaying total contempt for the dictatorship of the will. Such a person meets the will at the poker table and chooses to see all the misery suffering and torment the will can ante up and then chooses to raise the stakes.

There is also a suggestion in Schopenhauer's philosophy that mere "boredom" can lead to suicide. A bit over the top you might think. The bored person suffers from "lack of goals" which is another way of saying "lack of desire". Desire becomes a manifold concept. Anyone who suffers from a lack of desire suffers from a lack of motivation. Here desire is used in its broadest sense as being anything which we strive to attain. That can be a sensual yearning for the body of another person, but it can also be a sadistic desire to hurt another person, and in most cases our desire becomes completely asexual and we may simply want to acquire great wealth or power. It is your will that drives you to try to attain what you desire, but if this will leaves you then you will have nothing to motivate you. For most people who suffer from lack of desire they are conscious of a state of ill-ease which can be termed "boredom", but this state can get progressively more acute and can lead to depression and melancholia, and ultimately to suicide. Such people never successfully negotiated the trauma of birth and they found themselves in a world where they could find no satisfactory compensation.

Schopenhauer is famous for his pessimism. Nietzsche says that by rejecting the Christian notions of "meaning" in life, "Schopenhauer's question immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: Has existence any meaning at all?" It is arguable that even the Christian definition of meaning actually provides a satisfactory solution to Schopenhauer's pessimism. The fact is that there is a similar sort of pessimism at work here as well. For the Christians we are born into this world under the cloud of the original sin, whatever that may be, and the purpose of this life is to conduct ourselves in such a way as to atone for that sin so that we might find happiness in the afterlife. For the Christian it is only after death that we can achieve salvation. And this is the best case scenario. If we choose not to believe their dogma then we can expect the suffering and misery to increase exponentially after death. Schopenhauer's pessimism is more

honest and more logical: “nothing else can be stated as the aim of our existence except the knowledge that it would be better for us not to exist”. In point of fact if we interpret his words as meaning “better not to have been born”, and in fact several times throughout his works he makes precisely this statement, then his pessimism becomes perfectly understandable and rational.

The fact is that we were all of us blissfully happy in our mother’s womb. After we are born some of us experience less misery and suffering and despair than others, but none of us can claim to be as happy and satisfied as we were in the womb. The fact of being born has decreased our pleasure and increased our pain. The fact of being born has set in motion the will which drives us to relentlessly pursue compensation and to overcome the feeling that something is lacking. We, all of us without exception, would be better off if we had not been born. “Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion”. This is certainly true of our lives after we are born, and it is certainly not true of our lives before we were born. “...happiness lies always in the future, or else in the past, and the present may be compared to a small dark cloud driven by the wind over a sunny plain”.

The will to survive and the will to procreate are aspects of it for sure, but it is apparent that all these specific aspects of willing that Schopenhauer describes can all be better explained if we interpret Schopenhauer’s will to life as being essentially the same thing as Nietzsche’s will to power. Obviously the will to power likewise has its origin after birth. We certainly had no will to power when we were in the womb. At that point there was only unity, a complete attachment with the mother. The will to power is just another aspect of the annihilation we experience when we are cast out of the womb. Along with the hatred for our new environment comes the will to survive and that is going to involve taking control of the situation and trying to somehow turn our new environment to our own advantage.

The first object in this new motivation for survival will be the mother and her breast and not only will we seek to reattach to her, but also we will seek to control her and confine her, to incorporate her even, so that never again will we have to endure the trauma of being forcibly separated from her. This in a nutshell is what Schopenhauer’s egoistic will is about. For most (normal) people the will to power contents itself to attach to and control a comparatively modest array of objects both animate and inanimate, but there is in theory no limit to the dimensions this will to power can take. It largely depends on the degree of trauma experienced at birth. A neonate for whom the birth experience has been totally devastating, could well end up wanting to rule the world. Your magnates and tycoons of industry who are driven to endlessly accumulate phenomenal material wealth should really be pitied, rather than envied, because the trauma they experienced when they were cut away from the mother must have been devastating for them. Poor little tykes.

It is actually Nietzsche who gives us the direct connection between Colin Wilson’s *The Outsider* and the philosophy of Schopenhauer. You will remember that the theme of *The Outsider* is that certain writers and artists of genius all expressed either in their writings in their art a fundamental disillusionment with life and with the artificiality and falseness of human society that in many cases made them physically ill or even drove them to suicide. The thing about these Outsiders was their acute sensitivity and insight into the human condition which most people either do not feel, or if they do feel it they are just the anonymous cannon fodder of humanity who are unable to express their malaise in any original way and just go about trying to live their life as best they can, normally with the aid of substance abuse and other self-destructive practices. Nietzsche says, while dealing with the theme that art is often a crutch we can lean on to give us some sort of esthetic appreciation and pleasure in life: “If we had not welcomed the arts and invented this kind of cult of the untrue, then the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science – the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation – would be utterly unbearable. Honesty would lead to nausea and suicide”. It is this expression “the cult of the untrue” that is particularly insightful for it more or less sums up the message that we are bombarded with from the day we are born till the day we die that tends to glorify and give meaning to the lie we are living. The message that there is some sort of joy and satisfaction to be had from the material

bourgeois lifestyle, that our happiness is in some way linked to the volume of our consuming and excreting. What does it matter if we never actually find 'love' when on a day to day basis we can love all sorts of consumer products such as perfumes, chocolates and holiday destinations, cars, movies, and Hollywood celebrities. This is the "cult of the untrue" and if we ever had the courage to think about how hollow and artificial it all is the disillusionment would lead to nausea and suicide just as Nietzsche says.

Sigmund Freud knew of Schopenhauer's philosophy and Freud's theories have many points in common with it. Freud did not specifically cite Schopenhauer as an influence, and the fact that their theories have so many points of agreement would suggest that both thinkers were able to come up with similar insights into the human condition, Schopenhauer from the point of view of pure philosophy and Freud as a result of his psychoanalytical practices. Freud's psychoanalytical theory corroborates Schopenhauer's philosophy in a very profound way, so much so that it is very surprising that modern academic philosophers have virtually dispatched Schopenhauer and his pessimism if not to the trash heap of philosophy, then to the museum of philosophical oddities where they can bring him out and dust him off from time to time and pat themselves on the back about how far western philosophy has advanced from all this pessimistic gloom and doom, and showcase their positive, rational and above all noncontentious explanations for human motivation, our innate altruism, and the fundamental beneficence of human civilization. Not only are Freud and Schopenhauer in agreement about our primary motivations and emotions coming from an 'unconscious mind' where complete irrationality reigns supreme, but they agree that our moral conscience is tainted with this innate irrationality, they agree on the negative nature of pleasure, and that in fact there are forces at work in our psyche that are not only actively driving us to cause harm to others but are unconsciously urging us towards our own self-destruction as well. These are all aspects of the "cult of the untrue" that we prefer not even to think about, because if we were to ever understand the true nature of our cherished human values we would most certainly be driven to suicide and despair as Nietzsche has pointed out.

Schopenhauer introduced this notion of "the will turning against itself" which was adopted in the theories of both Nietzsche and Freud. In other words there is something in our psyche which is not only our worst enemy but also our tormentor. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud says:

We have long recognised a sadistic component of the sexual instinct: it can, as we know, attain independence, and as a perversion, dominate the whole sexual trend of a person. In one of the organisations which I have termed 'pregenital' it appears as a dominating part-instinct. But how is one to derive the sadistic impulse, which aims at the injury of the object, from the life-sustaining Eros! Does not the assumption suggest itself that this sadism is properly a death-instinct which is driven apart from the ego by the influence of the narcissistic libido, so that it becomes manifest only in reference to the object? It then enters the service of the sexual function; at the oral stage of organisation of the libido, amorous possession is still one and the same as annihilation of the object; later the sadistic impulse separates itself, and at last at the stage of the genital primacy it takes over with the aim of propagation the function of so far overpowering the sex-object as the carrying out of the sexual act demands. One might even say that the sadism expelled from the ego has acted as guide to the libidinous components of the sexual instinct; these later press on towards the object. Where the original sadism experiences no abatement or fusion, the well-known hate-love ambivalence of the love-life is set up.

Freud was the product of his times and was notorious for writing only about the male point of view. He does go on to satisfactorily explain the sex instinct in women, and indeed in men that actually have a desire to be mounted and penetrated, by suggesting that it is a normal phase in their development for this sadistic sex impulse to turn in on itself and thus become a masochistic impulse to be possessed,

mounted and penetrated. Without this sadomasochistic impulse on the part of both sexes to copulate the human race would have been a non-starter because neither sex would have had the “will” to engage in sexual intercourse which is of course necessary to propagate the species.

The most important lesson to be learned from the theories of Sigmund Freud is that they apply to all of us. It is undoubtedly true that the principles of psychoanalysis have been derived from the clinical observation of people who may be classified as “mentally ill” but the fact is that these people have sought treatment because for one reason or another they were not able to contain their neurotic impulses within normal limits, or their neurotic impulses impacted their ability to lead a normal life.

That which psychoanalysis reveals in the transference phenomena with neurotics can also be observed in the life of normal persons. It here gives the impression of a pursuing fate, a daemonic trait in their destiny, and psychoanalysis has from the outset regarded such a life history as in a large measure self-imposed and determined by infantile influences. The compulsion which thereby finds expression is in no way different from the repetition-compulsion of neurotics, even though such persons have never shown signs of a neurotic conflict resulting in symptoms. Thus one knows people with whom every human relationship ends in the same way: benefactors whose protégés, however different they may otherwise have been, invariably after a time desert them in ill-will, so that they are apparently condemned to drain to the dregs all the bitterness of ingratitude; men with whom every friendship ends in the friend’s treachery; others who indefinitely often in their lives invest some other person with authority either in their own eyes or generally, and themselves overthrow such authority after a given time, only to replace it by a new one; lovers whose tender relationships with women each and all run through the same phases and come to the same end, and so on. We are less astonished at this ‘endless repetition of the same’ if there is involved a question of active behavior on the part of the person concerned, and if we detect in his character an unalterable trait which must always manifest itself in the repetition of identical experiences... In the light of such observations as these, drawn from the behavior during transference and from the fate of human beings, we may venture to make the assumption that there really exists in psychic life a repetition-compulsion, which goes beyond the pleasure-principle.

Evidently something occurred at a very early stage of our development that that was a major trauma in our psychic development which put us in this repetition-compulsion mode that goes beyond the pleasure principle, and this is what Schopenhauer described as the will. It is obvious once you think about it that the traumatic event can be none other than the simple fact of being born. We are born into a permanent state of neurosis and to that extent we are all losers from day one, the only difference is that some of us manage to control our neurotic impulses sufficiently well to make life tolerable, or even enjoyable, and others will sink into the depths of neurotic suffering and despair. There are actually millions of different ways in which people leading a ‘normal’ life can derive sensations that they will perceive as pleasurable, but they are all secondary to the primary pleasure that was had in the womb. There was for all of us, both male and female, a fundamental and all-fulfilling sense of pleasure derived from our senses of taste, smell and touch that we derived from the conditions internal to the maternal body. Whatever avenues our pursuit of pleasure take after birth, much will depend on how much of that primary sensual pleasure in the genitals, bodily functions and bodily fluids of other humans is regained after birth, and particularly after puberty. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud describes the sexual impulses of the neurotic leading to a repetition compulsion to do acts that are more akin to pain rather than pleasure, but the German word he used means more “Unlust” rather than “pain” in the English sense. The condition that this is describing is quite simply the fact that the genitals and bodily fluids of others does not engender

that primary sensual bliss; on the contrary *unlust* means that in our earthly condition those genitals and bodily fluids have become repulsive. And that's where the torment starts.

Freud speaks of the daemonic character of the pleasure-principle because he observes in the early activities of infantile psychic life a compulsion to repeat precisely the unpleasant experiences, and he concludes that this is early attempts by the individual to gain mastery over these sensations. Freud states these propositions in a rather matter of fact sort of way as if he is just describing the normal processes involved in growing up and he doesn't ask the big question that's begging to be asked; doesn't this say something about life after birth if the infantile will develops itself precisely by gaining mastery over unpleasant, that is to say unsensual, or unlustful sensations. It all looks perfectly normal for the infantile psyche to be wrestling with these issues and because these observations appear to have universal application there apparently was no need for Freud to enquire more deeply into the significance of these infantile developmental processes, but the fact is that it is these same processes which are the cause of everything that is considered evil in the human psyche. Freud is describing the development of Schopenhauer's rapacious and insatiable will.

Freud comes to the conclusion that the compulsion to repeat is an instinct that is displayed perhaps by all organic life. "According to this, an instinct would be a tendency innate in living organic matter impelling it towards the reinstatement of an earlier condition, one which it had to abandon under the influence of external disturbing forces— a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the manifestation of inertia in organic life". Strangely though he never actually appreciated the natural and logical implications of these words; that there is an innate instinct in all of us compelling us to repeat the trauma of birth. And this notwithstanding the fact that he goes on to give examples in nature precisely based on the instinct in many of the lower creatures to return to their origins:

This conception of instinct strikes us as strange, since we are accustomed to see in instinct the factor urging towards change and development, and now we find ourselves required to recognise in it the very opposite, viz. the expression of the conservative nature of living beings. On the other hand, we soon think of those examples in animal life which appear to confirm the idea of instinct having been historically conditioned. When certain fish undertake arduous journeys at spawning-time, in order to deposit the spawn in certain definite waters far removed from their usual habitats, according to the interpretation of many biologists they are only seeking the earlier homes of their kind, which in course of time they have exchanged for others. The same is said to be true of the migratory flights of birds of passage, but the search for further examples becomes superfluous when we remember that in the phenomena of heredity and in the facts of embryology we have the most imposing proofs of the organic compulsion to repetition. We see that the germ cell of a living animal is obliged to repeat in its development— although in a fleeting and curtailed fashion— the structures of all the forms from which the animal is descended, instead of hastening along the shortest path to its own final shape. A mechanical explanation of this except in some trifling particulars is impossible, and the historical explanation cannot be disregarded. In the same way we find extending far upwards in the animal kingdom a power of reproduction whereby a lost organ is replaced by the growth of a new one exactly like it.

The above passage is all the more extraordinary for the fact that it seems to be asserting that there is at work in our psyche not only an instinct to return to the womb, but also a biological process pushing towards the regeneration of the umbilical cord and the placenta; our phantom limb that was our attachment to the mother. Freud also tells us that this repressed instinct to revert to a former state that was a primary experience of satisfaction, and that all substitutions, sublimations and compensations are

of no avail in reducing a continual tension that is set up in our psyche “and out of the excess of the satisfaction demanded over that found is born the driving momentum which allows of no abiding in any situation presented to it, but in the poet’s words ‘urges ever forward, ever unsubdued’ (Mephisto in ‘Faust’, Act I. Faust’s study)”. Evidently this quoted expression from Faust very aptly and succinctly describes Schopenhauer’s will as well.

Freud begins Civilization and its Discontents by discussing his view that religion is an illusion. He then informs us that one of his colleagues thinks that ‘religiosity’ in human beings stems from a very vague and undefined feeling that he calls “a sense of ‘eternity’, a feeling of something limitless, unbounded – as it were ‘oceanic’”. The idea is that if you can feel this “oceanic” feeling then you can call yourself religious even if you are forced as a matter of reason and commonsense to reject the specific dogma of the organized religions. Freud’s response:

This opinion of my esteemed friend, who himself once celebrated the magic of illusion in poetic form, caused me no small difficulty. I can discover no trace of this ‘oceanic’ feeling in myself. It is not easy to treat feelings scientifically. One may try to describe their physiological symptoms. Where this is not feasible – and I fear that the oceanic feeling will not lend itself to such a description – there is nothing left to do but to concentrate on the ideational content most readily associated with the feeling. If I have understood my friend correctly, what he has in mind is the same as the consolation that an original and rather eccentric writer offers his hero before his freely chosen death: ‘We cannot fall out of this world.’ It is a feeling, then, of being indissolubly bound up with and belonging to the whole of the world outside oneself. I would say that for me this is more in the nature of an intellectual insight, not of course without an emotional overtone, though this will not be wanting in other acts of thought that are similar in scope. Relying on my personal experience, I should not be able to convince myself of the primary nature of such a feeling. But this does not entitle me to dispute its actual occurrence in others. The only question is whether it is correctly interpreted and whether it should be acknowledged as the fons et origo of all religious needs.

I likewise can’t say that I get this “oceanic” feeling, however I would point out that it does give a reasonable depiction of the state of mind of the fetus in its dark watery milieu during the first nine months of its life. After it is born and it finds itself on dry land and it is bombarded with new sensations and begins to develop a whole new array of “feelings” it is reasonable to assume that all these secondary post-natal feelings could well constitute new layers in the psyche which still has that original oceanic feeling as its foundation. If you don’t like the metaphor of a city built over a swamp then perhaps the notion of Venice rising out of the Mediterranean will appeal. The edifices that we see above the waterline are much more tangible and easy of description but that says nothing of their crumbling nefarious and murky foundations slowly sinking into the muddy ocean bottom.

Freud is every bit as pessimistic as Schopenhauer when it comes to whether we can ever know ‘happiness’ in this life.

As we see, it is simply the programme of the pleasure principle that determines the purpose of life. This principle governs the functioning of our mental apparatus from the start; there can be no doubt about its efficacy, and yet its programme is at odds with the whole world – with the macrocosm as much as with the microcosm. It is quite incapable of being realized; all the institutions of the universe are opposed to it; one is inclined to say that the intention that man should be ‘happy’ has no part in the plan of ‘creation’. What we call happiness, in

the strictest sense of the word, arises from the fairly sudden satisfaction of pent-up needs. By its very nature it can be no more than an episodic phenomenon. Any prolongation of a situation desired by the pleasure principle produces only a feeling of lukewarm comfort; we are so constituted that we can gain intense pleasure only from the contrast, and only very little from the condition itself. Hence, our prospects of happiness are already restricted by our constitution. Unhappiness is much less difficult to experience. Suffering threatens us from three sides: from our own body, which, being doomed to decay and dissolution, cannot dispense with pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which can unleash overwhelming, implacable, destructive forces against us; and finally from our relations with others.

Those of us who claim to be happy can really only do so on the basis that they are blessed with prolonged periods of that "lukewarm comfort" that Freud is talking about. It seems that the best we can hope for is an overall contentment. Anyone who claims to be ecstatically happy 24/7 must be using some sort of artificial stimulant and if that's the case then it's only a matter of time before that will turn to abject misery and depression if for no other reason than artificial stimulants are injurious to our health and well-being. Some love relationships can bring a heightened and sustained sense of happiness on a daily basis but the percentage of the population that are lucky enough to find that sort of happiness would be less than one percent and even those relationships invariably end up in lukewarm comfort normally sooner rather than later. Anyone who claims that human beings are basically happy could only assert as best case scenario that 50% of all human beings have experienced lukewarm comfort during at most 50% of their lifespan. Writing this at age 65 I consider myself to be basically happy but when I look back on the periods of my life when I had a drinking problem, and when I was lonely, and when I had a job that was making me unhappy, and also when I consider that I have never found a long term loving relationship where sex was involved, I would have to assess my own quotient of lukewarm comfort as something less than 50%.

Freud discusses several ways and means where humans seek to bring happiness into their life or at least keep the suffering at manageable levels. In particular he discusses the happiness or pleasure we derive from the enjoyment of beauty however it presents itself to our senses or to our judgement; the beauty of human form and gestures, the beauty of natural objects or landscapes, and of course the beauty of artistic or even scientific or commercial creations. He says the appreciation of beauty can be mildly intoxicating, and although it is not easy to describe precisely why it is necessary to civilization, he readily concedes that human civilization would be inconceivable without it. Interestingly he doesn't make the obvious point that it is impossible to get a heightened enjoyment from the appreciation of beauty if there is no ugliness to compare it with. To say that human civilization would be inconceivable without beauty is really quite meaningless because in fact human civilization would be inconceivable if there were no ugliness and if the overwhelming bulk of the population were not somewhere in between. Let's face it for every truly beautiful human being there are perhaps 10 million who are quite lackluster and unattractive. The closest the great majority of us come to an appreciation of human beauty comes from images of beautiful people on the TV or in the gossip magazines. If we were to make an honest assessment of the amount of beauty we actually experience at first hand in our lives and in our civilization I think we would conclude that the enjoyment of beauty is an urban legend perpetuated by the commercial media and the advertising agencies on Madison Avenue.

Unfortunately psychoanalysis too has scarcely anything to say about beauty. All that seems certain is its origin in the sphere of sexual feeling; it would be an ideal example of an aim-inhibited impulse. 'Beauty' and 'attractiveness' are originally properties of the

sexual object. It is notable that the genitals themselves, the sight of which is always exciting, are hardly ever judged beautiful; on the other hand, the quality of beauty seems to attach to certain secondary sexual characteristics.

At the time Freud was writing there was undoubtedly a limit to how much he could say about the attractiveness of the female genitals. The astounding thing about the above statement is all the issues it does not address. We were all conceived in a womb and born through a vagina so all things being equal one would have thought that we should all find the female sex organs if not beautiful, at least highly desirable no matter what the rest of her looks like, and whether she is young or old, and whether she bathes or doesn't bathe. And yet as a normal part of their development all heterosexual females find the female genitals repellent, as do a very large proportion of men who are homosexual, and indeed most heterosexual men also find the female genitals repellent unless they are part of a body with beautiful and desirable secondary sexual characteristics. Two things at least are clear. Firstly it is evident that the trauma of birth for the female involves a total repression of the desirable characteristics of the female genitals. Once we appreciate this then the number of ways that the female can become screwed up in later life are virtually limitless. Secondly it is evident that those desirable secondary sexual characteristics that normal red-blooded heterosexual men get so excited about all relate to the eroticism that attaches to the sadomasochistic aspects of sexual intercourse. As a general rule the heterosexual man has lost all primary desire for the female genitals per se and gets turned on by the conquest of the woman with beautiful secondary sexual characteristics; the eroticism all comes from possessing, controlling, dominating, being seen with, bragging about the conquest of etc etc the female with the beautiful secondary sexual characteristics.

Freud examines the religious platitudes about love and finds that in fact they are necessary for civilization precisely because we actually find our neighbor unlovable, indeed he finds that there exists in all of us a fundamental feeling of enmity, if not hatred, for our neighbor. The mere fact that we are being enjoined "to love thine enemies" and to "to love thy neighbor as yourself" indicates that the fundamental attitude is one of enmity and that in the interests of molding human civilization into a cohesive unit we are constantly being brainwashed into believing that we feel love for our neighbor. You only have to reflect on how much modern western society is driven by competition, whether economic, political, social or sporting, to realize that we are all of us constantly in a situation of trying to beat or get some advantage over our neighbor, which in many cases actually can involve acquiring the means to hurt our neighbor, to realize that there really is little or no love in human civilization. In addition to this there is all the open animosity and hatred that all humans feel towards their neighbors who happen to be of different race, creed or color.

The reality behind all this, which many would deny, is that human beings are not gentle creatures in need of love, at most able to defend themselves if attacked; on the contrary, they can count a powerful share of aggression among their instinctual endowments. Hence, their neighbour is not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to take out their aggression on him, to exploit his labour without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to take possession of his goods, to humiliate him and cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus* [Man is a wolf to man]. Who, after all that he has learnt from life and history, would be so bold as to dispute this proposition? As a rule, this cruel aggression waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of a different aim, which could be attained by milder means. If the circumstances favor it, if the psychical counter-forces that would otherwise inhibit it have ceased to operate, it manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast that has no thought of sparing its own kind.

Freud specifically mentions the advantages for any small and close-knit cultural group to minimize their aggressive tendencies towards each other provided they can all agree to direct their hatred towards an outsider. "It is always possible to bind quite large numbers of people together in love, provided that others are left out as targets for aggression". Evidently he understates the significance of this tendency in human society because in fact this "herd instinct" mentality seems to operate best at the national level and indeed at the international level. Examples of this could be drawn from all periods of human history but in modern times it is very clear that western nations which make up a block euphemistically called the "free world" still have the need to identify a clearly defined "outsider" towards whom everybody can agree to direct their hatred. Up to 30 years ago that was of course the Soviets who were the walking incarnation of evil, and with the fall of the Soviet block then the free world found it necessary to intentionally radicalize the fundamentalist Muslims so that they may become the new bogeymen.

Admittedly the need for the free world to have a clearly defined and capable enemy is not just based on psychological considerations of allowing us all to have an outlet for our pent up hatred, the fact is that for modern western Capitalist economies to remain prosperous it is necessary for them to be permanently on a war footing. So to have a clearly defined enemy is a win-win situation; it enables us to convince ourselves that we love each other and hate the enemy and it creates the artificial need for bigger and better weapons of mass destruction which is always good for business. The fact is that the economies of the free world would spiral into irreversible depression in there was a permanent peace. That coupled with no longer having a present and credible enemy that we can all hate would see Western civilization crumble into a chaotic ferment of group hatreds and hostility towards each other.

What Schopenhauer called the will can be thought of as a blanket term for what Freud described as our drives. Throughout his career Freud wavered considerably on how to describe these drives. He was originally of the mind that the drives were essentially of two competing kinds; the ego drives and the libidinal drives. However it was difficult to neatly slot the sadistic drive into one or the other of these categories because on the one hand it had a close affinity with the drives that aim at domination and have no libidinal purpose and thus could be considered an ego drive, and on the other it is clearly part of sexual life where cruelty replaces tenderness and sensuality. He then came up with the concept of narcissism which means the ego drives are also occupied with libido and he concluded that in fact the narcissistic ego drives were really the primary source of libido, and that it is in fact this narcissistic libido that can turn towards objects and thus become object libido (love, lust etc), and indeed it can turn back from objects and again become a libidinal drive directed towards the self.

Once he found this there really seemed no point in having a whole category of libidinal drives which were separate from the ego drives. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he proposed two different competing categories for the drives; the ego drives which were libidinal and could be directed towards the self (narcissistic) or directed towards objects (Eros) and there was a death drive that could likewise be directed at the external world and tended towards aggression and destruction and could also be directed against the ego in which case it would be pushing us towards our own self-destruction. "At the same time one could surmise, on the basis of this example, that the two kinds of drive seldom – perhaps never – appeared in isolation, but alloyed with one another in different and highly varying proportions and so became unrecognizable to our judgement. In sadism, which has long been recognized as a partial drive of sexuality, one would be faced with a particularly strong alloy of the striving for love and the drive for destruction, just as its counterpart, masochism, would be a combination of inward-directed destruction and sexuality, through which the otherwise imperceptible striving became conspicuous and palpable".

In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud advances the theory that there is a fundamental drive in the human psyche towards non-erotic aggression.

I recognize that we have always seen sadism and masochism as manifestations of the destructive drive, directed outwards or inwards and strongly alloyed with eroticism, but I can no longer

understand how we could have ignored the ubiquity of non-erotic aggression and destruction and failed to accord it its due place in the interpretation of life. (The inward-directed craving for destruction mostly eludes our perception, of course, unless it is tinged with eroticism.) I can remember how I myself resisted the idea of a destructive drive when it first appeared in psychoanalytic literature, and how long it took me to become receptive to it. That others rejected it too, and still do, I find less surprising. 'For the little children do not like it' when there is talk of man's inborn tendency to 'wickedness', to aggression and destruction, and therefore to cruelty.

How are we to explain all these competing drives that are a mixture of a libidinal attachment to the self as well as a libidinal attachment to others competing with non-libidinal aggressive drives to destroy and do harm to others as well as hatred and hostility towards the self. All these essentially conflicting impulses go towards what Schopenhauer describes as will and they are all collectively responsible not only for all the suffering and evil conduct in the world but they are also responsible for whatever pleasure and enjoyment we manage to experience throughout life. We can be sure that none of this applies to the fetus in the womb so all these conflicting and competing drives have all developed after birth, and we can be sure that our will or motivation being made up of so many fundamentally contradictory impulses means that we can never ever hope to achieve any pure pleasure or any complete satisfaction from anything we attach ourselves to in this life. Our values and our emotions and our desires are irreversibly tainted from the moment we are born and the lucky ones are those who have managed to develop a high percentage of the pleasurable libido attachments whether to ourselves or to others and a small percentage of hostility and aggression, and vice versa for the unlucky ones. Our whole life seems to be determined by how badly we are traumatized at the moment of being introduced into the world and how successful we are at finding satisfying compensations.

According to Freud this drive towards non-erotic aggression is tied up with our narcissism and our yearning for omnipotence. "Yet even where it appears without any sexual purpose, in the blindest destructive fury, there is no mistaking the fact that its satisfaction is linked with an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, in that this satisfaction shows the ego how its old wish for omnipotence can be fulfilled. Moderated and tamed – aim-inhibited, as it were – the destructive drive, when directed towards objects, must provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature". We can readily agree with him that there is indeed a non-erotic aggressive drive in humans. We only have to consider the amount of non-erotic violence in our movies and our computer games to accept that human beings are stimulated and fascinated by violence. The entertainment aspect of violence is of course merely symptomatic of a deeper yearning for violence that can be demonstrated from the fact that humans have always organized into warring tribes which advanced to the current notions of warring nations and conflicting ideologies.

There is in all of us a fundamental desire to belong to one group or population or nation that is at war with another group. This enables us to sublimate our individual aggressive impulses into a general feeling of hostility towards those who are alien to us. As long as we remain in our group then we have the security of knowing that our own violent tendencies are shared accepted and even condoned by others. Most of us get to lead a comparatively violence free existence where all our non-erotic aggressive tendencies are fully satisfied by watching our Hollywood celebrities act out actual acts of aggression as well as belonging to some national state that maintains its economic prosperity by constantly preparing for war.

What is interesting is that Freud should have identified our narcissism and our desire for omnipotence as being the source of this non-erotic aggression. Clearly these are two fundamental aspects of what Schopenhauer would call the will and so they are both aspects of our emotional makeup that we knew nothing about prior to birth. And rather remarkable character traits they are as well. It is only some catastrophic emotional trauma that could kick start the will to develop in those rather singular directions.

The narcissism arises as a result of the complete annihilation that we feel at the time we are born into the world. In less than a half an hour we go from being in a state of idyllic sensual ecstasy where we are at one with the mother to a hostile and alien planet where we are gasping for breath.

All of a sudden our survival becomes the paramount issue, and the narcissism arises as a natural consequence of that need to survive. Evidently some of us are more narcissistic than others and that simply means that for some the feeling of annihilation was not as bad as it was for others. For the first time we are confronted with the need of having to look after number one, namely our self. This is the birth of the will. Part and parcel of this is the need to control others who will be necessary for us to survive. The control we seek is to tame this hostile environment and get it working for us. It is not just a matter of controlling individual people, it is a question of gaining mastery over our entire world. Evidently at the time of our birth our world is of very small compass, but as we grow so does the dimensions of the world we feel the need to control.

For most of us, let us call ourselves the well-adjusted ones or the normal ones, we introduce realistic restraints on just how much of the world we want to control, but history abounds with megalomaniacs who were not able to reign in their egoistic will and set out to become omnipotent in fact, that is to say they literally wanted to conquer the world. But be clear on this: there is essentially no difference between the housewife and mother who simply wants to control her own kids and her own domestic situation and a Napoleon or an Adolf Hitler who wanted to rule the world. They are all driven by the same narcissism and need for omnipotence, and the only difference is just how much of the world they are content to call their domain, or their sphere of control. Likewise the amount of non-erotic aggressiveness they display in order to assert their authority is only a difference of degree not of kind.

The fact is we have all experienced anger or rage to a greater or lesser extent at some time in our lives. Even those who have the ability to suppress their anger completely will not deny that from time to time things do occur that makes them feel angry. At the other end of the scale are those that get so angry that it turns to uncontrollable rage. Normally our anger is incited when others do something that is contrary to our own will. We need only try to recall when we experienced anger for the very first time to figure out the likely source of it. That would be of course when we were born and our umbilical cord was cut. We literally come into this world crying, and one thing is certain: they ain't tears of joy that we are shedding. They are tears of anger at whoever it is that has imposed this calamity on us. That is not only the first time we experience anger, but also it is the first time we experience hate: hatred for this world and everyone in it. Most of us quickly find the mother's breast and the original connection with the mother is partially restored which enables us to find compensations and we even learn to find some of the original pleasure and we quickly adjust to our new situation, but many are not so lucky and anger and hatred for the world will remain a dominant part of their personality for the rest of their lives. Paradoxically these are the ones who are most likely to turn to organized religion and start repeating the mantra of love in an effort to control, and even deny, the hatred that wells up in their soul. These are also the ones who end up on the psychoanalysts' couch hoping that talking openly about their feelings to a professional psychologist will help them to understand what is wrong with them that they should bear such hostility towards their fellow men and women. Little do they realize that it all comes from simply being born.

From this aggressive or destructive drive, along with the wish for omnipotence, comes the insatiable drive in human kind to gain control over nature. That means that the spread of civilization is actually a destructive force. Many will deny this and will argue that the spread of cities, the so-called ribbon development, is actually a positive and a creative characteristic of human civilization because houses and shopping centers and roads and bridges etc are being built, these are the people who think that the ultimate purpose of humans is to "go forth and multiply", but the fact is that the human race has now reached plague proportions and we are all confined to a finite land mass on which to live, which means that the human race if it goes on the way it is will end up consuming the entire world.

The human race has become the most powerful destructive force the world has ever known. And this is just talking about our insatiable drive to expand, and says nothing about the actually weapons we have developed that are capable of destroying the world directly in a nuclear holocaust. The amazing thing is how we manage to convince ourselves that we are anything other than evil. The fact is that our mania for growth and development is purely destructive. Freud saw human civilization as a “struggle between Eros and death, between the life drive and the drive for destruction”, but the fact is that there is really no struggle in it. On the basis that the only purpose of human civilization is to “go forth and multiply”, then it seems to me that Eros and the drive for destruction are going hand in hand in their inexorable quest to destroy the world.

The really interesting thing about human civilization is that it actually works to suppress our aggressive urge as individuals in order to maximize our capacity as a destructive machine at the national level. Our laws are designed of course to prevent individuals to act aggressively towards each other within society, but we train armies of individuals to fight and die on behalf of our society against whoever has been identified as the external enemy that is hell bent on destroying us as a nation. In addition to our laws of course there is our religion which actually acts in the service of our country in this continual push to suppress individual aggressiveness for the greater good of us all. Freud explains it thus:

We can study this in the development of the individual. What happens to him to render his aggressivity harmless? Something very curious, which we would not have suspected, but which is plain to see. The aggression is introjected, internalized, actually sent back to where it came from; in other words, it is directed against the individual's own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego that sets itself up as the super-ego, in opposition to the rest, and is now prepared, as 'conscience', to exercise the same severe aggression against the ego that the latter would have liked to direct towards other individuals. The tension between the stern super-ego and the ego that is subject to it is what we call a 'sense of guilt'; this manifests itself as a need for punishment. In this way civilization overcomes the dangerous aggressivity of the individual, by weakening him, disarming him and setting up an internal authority to watch over him, like a garrison in a conquered town.

I personally don't agree with Freud's distinction between the ego and the super-ego. I prefer to think of it as simply an aspect of the will in Schopenhauerian sense. But Freud is undoubtedly correct that our sense of guilt comes from internalizing our hatred for the world and all its inhabitants, that is to say redirecting our desire to destroy and do harm to others towards ourselves. This can take many forms, for instance if an erotic aspect is attached to it then we become masochists in the traditional sense, and if our hatred for ourselves becomes particularly strong then of course we will have suicidal tendencies, and it can also just become a desire to punish ourselves with no particular erotic stimulation. The need to punish is of course related to the sense of guilt. The trauma of birth instills in all of us some vague sense of being bad simply because we do harbor these non-specific feelings of hatred towards others which explains the fact that deeply religious people are constantly chastising themselves for being 'sinners' whereas in fact they have not done any overtly physical act of harm towards another living creature in all their life.

Just the fact of having this subconscious hatred towards the world in general as well as the creatures that inhabit it is enough to cause them to denounce themselves as vile sinners and endure all sorts of bizarre tortures by way of punishment. In this regard they are perfectly correct when they insist that we are all sinners and that all of us must in some way atone for our sins. We all experienced this same feeling of hatred towards the world when we were born. Some of course do not internalize their hatred and they will actually perform acts of non-erotic aggression towards other humans as well as the lesser creatures

and even inanimate objects, and most of us, the so-called normal ones, go through life coping with our sense of guilt in multifarious ways including substance abuse, being a philanthropist or a model citizen or simply going to church on Sundays or whatever. The sense of guilt is fortunately not so strong in most of us to drive us into extremes of self-punishment and self-hatred. As Freud says: "...it is quite conceivable that even the sense of guilt engendered by civilization is not recognized as such, but remains for the most part unconscious, or manifests itself as an unease, a discontent, for which other motivations are sought".

Schopenhauer and Sigmund Freud are two of the most influential thinkers the world has ever known, but it must be admitted that in their respective fields of philosophy and psychology they are very much considered fringe thinkers. Academics who study and teach philosophy consider Schopenhauer way too negative and pessimistic to be interested in basing their career on becoming an expert in his thought, and in the realm of psychology the standard university courses barely even mention Sigmund Freud. Here again modern psychologists are not interested in actually trying to explain the causes of neuroses and mental illness, they are only interested in developing theories about how to treat patients who are mentally ill. To this end they consider it more beneficial to deliver a positive and uplifting message to the patient, and not to delve too deeply into the murky depths of their unconscious impulses.

Modern philosophers and psychologists are therefore more interested in delivering a message that reinforces the 'goodness' in human beings and they go out of their way to deny the fact that we, all of us, have some very dark impulses floating around in our psyche. Schopenhauer and Freud were exceptional because they were more concerned with telling it like it is; they were genuinely seeking the truth. Obviously they are not going to get many followers in human society where mass delusion and deception are the norm. The last thing anyone wants who has these uneasy feelings that there is some really bad impulses submerged somewhere there in their mind, and who are going to great lengths to convince themselves and others that they are actually good, is to be told the true nature of these impulses, and just how bad they really are.

COSMIC JUSTICE IN ANCIENT GREECE

The Ancient Greeks believed very strongly in this notion of a cosmic justice at work in the Universe. The source of this notion of cosmic justice can be found in the ancient myths going back as far as Homer. In fact the ancient myths depict the gods engaged in all manners of licentious, immoral and evil behavior, and on a superficial reading of the myths it might be thought that the humans were just projecting onto the gods all their own shortcomings and evil impulses. As a general rule the myths are quite nonsensical in terms of the sheer scale of transgressions that Zeus, for example, was able to commit with absolute impunity, but the mere fact that the myths are loaded with so much rape and pillage and mindless criminal behavior quite clearly contains the subliminal suggestion that only gods can behave this way and get away with it, whereas us mere mortals had better toe the line or else we can expect to be punished.

Having said that, I did manage to find a few instances where there was a more rational and forthright message about the workings of cosmic justice. For a start there is Eros, some sort of four-headed, double-sexed being that could roar like a lion, hiss like a serpent or bleat like a ram. Night which was actually a triad of Night-Order-Justice apparently lived in a cave with Eros. This is the triple-goddess that rules the universe and here she is living in a cave with this monster Eros. There would appear to be some sort of psychological explanation for this myth. The cave is clearly a metaphor for the female pudenda and Eros is clearly a personification of desire, and Night when she is acting as Order-Justice most certainly has the job of keeping some very tight reins on that monster Eros which as a general rule is even more unruly and wayward at night.

One of the early 'philosophical' creation myths would have us believe that from a union between Air and Mother Earth sprang Terror, Craft, Anger, Strife, Lies, Oaths, Vengeance, Intemperance, Altercation, Treaty, Oblivion, Fear, Pride, Battle amongst other things. Again on the face of it nonsensical, or is it? What if this union between Air and Mother Earth is actually alluding to our being born into this world. Then this early creation myth is clearly saying that all these evils that inflict the human race are in some way inevitable. They simply come from the fact of being human and being alive. Not as some sort of original sin, mind you, but rather as something that is part and parcel of being human. All sorts of behavior that we blithely categorize as being evil are in fact programmed into us from the start. This of course then begs the question: How can there even be such a thing as cosmic justice if humans are actually programmed by God to commit all these atrocities? Surely we can't help ourselves and so it is illogical to expect that there is such a thing as cosmic justice where we will be taken to task or punished for our evil behavior. In fact in the great bulk of the myths the gods themselves are specifically reputed to be carrying on with all this evil behavior, and not only getting away with it, but because of the fact that they are immortal they are getting away with it for all eternity. This is truly an enigma.

Robert Graves in his book *The Greek Myths* tells us: "Only Zeus, the Father of Heaven, might wield the thunderbolt; and it was the threat of its fatal flash that he controlled his quarrelsome and rebellious family on Mount Olympus. He also ordered the heavenly bodies, made laws, enforced oaths, and

pronounced oracles. When his mother Rhea, foreseeing what trouble his lust would cause, forbade him to marry, he angrily threatened to violate her. Though she at once turned into a menacing serpent, this did not daunt Zeus, who became a male serpent and, twining about her an indissoluble knot, made good his threat. It was then that he began his long series of adventures in love.” A strange way indeed for the chief “lawmaker’ to behave, but not so bizarre if we try to see a deeper psychological message in it. At the very least it is recognizing just how insatiable and unruly is this motivation in all of us called desire.

Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were three brothers, and they drew lots for lordship of the sky, sea and murky underworld. The sky went to Zeus, the underworld went to Hades, and the sea went to Poseidon. However Poseidon was not satisfied and laid claims to the earthly kingdoms as well. He attempted to take possession of Attica by thrusting his trident into the Acropolis at Athens. Athene opposed this attempt by Poseidon to lay claim to Athens and Poseidon in a fury challenged her to single combat. Athene was about to take him on but Zeus interposed and ordered them to submit the dispute to arbitration. A divine court was set up presided over by their supernal fellow deities. Cecrops was called on to give evidence. Zeus remained impartial and would not support either side. It seems all the other gods supported Poseidon and all the goddesses supported Athene. By a majority of one Athene won the case. Clearly this is a nonsensical myth but surely the elements are here that would lay the foundations for all subsequent notions of what is involved when we talk about justice. Interestingly the conflict of gender was raised as well, all the male gods with the exception of Zeus supporting Poseidon and all the goddesses supporting Athene. Supposedly it is just a myth about fictional gods but it obviously points to some very real issues which are always emerging when justice is being dispensed.

Then there is the case of Hermes. While still a baby in swaddling bands, he grew with astonishing speed into a little boy and skipped off looking for adventure. He then stole a fine herd of cows from Apollo and put special little bark shoes on the hooves of all these cows so they would not leave tracks. When Apollo discovered his loss he was not able to track his cows so he offered a reward for the apprehension of the thief. Silenus and his satyrs anxious to win the reward went searching in all directions and for a long while had no success. Then they came upon a gifted child living in a cave that had made a musical instrument from a tortoise shell and some cow-gut. They noticed two cow hides stretched outside the cave and quickly deduced that this child must have stolen Apollo’s cows. Apollo himself showed up at this point because he had been observing the suspicious behavior of a long-winged bird and had independently deduced the identity of the thief. Hermes was actually back in his swaddling bands and was feigning sleep. Apollo awakened his mother Maia and demanded that Hermes restore his cows. Maia protested - “What an absurd charge!” – but Apollo had by now recognized the hides to be from his cows. Apollo picked up Hermes and took him to Olympus. He formally charged Hermes with theft, presenting the cow hides as evidence. Hermes was actually the newborn son of Zeus who of course refused to believe that this baby could be a thief and he encouraged Hermes to plead not guilty to the charge. Apollo was determined to have justice, and eventually Hermes weakened and confessed. Again we find a myth the facts of which are totally unreal and absurd, and yet the clear underlying theme involve notions of what we have come to know as justice.

Robert Graves tells us that Apollo was actually the enemy of barbarism, and he stood for moderation in all things. In classical times, music, poetry, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and

medicine came under his control. Even as the gods in general are embroiled in all manner of unbridled mayhem, we find the clear theme introduced that regulatory measures are being promoted.

Then we must consider the myth about Tyche and Nemesis. Tyche is the daughter of Zeus and he gave her the power to decide what the fortune of each mortal shall be. On some she heaps gifts from the horn of plenty, and others are deprived of all that they have. Tyche herself is completely irresponsible in her choices, indeed she revels in the fact that her choices are totally random. But let anyone whom she has favored start to boast about his/her good fortune and not make the appropriate sacrifices to the gods to show their gratitude and indeed to take steps to alleviate the hardships of the less fortunate, then the ancient goddess Nemesis will swoop on them and utterly humiliate them.

Robert Graves tells us that Tyche ('fortune') was an artificial deity invented by the early philosophers; whereas Nemesis ('due enactment') had been the Nymph-goddess of Death-in-Life whom they now redefined as a moral control on Tyche. There can't be any doubt that favors are distributed totally at random in this life. Some people clearly are more fortunate than others. (Here we are ignoring the possibility that there is an underlying Fate that governs every step in the unfolding of the Universe and the destiny of every single creature in it.) The myth of Tyche and Nemesis tells us that should you find yourself to be one of the favored ones, be very careful not to crow about it but rather give thanks constantly and indeed show your gratitude by trying to help the less fortunate if you can. Surely this is an aspect of cosmic justice.

Prometheus, the creator of mankind, had three brothers Epimetheus, Atlas and Menoetius. Atlas ruled over the land of Atlantis which was larger than Africa and Asia put together. This empire was very warlike and carried war eastwards as far as Egypt and Italy. According to the Egyptians these people from Atlantis were originally very virtuous and did not seek to abuse their great advantages of power and wealth. But they succumbed to greed and cruelty, and with the support of Zeus, the Athenians were able to defeat them and destroy their power. At the same time the gods sent a deluge and Atlantis was buried beneath a waste of mud. Atlas and Menoetius escaped and they joined Cronus and the Titans in their war against the Olympian gods. Zeus killed Menoetius with a thunderbolt and Atlas was condemned to support Heaven on his shoulders for all eternity. Prometheus was wiser than Atlas and he foresaw the outcome of this war and he sided with Zeus and he persuaded his other brother Epimetheus to do likewise. It seems that Prometheus was too smart for his own good, and Zeus became concerned with his increasing powers and talents. Remember that Prometheus is the creator of mankind so Zeus's concern was evidently with the rising powers and talents of humans in general.

A dispute took place at Sicyon about which portions of the sacrificial bull should be offered to the gods and which should be reserved for men. Prometheus was called upon to act as arbiter. He flayed and jointed a bull, and sewed its hide to form two open-mouthed bags, filling these with what he had cut up. He tricked Zeus by putting all the flesh in one bag and then covered it with the entrails from the stomach that made this bag look very unappetizing indeed. In the other bag he put all the bones which were hidden beneath a rich layer of fat. Zeus fell for the deception and the divine portion became the bones and the fat. He attempted to punish Prometheus who was laughing at him behind his back by withholding fire from mankind. "Let them eat their flesh raw," he cried. But Prometheus was able to gain access to

Olympus by deceit and steal a fragment of glowing charcoal which enabled him to provide fire to mankind nonetheless.

In a further act of vengeance, Zeus ordered Hephaestus, the master artisan, to fashion a clay woman and then the Four Winds breathed life into her. The goddess of Olympus adorned her and she became the most beautiful woman ever created. Her name was Pandora. She was escorted with much pomp and circumstance by Hermes as a gift to Epimetheus. Prometheus however had warned his brother Epimetheus to accept no gift from Zeus, and so when Pandora arrived he politely declined.

Zeus was furious. He had Prometheus chained naked to a pillar in the Caucasian Mountains where a greedy vulture tore at his liver all day. His liver regenerates during the bitterly cold frosty nights so that his excruciatingly painful punishment is eternal.

Upon seeing what happened to his brother, Epimetheus hastened to marry Pandora, who was as foolish, mischievous and idle as she was beautiful. This is probably the first instance of what in modern times is known as stereotyping. Pandora is the first of a long line of such women. Epimetheus had a jar that contained all the Spites that might plague mankind including Old Age, Labor, Sickness, Insanity, Vice, and Passion. Prometheus had warned him under no circumstances open that jar, but Pandora of course running true to form, proceeded to open the jar. All the Spites flew out in a cloud and sting Epimetheus and Pandora all over their bodies and then moved on to attack the rest of mankind. Delusive Hope, who was also shut up in the jar, was so convincing in her lies to the mortals, that she managed to dissuade humankind from a general suicide.

This may not be the most convincing account of why there is so much evil, pain and suffering in the human condition, but what is very clear is that from the point of view of the earliest Greek myths, the so-called Spites are an essential part of the package, and any question or issue that involves cosmic justice has to take this into account. Rather than asking why did God who is so good create evil in the world, we should be asking, given the fact that God has purposely worked the Spites into human nature, why should we even be concerned with trying to punish evil behavior, and indeed why should we even regard it as a 'good' thing to try to alleviate the suffering or hardships that others less fortunate are experiencing.

Sisyphus owned a fine herd of cattle, and nearby lived Autolycus who kept stealing his cattle from him. Sisyphus suspected Autolycus because his herd was continuously decreasing and the herd of Autolycus was continually increasing, but he was unable to prove anything against Autolycus because the latter has magic powers given to him by Hermes which enabled him to metamorphose the beasts he had stolen. He could change them from horned to unhorned or from black to white or whatever. Sisyphus got the bright idea of engraving his monogram SS inside of all of his cattle's hooves. That night Autolycus came and took some more cows as usual, but now they left telltale footprints headed straight for Autolycus's place, and so Sisyphus and some witnesses went to Autolycus and accused him of cattle rustling. If Sisyphus had just left it there he could have been credited perhaps with inventing cattle branding in order to stop cattle rustling and have been an exemplary person for all times, but he actually left the witnesses to argue with Autolycus over the cattle, and he seduced Autolycus's daughter Anticleia, who happened to

be married to Laertes the Argive. As a result of his cunning and underhanded seduction, she bore him Odysseus, who having been conceived irregularly likewise shows traits of habitual cunning.

Sisyphus got involved in another very questionable intrigue. When his father Aeolus died, he was the rightful heir to the Thessalian throne, however Salmoneus usurped the throne and Sisyphus consulted the Delphic Oracle who advised him: "Sire children on your niece; they will avenge you." He then seduced Tyro, the daughter of Salmoneus, who had two sons by him. However she found out that he had seduced her out of hatred for her father and not from love of her own person, so she killed her two sons. Sisyphus managed to turn this to his advantage however, because he publicly accused Salmoneus of incest and murder and had him expelled from Thessaly.

Sisyphus's charmed run came to an end however when he ratted on Zeus to the River-god Asopus. Zeus had abducted Aegina, and Sisyphus knew what had happened to her. When questioned by Asopus, he initially imposed a condition that Asopus must supply the citadel of Corinth with a perennial spring, but as soon as that was done Sisyphus opened up to Asopus and told him all that he knew.

Zeus only narrowly escaped Asopus's vengeance and ordered an 'exemplary' punishment for Sisyphus. The Judges of the Dead showed him a huge block of stone which just happened to be the same size as the block of stone into which Zeus had turned himself to escape Asopus, and he was ordered to roll it up the brow of a hill and then let it topple down the other side. His punishment has turned out to be eternal, because just as gets almost to the top of the hill the weight of the 'shameless stone' is too much for him and just can't quite make it over. The stone rolls back down to the very bottom, where a weary Sisyphus bathed in sweat and covered in dust has to start all over again.

Abas, King of Aglaia, had twin sons by his wife Aglaia. He bequeathed his kingdom to his twin sons, Proetus and Acrisius, bidding them to rule alternately for about 50 months (half a Great Year). This is a myth about royal twins who hated each other and whose quarrel began in the womb. A similar myth can be found in other traditions as well. It is a classic example of the way Strife has been purposely built into the human condition. Nothing much turns on the nature of their quarrel, the point being that their quarrel was inevitable.

There is a very clear lesson to be learnt about cosmic justice in the well-known myth about Midas. Midas was the pleasure-loving King of Macedonian Bromium, and even in his infancy the soothsayers were predicting that great wealth was destined to accrue to him. Dionysus's army was on the march from Thracia into Boeotia, and a debauched old satyr by name Silenius happened to straggle away from the main body of the army. Silenius was formerly the pedagogue of Dionysus, who still bore some affection for him. Silenius was found by the gardeners of Midas sleeping off his bout of drunkenness in the royal rose gardens. The gardeners bound him with garlands of flowers and took him before Midas. Silenius was an enchanted storyteller and for five days and nights he regaled Midas with wondrous tales about distant lands and other extraordinary things. Midas was highly entertained by Silenius, but after five days he gave orders that Silenius be escorted back to Dionysus.

Dionysus had been very anxious about the disappearance of Silenius, and he was so grateful when he was returned safe and sound that he immediately sent out to Midas to ask him how he would like to

be rewarded. Midas was of course already immensely wealthy, but he said without hesitation: "Pray grant that all I touch be turned to gold." Dionysus granted his request but Midas soon found that his excessive greed was going to lead to his downfall. Not only did the stones, flowers and furnishings of his house turn to gold but so did the food that he tried to eat and the water that he tried to drink. He was dying of hunger and thirst and he begged Dionysus to be released from his wish. Dionysus of course had never intended to punish him and it seemed that he was highly amused by the plight that Midas found himself in as a result of his own excessive desires and foolishness. Dionysus told him to visit the source of the river Pactolus, near Mount Tmolus, and there wash himself. Midas did so and he was cured of this cursed golden touch. It is said that the sands of the river Pactolus are bright with gold to this day.

As if to underscore Midas's folly for being excessively greedy the myth contains a final chapter where Midas gets a dose of cosmic justice. There was a famous musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas that was inspired by the River-god Tmolus. Tmolus awarded the prize to Apollo, but Midas apparently did not agree with the decision of Tmolus in favor of Apollo and he had the temerity to voice his dissent. When Apollo heard of this he punished Midas with a pair of ass's ears. Midas was able to conceal his enormous ears under a Phrygian cap, and only his barber knew about his shameful secret. The barber had been told by Midas that the penalty if he ever revealed the secret would be death, but he was fairly busting with the responsibility of holding this secret. He dug a hole in the riverbank then carefully looked about to ensure that there was no-one within earshot, then he whispered into the hole: "King Midas has ass's ears!" Having mouthed the secret at least, the barber filled up the hole, and went on his way feeling much more at ease.

Unfortunately a reed sprouted up from the place where his secret was buried and whispered the secret to anyone passing by. Midas was furious when he found out that his disgrace had become public knowledge. He had the barber put to death and he himself drank bull's blood. Alas there was no ridding himself of the shame, and he perished miserably.

Given the fact that Strife is a necessary and essential part of life and so questions of cosmic justice are inevitably going to arise, and that 'good' is going to be engaged in an eternal struggle against 'evil', there is a very real issue that has to be faced whether, in fact, life is worth living at all. The myth of Cleobis and Biton deals with this issue, and the answer that is given will sound surprising to all those who don't recognize that the state of sleep is actually a divine state. Cleobis and Biton were the sons of Hera's priestess at Argos. She had to perform the rights of the goddess but the white oxen which were to draw her sacred chariot had not been brought in from pasture. So Cleobis and Biton harnessed themselves to the chariot and dragged it to the temple a distance of about five miles. Touched by their filial devotion, the priestess prayed to Hera to grant her sons the best gift that it was possible to bestow upon mortals. Hera granted the request and once the priestess had performed her rites, her two sons went to sleep in the temple, never to awake again. To put mortals into a state of permanent sleep is virtually to accord them a divine status, like Endymion.

The myth of Narcissus surely touches on the question of cosmic justice. Narcissus was the son of the blue Nymph Leirioppe who gave birth after the River-god Cephissus encircled her with the windings of his streams, and ravished her. Leirioppe consulted the seer Teiresias, who told her: "Narcissus will live to a

ripe of age, provided that he never knows himself." He was so beautiful, even as a child, that people would fall in love with him. But he was very proud of his beauty, and by the time he was sixteen years of age he had already heartlessly rejected the advances of many would be lovers of both sexes. The nymph Echo, who had lost the use of her own voice except as a repetition of what someone else shouts, pursued Narcissus. She was infatuated with him but he rejected her advances. He pushed her away roughly, and said: "I will die before you ever lie with me." Echo spent the rest of her lonely life in glens pining away for her unrequited love of Narcissus.

Another suitor, Ameinius, killed himself on Narcissus's threshold with a sword that Narcissus had in fact given him, at the same time calling on the gods to avenge his death. The god Artemis heard the plea and he sentenced Narcissus to fall in love while at the same time denying him love's consummation. At Donacon in Thespia, Narcissus came upon a spring the water of which was as clear as silver. This water had never been disturbed by cattle, or birds, or wild beasts. Indeed not even the branches of the overhanging trees had fallen into this water. Narcissus cast himself down on the grassy verge to slake his thirst and immediately fell in love with his own reflection. At first he thought it was a beautiful boy looking up at him, but he soon recognized that the beautiful boy was himself. There he sat hour after hour gazing enraptured into the pool. To possess and yet not to possess became an unendurable torture for him. Grief was destroying him and yet at the same time he was rejoicing in his torment. He knew in his heart of hearts that his other self would remain true to him, even though he could never possess it.

Even Echo, who had not forgiven him, grieved for him. As he plunged a dagger into his breast, she sympathetically echoed: "Alas! Alas!" and as he breathed his final breath, she sighed: "Ah youth, beloved in vain, farewell." On the spot where the blood of Narcissus had soaked the earth, both a white and a red narcissus flower sprang up to mark the tragic passing of this most beautiful of all youths, and yet at the same time most vain and proud.

One of the sons of Zeus and Europe was Minos. He had two brothers as well. Europe later married Asterius, the reigning King of Crete. That marriage was childless but Asterius actually adopted Asterius and his brothers. When these brothers grew up they apparently all fell in love with a beautiful boy, named Miletus, and a bitter quarrel enveloped the family. Miletus actually preferred one of the brothers of Minos and went off with him.

When his stepfather Asterius died, Minos claimed the throne of Crete. As proof of his right to reign, he boasted that the gods would answer whatever prayer he offered them. In dedicating his first altar to Poseidon, he prayed that a bull might emerge from the sea that he would use as a sacrifice. A dazzling white bull swam ashore, and Minos was so taken with its beauty that he decided to keep it, and he sacrificed one of the other bulls from his herd instead.

Minos married Pasiphaë, a daughter of Helios and the nymph Perseis. Poseidon however was determined to avenge the affront given to him by Minos, and he made Pasiphaë fall in love with that dazzling white bull that was supposed to have been sacrificed to him. Pasiphaë confided her unnatural passion to Daedalus, a master craftsman from Athens especially well known for carving animated wooden dolls. Daedalus agreed to help her and he carved a hollow wooden cow, upholstered it with cow's hide,

and had little wheels concealed in its hooves. He then pushed this lifelike cow doll into the pasture where Poseidon's bull was grazing with Minos's cows. He showed Pasiphaë how to get inside the cow by opening the folding doors in the cow's back, and then recline with her legs thrust down inside its hindquarters. Poseidon's bull was immediately attracted to this new cow and ambled up and mounted it. Pasiphaë's unnatural desire was well and truly satiated, and she later gave birth to the Minotaur, a monster with a bull's head and a human body.

Minos was concerned about the scandal and he consulted an oracle as to how he could best keep this sordid affair under wraps. The oracle advised: "Instruct Daedalus to build you a retreat at Cnossus!" So Daedalus got to work and built a Labyrinth. Pasiphaë and the Minotaur were concealed in the heart of this inextricable maze, and it seems that Minos spent the rest of his life in there with them as well. Incidentally when Minos found out that Daedalus had assisted Pasiphaë to have sexual intercourse with his white bull, he had him cast into the Labyrinth as well, together with his son Icarus, but Pasiphaë was able to free them both.

Another myth involving Minos appears to be a prohibition on the crime of parricide. Minos had laid siege to the city of Nisa, on the Isthmus of Corinth, which was ruled by Nisus the Egyptian. In this city there was a tower at the foot of which lay a musical stone. When pebbles were dropped onto the stone from the tower it rang like a lyre, an enchanting sound. Nisus had a beautiful daughter, named Scylla, and her favorite pastime was to sit up in this tower with a lapful of pebbles, and drop them down on this musical stone.

When the war began she liked to go up in the tower to watch the fighting as well. She had such a good vantage point that she was able to recognize and even know the names of every Cretan soldier. Minos particularly took her fancy. He wore beautiful clothes and rode a white charger. So smitten was she that she fell perversely in love with him, and decided to betray her father.

One night she crept into her father's chamber while he was asleep. She cut off the famous bright lock of hair upon which his life and his throne depended. She also took from her father the keys to the city gate, and she then stole away to join Minos, bearing him these gifts. She offered the lock of her father's hair in exchange for his love, to which Minos immediately replied: "It is a bargain!" That same night he entered the city and sacked it, after which he lay with Scylla.

Then he went back on his bargain and would not take Scylla with him to Crete. The reason given is that he loathed the crime of parricide. Scylla swam after his ship, and clung to the stern. Then her father Nisus's soul in the form of a sea-eagle swooped down on her and tore at her with its talons and hooked beak. The terrified Scylla let go of her hold on the stern of the ship, and was drowned. We are told that her soul flew off as a ciris-bird.

The labors of Theseus give us an interesting example of cosmic justice at work. Theseus set out to rid the coast road from Troezen to Athens of bandits. Apparently this was a notorious stretch of road where bandits preyed on all wayfarers. Theseus made the decision that he would not initiate the quarrel, but would wait until he was accosted by a bandit and then he would make the punishment fit the crime; he would retaliate in kind so to speak.

He was first waylaid by Periphetes the Cripple. This bandit had a huge brazen club that he used to kill wayfarers, and his nickname was Corunetes, or 'cudgel-man.' Theseus merely wrenched the club from Periphetes's hand and battered him to death with it. Indeed he found the club to his liking and kept it for his own.

The next bandit he came across was Sinis, the son of Pemon. This fellow was so strong that he was able to bend down the tops of pine trees until they touched the ground. In fact his nickname was Pityocampetes, which means 'pinebender'. He used this unique ability of his to bend trees as a means of dispatching wayfarers. Sometimes he would ask someone passing by to help him bend down a tree, and then he would suddenly let go and his unfortunate victim would be catapulted high into the air, and die as a result. Other times he would bend down two neighboring trees and tie his victim to both of them, so when the trees are released the victim is rent asunder. Theseus wrestled with Sinis and overpowered him and gave him a dose of the pine tree catapult. He then saw a beautiful girl run and hide in a thicket of rushes and wild asparagus. He went in search of her and found her invoking the plants to keep her concealed. Theseus swore not to do her any violence and she turned out to be Sinis's daughter Perigune. This girl fell in love with Theseus even though he had just killed her father and she succumbed to him on the spot, and in due course bore him a son, named Melanippus, who was said to venerate thickets of rushes and wild asparagus.

The next adventure for Theseus was at Crommyum, where he hunted and killed a monstrous wild sow. This monster had been terrorizing the local farmers to the point where they no longer dared to go out to plough their fields.

After that he came to the stronghold of the bandit Sciron, which was on top of a precipitous cliff rising sheer from the sea. Sciron would sit on a rock on the edge of the cliff and force passers-by to wash his feet. When they stooped to obey he would simply kick them over the cliff, and if the fall didn't kill them there was a giant turtle below swimming about waiting to devour them. Theseus didn't fall for the trick of stooping to wash Sciron's feet, but rather lifted him up bodily from the rock and flung him into the sea.

The next bandit that Theseus met was Cercyon the Arcadian. This fellow was a wrestler and he would challenge passers-by to wrestle with him. He was so powerful he would simply crush his hapless victims to death. Theseus accepted his challenge to wrestle, picked him up at the knees and drove him headlong into the ground, killing him instantly. It seems that Theseus had actually invented the art of wrestling, so he was able to rely not so much on brute strength but his great skill. He had no trouble at all dispatching Cercyon the Arcadian, and making the punishment fit the crime as per usual.

The last bandit Theseus dealt with was actually the father of Sinis the pinebender whom he had slain earlier. This fellow had a most interesting operation. He had a house beside the road and he would offer lodging to passers-by. There were two beds in the house, one large bed and one small bed. He would put short men in the large bed and then stretch them to fit it as if they were on the rack. Tall men he would put on the short bed, and then proceed to cut off any of their limbs that projected over the edges. We are told that Theseus served this fellow as he had served others, but we are not told specifically

whether that involved lengthening or shortening him. Either way it would have been painful and he got his just deserts.

Theseus is said to be responsible for the federalization of Attica, which essentially means that he gave Athens its first constitution. When he succeeded his father Aegeus to the throne of Athens, he set out to reinforce his sovereignty by executing practically all his opponents. He spared one of his opponents, named Pallas, and the remainder of his fifty sons. Some years later, as a precautionary measure, he executed them as well.

He was actually charged with their murder in the Court of Apollo the Dolphin, but he made the novel, and therefore unprecedented plea of 'justifiable homicide', and was acquitted. Perhaps not cosmic justice in his case, but we see here a myth sowing the seeds for what will later become cosmic justice. He managed to get himself officially purified of their blood.

At that time Attica consisted of twelve communities who managed their own affairs and were virtually autonomous. They really only consulted the Athenian King in times of emergency. Theseus set about to bring them into a federation. He consulted each clan and family in turn and persuaded them to give up their independence and band together as a federation. He promised to abolish the monarchy in favor of a democracy where he would remain as commander-in-chief and supreme judge. Most of the large landowners went along with him because he also promised not to interfere with the laws of private property. He managed to dissolve all the local governments, and in their place he instituted a common Council Hall and Law Court. Originally the city of Athens was considered to be the area around the Acropolis but this new scheme united the city of Athens with the suburban areas. With these reforms Theseus is credited with being responsible for Athens's later wellbeing. He named the sixteenth day of Hecatomboeon (July) 'Federation Day', and made it a public festival in honor of Athene. Perhaps we see here the beginnings of the sentiments of patriotism and nationalism, where the citizens swear their allegiance to a duly constituted government rather than an hereditary monarch.

To advance the city of Athens still further, Theseus sent out a general invitation to all wealthy foreigners to come and swear their allegiance to Athens and become fellow citizens. Theseus is said to be the first king to found a commonwealth. In the *Catalogue of Ships*, Homer distinguishes only the Athenians as being a sovereign people as a result of the reforms implemented by Theseus.

Theseus was the first Athenian King to mint money. The coins were stamped with the image of the bull. You could get a 'ten oxen' coin or a 'hundred oxen' coin etc. He also introduced the notion of national boundaries. He settled a longstanding frontier dispute between the Peloponnesians and the Ionians by first getting them to agree on a common boundary, and then he had the celebrated column erected on the agreed boundary. On the eastern side of the column were the words: "This is not the Peloponnese, but Ionia!" on the western side: "This is not Ionia, but the Peloponnese!"

The growing influence of Athens in international affairs is evidenced by the Corinthians assenting that the Athenians should have place of honor at the Isthmian games. The Athenians were allotted as much ground as was covered by the mainsail of the ship that had brought them.

All these supposedly mythical reforms implemented by Theseus seem to touch on issues that can come within the ambit of cosmic justice. Ways to resolve disputes between nations, ways to resolve disputes between private property owners. Minting coins that have a symbolic value in terms of oxen is an obvious indication of the way in which financial and commercial relations between humans would evolve. First there is a myth and then it becomes a reality. It's hard to understand though how such a myth about the implementation of such detailed political and constitutional measures could have arisen.

Peirithous the Lapith was every bit the equal of Theseus in nobility, strength and valor. His mother was Dia and it is said that his father was Zeus who disguised himself as a stallion and coursed around Dia as a prelude to seducing her.

Peirithous was hearing all these reports about the incredible strength and valor of Theseus, and he decided to go to Attica and see for himself just how great Theseus actually was. He laid down the challenge to Theseus by driving away a herd of cattle that were grazing at Marathon. Theseus immediately went in pursuit, and when he caught up to Peirithous the latter boldly turned to face him. There was no battle however because they were both mutually struck with the other's nobility of appearance and an everlasting bond of friendship was formed on the spot.

When Peirithous married Hippodameia he gave a huge wedding feast. All the Olympians were invited with some exceptions, namely Ares and Eris, who had a bad reputation because they had trashed someone else's wedding ceremony. In fact there were so many invitees that there wasn't room for them all in the palace, so his cousins the Centaurs, together with Nestor, Caeneus and other Thessalian princes were seated at tables in a nearby tree-shaded cave.

It seems that his cousins the Centaurs were not used to wine. Sour milk was set before them but they pushed it away and they rushed to fill their silver horns from the wineskins. In their ignorance they did not take the precaution of mixing this strong liquor with water and they all became raging drunk. When the bride Hippodameia was escorted into the cavern to greet them, Eurytion dragged her off by the hair and raped her. The other Centaurs followed his lead lecherously mounting the nearest women and boys and the wedding feast degenerated into a wild orgy.

Peirithous and his paranymp Theseus rushed to the cavern to rescue Hippodameia. Peirithous cut off the ears and nose of Eurytion, and then with the aid of some other Lapiths he was thrown out of the cavern. The ensuing fight between the Lapiths and the Centaurs lasted until nightfall and Caeneus the Lapith was actually killed. This incident, which some say was actually engineered by Ares and Eris because of the sleight offered them for not being invited, was the celebrated cause of the long feud between the Lapiths and their neighbors the Centaurs.

Perhaps the myth about Oedipus has more to do with cosmic destiny than cosmic justice. Certainly the Freudians have interpreted this myth as defining unconscious psychological motives in all of us which are ultimately caused by the simple fact that we are all born of woman.

Laius, son of Labdacus, married Iocaste, and ruled over Thebes. For a long while their marriage was childless. Laius secretly sought advice from the Delphic Oracle who informed him that this was a blessing

in disguise because any child born to Iocaste would be his murderer. Laius came home and informed Iocaste that there would be no more sex without giving any reasons, so she conspired to get him drunk and he laid with her that night just the same. As fate would have it this time she was actually impregnated and nine months later she gave birth to a baby boy. Laius very mindful of the dire prediction from the Delphic Oracle, snatched the baby from the nurse's arms, pierced its feet with a nail and bound them together and then left it for dead, exposed to the elements on Mount Cithaeron.

Laius should have simply killed the baby because the prediction of the Delphic Oracle was activated the moment the child was born to Iocaste. A Corinthian shepherd found the baby and named him Oedipus on account of his deformed feet from the nail wounds. The shepherd then took Oedipus to Corinth where Polybus was the reigning king.

There is another version of this myth somewhat similar to the Biblical story how Moses was found floating in a basket among the bulrushes. In this version Laius has the baby locked in a chest which was set adrift from a ship at sea. The chest floated ashore at Sicyon, where Periboea, the Queen of Polybus, just happened to be on the beach supervising her royal laundry-women. Periboea was herself childless so she decided to pretend the baby was her own. She went off into a thicket with the baby, made the appropriate noises as if she was giving birth, and then re-emerged with her newborn baby son. She managed to deceive the laundry-women but it seems she told the truth to her husband Polybus, who was quite happy to adopt Oedipus as his own son.

One day a Corinthian youth taunted Oedipus that he did not in the least resemble his parents, so Oedipus went to the Delphic Oracle to find out what was in store for him. "Away from the shrine, wretch!" the Pythoness shrieked at him. "You will kill your father and marry your mother."

With this curse upon him, Oedipus decided not to return to Corinth because he did not want to bring shame on his foster parents whom he well loved. He went off in another direction, but in the narrow defile between Delphi and Daulis who should he happen upon but his real father Laius. The latter who was in a fine chariot yelled roughly at Oedipus to get off the road and make way for his betters. Oedipus boldly replied that he knew no betters except the gods and his own parents. Laius ordered his charioteer to drive on and run Oedipus over if he didn't make way. One of the chariot wheels ran over Oedipus's foot. Transported with rage, Oedipus attacked. He killed the charioteer with his spear and Laius was flung to the ground entangled in the reins. Oedipus then whipped up the team and Laius was dragged along behind the chariot to his death.

Oedipus, fresh from the murder of Laius, then went to Thebes. To cut a long story short he managed to solve a riddle posed by the Three Muses. The Thebans were in awe of Oedipus and proclaimed him their king whereupon he married Iocaste unaware that she was actually his mother.

A plague then descended on Thebes. The Delphic Oracle was again consulted who once again advised them to expel the murderer of Laius. Oedipus was still not aware that this was actually himself because he never knew the identity of the man he had quarreled with in the defile. Oedipus pronounced a general curse on the murderer of Laius and proclaimed that he should be exiled if caught.

Blind Teiresias, the most renowned seer in Greece, was brought in to advise how to get rid of the plague. Teiresias informed Queen Iocaste that her current husband Oedipus was in fact the murderer of Laius. At first the Thebans would not believe Teiresias but then it seems his stepmother Periboea at Corinth wrote a damning letter revealing the circumstances of Oedipus's adoption. Iocaste hanged herself for the shame of it all and Oedipus took a pin from her garments and put out his own eyes.

Clearly the myth contains a moral about parricide and incest, and also conveys the message that human life is predetermined and we cannot avoid our fate. These considerations are relevant to the issue of cosmic justice precisely because it means that that bad or evil behavior is actually programmed into us even before we are born, and there is nothing we can do to actually avoid our destiny. Actually what is programmed into us before we are born is the precise way in which we will be affected by the trauma of birth. Evidently we all manage to cope with this trauma in different ways especially relating to anger management and this is what impacts on our destiny. Still it is clear that humans are expected to fight against these evil tendencies, and above all we must never let ourselves get into the situation where our evil tendencies are allowed to completely prevail over the good.

An important myth about cosmic justice is that of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra. It is a long and convoluted myth but essentially Agamemnon was a very important general who had killed Tantalus, King of Pisa, in one of his earlier campaigns and forcibly married his widow Clytaemnestra. She bore him one son Orestes and three daughters.

Agamemnon went off to the Trojan war and was away for ten years. It seems that Agamemnon also had a mistress Cassandra which Clytaemnestra found particularly galling, and she conspired with Aegisthus to kill both Agamemnon and Cassandra when he returned from the Trojan war. She made elaborate arrangements so she would get advance warning of his return. When her travel-worn husband returned she greeted him with feigned delight and led him off to the bathhouse. As he was getting out of the bath she threw a net over him which allowed Aegisthus to kill him with a two-edged sword. He fell back into the bath whereupon Clytaemnestra gave full vent to her desire for vengeance for all the wrongs he had done her by beheading him with an axe. She wiped off on his hair the blood that had splashed on her which bears the significance that he had brought about his own death. She then discarded the head without closing the eyes or the mouth and went off with her axe in search of Cassandra. By this time there was a battle raging between Agamemnon's bodyguards and Aegisthus's supporters. The latter won the day and Cassandra's head rolled on the ground as well.

This massacre took place on the thirteenth day of Gamelion (January) so Clytaemnestra declared the thirteenth day a monthly festival completely oblivious to the possibility of divine retribution. The day was to be celebrated with dancing and offerings of sheep to her guardian deities. Public opinion was mixed concerning her actions, there were those who applauded her but there were others who thought that she had brought eternal disgrace to all women, even virtuous ones.

Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra, was only ten years old at the time of the massacre, and there are different versions of how he managed to escape being murdered by Aegisthus as well, because the latter was always mindful that Orestes would one day seek to avenge the death of his

father. In fact as time went by Aegisthus became quite paranoid about this, whereas Clytaemnestra was completely unperturbed because she firmly believed that she was in the right. For seven years Aegisthus was ostensibly the King of Mycenae, he rode in Agamemnon's chariot, sat on his throne, wielded his scepter, wore his robes, slept in his bed, and squandered his riches. Behind the scenes however he was little more than a slave to Clytaemnestra who was the true ruler of Mycenae.

When Orestes grew to manhood he visited the Delphic Oracle to get advice about what he should do about avenging the death of his father. He was told that the opinion of Apollo would be that if he didn't avenge Agamemnon's death he would become an outcast of society and a leprosy would strike his flesh causing it to sprout a white mold. On the other hand the Pythoness also gave him a bow of horn which he could use to defend himself against the Erinnyes who would not lightly forgive a matricide.

Orestes was at Agamemnon's tomb seeking a sign as to the best way to go about avenging his death. As it happens Clytaemnestra had had a prophetic nightmare that she had given birth to a serpent which she had wrapped in swaddling clothes and suckled. She had sent mourners to Agamemnon's tomb because a soothsayer had told her that the meaning of the dream was that she had incurred the wrath of the dead. Orestes heard this story from the mourners, and he recognized himself as being the serpent and thought that he would indeed play the role of a cunning serpent and sink his fangs into her false body.

Orestes adopted the ruse of pretending to be an Aeolian from Daulis who had been charged with a message from one Strophius who was holding the ashes of her dead son Orestes and wanted to know what to do with them. Orestes gave this message to Clytaemnestra in person and she failed to recognize him as her son. She immediately welcomed him inside the palace. However Geilissa, Orestes old nurse, did recognize Orestes and when she was sent to fetch Aegisthus she led him to believe that he was now safe to come alone and weaponless to greet the bearer of news that would give him great joy; the demise of his archenemy Orestes.

Just as Aegisthus entered the palace, Pylades who was Orestes's travelling companion arrived carrying a brazen urn which he announced contained the ashes of Orestes, and which had been sent to Mycenae by Strophius. This was a further confirmation of the good news and Aegisthus was completely put off his guard. Orestes simply drew his sword and cut him down. Clytaemnestra immediately recognized her son Orestes, and we are told that she tried to soften his heart by baring her naked breast and appealing to his filial duty. All to no avail for he simply beheaded her with one stroke of his sword. Orestes stood over the corpses and addressed the Palace servants. He held aloft the still bloodstained net that had been used when Agamemnon was slaughtered, and reminded them of Clytaemnestra's treachery which exculpated him for her murder, and as regards Aegisthus he had merely metered out the punishment prescribed for adulterers. Orestes also killed their second daughter, and his half-sister Helen.

Orestes's actions naturally caused all sorts of repercussions. The Mycenaeans generally supported Orestes and indeed they would not allow the bodies of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus to be buried within their city. The serpent-haired, dog-headed, bat-winged Erinnyes wasted no time in attacking him for the matricide. Clytaemnestra's family got into the act and they were pushing for a charge of matricide to be brought against Orestes and summoned the Mycenaen chieftains to judge his case. It seems that there

was a trial and Orestes was initially sentenced to be stoned to death for matricide, along with fiancée Electra who had spurred him on. But Orestes himself made an eloquent plea for clemency and the judges commuted the sentence holding that Clytaemnestra had suicided.

His dispute with Clytaemnestra's family continued however and the Erinnyes were still hounding him relentlessly. Orestes set out for Delphi and the Pythian Priestess was terrified at the sight of him. The gods had to intervene and Apollo reassured the priestess by promising to act as an advocate for Orestes.

Orestes was exiled for one year which was the standard punishment for a homicide and he underwent various ceremonies of purification in several different countries. He eventually came to Athens and he went at once to embrace the image of Athene at the Acropolis. But the Erinnyes continued to hound him as well as Clytaemnestra's family.

Athene who had heard Orestes's supplication convened a court, the Areopagus, to try this case of homicide which it seems was only the second case of homicide ever to be brought before it. Apollo appeared as counsel for the defense, and the eldest of the Erinnyes was the public prosecutrix. Apollo pleaded that the father and not the mother was the only parent of any consequence. He argued that motherhood was insignificant and indeed a woman was no more than the inert furrow in which the husbandman cast his seed. The judges were split down the middle as Athene had to give a casting vote which she did in favor of Orestes, declaring herself wholly in agreement with Apollo that the father was the most important parent.

Thus Orestes was finally honorably acquitted and he returned triumphantly to Argolis, and he declared himself Athene's faithful servant and ally for life. The Erinnyes of course were mortified, and they loudly lamented this subversal of the ancient law where the matriarch was to be revered over and above the patriarch.

Robert Graves explains that these Erinnyes are actually personified pangs of conscience. One tradition has it that the Erinnyes actually drove Orestes mad and hounded him to death. Quite clearly this myth about Orestes avenging his father's death by killing his mother sets up many crucial questions when we are considering the operation of cosmic justice. What you have here are many opposing considerations. Was Clytaemnestra justified in killing Agamemnon, he had after all killed her first husband and forced her to marry him. In addition to which he was carrying on an affair with Cassandra, through whom he had sired two children who were Orestes's half-siblings. If Clytaemnestra was justified in killing Agamemnon then evidently Orestes was not justified in killing her. She actually bared her naked breast to him and appealed to his filial duty to her as his mother who had been wronged by his father. Instead of killing her perhaps he should have supported or even assisted her in her quest for vengeance against his father. In this myth the case is never resolved satisfactorily; there are too many arguments for and against. We will see later when we get onto the philosophical basis for cosmic justice that this is a fundamental premise. Cosmic justice is about the clash of opposites – good vs evil, Strife vs Love, the male/paternal principle vs the female/maternal principle etc. In all aspects of human life there are the interests of opposing forces that have to be resolved.

We find similar considerations in the murder of Iphitus by Heracles. Heracles had a wife named Megara and one day he decided that his marriage had not been auspicious. Megara was thirty-three years old and he gave her in marriage to his nephew and charioteer Iolaus, who was just sixteen years old. It seems also that he murdered the children he had had by her. He then went on the lookout for a younger and more fortunate wife.

He then got the news that his friend Eurytus, who was the son of Melanius the King of Oechalia, had offered to give his daughter Iole in marriage to any archer who could outshoot him and his four sons. Eurytus was a famed archer who had been given a fine bow by Apollo. Indeed he boasted that he had now surpassed Apollo in marksmanship.

Heracles arrived and had no difficulty at all in winning the contest. However Eurytus found out what Heracles had done to his first wife and he decided that he wasn't about to give his beloved daughter to this ruffian. After having drunk a great deal of wine to boost his confidence, he told Heracles that the contest was void because he had unfairly used magic arrows that cannot miss their mark. He told Heracles that there was no way he could compare with himself and his sons as archers were it not for these magic arrows. He then had Heracles forcibly removed from the Palace. Heracles did not retaliate at once but he swore he would have vengeance.

Three of Eurytus's sons agreed with their father's actions, however his eldest son Iphitus felt that in all fairness Iole should have been given to Heracles. Soon afterwards twelve strong-hooved broodmares and twelve sturdy mule-foals disappeared from Euboea and Eurytus and his sons falsely accused Heracles as being the culprit as a means of taking vengeance. Iphitus however refused to believe this. In fact the stock had been stolen by the well-known thief Autolycus who had magically changed their appearance, and had then on-sold them to Heracles who had innocently believed that the stock was his to sell.

In an effort to exculpate Heracles, Iphitus set out to follow the tracks of the mares and foals, but when he realized they led towards Tiryns he began to suspect Heracles after all. He suddenly found himself face to face with Heracles, so he dissimulated his suspicions and simply asked Heracles whether he knew anything about the missing stock. His description about the missing stock did not match the beasts sold to him by Autolycus, so Heracles in all good faith heartily promised to help Iphitus search for them and invited him to become his guest and accept his hospitality.

Iphitus accepted, but Heracles now divined that he was suspected of theft. This offended his sensibilities, so after treating Iphitus to a grand banquet he led him to the top of the highest tower in Tiryns. They had an extensive view in all directions, and Heracles said to Iphitus: "Look about you! Tell me if your mares are grazing anywhere in sight." Iphitus admitted: "I cannot see them." Heracles roared: "Then you have falsely accused me in your heart of being a thief!" Whereupon beside himself with rage, he hurled poor Iphitus to his death.

There was general condemnation of Heracles actions. He sought purification from various quarters but none would entertain him. Heracles was suffering from evil dreams and went and sought advice from the Delphic Oracle as to how he might rid himself of his guilt. The Pythoness Xenoclea refused even to answer his question. "You murdered your guest," she told him. "I have no oracles for such as you!"

Heracles retorted in anger: "Then I shall be obliged to institute an oracle of my own!" Whereupon he knocked Xenoclea off of her seat and trashed the shrine, taking away with him its votive offerings as well as the tripod that Xenoclea had been sitting upon.

Apollo was furious and engaged Heracles in battle. Zeus had to part them with his thunderbolt and restored peace between them. Heracles agreed to return the sacred tripod to Xenoclea and she gave him the following oracle: "To be rid of your affliction you must be sold into slavery for one whole year and the price you fetch must be offered to Iphitus's children. Zeus is enraged that you have violated the laws of hospitality." Heracles said that he would obey, although he vowed that one day he would enslave the man who was the cause of this whole problem, namely Eurytus.

Hermes, the patron of all important financial transactions, took Heracles to Asia and offered him for sale as a nameless slave. He was purchased by Omphale, Queen of Lydia, as the Pythoness had foretold. He served her faithfully and well for the period of one year. Hermes took the purchase money of three silver talents to give to Iphitus's orphans, but Eurytus stubbornly refused to allow them to accept any monetary compensation. He was adamant that only blood would pay for blood.

Perhaps in this myth we see not so much an example of cosmic justice, but rather the sort of scenario where questions of cosmic justice come to the fore. It seems that Heracles' enslavement to Omphale was not that hard for him to take. She had purchased him as a lover rather than a fighter, and not only did he sire three sons on her, but he also had unlimited access to her ladies-in-waiting. Reports reached Greece that Heracles had discarded his lion pelt and his aspen wreath, and he now wore jeweled necklaces, golden bracelets and other finery, and sat surrounded by wanton Ionian girls. Meanwhile Omphale was dressed up in his lion pelt, and was wielding his awesome club and bow.

Robert Graves describes the tale about what happened to the great Ancaeus, the helmsman of the Argo, on their return from their expedition to seize the golden fleece, as instructive, which indeed it is. This man had survived so many hardships and perils as a member of the Argonauts and he was one of the fortunate ones who returned home to his palace at Tegea without a scratch on him so to speak. He had planted a vineyard on his grounds many years before but a seer had warned him that he would never taste the wine from that vineyard. On the very day of his return he was told that the first crop of grapes had been harvested and that his wine was ready to be tasted. He took a cup of the wine and put it to his lips. He then decided he would show the seer how wrong he was. He had the seer brought before him and reproached him for his false prophecy and gloated about having survived the expedition of the Argonauts after all. The seer held his ground and simply said: "Sire, there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." At that instant the servants ran in and informed Ancaeus that a wild boar was ravaging his vineyard. With that Ancaeus set down his untasted cup of wine, grabbed his boar-spear and rushed out to do battle with the beast. The boar was concealed behind a bush as Ancaeus rushed into the vineyard. The boar charged, took him by surprise and killed him.

The message would appear to be if you are fortunate to have a lucky escape from a dangerous or difficult situation, be thankful rather than arrogant and boastful because there really is nothing certain in

this life and our destiny is more in the nature of a lottery where we mere mortals are not in a position to dictate or even predict when our number is going to come up.

A tale about Greek treachery in the tenth year of the Trojan War impacts on cosmic justice. By the way Robert Graves tells us that the Trojan war was historical and that the recovery of Helen was merely an idealized reason for the war. In fact the real reasons for the war related to trade and commercial considerations. Troy controlled the valuable Black Sea trade in various commodities and Greece wanted to get a piece of the action.

Odysseus was sent by Agamemnon on a foraging expedition to Thrace. He came back empty handed and Palamedes, son of Nauplius, accused him of slothfulness and cowardice. Odysseus responded: "It was not my fault that no corn could be found. If Agamemnon had sent you in my stead, you would have had no greater success." Whereupon Palamedes set sail at once and he did manage to return with a ship-load of grain.

Odysseus was furious. His honor had been wounded and he was determined that he would have his revenge. He decided to frame Palamedes for a crime he did not commit. He sent word to Agamemnon: "The gods have warned me in a dream that treachery is afoot; the camp must be moved for a day and a night". Agamemnon gave immediate orders for this to be done. In the place where Palamedes tent had been pitched, Odysseus secretly buried a sackful of gold. He then forced a Phrygian prisoner to write a letter ostensibly from Priam to Palamedes which read: "The gold that I have sent is the price you asked for betraying the Greek camp". He ordered the prisoner to deliver the letter to Palamedes but then had him killed outside the camp before he could deliver it. When the camp returned to its original spot the corpse of the prisoner was found along with the letter which was taken to Agamemnon. Palamedes was court-martialed. He of course flatly denied having received any gold from Priam or anybody else. On the suggestion of Odysseus his tent was searched. The gold was found and Palamedes was stoned to death as a traitor.

A variation of this story is that Agamemnon as well as Diomedes were co-conspirators with Odysseus in this dastardly frame up of Palamedes, that they had jointly dictated the incriminating letter and had bribed a servant to plant it as well as the gold in the tent of Palamedes. As Palamedes was led off to be stoned he cried aloud: "Truth, I mourn for you, you have predeceased me."

It seems that the motive for the murder of Palamedes may have been simple jealousy. He was evidently a superior being who was reputed to have invented dice which enabled the soldiers to while away their time during the ten long years of the Trojan war and in addition he is said to have invented lighthouses, scales, measures, the discus, the alphabet, and the art of posting sentinels. He was a very remarkable man indeed.

Once Nautilus heard of the murder he immediately set sail for Troy to demand justice, but as Agamemnon himself was implicated in the plot, his pleas fell on death ears. It seems that Agamemnon enjoyed the confidence and support of all the other Greek leaders so there was little chance for Nautilus to accuse him directly. However when he returned to Greece he did his best to avenge the murder of Palamedes. He went and gave false news to all the wives of the co-conspirators, saying to each one of

them: "Your husband is bringing back a Trojan concubine as his new queen". Some of the wives committed suicide when they heard this news. Others were driven to commit adultery. We have already seen that Agamemnon's wife Clytaemnestra began her affair with Aegisthus with dire consequences for Agamemnon himself. So justice was done in the end. It is interesting to note that the *Iliad* which is dated at about 750 B.C. depicts all the Greek leaders as being the real villains in this war and the Trojans by contrast are presented as the wronged party. The Greek leaders behave murderously, deceitfully and shamelessly and yet Homer's *Iliad* is a national cultural treasure for Greek culture. It seems that in a work like this that has been honored and revered over the millennia and becomes a national epic, it no longer matters that the legendary heroes are actually evil doers. National cultural pride is blind to truth, justice, righteousness and even reason.

Talking about the collective national consciousness being devoid of reason, we should take some note of the famous incident of the wooden horse by means of which the Greeks were able to trick the Trojans and gain an entry into Troy. According to the official story the original idea to build the horse was divinely inspired by Athene. It is said to have been built by Epeius who had brought thirty ships from Cyclades to Troy. They built a huge hollow horse out of fir planks which had a trapdoor fitted into one of the flanks. On the other flank was carved in large letters the following words: "In thankful anticipation of a faithful return to their homes, the Greeks dedicate this offering to the Goddess". A small contingent of the bravest Greeks led by Odysseus climbed up a rope ladder and ensconced themselves in the belly of the horse. At nightfall the rest of the Greek army led by Agamemnon set fire to their camp and they set sail as if they really were calling it quits and returning to Greece.

The following morning the Trojan scouts reported that the Greeks had departed leaving their camp in ashes and that they had left a huge wooden horse on the seashore. One of the Trojan leaders Priam rushed down to the seashore with several of his sons and they stood gazing at this horse in wonder along with many others. Thymoetes suggested: "Since this is a gift to Athene, I propose that we take it into Troy and haul it up to her citadel". Caphys did not agree: "No, no! Athene favored the Greeks too long; we must either burn it at once or break it open to see what the belly contains". Priam however took no heed of this warning. He declared: "Thymoetes is right. We will fetch it on rollers. Let nobody desecrate Athene's property".

After a tremendous amount of effort they managed to get the horse into Troy and up to Athene's citadel. It was so big they couldn't get it through the gates and they had to breach the city wall which they hurriedly repaired afterwards. Several voices were heard warning that there was something wrong here. Cassandra actually announced that the horse contained armed men and a seer named Laocoön cried out: "You fools, never trust a Greek even if he brings you gifts!" Whereupon he hurled his spear at it which got stuck quivering in the horse's flank. They heard the sound of weapons clashing together inside. Some of the onlookers cried: "Burn it!" "Hurl it over the walls!" But still Priam and his supporters wanted it to stay.

A Greek spy called Sinon arrived at this point with a story that he had been sentenced to be sacrificed to Athene to try to placate her, but then a favorable wind had sprung up and they had decided to return to Greece and assemble fresh forces. They left the placatory gift to Athene in the hope that they could return under better auspices. "Why was it built so big?" asked Priam who it seems was completely taken in by Sinon's story. Sinon had been well coached by Odysseus, and he replied: "To prevent you from bringing it into the city. Calchas foretells that if you despise this sacred image, Athene will ruin you; but once it enters Troy, you shall be empowered to marshal all the forces of Asia, invade Greece, and conquer

Mycenae". Still the naysayers were screaming that it was a trick, but these were evidently the sort of words that Priam and his supporters wanted to hear. It seems at this stage that a misfortune befell Lacoön and this was taken as a portent that he was being punished by Athene for having hurled his spear at the horse. This decided the matter. The Trojans proceeded to celebrate this wonderful gift and the whole city turned to feasting and merrymaking, much to the relief of the Greek soldiers inside the horse who had been trembling with fear while this prolonged debate was raging. This story is too well known for me to have to tell you how it ends. The moral of the story is that politicians, and the citizenry in general, will believe anything if you tell them what they want to hear. They will believe that black is white and that bad is good and that foolhardiness is reason. All they had to do was open up the horse and see what was inside, but they opted instead for the slogan: "It's better not to know than to know the truth".

Odysseus himself did not escape cosmic justice for all his misdeeds and he set sail from Troy in the sure knowledge that he must wander for another ten years and undergo many hardships and perils before he will regain his homeland of Ithaca. Not all his adventures were hardships. For instance he and his crew fell under the enchantment of the goddess Circe in the pleasant land of Aea and he sired three sons by her. His wanderings became even more mystical when he entered the land of Hades where the fog-bound Cimmerians, citizens of Perpetual Dusk, are denied all view of the sun. He was there in search of the seer Teiresias who would tell him what fate awaited him when he returned to Ithaca. Circe had provided him with a young ram and a black ewe which he had to sacrifice to Hades and Persephone and let the blood flow into a trench. He then had to await Teiresias who would come to drink the blood. Any other ghosts who tried to drink the blood he had to drive away. Eventually Teiresias showed up and told him that he could expect trouble in Ithaca and he would have to avenge himself of parasitic scoundrels, that his travels were not ended, he told him the appropriate sacrifices to make to Poseidon, and after all that he might eventually regain Ithaca and enjoy a prosperous old age but when death came to him it would be from the sea.

He eventually did get home assisted by the Phaeacians. By this time he had lost his own ship and everyone else on board had perished. He was actually delivered onto the island of Ithaca while he was fast asleep. Poseidon was so vexed that the Phaeacians had shown kindness to Odysseus that he struck the Phaeacian ship with the flat of his hand as it returned home, whereupon it sunk to the bottom of the sea taking the entire crew with it. As far as Poseidon (and Homer) were concerned Odysseus still had not received his just deserts.

The trials of Odysseus did not end with his homecoming either. His wife Penelope was being courted by no fewer than one hundred and twelve insolent young princes. Penelope it seems had remained faithful to him and she was just stringing them along resorting to various ruses to delay having to make a choice. Odysseus ended up killing most of them and hanging twelve of his maid-servants who had been cavorting with them. The families of some of these would-be suitors took legal action against him and he was sentenced to another ten years of exile. Poseidon it seems was still not placated and Odysseus had to make further sacrifices prescribed by Teiresias in order to receive his full forgiveness. That ten years was fruitful for him however because he married Callidice, Queen of the Thesprotians, and sired a son by her as well as commanding her armies in a miscellaneous war. When he eventually got back to Ithaca his wife Penelope was reigning in the name of their young son Poliporthis.

Death did come to him from the sea as Teiresias had foretold. His own son that he had sired by Circe, Telegonus, who had sailed in search of him, raided Ithaca mistakenly thinking it was the island of Corcyra. Odysseus sailed out to repel the attack. Telegonus killed him on the seashore using a spear head that was the spine of a sting-ray. Needless to say Telegonus then married Penelope and they lived happily ever after, although there must have been quite an age difference.

W.H. Auden explains the Homeric hero has the military virtues of courage, resourcefulness, magnanimity in victory, and dignity in defeat to an exceptional degree. His heroism is manifested in exceptional deeds which can be judged by others who are forced to admit "He achieved what he could have achieved". His motive is to win admiration and glory from his equals whether they are on his side or the enemy's. The code by which he lives is a code of honor which is not a universal requirement like law but an individual one, that which I require of myself and that which in view of my achievements I have a right to demand of others.

Clearly such a man is not answerable to the normal considerations of right and wrong. He is literally a law unto himself. We have seen in some of the Greek myths that the hero has been subjected to justice in the conventional sense of the word but they are the exception rather than the rule. As a general rule 'Might is Right' just as it is today in the current empire of the Judeo-Christian Military Industrial Complex. Also as W.H. Auden points out the assumption of the *Iliad* as of all early epics, which is so strange to us, is that war is the normal condition of mankind and peace an accidental breathing space. In the foreground are men locked in battle, killing or being killed, farther off their wives, children and servants waiting anxiously for the outcome, overhead, watching the spectacle with interest and at times interfering, the gods who know neither sorrow nor death, and around them all indifferent and unchanging, the natural world of sky and sea and earth. That is how things are; that is how they always have been and always will be. Consequently, there can be no moral or historical significance about the results of any conflict; it brings joy to the victor and sorrow to the vanquished but neither could imagine raising the question of justice.

W.H. Auden thought it a strange way of thinking for the early Greeks that war was the natural condition of mankind. The fact is however that they got it right. War continues to be the common condition of mankind especially in the modern era. The fact is that capitalist economies need to be in a state of war in order to maintain their prosperity. What has changed however is the war mentality. In ancient times war obviously involved a hands-on do-or-die total commitment from the army generals as well as the soldiers and there could be massive loss of life and much mourning and suffering for the families and dependents of the military personnel, but still the politicians or the kings who started the wars as a general rule put themselves in no personal danger, and the bulk of the citizenry went about their humdrum lives as per usual.

In the modern era, with the advances of technology, wars can be fought in far off distant places with insignificant casualties and loss of life for the aggressor countries. Nowadays countries can be in a permanent state of war and the politicians and the citizenry and even the army just go about their accustomed lives with complete indifference as to the rights or wrongs of it all. The economy remains prosperous because it does involve massive government contracts to the arms manufacturers for all the high-tech weapons etc, and as the civilians are not actually being called upon to go fight in the war there is very little public protest. So it must be said then that the human race has more or less turned a full circle and we are literally back with Homer's mentality of accepting war as the natural, and indeed the preferred, condition for mankind.

W.H. Auden tells us if one compares the *Iliad* with, for example, Shakespeare's *Henry IV* or Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, one sees that the modern writers are deeply concerned first with historical questions: "How did Henry IV or Napoleon come to power?" "What were the causes of the civil or international war?" and secondly with general moral questions: "What is the moral effect of war on human beings?" "What virtues and vices does it encourage as contrasted with those encouraged by peace?" "Irrespective of the individuals on both sides, did the defeat of Hotspur and Napoleon promote or retard the establishment of a Just Society?" These are questions which to Homer would seem meaningless. He does it is true, give a cause for the Trojan war, the Apple of Discord; but this is both a divine cause, i.e. outside human control,

and a frivolous cause, i.e. Homer does not take it seriously but uses it as a literary device for beginning his tale.

This enquiry I am making into cosmic justice is actually prompted by the second Iraq War in 2003 when the Bush Administration without proper cause attacked Iraq and deposed and executed the then ruler Saddam Hussein. I am writing this chapter fourteen years later, the war is still going on, the war has destabilized the entire Middle East region, and has directly led to the establishment of a new form of radical Islamic fighters called Islamic State that the West will never be able to defeat. Essentially this is a war that will go on forever and it has led to massive disruption and suffering to the people of the Middle East and an unstoppable flow of refugees into Europe. The surprising thing is how little criticism we hear of U.S. foreign policy that has virtually put the world on a permanent war footing. All the talk centers around how evil and fanatical the Islamic State is and how they must be defeated at all costs. There is no talk whatsoever of bringing the people who actually started this war to justice. The world has adopted an Homeric attitude to this war. Nobody cares how it started, the primary concern is that Islamic State are evil fanatics that must be stopped.

Then there is the Tragic Hero. W.H. Auden tells us that he suffers because he has come into collision, not with other individuals, but with the universal law of righteousness. As a rule, however, the actual violation of which he is guilty is not his own conscious choice in the sense that he could have avoided it. Ostensibly what happens to a tragic hero has more to do with Fate or Destiny rather than Justice in the sense of specifically being punished or encountering insuperable problems because of intentional wrongdoing. According to W.H. Auden however the fact that he finds himself in a tragic situation where he has sinned unwittingly or must sin against his will is a sign that he is guilty of another sin for which the gods hold him responsible, namely the sin of *hybris*, an overweening self-confidence which makes him believe that he, with all his *arete*, is a god who cannot be made to suffer.

There is also the Contemplative hero. Again according to W.H. Auden, the Ideal Man of Greek Epic is the strong individual; the Ideal Man of Greek Tragedy is the modest citizen with a reverence for the law of justice; the Ideal Man of Greek Philosophy has something in common with both men. "Like the latter he is one who keeps the Law but, like the former, he is an exceptional individual, not a member of the chorus, for to learn how to keep the Law has become a heroic task which is beyond the power of the average man. To the question "What is the cause of evil and suffering?" Homer can only answer, "I don't know. The caprice of the gods perhaps"; Tragedy answers, "The violation of the laws of righteousness and justice by arrogant strong men"; Philosophy answers, "Ignorance of what the Law is which leaves the minds of men at the mercy of their bodily passions".

W.H. Auden tells us that to the Greeks the essential difference between man and nature was that the former can reason if he wants to, whereas for us the essential difference is that man has a self, i.e. that he and, so far as we know, apart from God, he alone is conscious of existing, and this consciousness is his whether he wants it or not, whether he is intelligent or not. The Greeks therefore had no real conception of the will as distinct from desire, so that, though they had, of course, observed the psychological fact of temptation, that one can desire what one knows is wrong, they were at a loss as to how to explain it. The weakest point in Greek Ethics is its analysis of Choice. We will see when we get to the early Greek philosophers that all of life is about the conflict of opposites, such as Love vs Strife. For them this is inevitable and it is actually quite pointless to try to reason why this should be so. The point of cosmic justice is not so much that individuals or nations should get their just deserts on account of deliberate wrongdoing, but rather that the one should not be allowed to completely prevail over the other, the bad over the good for example. Cosmic justice is about restoring a harmony or equilibrium between the two opposing camps. The point being if life is a conflict of opposites then if one of those

opposing forces is able to completely dominate and overpower the other or totally defeat the other then the whole essence of life is lost.

The ancient Greeks were very clear that all the bad aspects of life as well as the good were directly implanted in us by the gods. In *Theogony* by Hesiod we read: And Night bare hateful Doom and black Fate and Death, and she bare Sleep and the tribe of Dreams. And again the goddess murky Night, though she lay with none, bare Blame and painful Woe, and the Hesperides who guard the rich, golden apples and the trees bearing fruit beyond glorious Ocean. Also she bare the Destinies and ruthless avenging Fates, Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos, who give men at their birth both evil and good to have, and they pursue the transgressions of men and of gods: and these goddesses never cease from their dread anger until they punish the sinner with a sore penalty. Also deadly Night bare Nemesis (Indignation) to afflict mortal men, and after her, Deceit and Friendship and hateful Age and hard-hearted Strife.

From *Oedipus Tyrannus* by Sophocles:

Rooted in pride, the tyrant grows;
But pride that with its own too much
Is rashly surfeited,
Heeding not the prudent mean,
Down the inevitable gulf
From its high pinnacle is hurled,
Where use of foothold there is none.
But, O kind gods, the noble strength,
That struggles for the city's good,
Unbend not yet:
In the gods have I put my trust – I will not fear.

It seems that Heraclitus was the first to specifically formulate the conflict of the opposites as a philosophy of the meaning of life:

(29) The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out.

(36) God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as oil, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the savor of each.

(43) Homer was wrong in saying: "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!" He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe; for if his prayer were heard, all things would pass away...

(44) War is the father of all and the king of all; and some he has made gods and some men, some bond and some free.

(45) Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and lyre.

(57) Good and ill are one.

(59) Couples are things whole and things not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one.

(60) Men would not have known the name of Justice if these things were not.

(61) To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right.

(62) We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife.

(69) The way up and the way down is one and the same.

(104) It is not good for men to get all they wish to get. It is sickness that makes health pleasant; evil, good; hunger, plenty; weariness, rest.

(112) In Priene lived Bias, son of Teutamus, who is of more account than the rest. (He said, "Most men are bad".)

According to Empedocles life is a contest between Love and Strife.

I shall tell thee a twofold tale. At one time it grew to be one only out of many; at another, it divided up to be many instead of one. There is a double becoming of perishable things and a double passing away. The coming together of all things brings one generation into being and destroys it; the other grows up and is scattered as things become divided. And these things never cease continually changing places, at one time all uniting in one through Love, at another each borne in different directions by the repulsion of Strife. Thus, as far as it is their nature to grow into one out of many, and to become many once more when the one is parted asunder, so far they come into being and their life abides not. But, inasmuch as they never cease changing their places continually, so far they are ever immovable as they go round the circle of existence.

This (the contest of Love and Strife) is manifest in the mass of mortal limbs. At one time all the limbs that are the body's portion are brought together by Love in blooming life's high season; at another, severed by cruel Strife, they wander each alone by the breakers of life's sea. It is the same with plants and the fish that make their home in the waters, with the beasts that have their lairs on the hills and the seabirds that sail on wings.

Aristotle discusses Empedocles in his *Metaphysics*:

Empedocles also has a paradoxical view; for he identifies the good with love, but this is a principle both as mover (for it brings things together) and as matter (for it is part of the mixture). Now even if it happens that the same thing is principle both as matter and as mover, still the being, at least, of the two is not the same. In which respect then is love a principle? It is paradoxical also that strife should be imperishable; the nature of his “evil” is just strife.

Anaxagoras makes the good a motive principle; for his “reason” moves things. But it moves them for an end, which must be something other than it, except according to *our* way of stating the case; for, on our view, the medical art is in a sense health. It is paradoxical also not to suppose a contrary to good, i.e. to reason. But all who speak of the contraries make no use of the contraries, unless we bring their views into shape.

Again, in the list of contraries one of the two columns is privative, and all contraries are reducible to being and non-being, and to unity and plurality, as for instance rest belongs to unity and movement to plurality. And nearly all thinkers agree that being and substance are composed of contraries; at least all name contraries as their first principles – some name odd and even, some hot and cold, some limit and the unlimited, some love and strife. And all the others as well are evidently reducible to unity and plurality (this reduction we must take for granted), and the principles stated by other thinkers fall entirely under these as their genera. It is obvious then from these considerations too that it belongs to one science to examine being qua being. For all things are either contraries or composed of contraries, and unity and plurality are the starting-points of all contraries.

According to Epictetus with life being a perpetual contest between opposing forces then the goal or meaning of life is to strive towards harmony:

When you are about to take something in hand, remember yourself what manner of thing it is. If you are going to bathe put before your mind what happens in the bath – water pouring over some, others being jostled, some reviling, others stealing; and you will set to work more securely if you say to yourself at once: “I want to bathe, and I want to keep my will in harmony with nature”, and so in each thing you do; for in this way, if anything turns up to hinder your bathing, you will be ready to say, “I did not want only to bathe, but to keep my will in harmony with nature, and I shall not so keep it, if I lose my temper at what happens”.

There is also the fable by Aesop about “The Goods and the Ills”:

All the *Goods* were once driven out by the *Ills* from that common share which they each had in the affairs of mankind; for the *Ills* by reason of their numbers had prevailed to possess the earth. The *Goods* wafted themselves to heaven, and asked for a righteous vengeance on their persecutors. They entreated Zeus that they might no longer be associated with the *Ills*, as they had nothing in common and could not live together, but were engaged in unceasing warfare, and that an indissoluble law might be laid down for their future protection. Zeus granted their request, and decreed that henceforth the *Ills* should visit the earth in company with each other, but that the *Goods* should one by one enter the habitations of men. Hence it arises that *Ills* abound, for they come not one by one, but in troops, and by no means singly: while the *Goods* proceed from Zeus, and are given not alike to all, but singly, and separately; and by one to those who are able to discern them.

Thucydides wrote a piece about The Sicilian Expedition which was in the nature of a dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians which essentially is a reasoned argument about the pointlessness of war:

The Athenians next made an expedition against the island of Melos with thirty ships of their own, six Chian, and two Lesbian, 1,200 hoplites and 300 archers besides twenty mounted archers of their own, and about 1,500 hoplites furnished by their allies in the islands. The Melians are colonists of the Lacedaemonians who would not submit to Athens like the other islanders. At first they were neutral and took no part. But when the Athenians tried to coerce them by ravaging their lands, they were driven into open hostilities. The generals, Cleomedes the son of Lycomedes and Tisias the son of Tisimachus, encamped with the Athenian forces on the island. But before they did the country any harm they sent envoys to negotiate with the Melians. Instead of bringing these envoys before the people, the Melians desired them to explain their errand to the magistrates and the chief men. They spoke as follows;

Athenians: Well, then, we Athenians will use no fine words; we will not go out of our way to prove at length that we have a right to rule, because we overthrew the Persians; or that we attack you now because we are suffering any injury at your hands. We should not convince you if we did; nor must you expect to convince us by arguing that, although a colony of the Lacedaemonians, you have taken no part in their expeditions, or that you have never done us any wrong. But you and we should say what we really think, and aim only at what is possible, for we both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where the pressure of necessity is equal, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must.

Melians: But must we be your enemies? Will you not receive us as friends if we are neutral and remain at peace with you? ...How base and cowardly would it be in us, who retain our freedom, not to do and suffer anything rather than be your slaves.

Athenians: Not so, if you calmly reflect: for you are not fighting against equals to whom you cannot yield without disgrace, but you are taking counsel whether or no you shall resist an overwhelming force. The question is not one of honor but of prudence.

Melians: We know only too well how hard the struggle must be against your power, and against fortune, if she does not mean to be impartial. Nevertheless we do not despair of fortune; for we hope to stand as high as you in the favor of heaven, because we are righteous, and you against whom we contend are unrighteous; and we are satisfied that our deficiency in power will be compensated by the aid of our allies the Lacedaemonians; they cannot refuse to help us, if only because we are their kinsmen, and for the sake of their own honor.

Athenians: As for the gods, we expect to have quite as much of their favor as you: for we are not doing or claiming anything which goes beyond common opinion about divine or men's desires about human things... The Lacedaemonians are exceedingly virtuous among themselves, and according to their national standard of morality. But, in respect of their dealings with others, although many things might be said, a word is enough to describe them, of all men whom we know they are the most notorious for identifying what is pleasant with what is honorable, and what is expedient with what is just. But how inconsistent is such a character with your present blind hope of deliverance!

The Athenians commenced hostilities and surrounded the town of Melos. The Melians had some early successes but after a prolonged campaign that must have lasted almost a year the Athenians sent in fresh troops and the town of Melos was now closely invested. There was also treachery amongst the citizens of Melos themselves. "So the Melians were induced to surrender at discretion. The Athenians thereupon put to death all who were of military age, and made slaves of the women and children. They then colonized the island, sending thither 500 settlers of their own".

Around the same time the Athenians conceived the idea of sending a larger expedition to conquer the whole island of Sicily. Thucydides tells us that they never reflected that they were entering on a struggle almost as arduous as the Peloponnesian War. "They virtuously professed that they were going to the aid of their own kinsmen and their newly acquired allies, but the simple truth was that they aspired to the empire of Sicily".

"Nicias, who had been appointed general against his will, thought that the people had come to a wrong conclusion, and that upon slight and flimsy grounds they were aspiring to the conquest of Sicily, which was no easy task. So, being desirous of diverting the Athenians from their purpose, he came forward and admonished them in the following terms:

I know that we are assembled here to discuss the preparations which are required for our expedition to Sicily, but in my judgment it is still a question whether we ought to go thither at all; we should not be hasty in determining a matter of so much importance, or allow ourselves to rush into an impolitic war at the instigation of foreigners. Yet to me personally war brings honor; and I am as careless as any man about my own life; not that I think worse of a citizen who takes a little thought about his life or his property, for I believe that the sense of a man's own interest will quicken his interest in the prosperity of the state. But I have never been induced by the love of reputation to say a single word contrary to what I thought; neither will I now: I will say simply what I believe to be best. If I told you to take care of what you have and not to throw away present advantages in order to gain an uncertain and distant good, my words would be powerless against a temper like yours. I would rather argue that this is not the time and that your great aims will not be easily realized.

"The most enthusiastic supporter of the expedition was Alcibiades the son of Cleinias; he was determined to oppose Nicias, who was always his political enemy and had just now spoken of him in disparaging terms; but the desire to command was even a stronger motive with him. He was hoping that he might be the conqueror of Sicily and Carthage; and that success would repair his private fortunes, and gain him money as well as glory. He had a great position among the citizens and was devoted to horse-racing and other pleasures which outran his means. And in the end his wild courses went far to ruin the Athenian state. For the people feared the extremes to which he carried his lawless self-indulgence, and the far-reaching purposes which animated him in all his actions. They thought that he was aiming at a tyranny and set themselves against him. And therefore, although his talents as a military commander were unrivalled, they entrusted the administration of the war to others, because they personally objected to his private life; and so they speedily shipwrecked the state. He now came forward and spoke as follows:

I have a better right to command, men of Athens, than another; for as Nicias has attacked me, I must begin by praising myself; and I consider that I am worthy. Those doings of mine for which I am so much cried out against are an honor to myself and to my ancestors, and a solid advantage to my country. In consequence of the distinguished manner in which I represented the state at Olympia, the other Hellenes formed an idea of our power which even succeeded the reality, although they had previously imagined that we were exhausted by war.

He who would have proper respect shown to him should himself show it towards others. I know that men of this lofty spirit, and all who have been in any way illustrious, are hated while they are alive, by their equals especially, and in a lesser degree by others who have to do with them; but that they leave behind them to after-ages a reputation which leads even those who are not of their family to claim kindred with them, and that they are the glory of their country, which regards them, not as aliens or as evildoers, but as her own children, of whose character she is proud. These are my own aspirations...

Like all other imperial powers, we have acquired our dominion by our readiness to assist anyone, whether barbarian or Hellene, who may have invoked our aid. If we are all to sit and do nothing, or to draw distinctions of race when our help is requested, we shall add little to our empire, and run a risk of losing it altogether. For mankind do not await the attack of a superior power, they anticipate it. We cannot cut down an empire as we might a household; but having once gained our present position, we must keep a firm hold upon same, and contrive occasion against others; for if we are not rulers we shall be subjects.

The state, if at rest, like everything else will wear herself out by internal friction. Every pursuit which requires skill will bear the impress of decay, whereas by conflict fresh experience is always being gained, and the city learns to defend herself, not in theory, but in practice. My opinion in short is, that a state used to activity will quickly be ruined by the change to inaction; and that they of all men enjoy the greatest security who are truest to themselves and their institutions even when they are not the best.

“All alike were seized with a passionate desire to sail, the elder among them convinced that they would achieve the conquest of Sicily, at any rate such an armament could suffer no disaster; the youth were longing to see with their own eyes the marvels of a distant land, and were confident of a safe return; the main body of the troops expected to receive present pay, and to conquer a country which would be an inexhaustible mine of pay for the future. The enthusiasm of the majority was so overwhelming that, although some disapproved, they were afraid of being thought unpatriotic if they voted on the other side, and therefore held their peace...”

Thucydides sums up the outcome of this campaign: “Those who were imprisoned in the quarries were at the beginning of their captivity harshly treated by the Syracusans. There were great numbers of them, and they were crowded in a deep and narrow place. At first the sun by day was still scorching and suffocating, for they had no roof over their heads, while the autumn nights were cold, and the extremes of temperature engendered violent disorders. Being cramped for room they had to do everything on the spot. The corpses of those who died from their wounds, exposure to the weather and the like, lay heaped upon one another. The smells were intolerable; and they were at the same time inflicted by hunger and thirst. During eight months they were allowed only about half a pint of water and a pint of food a day. Every kind of misery which could befall them in such a place befell them. This was the condition of all the captives for about ten weeks. At length the Syracusans sold them, with the exception of the Athenians and of any Sicilian or Italian Greeks who had sided with them in the war. The whole number of the public prisoners is not accurately known, but they were not less than 7,000.”

“Of all the Hellenic actions which took place in the war, or indeed of all Hellenic actions which are on record, this was the greatest – the most glorious to the victors, the most ruinous to the vanquished; for they were utterly and at all points defeated, and their sufferings were prodigious. Fleet and army perished from the face of the earth; nothing was saved, and of the many who went forth few returned home. Thus ended the Sicilian expedition”.

It would seem that the Athenians got themselves a dose of cosmic justice here.

This chapter was written after the Presidential election in the U.S. in 2016 when Donald Trump became the 45th President nominated ostensibly by the Republican Party and the Republicans now control both houses of Congress. In addition the U.S. Supreme Court is likely to become in this term heavily biased in favor of the Right. At the time of writing there are eight Justices on the Bench and they are evenly split between Right and Left. Trump has just announced the ninth member of the Court to replace Justice Scalia who died about a year ago. This will make the split 5-4 in favor of the Right and the two Left leaning Justices are very old and are likely to die while Trump is in office. This will make the split 7-2 in favor of the Right. In this theory of the contest of opposing forces as being the essence of life then obviously the dichotomy between Right and Left are classic opposing forces in the political sphere. Not only in the United States but in many other western countries as well the Right is completely dominating. So if this theory that one of the opposing forces can never be allowed to completely dominate the other is correct then we are soon to see Right encountering problems or obstacles that will restore the equilibrium. One can only hope...

THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The subtitle of William James's book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is *A Study in Human Nature* and this is why I have chosen to use the title of James's book as the title of this chapter. James writes primarily from the point of view of an American brought up in a Christian society, and although he himself was not a believer, and his father was a follower of Swedenborg, he still bases most of his illustrations of the religious sentiment on the traditional Christian experience. Christianity is arguably the most successful religion that human civilization has produced, and therefore we must assume that the reason for this is that in some way the genius of the Christian religion has somehow managed to resonate in the human condition at a more profound level, and to have a more intense and immediate appeal to human nature. Why should this be so? The answer lies in the essential logos of the Christian religion which is the image of a man being crucified, that is to say of a man nailed to a cross and slowly dying in what can only be the most intense and excruciating agony imaginable. Compare this with the logos of the Jewish religion for example which is the image of a candelabra or a star of David, or the logos of the Buddhist religion which is an image of a man (the Buddha) sitting cross-legged meditating in a state of complete contentment and serenity, or the logos of the Hindu religion which is Shiva engaged in a wild dance, or the logos of the ancient Greek religion which is Dionysus engaged in a drunken orgy and so it goes on. The Buddhists of course emphasized the suffering in the human condition, but their logos shows a man who was literally able to rise above it and achieve a blissful state of nirvana. Dionysus was able to rise above the suffering in the human condition by drinking himself into a drunken stupor. It is only Jesus Christ who had to succumb to the suffering and indeed take the burden of all the suffering of all of humanity onto his own shoulders in such a way as to enable the individual sufferers to symbolically and mentally shift their pain onto him.

But this can't be right you will say. The Jews have suffered much more than the Christians over the millennia even if their logos is much more benign. They have known infinitely more suffering in the pogroms at the hands of the Christians and the massacres by the Muslims and of course in recent times the holocaust in Nazi Germany. This however is a different kind of suffering. This is due to the suffering from man's inhumanity to man. The type of suffering I am talking about is due to the simple fact of just being human and living in the physical world and being a digit in human civilization. This is the suffering that is at the core of all living human beings which is due to the simple fact of being alive in an imperfect world. Mind you, the man's inhumanity to man type of suffering is a direct result of the more profound unhappiness and anguish that we all experience. The normal way that human beings alleviate their own profoundly internal suffering is to direct their anger at other nations or races. Christians of course have done plenty of that over the millenia, but they have also had this additional scapegoat of pinning the guilt for their hostility on their logo, Jesus Christ. It's alright that they feel all this pent up anger and hatred and pain and anguish because the immense suffering that Jesus Christ endured has washed their guilt away and wiped the slate clean for them. The fact that the Jews have endured so much of the man's inhumanity to man type of suffering has given them a different sort of strength. For them the scapegoat upon which they can dump all their hatred and pent up anger and not feel guilty about it is the non-Jews who have persecuted them. This gives them a tendency to club together and seek material security as a priority.

William James regarded the need for religion to be more or less universal, because it was based on universal needs: "we are all *potentially* sick men," and need saving or rescue. He stated his own religious experience thus:

My personal position is simple. I have no living sense of commerce with a God. I envy those who have, for I know that the addition of such a sense would help me greatly. The Divine, for my active life, is limited to impersonal and abstract concepts which, as ideals, interest and determine me, but do so but faintly in comparison with what a feeling of God might effect if I had one. Yet if I am devoid of a sense of God in the directer and stronger sense, yet there is *something in me* which *makes response* when I hear utterances from that quarter made by others. I recognize the deeper voice. Something tells me: -'thither lies the truth'- and I am sure it is not old theistic prejudices of infancy. Those in my case were Christian, but I have grown so out of Christianity that entanglement therewith on the part of a mystical utterance has to be abstracted from and overcome, before I can listen. Call this, if you like, my mystical *germ*. It is a very common germ. It creates the rank and file of believers. As it withstands in my case, so it will withstand in most cases, all purely atheistic criticism.

James starts out by attempting to define religion:

It would strain the ordinary use of language too much to call such attitudes religious, even though, from the point of view of an unbiased critical philosophy, they might conceivably be perfectly reasonable ways of looking upon life. Voltaire, for example, writes thus to a friend, at the age of seventy-three: "As for myself," he says, "weak as I am, I carry on the war to the last moment, I get a hundred pike-thrusts, I return two hundred, and I laugh. I see near my door Geneva on fire with quarrels over nothing, and I laugh again; and, thank God, I can look upon the world as a farce even when it becomes as tragic as it sometimes does. All comes out even at the end of the day, and all comes out still more even when all the days are over." [Note: Compare the attitude of the ancient Greeks. This attitude of Voltaire, may be taken as classic for all atheists everywhere. The best way to overcome all the pain, misery and suffering in the world is to regard it as a farce. An anti-religious spirit is still a religious spirit. It is just an alternative way to deal with the torment.]

Much as we may admire such a robust old gamecock spirit in a valetudinarian, to call it a religious spirit would be odd. Yet it is for the moment Voltaire's reaction on the whole of life. *Je m'en fiche* is the vulgar French equivalent for our English ejaculation 'Who cares?' And the happy term *je m'en fichism* recently has been invented to designate the systematic determination not to take anything in life too solemnly. 'All is vanity' is the relieving word in all difficult crises for this mode of thought, which that exquisite literary genius Renan took pleasure. In his later days of sweet decay, in putting into coquettishly sacrilegious forms which remain to us as excellent expressions of the 'all is vanity' state of mind. Take the following passage, for example, - we must hold to duty, even against the evidence, Renan says, - but he then goes on:-

"There are many chances that the world may be nothing but a fairy pantomime of which no God has care. We must therefore arrange ourselves so that on neither hypothesis we shall be completely wrong. We must listen to the superior voices, but in such a way that if the second hypothesis were true we should not have been completely

duped. If in effect the world be not a serious thing, it is the dogmatic people who will be the shallow ones, and the worldly minded whom the theologians now call frivolous will be those who are really wise."

"In utrumque paratus, then. Be ready for anything – that perhaps is wisdom. Give ourselves up, according to the hour, to confidence, to skepticism, to optimism, to irony, and we may be sure that at certain moments at least we shall be with the truth... Good-humour is a philosophi state of mind; it seems to say to Nature that we take her no more seriously than she takes us. I maintain that one should always talk of philosophy with a smile. We owe it to the Eternal to be virtuous; but we have the right to add to this tribute our irony as a sort of personal reprisal. In this way we return to the right quarter jest for jest; we play the trick that has been played on us. Saint Augustine's phrase: *Lord, if we are deceived, it is by thee!* remains a fine one, well suited to our modern feeling. Only we wish the Eternal to know that if we accept the fraud, we accept it knowingly and willingly. We are resigned in advance to losing the interest on our investments of virtue, but we wish not to appear ridiculous by having counted on them too securely."

Surely all the usual associations of the word 'religion' would have to be stripped away if such a systematic *parti pris* of irony were also to be denoted by the name. For common men 'religion,' whatever more special meaning it may have, signifies always a *serious* state of mind. If any one phrase could gather its universal message, that phrase would be, 'All is *not* vanity in the Universe, whatever the appearances may suggest.' If it can stop anything, religion as commonly apprehended can stop such chaffing talk as Renan's. It favors gravity, not pertness; it says 'hush' to all vain chatter and smart wit.

But if hostile to light irony, religion is equally hostile to heavy grumbling and complaint. The world appears tragic enough in some religions, but the tragedy is realized as purging, and a way of deliverance is held to exist. We shall see enough of the religious melancholy in a future lecture; but melancholy, according to our ordinary use of language, forfeits all title to be called religious when, in Marcus Aurelius's racy words, the sufferer simply lies kicking and screaming after the fashion of a sacrificed pig. The mood of a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche, - and in a less degree one may sometimes say the same of our own sad Carlyle, - though often an ennobling sadness, is almost as often only peevishness running away with the bit between its teeth. The sallies of the two German authors remind one, half the time, of the sick shriekings of two dying rats. They lack the purgatorial tone which religious sadness gives forth. [Note: Schopenhauer truly felt the essential suffering which is the essence of the human condition and felt the need to call it exactly for what it was, but he also relied heavily on the sentiments expressed in the Upanishads and the Buddhist religion in order to try to find some higher significance for this suffering. I think James is a bit unjust in describing Schopenhauer's pessimism as the shriekings of a dying rat.]

Here, for example, is the total reaction upon life of Frederick Locker Lampson, whose autobiography, entitled 'Confidences,' proves him to have been a most amiable man.

"I am so far resigned to my lot that I feel small pain at the thought of having to part from what has been called the pleasant habit of existence, the sweet fable of life. I would not care to live my wasted life over again, and so to prolong my span. Strange to say, I have but little wish to be younger. I submit with a chill at my heart. I humbly submit

because it is the Divine Will, and my appointed destiny. I dread the increase of infirmities that will make me a burden to those around me, those dear to me. No! let me slip away as quietly and comfortably as I can. Let the end come, if peace come with it.”

“I do not know that there is a great deal to be said for this world, or our sojourn here upon it; but it has pleased God so to place us, and it must please me also. I ask you, what is human life? Is not it a maimed happiness – care and weariness, weariness and care, with the baseless expectation, the strange cozenage of a brighter tomorrow? At best it is but a froward child, that must be played with and humored, to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.”

It was the extremer cases that I had in mind a little while ago when I said that personal religion, even without theology or ritual, would prove to embody some elements that morality pure and simple does not contain. You may remember that I promised shortly to point out what those elements were. In a general way I can now say what I had in mind.

“I accept the universe” is reported to have been a favorite utterance of our New England transcendentalist, Margaret Fuller; and when someone repeated this phrase to Thomas Carlyle, his sardonic comment is said to have been: “Gad! She’d better!” At bottom the whole concern of both morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe. Do we accept it only in part and grudgingly, or heartily and altogether? Shall our protests against certain things in it be radical and unforgiving, or shall we think that, even with evil, there are ways of living that must lead to good? If we accept the whole, shall we do so as if stunned into submission, - as Carlyle would have us – “Gad! we’d better!” – or shall we do so with enthusiastic assent? Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey it with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and fully developed manifestations, the service of the highest never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place.

It makes a tremendous emotional difference to one whether one accept the universe in the drab discolored way of stoic resignation to necessity, or with the passionate happiness of Christian saints. The difference is as great as that between passivity and activity, as that between the defensive and the aggressive mood. Gradual as are the steps by which an individual may grow from one state into the other, many as are the intermediate stages which different individuals represent, yet when you place the typical extremes beside each other for comparison, you feel that two discontinuous psychological universes confront you, and that in passing from one to the other a ‘critical point’ has been overcome.

If we compare stoic with Christian ejaculations we see much more than a difference of doctrine; rather is it a difference of emotional mood that parts them. When Marcus Aurelius reflects on the eternal reason that has ordered things, there is a frosty chill about his words which you rarely find in a Jewish and never in a Christian piece of religious writing. The universe is ‘accepted’ by all these writers; but how devoid of passion or exultation the spirit of the Roman Emperor is! Compare his fine sentence: “If gods care

not for me or my children, here is a reason for it," with Job's cry: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!" and you immediately see the difference I mean. The *anima mundi*, to whose disposal of his own personal destiny the Stoic consents, is there to be respected and submitted to, but the Christian God is there to be loved; and the difference of emotional atmosphere is like that between the arctic climate and the tropics, though the outcome in the way of accepting actual conditions uncomplainingly may seem in abstract terms to be much the same.

"It's a man's duty," says Marcus Aurelius, "to comfort himself and wait for the natural dissolution, and not to be vexed, but to find refreshment solely in these thoughts – first that nothing will happen to me which is not conformable to the nature of the universe; and secondly that I need do nothing contrary to the God and deity within me; for there is no man who can compel me to transgress. He is an abscess on the universe who withdraws and separates himself from the reason of our common nature, through being displeased with the things which happen. For the same nature produces these, and has produced thee too. And so accept everything which happens, even if it seem disagreeable, because it leads to this, the health of the universe and to the prosperity and felicity of Zeus. For he would not have brought on any man what he has brought, if it were not useful for the whole. The integrity of the whole is mutilated if thou cuttest off anything. And thou dost cut off, as far as it is in thy power, when thou art dissatisfied, and in a manner triest to put anything out of the way."

Compare now this mood with that of the old Christian author of the *Theologica Germanica*:-

"Where men are enlightened with the true light, they renounce all desire and choice, and commit and commend themselves and all things to the eternal Goodness, so that every enlightened man could say: 'I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man.' Such men are in a state of freedom, because they have lost the fear of pain or hell, and the hope of reward or heaven, and are living in a pure submission to the eternal Goodness, in the perfect freedom of fervent love. When a man truly perceiveth and considereth himself, who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked and unworthy, he falleth into such a deep abasement that it seemeth to him reasonable that all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him. And therefore he will not and dare not desire any consolation and release; but he is willing to be unconsolated and unreleased; and he doth not grieve over his sufferings, for they are right in his eyes, and he hath nothing to say against them. This is what is meant by true repentance for sin; and he who in this present time entereth in this hell, but He is laying his hand upon him, that the man may not desire nor regard anything but the eternal Good only. And then, when the man neither careth for nor desireth anything but the eternal Good alone, and seeketh not himself nor his own things, but the honour of God only, he is made a partaker of all manner of joy, bliss, peace, rest, and consolation, and so the man is henceforth in the kingdom of heaven. This hell and this heaven are two good safe ways for a man, and happy us he who truly findeth them." [Note: Literally life is a living hell, and the only way for salvation, literally to be saved from the hell, is thru God.]

How much more active and positive the impulse of the Christian writer to accept his place in the universe is! Marcus Aurelius agrees to the scheme – the German theologian

agrees *with* it. He literally *abounds* in agreement, he runs out to embrace the divine decrees.

Occasionally, it is true, the Stoic rises to something like a Christian warmth of sentiment, as in the often quoted passage of Marcus Aurelius:-

“Everything harmonizes with me which is harmonious to thee, O universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too late, which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature: from thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. The poet says, Dear City of Cecrops; and wilt not say, Dear City of Zeus?”

But compare even as devout a passage as this with a genuine Christian outpouring, and it seems a little cold. Turn, for instance, to the Imitation of Christ:-

“Lord, thou knowest what is best; let this or that be according as thou wilt. Give what thou wilt, as much as thou wilt, when thou wilt. Do with me as thou knowest best, and as shall be most to thine honour. Place me where thou wilt, and freely work thy will with me in all things... When could it be evil when thou wert near? I had rather be poor for thy sake than rich without thee. I choose rather to be a pilgrim upon the earth with thee, than without thee to possess heaven. Where thou art, there is heaven; and where thou art not, behold there death and hell.”

James adds as a footnote: Compare Mary Moody Emerson: “Let me be a blot on this fair world, the obscurest, the loneliest sufferer, with one proviso, - that I know it is His agency. I will love Him though He shed frost and darkness on every way of mine.”

The Christian also spurns the pinched and mumping sick-room attitude, and the lives of saints are full of a kind of callousness to diseased conditions of body which probably no other human records show. But whereas the merely moralistic spurning takes an effort of volition, the Christian spurning is the result of the excitement of a higher kind of emotion, in the presence of which no exception of volition is required. The moralist must hold his breath and keep his muscles tense; and so long as this athletic attitude is possible all goes well – morality suffices. But the athletic attitude tends ever to break down, and it inevitably does break down even in the most stalwart when the organism begins to decay, or when morbid fears invade the mind. To suggest personal will and effort to one all sicklied o’er with the sense of irremediable impotence is to suggest the most impossible of things. What he craves is to be consoled in his very powerlessness, to feel that the spirit of the universe recognizes and secures him, all decaying and failing as he is. Well, we are all such helpless failures in the last resort. The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down. And whenever we feel this, such a sense of vanity and provisionality of our voluntary career comes over us that all our morality appears but as a plaster hiding a sore it can never cure, and all our well-doing as the hollowest substitute for that *well-being* that our lives ought to be grounded in.

And here religion comes to our rescue and takes our fate into her hands. There is a state of mind, known to religious men, but to no others, in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God. In this state of mind, what we most dreaded has become the habitation of our safety, and the hour of our moral death has

turned into our spiritual birthday. The time for tension is our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, of calm deep breathing, of an eternal present, with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived. Fear is not held in abeyance as it is by mere morality, it is positively expunged and washed away.

We shall see abundant examples of this happy state of mind. We shall see how infinitely passionate a thing religion at its highest flights can be. Like love, like wrath, like hope, ambition, jealousy, like every other instinctive eagerness and impulse, it adds to life an enchantment which is not rationally or logically deducible from anything else. This enchantment, coming as a gift when it does come, - a gift of our organism, the physiologists will tell us, a gift of God's grace, the theologians say, - is either there or not there for us, and there are persons who can no more become possessed by it than they can fall in love with a given woman by mere word of command. Religious feeling is thus an absolute addition to the Subject's range of life. It gives him a new sphere of power. When the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste. [Note: The word power is important here. The craving for power stems from the total feeling of annihilation that we feel at birth. Through religion we can obtain an internal power over ourselves which enables us overcome our feelings of inadequacy and alienation in a tasteless and hostile world, and we get a feeling of power and authority over the external world by being a member of a Church that has influence socially and politically. An institution which attempts to impose its dogma on others.]

If religion is to mean anything definite for us, it seems to me that we ought to take it as meaning this added dimension of emotion, this enthusiastic temper of espousal, in regions where morality strictly so called can at best but bow its head in acquiescence. It ought to mean nothing short of this new reach of freedom for us, with the struggle over, the keynote of the universe sounding in our ears, and everlasting possession spread before our eyes.

Once more, there are plenty of men, constitutionally somber men, in whose religious life this raptureousness is lacking. They are religious in the wider sense; yet in this acutest of all senses they are not so, and it is religion in the acutest sense that I wish, without disputing about words, to study first, so as to get at its typical *differentia*. [Note: Where they attain an artificial joy that they don't get from life.]

This sort of happiness in the absolute and everlasting is what we find nowhere but in religion. It is parted off from all mere animal happiness, all mere enjoyment of the present, by that element of solemnity of which I have already made so much account. Solemnity is a hard thing to define abstractly, but certain of its marks are patent enough. A solemn state of mind is never crude or simple - it seems to contain a certain measure of its own opposite in solution. A solemn joy preserves a sort of bitter in its sweetness; a solemn sorrow is one to which we intimately consent. But there are writers who, realizing that happiness of a supreme sort is the prerogative of religion, forget this complication, and call all happiness, as such, religious. Mr. Havelock Ellis, for example, identifies religion with the entire field of the soul's liberation from oppressive moods.

"The simplest functions of physiological life," he writes, "may be its ministers. Every one who is at all acquainted with the Persian mystics knows how wine may be regarded

as an instrument of religion. Indeed, in all countries and in all ages, some form of physical enlargement – singing, dancing, drinking, sexual excitement – has been intimately associated with worship. Even the momentary expansion of the soul in laughter is, to however slight an extent, a religious exercise... Whenever an impulse from the world strikes against the organism, and the resultant is not discomfort or pain, not even the muscular contraction of strenuous manhood, but a joyous expansion or aspiration of the whole soul – there is religion. It is the infinite for which we hunger, and we ride it gladly on every little wave that promises to bear us towards it." [Note: It is not the infinite for which we hunger, on the contrary the feeling that we hunger for is very finite; it is the sensual bliss that we experienced during the first nine months of our life prior to birth. Havelock Ellis is absolutely correct that every activity that recalls to us some of that blissful state that we enjoyed prior to birth may be considered a compensation for the trauma of birth and therefore a religious experience. In the human condition we are literally clutching at straws.]

But such a straight identification of religion with any and every form of happiness leaves the essential peculiarity of religious happiness out. The more commonplace happiness which we get are 'reliefs,' occasioned by our momentary escapes from evils either experienced or threatened. But in its most characteristic embodiments, religious happiness is no mere feeling of escape. It cares no longer to escape. It consents to the evil outwardly as a form of sacrifice – inwardly it knows it to be permanently overcome. If you ask *how* religion thus falls on the thorns and faces death, and in the very act annuls annihilation, I cannot explain the matter, for it is a religion's secret, and to understand it you must yourself have been a religious man of the extremer type. In our future examples, even of the simplest type and healthiest-minded type of religious consciousness, we shall find this complex sacrificial constitution, in which a higher happiness holds a lower unhappiness in check. [Note: The German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing introduced the terms "Sadism" and "Masochism" into medical terminology in his work *Neue Forschungen auf dem Gebiet der Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1890. In 1905, Sigmund Freud described sadism and masochism in his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* ("Three papers on Sexual Theory") as stemming from aberrant psychological development from early childhood. William James gave these lectures in 1901 and 1902 so he would not have been aware of the masochistic complex. Had he been aware of it he would most certainly have recognized that this 'complex sacrificial constitution' that is at the core of the religious consciousness is none other than de-sexualized masochism. Sadomasochism in all its permutations and combinations is the primary complex that arises in all of us from the trauma of birth. It is a natural compensatory reflex either to seek to derive pleasure from our own pain, or to derive pleasure from inflicting pain on others as an outlet for our hatred for the world and everyone in it.]

In the Louvre there is a picture, by Guido Reni, of St. Michael with his foot on Satan's neck. The richness of the picture is in large part due to the fiend's figure being there. The richness of its allegorical meaning also is due to his being there – that is, the world is all the richer for having a devil in it, *so long as we keep our foot upon his neck*. In the religious consciousness, that is just the position in which the fiend, the negative or tragic principle, is found; and for that very reason the religious consciousness is so rich from the emotional point of view. [Note: The devil is of course the personification of our sadomasochistic tendencies. This is the essential genius of the Christian religion that it has managed to

come up logos that depict so perfectly the sadomasochistic complex – the Christ suffering on the cross for all eternity, and the devil upon whose neck we must permanently keep our foot. The Christian religion is essentially a pantomime of the human condition.]

We shall see how in certain men and women it takes on a monstrously ascetic form. There are saints who have literally fed on the negative principle, on humiliation and privation, and the thought of suffering and death, - their souls growing in happiness just in proportion as their outward state grew more intolerable. No other emotion than religious emotion can bring a man to this peculiar pass. [Note: Refer to note above that William James was not aware of the masochistic complex. The religious emotion is just one manifestation of this general complex.] And it is for that reason that when we ask our question about the value of religion for human life, I think we ought to look for the answer among these violenter examples rather than among those of a more moderate hue.

Having the phenomenon of our study in its acutest possible form to start with, we can shade down as much as we please later. And if these cases, repulsive as they are to our ordinary worldly way of judging, we find ourselves compelled to acknowledge religion's value and treat it with respect, it will have proved in some way its value for life at large. By subtracting and toning down extravagances we may thereupon proceed to trace the boundaries of its legitimate sway.

To be sure, it makes our task difficult to have to deal so much with eccentricities and extremes. "How *can* religion on the whole be the most important of all human functions," you may ask, "if every several manifestation of it in turn have to be corrected and sobered down and pruned away?" Such a thesis seems a paradox impossible to sustain reasonably, - yet I believe that something like it will have to be our final contention. That personal attitude which the individual finds himself impelled to take up towards what he apprehends to be the divine – and you will remember that this was our definition – will prove to be both a helpless and a sacrificial attitude. That is, we shall have to confess to at least some amount of dependence on sheer mercy, and to practice some amount of renunciation, great or small, to save our souls alive. The constitution of the world we live in requires it. [Note: This is a round about way of saying that we are all in the same boat. We all of us have subconscious masochistic tendencies as a result of the trauma of birth. Most of us have been able to come through the trauma of birth and go on to lead a fairly normal life, to find adequate compensations in our possessions, our relations with others, our desires, goals and aspirations, and our subconscious masochistic tendencies remain exactly that – subconscious. Not so for these saints that James is talking about, however. They got an extreme dose of masochism from the trauma of birth, and it is impossible for them to lead a normal life and find pleasure in the ordinary pursuits of mankind. Should anyone doubt that we all have a sadomasochistic complex reflect only on this: Were it not for the sadomasochistic complex there would not be a human race. The male urge to mount and penetrate a woman is a sadistic impulse and the female urge to be mounted and penetrated by a male is a masochistic impulse. Were it not for the sadomasochistic complex human beings would have no inclination to procreate. In fact the de-sexualized sadomasochistic complex is the core motivation for everything we do in life. Every aspect of human civilization is the result of it. Human civilization is literally founded on our evil impulses.]

For when all is said and done, we are in the end absolutely dependent on the universe; and into sacrifices and surrenders of some sort, deliberately looked at and accepted, we are drawn and pressed as into our only permanent position of repose. Now in those states of mind which fall short of religion, the surrender is submitted to as an imposition of necessity, and the sacrifice is undergone at the very best without complaint. In the religious life, on the contrary, surrender and sacrifice are positively espoused: even unnecessary givings-up are added in order that the happiness may increase. *Religion thus makes easier and felicitous what in any case is necessary*; and if it be the only agency that can accomplish this result, its vital importance as a human faculty stands vindicated beyond dispute. It becomes an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so successfully fulfill.

James devotes two lectures to *the religion of healthy-mindedness*. If we were to ask the question: 'What is human life's chief concern?' one of the answers we should receive would be: 'It is happiness.' How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure. The hedonistic school in ethics deduces the moral life wholly from the experiences of happiness and unhappiness which different kinds of conduct bring; and, even more in the religious life than in the moral life, happiness and unhappiness seem to be the poles around which the interest revolves. We need not go so far as to say with the author whom I lately quoted that any persistent enthusiasm is, as such, religion, nor need we call mere laughter a religious exercise; but we must admit that any persistent enjoyment may *produce* the sort of religion which consists in a grateful admiration of the gift of so happy an existence; and we must also acknowledge that the more complex ways of experiencing religion are new manners of producing happiness, wonderful inner paths to a supernatural kind of happiness, when the first gift of natural existence is unhappy, as it so often proves to be. [Note: The mere fact that these 'healthy minded' people have to proclaim their joy and happiness through religion means that they are compensating for the lack of happiness in their life.]

In many persons, happiness is congenital and irreclaimable. 'Cosmic emotion' inevitably takes in them the form of enthusiasm and freedom. I speak not only of those who are animally happy. I mean those who, when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if were something mean and wrong. We find such persons in every age, passionately flinging themselves upon their sense of the goodness of life, in spite of the hardships of their own condition, and in spite of the sinister theologies into which they may be born.

This finding of a luxury in woe is very common during adolescence. The truth-telling Marie Bashkirtseff expresses it well:-

"In this depression and dreadful uninterrupted suffering, I don't condemn life. On the contrary, I like it and find it good. Can you believe it? I find everything good and pleasant, even my tears, my grief. I enjoy weeping, I enjoy my despair. I enjoy being exasperated and sad. I feel as if these were so many diversions, and I love life in spite of them all. I want to live on. It would be cruel to have me die when I am so accommodating. I cry, I grieve, and at the same time I am pleased – no, not exactly that – I know not how to express it. But everything in life pleases me. I find everything agreeable, and in the very midst of my prayers for happiness, I find myself happy at being miserable. It is not I who

undergo all this – my body weeps and cries; but something inside of me which is above me is glad of it all.” [Note: This woman is one of the ‘healthy minded’ religious people!]

To my mind a current far more important and interesting religiously than that which sets in from natural science towards healthy-mindedness is that which has recently poured over America and seems to be gathering force every day, - I am ignorant what foothold it may have acquired in Great Britain, - and to which, for the sake of having a brief designation, I will give the title of the ‘Mind-cure movement.’ There are various sects of this ‘New Thought,’ to use another of the names by which it calls itself; but their agreements are so profound that their differences may be neglected for my present purpose, and I will treat the movement, without apology, as if it were a simple thing.

The blind have been made to see, the halt to walk; lifelong invalids have had their health restored. The moral fruits have been no less remarkable. The deliberate adoption of a healthy-minded attitude has proved possible to many who never supposed they had it in them; regeneration of character has gone on on an extensive scale; and cheerfulness has been restored to countless homes. The indirect influence of this has been great. The mind-cure principles are beginning so to pervade the air that one catches their spirit at second-hand. One hears of the ‘Gospel of Relaxation,’ of the ‘Don’t Worry Movement,’ of people who repeat to themselves, ‘Youth, health, vigor!’ when dressing in the morning, as their motto for the day. Complaints of the weather are getting to be forbidden in many households; and more and more people are recognizing it to be bad form to speak of disagreeable sensations, or to make much of the ordinary inconveniences and ailments of life. [Note: Surely the positive aspects of religion, but the ‘Mind-cure movement’ is by definition an attempt by people to overcome their sufferings which are directly or indirectly the after-effects of the trauma of birth.]

On the whole, one is struck by a psychological similarity between the mind-cure movement and the Lutheran and Wesleyan movements. To the believer in moralism and works, with this anxious query, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ Luther and Wesley replied: ‘You are saved now, if you would but believe it.’ And the mind-curers come with precisely similar words of emancipation. They speak, it is true, to persons for whom the conception of salvation has lost its ancient theological meaning, but who labor nonetheless with the same eternal human difficulty, *Things are wrong with them*; and ‘What shall I do to be clear, right, sound, whole, well?’ is the form of their question. And the answer is: ‘You *are* well, sound, and clear already, if you did but know it.’ “The whole matter may be summed up in one sentence,” says one of the authors whom I have already quoted, “*God is well, and so are you*. You must awaken to the knowledge of your real being.”

The mind-cure gospel thus once more appears to us as having dignity and importance. We have seen it to be a genuine religion, and no mere silly appeal to imagination to cure disease; we have seen its method of experimental verification to be not unlike the method of all science; and now here we find mind-cure as the champion of a perfectly definite conception of the metaphysical structure of the world.

Let us now say good-by for awhile to all this way of thinking, and turn towards those persons [the sick souls] who cannot so swiftly throw off the burden of the consciousness of evil, but are congenitally fated to suffer from its presence. Just as we saw that in healthy-mindedness there are shallower and profounder levels, happiness like that of the

mere animal, and more regenerate sorts of happiness, so also are there different levels of the morbid mind, and the one is much more formidable than the other. There are people for whom evil means only a mal-adjustment with *things*, a wrong correspondence of one's life with the environment. [Note: This also is an extension of the trauma of birth. That is essentially what the trauma of birth is. We feel we have been cast into an alien environment.] Such evil as this is curable, in principle at least, upon the natural plane, for merely by modifying either the self or the things, or both at once, the two terms may be made to fit, and all go merry as a marriage bell again. But there are others for whom evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nature, which no alteration of the environment, or any superficial rearrangement of the inner self, can cure, and which requires a supernatural remedy. On the whole, the Latin races have leaned more towards the former way of looking upon evil, as made up of ills and sins in the plural, removable in detail; while the Germanic races have tended rather to think of Sin in the singular, and with a capital S, as of something ineradicably ingrained in our natural subjectivity, and never to be removed by any superficial piecemeal operations. These comparisons of races are always open to exception, but undoubtedly the northern tone in religion has inclined to the more intimately pessimistic persuasion, and this way of feeling, being the more extreme, we shall find by far the more instructive for our study.

Recent psychology has found great use for the word 'threshold' as a symbolic designation for the point at which one state of mind passes into another. Thus we speak of the threshold of a man's consciousness in general, to indicate the amount of noise, pressure, or other stimulus which it takes to arouse his attention at all. One with a high threshold will doze through an amount of racket by which one with a low threshold would be immediately waked. Similarly, when one is sensitive to small differences in any order of sensation, we say he has a low 'difference-threshold' – his mind easily steps over it into the consciousness of the differences in question. And just so we might speak of a 'pain-threshold,' a 'fear-threshold,' a 'misery-threshold,' and find it quickly overpassed by the consciousness of some individuals, but lying too high in others to be often reached by their consciousness. The sanguine and healthy-minded live habitually on the sunny side of their misery-line, the depressed and melancholy live beyond it, in darkness and apprehension. There are men who seem to have started in life with a bottle or two of champagne inscribed to their credit; whilst others seem to have been born close to the pain-threshold, which the slightest irritants fatally send them over. [Note: Clearly James is talking here about the trauma of birth, and the fact that it affects individuals differently. The sanguine and healthy-minded are able to find adequate compensations in life to consider themselves 'happy', and the depressed and melancholy are not able to find satisfactory compensations in life and they remain steeped in misery.]

Does it not appear as if one who lived more habitually on one side of the pain-threshold might need a different sort of religion from one who habitually lived on the other? This question, of the relativity of different types of religion to different types of need, arises naturally at this point, and will become a serious problem ere we have done. But before we confront it in general terms, we must address ourselves to the unpleasant task of hearing what the sick souls, as we may call them in contrast to the healthy-minded, have to say of the secrets of their prison-house, their own peculiar form of consciousness. Let us then resolutely turn our backs on the once-born and their sky-blue optimistic

gospel; let us not simply cry out, in spite of all appearances, "Hurrah for the Universe! – God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world." Let us see rather whether pity, pain, and fear, and the sentiment of human helplessness may not open a profounder view and put into our hands a more complicated key to the meaning of the situation.

To begin with, how *can* things so insecure as the successful experiences of this world afford a stable anchorage? A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and life is after all a chain. In the healthiest and most prosperous existence, how many links of illness, danger, and disaster are always interposed? Unsuspectedly from the bottom of every fountain of pleasure, as the old poet said, something bitter rises up: a touch of nausea, a falling dead of the delight, a whiff of melancholy, things that sound a knell, for fugitive as they may be, they bring a feeling of coming from a deeper region and often have an appalling convincingness. The buzz of life ceases at their touch as a piano-string stops sounding when the damper falls upon it.

Of course the music can commence again; - and again and again, - at intervals. But with this the healthy-minded consciousness is left with an irremediable sense of precariousness. It is a bell with a crack; it draws its breath on sufferance and by an accident.

Even if we suppose a man so packed with healthy-mindedness as never to have experienced in his own person any of these sobering intervals, still, if he is a reflecting being, he must generalize and class his own lot with that of the others; and, doing so, he must see that his escape is just a lucky chance and no essential difference. He might just as well have been born to an entirely different fortune. And then indeed the hollow security! What kind of a frame of things is it of which the best you can say is, "Thank God, it has let me off clear this time!" Is not its blessedness a fragile fiction? Is not your joy in it a very vulgar glee, not much unlike the snicker of any rogue at his success? If indeed it were all success, even on such terms as that! But take the happiest man, the one most envied by the world, and in nine cases out of ten his inmost consciousness is one of failure. Either his ideals in the line of his achievements are pitched far higher than the achievements themselves, or else he has secret ideals of which the world knows nothing, and in regard to which he inwardly knows himself to be found wanting.

When such a conquering optimist as Goethe can express himself in this wise, how must it be with less successful men?

"I will say nothing," writes Goethe in 1824, "against the course of my existence. But at the bottom it has been nothing but pain and burden, and I can affirm that during the whole of my 75 years, I have not had four weeks of genuine well-being. It is but the perpetual rolling of a rock that must be raised up again forever."

What a single-handed man was ever on the whole as successful as Luther? Yet when he had grown old, he looked back on his life as if it were an absolute failure.

"I am utterly weary of life. I pray the Lord will come forthwith and carry me hence. Let him come, above all, with his last Judgment: I will stretch out my neck, the thunder will burst forth, and I shall be at rest." – And having a necklace of white agates in his hand at the time he added: "O God, grant that it may come without delay. I would readily eat up this necklace today, for the Judgment to come tomorrow." – The Electress Dowager,

one day when Luther was dining with her, said to him: "Doctor, I wish you may live forty years to come." "Madam," replied he, "rather than live forty years more, I would give up my chance of Paradise." [Note: It is this utter world-weariness expressed by Luther is the proof that the trauma of birth is a reality. The hour Martin Luther was born all the sensual pleasure that he had known in the womb was annihilated, and he evidently found no satisfactory compensations throughout his entire life.]

Failure, then, failure! So the world stamps us at every turn. We strew it with our blunders, our misdeeds, our lost opportunities, with all the memorials of our inadequacy to our vocation. And with what a damning emphasis does it then blot us out! No easy fine, no mere apology or formal expiation, will satisfy the world's demands, but every pound of flesh exacted is soaked with all its blood. The subtlest forms of suffering known to man are connected with the poisonous humiliations incidental to these results.

And they are pivotal human experiences. A process so ubiquitous and everlasting is evidently an integral part of life. "There is indeed one element in human destiny," Robert Louis Stevenson writes, "that not blindness itself can controvert. Whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed; failure is the fate allotted." Then he adds with characteristic healthy-mindedness: "Our business is to continue to fail in good spirits."

And our nature being thus rooted in failure, is it any wonder that theologians should have held it to be essential, and thought that only through the personal experience of humiliation which it engenders the deeper sense of life's significance is reached. [Note: The most direct consequence of the trauma of birth is that subconsciously we tend to blame our distress on others and the world in general, or we can turn the blame in on ourselves for our predicament, hence feelings of failure and the desire for humiliation.]

"The God of many men is little more than their court of appeal against the damnatory judgment passed on their failures by the opinion of this world. To our own consciousness there is usually a residuum of worth left over after our sins and errors have been told off – our capacity of acknowledging and regretting them in the germ of a better self *in posse* at least. But the world deals with us *in actu* and not *in posse*: and of this hidden germ, not to be guessed at from without, it never takes account. Then we turn to the All-knower, who knows our bad, but knows this good in us also, and who is just. We cast ourselves with our repentance on his mercy: only by an All-knower can we finally be judged. So the need of a God very definitely emerges from this sort of experience of life."

But this is only the first stage of the world-sickness. Make the human being's sensitiveness a little greater, carry him a little further over the misery-threshold, and the good quality of the successful moments themselves when they occur is spoiled and vitiated. All natural goods perish. Riches take wings; fame is a breath; love is a cheat; youth and health and pleasure vanish. Can things whose end is always dust and disappointment be the real goods which our souls require? Back of everything is the great spectre of universal death, the all-encompassing blackness:-

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the Sun? I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the

other; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again... The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun... Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the Sun: but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." [Note: James doesn't say who said this, but it seems clear that this was not a religious person because there is here no belief in an afterlife. There cannot be any doubt that religion in general caters to the death wish that is in all of us to a greater or lesser degree. Religion holds out the hope that we will regain the Paradise that we irrevocably lost at birth.]

In short, life and its negation are beaten up inextricably together. But if life be good, the negation of it must be bad. Yet the two are equally essential facts of existence; and all natural happiness thus seems infected with a contradiction. The breath of the sepulchre surrounds it.

To a mind attentive to this state of things and rightly subject to the joy-destroying chill which such a contemplation engenders, the only relief that healthy-mindedness can give is by saying: 'Stuff and nonsense, get out into the open air!' or 'Cheer up, old fellow, you'll be all right ere long, if you will only drop your morbidness!' But in all seriousness, can such bald animal talk as that be treated as a rational answer? To ascribe religious value to mere happy-go-lucky contentment with one's brief chance at natural good is but the very consecration of forgetfulness and superficiality. Our troubles lie indeed too deep for *that* cure. The fact that we *can* die, that we *can* be ill at all, is what perplexes us; the fact that we now for a moment live and are well is irrelevant to that perplexity. We need a life not correlated with death, a health not liable to illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the Goods of nature.

It all depends on how sensitive the soul may become to discords. "The trouble with me is that I believe too much in common happiness and goodness," said a friend of mine whose consciousness was of this sort, "and nothing can console me for their transiency. I am appalled and disconcerted at its being possible." And so with most of us: a little cooling down of animal excitability and instinct, a little loss of animal toughness, a little irritable weakness and descent of the pain-threshold, will bring the worm at the core of all our usual springs of delight into full view, and turn us into melancholy metaphysicians. The pride of life and glory of the world will shrivel. It is after all but the standing quarrel of hot youth and hoary eld. Old age has the last word: the purely naturalistic look at life, however enthusiastically it may begin, is sure to end in sadness.

This sadness lies at the heart of every merely positivistic, agnostic, or naturalistic scheme of philosophy. Let sanguine healthy-mindedness do its best with its strange power of living in the moment and ignoring and forgetting, still the evil background is really there to be thought of, and the skull will grin in at the banquet. In the practical life of the individual, we know how his whole gloom or glee about any present fact depends on the remoter schemes and hopes with which it stands related. Its significance and framing give it the chief part of its value. Let it be known to lead nowhere, and however agreeable it may be in its immediacy, its glow and gilding vanish. The old man, sick with an insidious internal disease, may laugh and quaff his wine at first as well as ever, but he knows his fate now, for the doctors have revealed it; and the knowledge knocks the

satisfactions out of all these functions. They are partners of death and the worm is their brother, and they turn to a mere flatness.

The lustre of the present hour is always borrowed from the background of possibilities it goes with. Let our common experiences be enveloped in an eternal moral order; let our suffering have an immortal significance; let Heaven smile upon the earth, and deities pay their visits; let faith and hope be the atmosphere which man breathes in; - and his days pass by with zest; they stir with prospects, they thrill with remoter values. Place round them on the contrary the curdling cold and gloom and absence of all permanent meaning which for pure naturalism and the popular science evolutionism of our time are all that is visible ultimately, and the thrill stops short, or turns rather to an anxious trembling.

For naturalism, fed on recent cosmological speculations, mankind is in a position similar to that of a set of people living on a frozen lake, surrounded by cliffs over which there is no escape, yet knowing that little by little the ice is melting, and the inevitable day drawing near when the last film of it will disappear, and to be drowned ignominiously will be the human creature's portion. The merrier the skating, the warmer and more sparkling the sun by day, and the ruddier the bonfires at night, the more poignant the sadness with which one must take in the meaning of the total situation.

The early Greeks are continually held up to us in literary works as models of the healthy-minded joyousness which the religion of nature may engender. There was indeed much joyousness among the Greeks - Homer's flow of enthusiasm for most things that the sun shines upon is steady. But even in Homer the reflective passages are cheerless: "Nothing then is more wretched anywhere than man of all that breathes and creeps upon this earth." (*Iliad*, XVII.446) And the moment the Greeks grew systematically pensive and thought of ultimates, they became unmitigated pessimists: "Best of all for all things upon earth is it not to be born nor to behold the splendors of the Sun; next best to traverse as soon as possible the gates of Hades." (*Theognis*, 425-428) The Anthology is full of pessimistic utterances: "Naked came I upon the earth, naked I go below the ground - why then do I vainly toil when I see the end naked before me?" - "How do I come to be? Whence am I? Wherefore did I come? To pass away. How can I learn aught when naught I know? Being naught I came to life: once more shall I be what I was. Nothing and nothingness is the whole race of mortals." - "For death we are all cherished and fattened like a herd of hogs that is wantonly butchered."

The difference between Greek pessimism and the oriental and modern variety is that the Greeks had not made the discovery that the pathetic mood may be idealized, and figure as a higher form of sensibility. Their spirit was still too essentially masculine for pessimism to be elaborated or lengthily dwelt on in their classic literature. They would have despised a life set wholly in a minor key, and summoned it to keep within the proper bounds of lachrymosity. The discovery that the enduring emphasis, so far as the world goes, may be laid on its pain and failure, was reserved for races more complex, and (so to speak) more feminine than the Hellenes had attained to being in the classic period. But all the same was the outlook of these Hellenes blackly pessimistic. They knew no joys comparable in quality of preciousness to those which we shall ere long see that Brahmans, Buddhists, Christians, Mohammedans, twice-born people whose religion is non-naturalistic, get from their several creeds of mysticism and renunciation.

The securest way to the rapturous sorts of happiness of which the twice-born make report has as an historic matter of fact been through a more radical pessimism than anything that we have yet considered. We have seen how the lustre and enchantment may be rubbed off from the goods of nature. But there is a pitch of unhappiness so great that the goods of nature may be entirely forgotten, and all sentiment of their existence vanish from the mental field. For this extremity of pessimism to be reached, something more is needed than observation of life and reflection upon death. The individual must in his own person become the prey of a pathological melancholy. As the healthy-minded enthusiast succeeds in ignoring evil's very existence, so the subject of melancholy is forced in spite of himself to ignore that of all good whatever: for him it may no longer have the least reality. Such sensitiveness and susceptibility to mental pain is a rare occurrence where the nervous constitution is entirely normal; one seldom finds it in a healthy subject even where he is the victim of the most atrocious cruelties of outward fortune. So we note here the neurotic constitution making its active entrance on our scene, and destined to play a part in much that follows. [Note: Here again we must remember that James was writing before the theories of Sigmund Freud became prominent. What he calls melancholy is now a well established mental state of advanced depression where in Freud's words all libido for the objects and uses of this world (especially sensuality and sexual desire for an other) is withdrawn from the sufferer. The essential point here is that all the sensuality that the fetus experienced in the womb is literally annihilated by the act of being born into this world, and the sufferer of melancholia has not managed to find any satisfactory compensation or substitute later in life. The sufferer is literally devoid of desire, and the whole world and everything in it appears barren and meaningless as a result. We should also remember that because of the trauma of birth we are all at base neurotic. The so-called normal people, or what James called the healthy-minded people, have managed in their daily life to find adequate compensations for their neurotic tendencies. They may even consider themselves content. But they are only content because all their little rituals and habits and customs and pastimes give them a sense of satisfaction and well-being. If you up-root them and place them in a situation that is beyond their comfort zone then you will soon see their state of mind take a decidedly neurotic turn. The neurotic person as such is the one who feels compelled to perform irrational rituals and practices from which he/she gets no satisfaction or contentment; the neurotic person lives permanently outside the comfort zone, and it is precisely this feeling that is constantly recalling the trauma of birth. The same with the extreme rituals and customs to be found in religious practices. They are the result of the same neurosis that is common to us all, but they go beyond the bounds of what may be considered normal and well-adjusted.]

Since these experiments of melancholy are in the first instance absolutely private and individual, I can now help myself out with personal documents. Painful indeed they will be to listen to, and there is almost an indecency in handling them in public. Yet they lay right in the middle of our path; and if we are to touch the psychology of religion at all seriously, we must be willing to forget conventionalities, and dive below the smooth and lying official conversational surface.

Every good, terrestrial or celestial, is imagined only to be turned from with disgust. A temporary condition of this sort, connected with the religious evolution of a singularly lofty character, both intellectual and moral, is well described by the Catholic philosopher,

Father Gratry, in his autobiographical recollections. In consequence of mental isolation and excessive study at the Polytechnic school, young Gratry fell into a state of nervous exhaustion with symptoms which he thus describes:-

“I had such a universal terror that I woke at night with a start, thinking that the Pantheon was tumbling on the Polytechnic school, or that the school was in flames, or that the Seine was pouring into the Catacombs, and that Paris was being swallowed up. And when these impressions were past, all day long without respite I suffered an incurable and intolerable desolation, verging on despair. I thought myself, in fact, rejected by God, lost, damned! I felt something like the suffering of hell. Before that I had never even thought of hell. My mind had never turned in that direction. Neither discourse nor reflections had impressed me in that way. I took no account of hell. Now, and all at once, I suffered in a measure what is suffered there.

“But what was perhaps still more dreadful is that every idea of heaven was taken away from me: I could no longer conceive of anything of the sort. Heaven did not seem to me worth going to. It was like a vacuum; a mythological elysium, an abode of shadows less real than the earth. I could conceive no joy, no pleasure in inhabiting it. Happiness, joy, light, affection, love – all these words were now devoid of sense. Without doubt I could still have talked of all these things, but I had become incapable of feeling anything in them, of understanding anything about them, of hoping anything from them, or of believing them to exist. There was my great and inconsolable grief! I neither perceived nor conceived any longer the existence of happiness or perfection. An abstract heaven over a naked rock. Such was my present abode for eternity.”

So much for melancholy in the sense of incapacity for joyous feeling. A much worse form of it is positive and active anguish, a sort of psychical neuralgia wholly unknown to healthy life. Such anguish may partake of various characters, having sometimes more the quality of loathing; sometimes that of irritation and exasperation; or again of self-mistrust and self-despair; or of suspicion, anxiety, trepidation, fear. The patient may rebel or submit; may accuse himself, or accuse outside powers; and he may or he may not be tormented by the theoretical mystery of why he should have to suffer. Most cases are mixed cases, and we should not treat our classification with too much respect. Moreover, it is only a relatively small proportion of cases that connect themselves with the religious sphere of experience at all. Exasperated cases, for instance, as a rule do not. I quote now literally from the very first case of melancholy on which I lay my hand. It is a letter from a patient in a French asylum.

“I suffer too much in this hospital, both physically and morally. Besides the burnings and the sleeplessness (for I no longer sleep since I am shut up here, and the little rest I get is broken by bad dreams, and I am waked with a jump by nightmares, dreadful visions, lightning, thunder, and the rest), fear, atrocious fear, presses me down, holds me without respite, never lets me go. Where is the justice in it all! What have I done to deserve this excess of severity? Under what form will this fear crush me? What would I not own to any one who would rid me of my life? Eat, drink, lie awake all night, suffer without interruption – such is the fine legacy I have received from my mother! What I fail to understand is the abuse of power. There are limits to everything, there is a middle way. But God knows neither middle way nor limits. I say God, but why? All I have known so far has been the devil. After all, I am afraid of God as much as of the devil, so I drift along,

thinking of nothing but suicide, but with neither courage nor means here to execute the act. As you read this, it will easily prove to you my insanity. The style and the ideas are incoherent enough – I can see that myself. But I cannot keep myself from being either crazy or an idiot; and, as things are, from whom should I ask pity? I am defenseless against the invisible enemy who is tightening his coils around me. I should be no better armed against him even if I saw him, or had seen him. Oh, if he would but kill me, devil take him! Death, death, once for all! But I stop. I have raved to you long enough. I say raved, for I can write no otherwise, having neither brain nor thoughts left. O God! what a misfortune to be born! Born like a mushroom, doubtless between an evening and a morning; and how true and right I was when in our philosophy-year in college I chewed the cud of bitterness with the pessimists. Yes, indeed, there is more pain in life than gladness – it is one long agony until the grave. Think how gay it makes me to remember that this horrible misery of mine, coupled with this unspeakable fear, may last fifty, one hundred, who knows how many more years!”

This letter shows two things. First, you see how the entire consciousness of the poor man is so choked with the feeling of evil that the sense of there being any good in the world is lost for him altogether. His attention excludes it, cannot admit it: the sun has left his heaven. And secondly you see how the querulous temper of his misery keeps his mind from taking a religious direction. Querulousness of mind tends in fact rather towards irreligion; and it has played, so far as I know, no part whatever in the construction of religious systems.

Religious melancholy must be cast in a more melting mood. Tolstoy has left us, in his book called *My Confession*, a wonderful account of the attack of melancholy which led him to his own religious conclusions. The latter in some respects are peculiar; but the melancholy presents two characters which make it a typical document for our present purpose. First it is a well-marked case of passive loss of appetite for all life's values; and second, it shows how the altered and estranged aspect which the world assumed in consequence of this stimulated Tolstoy's intellect to a gnawing, carking questioning and effort for philosophic relief. I mean to quote Tolstoy at some length; but before doing so, I will make a general remark on each of these two points.

First on our spiritual judgments and the sense of value in general.

It is notorious that facts are compatible with opposite emotional comments, since the same fact will inspire entirely different feelings in different persons, and at different times in the same person; and there is no rationally deducible connection between any outer fact and the sentiments it may happen to provoke. These have their source in another sphere of existence altogether, in the animal and spiritual region of the subject's being. Conceive yourself, if possible, suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it *as it exists*, purely by itself, without your favorable or unfavorable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness. No one portion of the universe would then have importance beyond another; and the whole collection of its things and series of its events would be without significance, character, expression, or perspective. Whatever of value, interest, or meaning our respective worlds may appear endowed with are thus pure gifts of the spectator's mind. The passion of love is the most familiar and extreme example of this fact. If it comes, it comes; if it does not come, no

process of reasoning can force it. Yet it transforms the value of the creature loved as utterly as the sunrise transforms Mont Blanc from a corpse-like gray to a rosy enchantment; and it sets the whole world to a new tune for the lover and gives a new issue to his life. So with fear, with indignation, jealousy, ambition, worship. If they are there, life changes. And whether they shall be there or not depends almost always upon non-logical, often on organic, conditions. And as the excited interest which these passions put into the world is our gift to the world, just so are the passions themselves *gifts*, - gifts to us, from sources sometimes low and sometimes high; but almost always non-logical and beyond our control. How can the moribund old man reason back to himself the romance, the mystery, the imminence of great things with which our old earth tingled for him in the days when he was young and well? Gifts, either of the flesh or of the spirit; and the spirit bloweth where it listeth; and the world's materials lend their surface passively to all the gifts alike, as the stage setting receives indifferently whatever alternating colored lights may be shed upon it from the optical apparatus in the gallery.

Meanwhile the practical real world for each one of us, the effective world of the individual, is the compound world, the physical facts and emotional values in indistinguishable combination. Withdraw or pervert either factor of this complex resultant, and the kind of experience we call pathological ensues. [Note: Take any of us out of our comfort zone and we will become neurotic.]

In Tolstoy's case the sense that life had any meaning whatever was for a time wholly withdrawn. The result was a transformation in the whole expression of reality. When we come to study the phenomenon of conversion or religious regeneration, we shall see that a not infrequent consequence of the change operated in the subject is a transfiguration of the face of nature in his eyes. A new heaven seems to shine upon a new earth. In melancholiacs there is usually a similar change, only it is in the reverse direction. The world now looks remote, strange, sinister, uncanny. Its color is gone, its breath is cold, there is no speculation in the eyes it glares with. "It is as if I lived in another century," says one asylum patient. I see everything through a cloud," says another, "things are not as they were, and I am changed." - "I see," says a third, "I touch, but the things do not come near me, a thick veil alters the hue and look of everything." - "Persons move like shadows, and sounds seem to come from a distant world." - "There is no longer any past for me; people appear so strange; it is as if I could not see any reality, as if I were in a theatre; as if people were actors, and everything were scenery; I can no longer find myself; I walk, but why? Everything floats before my eyes, but leaves no impression." - "I weep false tears, I have unreal hands: the things I see are not real things." - Such are expressions that naturally rise to the lips of melancholy subjects describing their changed state.

Now there are some subjects whom all this leaves a prey to the profoundest astonishment. The strangeness is wrong. The unreality cannot be. A mystery is concealed, and a metaphysical solution must exist. If the natural world is so double-faced and unhomelike, what world, what thing is real? An urgent wondering and questioning is set up, a poring theoretic activity, and in the desperate effort to get into right relations with the matter, the sufferer is often led to what becomes for him a satisfying religious solution.

At about the age of fifty, Tolstoy relates that he began to have moments of perplexity, of what he calls arrest, as if he knew not 'how to live,' or what to do. It is

obvious that these were moments in which the excitement and interest which our functions naturally bring had ceased. Life had been enchanting, it was now flat sober, more than sober, dead. Things were meaningless whose meaning had always been self-evident. The questions 'Why?' and 'What next?' began to beset him more and more frequently. At first it seemed as if such questions must be answerable, and as if he could easily find the answers if he would take the time; but as they ever became more urgent, he perceived that it was like those first discomforts of a sick man, to which he pays but little attention till they run into one continuous suffering, and then he realizes that what he took for a passing disorder means the most momentous thing in the world for him, means his death.

These questions 'Why?' 'Wherefore?' 'What for?' found no response.

"I felt," says Tolstoy, "that something had broken within me on which my life had always rested, that I had nothing left to hold on to, and that morally my life had stopped. An invincible force impelled me to get rid of my existence, in one way or another. It cannot be said exactly that I *wished* to kill myself, for the force which drew me away from life was fuller, more powerful, more general than any mere desire. It was a force like my old aspiration to live, only it impelled me in the opposite direction. It was an aspiration of my whole being to get out of life.

"Behold me then, a man happy and in good health, hiding the rope in order not to hang myself to the rafters of the room where every night I went to sleep alone; behold me no longer going shooting, lest I should yield to the too easy temptation of putting an end to myself with my gun.

"I did not know what I wanted. I was afraid of life; I was driven to leave it; and in spite of that I still hoped something from it.

"All this took place at a time when so far as all my outer circumstances went, I ought to have been completely happy. I had a good wife who loved me and whom I loved; good children and a large property which was increasing with no pains taken on my part. I was more respected by my kinsfolk and acquaintance than I had ever been; I was loaded with praise by strangers; and without exaggeration I could believe my name already famous. Moreover I was neither insane nor ill. On the contrary, I possessed a physical and mental strength which I have rarely met in persons of my age. I could mow as well as the peasants, I could work with my brain eight hours uninterruptedly and feel no bad effects.

"And yet I could give no reasonable meaning to any actions of my life. And I was surprised that I had not understood this from the very beginning. My state of mind was as if some wicked and stupid jest was being played upon me by some one. One can live only so long as one is intoxicated, drunk with life; but when one grows sober one cannot fail to see that it is all a stupid cheat. What is truest about it is that there is nothing even funny or silly in it; it is cruel and stupid, purely and simply.

"The oriental fable of the traveler surprised in the desert by a wild beast is very old.

"Seeking to save himself from the fierce animal, the traveler jumps into a well with no water in it; but at the bottom of this well he sees a dragon waiting with open mouth to devour him. And the unhappy man, not daring to go out lest he should be the prey of

the beast, not daring to jump to the bottom lest he should be devoured by the dragon, clings to the branches of a wild bush which grows out of one of the cracks of the well. His hands weaken, and he feels that he must soon give way to a certain fate; but still he clings, and sees two mice, one white, the other black, evenly moving round the bush to which he hangs, and gnawing off its roots.

“The traveler sees this and knows that he must inevitably perish; but while thus hanging he looks about him and finds on the leaves of the bush some drops of honey. These he reaches with his tongue and licks them off with rapture.

“Thus I hang upon the boughs of life, knowing that the inevitable dragon of death is waiting ready to tear me, and I cannot comprehend why I am thus made a martyr. I try to suck the honey which formerly consoled me; but the honey pleases me no longer [Note: I read this as meaning that he had lost his sensual desire for his wife and for women in general. He says he had a good wife whom he loved, but I expect that it was the love one might have for a horse that one owns or a favorite pair of jeans. I expect that whatever pleasure he got from having sex with his wife came from his sadistic impulse to mount and penetrate her as well as of course the orgasm which is in his own head. I expect that he never got any sensual pleasure from his wife’s genitals. Put simply, I doubt whether he had any taste for cunnilingus. Anyone, male or female, who has no taste for cunnilingus has had all their original fetal sensuality destroyed at birth, and this is what makes them susceptible to neurotic attacks, depression and melancholia later in life. The destruction of the fetal sensuality is at the core of the trauma of birth. Even those later in life who have a taste for cunnilingus have managed only to retain a remnant of that fetal sensuality. They still weathered the trauma of birth but it was not as devastating for them.] and day and night the white mouse and the black mouse gnaw the branch to which I cling. I can see but one thing: the inevitable dragon and the mice – I cannot turn my gaze away from them.

“This is no fable, but the literal incontestable truth which every one may understand. What will be the outcome of what I do today? Of what I shall do tomorrow? What will be the outcome of all my life? Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there in life any purpose which the inevitable death which awaits me does not undo and destroy?

These questions are the simplest in the world. From the stupid child to the wisest old man, they are in the soul of every human being. Without an answer to them, it is impossible, as I experienced, for life to go on. [Note: Most people do not even feel the need to ask these questions because they have found adequate secondary objects of desire, either sexual or non-sexual. Even completely heterosexual women who have all their fetal sensuality destroyed and have developed an aversion for the female genitalia, still manage to get adequate secondary satisfaction through their masochistic impulse to be mounted and penetrated by a penis, as well as their orgasm, and their maternal impulse to have a child that they can be attached to and have a sadistic power over. The maternal instinct is sadomasochism pure and simple. Of course those who have the taste for cunnilingus and retain a remnant of the fetal sensuality still have had so much of the original sensuality destroyed that they have become sadomasochistic monsters like everybody else. Were it not so they would have no motivation even to mount a woman and would spend 24/7/365 doing cunnilingus. It also means that there is no such thing as love. What we call the love of a man for a woman is a complex mix of the original fetal

sensuality, the sadistic impulse to mount and penetrate her, and the impulse to become attached to her to replace the original attachment to the mother that was lost, and the sadistic impulse to own her and exercise control over her. What we call the love of a woman for a man is a complex mix of the masochistic impulse to be mounted and penetrated by a penis, a secondary sensual fixation on the penis both as a sadistic weapon that will penetrate her and the tool that will penetrate her and satisfy her sadomasochistic maternal instinct, the impulse to become attached to him as well as have a child by him to replace the original attachment to the mother, and the need for security and the masochistic urge to be possessed.]

“‘But perhaps,’ I often said to myself, ‘there may be something I have failed to notice or to comprehend. It is not possible that this condition of despair should be natural to mankind.’ And I sought for an explanation in all the branches of knowledge acquired by men. I questioned painfully and protractedly and with no idle curiosity. I sought, not with indolence, but laboriously and obstinately for days and nights together. I sought like a man who is lost and seeks to save himself, - and I found nothing. I became convinced, moreover, that all those who before me had sought for an answer in the sciences have also found nothing. And not only this, but that they have recognized that the very thing which was leading me to despair - the meaningless absurdity of life - is the only incontestable knowledge accessible to man.”

To prove this point, Tolstoy quotes the Buddha, Solomon, and Schopenhauer. And he finds only four ways in which men of his own class and society are accustomed to meet the situation. Either mere animal blindness, sucking the honey without seeing the dragon or the mice, - “and from such a way,” he says, “I can learn nothing, after what I now know;” or reflective epicureanism, snatching what it can while the day lasts, - which is only a more deliberate sort of stupefaction than the first; or manly suicide; or seeing the mice and dragon and yet weakly and plaintively clinging to the bush of life.

Suicide was naturally the consistent course dictated by the logical intellect.

“Yet,” says Tolstoy, “whilst my intellect was working, something else in me was working too, and kept me from the deed - a consciousness of life, as I may call it, which was like a force that obliged my mind to fix itself in another direction and draw me out of my situation of despair... During the whole course of this year, when I almost unceasingly kept asking myself how to end the business, whether by the rope or by the bullet, during all that time, alongside of all those movements of my ideas and observations, my heart kept languishing with another pining emotion. I can call this by no other name than that of a thirst for God. This craving for God had nothing to do with the movement of my ideas, - in fact, it was the direct contrary of that movement, - but it came from my heart. It was like a feeling of dread that made me seem like an orphan and isolated in the midst of all these things that were so foreign. And this feeling of dread was mitigated by the hope of finding the assistance of some one.”

Of the process, intellectual as well as emotional, which, starting from this idea of God, led to Tolstoy's recovery, I will say nothing in this lecture, reserving it for a later hour. The only thing that need interest us now is the phenomenon of his absolute disenchantment with ordinary life, and the fact that the whole range of habitual values

may, to a man as powerful and full of faculty as he was, come to appear so ghastly a mockery.

When disillusionment has gone as far as this, there is seldom a *restitutio ad integrum*. One has tasted of the fruit of the tree, and the happiness of Eden never comes again. The happiness that comes, when any does come, - and often enough it fails to return in an acute form, though its form is sometimes very acute, - is not the simple ignorance of ill, but something vastly more complex, including natural evil as one of its elements, but finding natural evil no such stumbling-block and terror because it now sees it swallowed up in supernatural good. [Note: The simple fact of the matter is that every aspect of human civilization is based on our sadomasochistic, that is to say our evil, impulses as a result of the devastating trauma we suffered at birth. Tolstoy's crisis was the realization of this.] The process is one of redemption, not of mere reversion to natural health, and the sufferer, when saved, is saved by what seems to him a second birth, a deeper kind of conscious being than he could enjoy before.

William James devotes a lecture to Saintliness. Space precludes me from giving a full coverage of all the aspects and examples of saintliness that he gives. A single example under the aspect of Asceticism will be instructive.

Asceticism. – The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so overrule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism, measuring and expressing as they do the degree of his loyalty to the higher power.

The Roman Church has, in its incomparable fashion, collected all the motives towards asceticism together, and so codified them that any one wishing to pursue Christian perfection may find a practical system mapped out for him in any one of a number of ready-made manuals. The dominant Church notion of perfection is of course the negative one of avoidance of sin. Sin proceeds from concupiscence, and concupiscence from our carnal passions and temptations, chief of which are pride, sensuality in all its forms, and the loves of worldly excitement and possession. [Note: In short all the sadomasochistic uses, pleasures and pursuits of human civilization.] All these sources of sin must be resisted; and discipline and austerities are a most efficacious mode of meeting them. Hence there are always in these books chapters on self-mortification. But whenever a procedure is codified, the more delicate spirit of it evaporates, and if we wish the undiluted ascetic spirit, - the passion of self-contempt wreaking itself on the poor flesh, the divine irrationality of devotion making a sacrificial gift of all it has (its sensibilities, namely) to the object of its adoration, - we must go to autobiographies, or other individual documents.

Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic who flourished – or rather who existed, for there was little that suggested flourishing about him – in the sixteenth century, will supply a passage suitable for our purpose.

“First of all, carefully excite in yourself an habitual affectionate will in all things to imitate Jesus Christ. [Note: A simple case of attempting to turn the symbolic suffering of Christ into real pain and suffering for the worshipper. Christ suffering on the cross is a classic symbol of worship for the would-be masochist, and we must remember that

masochism is just sadism turned in on oneself. They are able to project their sadistic tendencies onto the Christ and take pleasure from it.] If anything agreeable offers itself to your senses, yet does not at the same time tend purely to the honor and glory of God, renounce it and separate yourself from it for the love of Christ, who all his life long had no other taste or wish than to do the will of his Father whom he called his meat and nourishment. For example, you take satisfaction in *hearing* of things in which the glory of God bears no part. Deny yourself this satisfaction, mortify your wish to listen. You take pleasure in *seeing* objects which do not raise your mind to God: refuse yourself this pleasure, and turn away your eyes. The same with conversations and all other things. Act similarly, so far as you are able, with all the operations of the senses, striving to make yourself free from their yokes.

“The radical remedy lies in the mortification of the four great natural passions, joy, hope, fear, and grief. You must seek to deprive these of every satisfaction and leave them as it were in darkness and the void. Let your soul therefore turn always:

“Not to what is most easy, but to what is hardest;

“Not to what tastes best, but to what is most distasteful;

“Not to what most pleases, but to what disgusts;

“Not to matter of consolation, but to matter for desolation rather;

“Not to rest, but to labor;

“Not to desire the more, but the less;

“Not to aspire to what is highest and most precious, but to what is lowest and most contemptible;

“Not to will anything, but to will nothing;

“not to seek the best in everything, but to seek the worst, so that you may enter for the love of Christ into a complete destitution, a perfect poverty of spirit, and an absolute renunciation of everything in this world.

“Embrace these practices with all the energy of your soul and you will find in a short time great delights and unspeakable consolations;

“Despise yourself, and wish that others should despise you;

“Speak to you own disadvantage, and desire others to do the same;

“Conceive a low opinion of yourself, and find it good when others hold the same;

“To enjoy the taste of all things, have no taste for anything;

“To know all things, learn to know nothing;

“To possess all things, resolve to possess nothing;

“To be all things, be willing to be nothing;

“To get to where you have no taste for anything, go through whatever experiences you have no taste for;

“To learn to know nothing, go whither you are ignorant;

“To reach what you possess not, go whithersoever you own nothing;

“To be what you are not, experience what you are not.”

[Note: In the next chapter I am going to give an overview of the religion of Tolstoy which enabled him to come through his crisis and find a salvation, and a passion for the love of God. You will find that there is much of the sentiment expressed by Saint John of the Cross in Tolstoy’s belief system as well.]

These later verses play with that vertigo of self-contradiction which is so dear to mysticism. Those that come next are completely mystical, for in them Saint John passes from God to the mere metaphysical notion of the All.

“When you stop at one thing, you cease to open yourself to the All;

“For to come to the All you must give up the All;

“And if you should attain to owning the All, you must own it, desiring Nothing;

“In this spoliation, the soul finds its tranquility and rest. Profoundly established in the center of its own nothingness, it can be assailed by naught that comes from below; and since it no longer desires anything, what comes from above cannot depress it; for its desires alone are the causes of its woes.”

And now, as a more complete example of all the heads of asceticism together, and of the irrational extreme to which a psychopathic individual may go in the line of bodily austerity, I will quote the sincere Suso’s account of his own self-tortures. Suso was one of the fourteenth century German mystics; his autobiography, written in the third person, is a classic religious document.

“He was in his youth of a temperament full of fire and life; and when this began to make itself felt, it was very grievous to him; and he sought by many devices how he might bring his body into subjection. He wore for a long time a hair shirt and an iron chain, until the blood ran from him, so that he was obliged to leave them off. He secretly caused an undergarment to be made for him; and in the undergarment he had strips of leather fixed, into which a hundred and fifty brass nails, pointed and filed sharp, were driven, and the points of the nails were always turned towards the flesh. He had this garment made very tight, and so arranged as to go around him and fasten in front, in order that it might fit the closer to his body, and the pointed nails might be driven into his flesh; and it was high enough to reach upwards to his navel. In this he used to sleep at night. Now in summer,

when it was hot, and he was very tired and ill from his journeyings, or when he held the office of lecturer, he would sometimes, as he lay thus in bonds, and oppressed with toil, and tormented also by noxious insects, cry aloud and give way to fretfulness, and twist round and round in agony, as a worm does when run through with a pointed needle. It often seemed to him as if he were lying upon an ant-hill, from the torture caused by the insects; for if he wished to sleep, or when he had fallen asleep, they vied with one another. Sometimes he cried to Almighty God in the fullness of his heart: Alas! Gentle God, what a dying is this! When a man is killed by murderers or strong beasts of prey it is soon over; but I lie dying here under the cruel insects, and yet cannot die. The nights in winter were never so long, nor was the summer so hot, as to make him leave off this exercise. On the contrary, he devised something farther – two leathern loops into which he put his hands, and fastened one on each side of his throat, and made the fastenings so secure that even if his cell had been on fire about him, he could not have helped himself. This he continued until his hands and arms had become almost tremulous with the strain, and then he devised something else: two leather gloves; and he caused a brazier to fit them all over with sharp-pointed brass tacks, and he used to put them on at night, in order that if he should try while asleep to try to throw off the hair undergarment, or relieve himself of the gnawings of the vile insects, the tacks might then stick into his body. And so it came to pass. If ever he sought to help himself with his hands in his sleep, he drove the sharp tacks into his breast, and tore himself, so that his flesh festered. When after many weeks the wounds had healed, he tore himself again and made fresh wounds.

“He continued this tormenting exercise for about sixteen years. At the end of this time, when his blood was now chilled, and the fire of his temperament destroyed, there appeared to him a vision on Whitsunday, a messenger from heaven, who told him that God required this of him no longer. Whereupon he discontinued it, and threw all these things away into a running stream.”

Suso then tells how, to emulate the sorrows of his crucified Lord, he made himself a cross with thirty protruding iron needles and nails. This he bore on his back between his shoulders day and night. “The first time that he stretched out this cross upon his back his tender frame was struck with terror at it, and blunted the sharp nails slightly against a stone. But soon, repenting of this womanly cowardice, he pointed them all again with a file, and placed once more the cross upon him. It made his back, where the bones are, bloody and seared. Whenever he sat down or stood up, it was as if a hedgehog-skin were on him. If anyone touched him unawares, or pushed against his clothes, it tore him.”

Suso next tells of his penitences by means of striking this cross and forcing the nails deeper into the flesh, and likewise of his self-scourgings, - a dreadful story, - and then goes on as follows: “At this same period the Servitor procured an old castaway door, and he used to lie upon it at night without any bedclothes to make him comfortable, except that he took off his shoes and wrapped a thick cloak round him. He thus secured for himself a most miserable bed; for hard pea-stalks lay in humps under his head, the cross with the sharp nails stuck into his back, his arms were locked fast in bonds, the horsehair undergarment was round his loins, and the cloak too was heavy and the door hard. Thus he lay in wretchedness, afraid to stir, just like a log, and he would send up many a sigh to God.

“In winter he suffered very much from the frost. If he stretched out his feet they lay bare on the floor and froze, if he gathered them up the blood became all on fire in his legs, and this was great pain. His feet were full of sores, his legs dropsical, his knees bloody and seared, his loins covered with scars from the horsehair, his body wasted, his mouth parched with intense thirst, and his hands tremulous from weakness. Amid these torments he spent his nights and days; and he endured them all out of the greatness of the love which he bore in his heart to the Divine and Eternal Wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose agonizing sufferings he sought to imitate. [Note: You will never get a clearer example than this that the symbol of Christ suffering on the cross has a direct appeal to our sadomasochistic impulses.] After a time he gave up this penitential exercise of the door, and instead of it he took up his abode in a very small cell, and used the bench, which was so narrow and short that he could not stretch himself upon it, as his bed. In this hole, or upon the door, he lay at night in his usual bonds, for about eight years. It was also his custom, during the space of twenty-five years, provided he was staying in the convent, never to go after compline in winter into any warm room, or to the convent stove to warm himself, no matter how cold it might be, unless he was obliged to do so for other reasons. Throughout all these years he never took a bath, either a water or a sweating bath; and this he did in order to mortify his comfort-seeking body. He practiced during a long time such rigid poverty that he would neither receive nor touch a penny, either with leave or without it. For a considerable time he strove to attain such a high degree of purity that he would neither scratch nor touch any part of his body, save only his hands and feet.”

I spare you the recital of poor Suso’s self-inflicted tortures from thirst. It is pleasant to know that after his fortieth year, God showed him by a series of visions that he had sufficiently broken down the natural man, and that he might leave these exercises off. His case is distinctly pathological, but he does not seem to have had the alleviation, which some ascetics have enjoyed, of an alteration of sensibility capable of actually turning torment into a perverse kind of pleasure. Of the founder of the Sacred Heart order, for example, we read that

“Her love of pain and suffering was insatiable... She said that she could cheerfully live till the day of judgment, provided she might always have matter for suffering for God; but that to live a single day without suffering would be intolerable. She said again that she was devoured with two unassuageable fevers, one for the holy communion, the other for suffering, humiliation, and annihilation. ‘Nothing but pain,’ she continually said in her letters, ‘makes my life supportable.’

Thus it was predicted in the Book of Genesis that sorrow would be the lot of all those born of woman and who partake of the tree of life:

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

Unto the woman he said, *I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; *in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;*

THE CONVERSION OF LEO TOLSTOY

In the last chapter we examined the crisis of Leo Tolstoy where he was suddenly struck not only with the meaningless of life, but also the desolation of it, and the total lack of joy it offered, to the point where he was seriously contemplating suicide at a time in life where he had in fact all the temporal advantages, including being an aristocrat, literary fame, a happy family life, a large estate and abundant wealth. In this chapter we will see how he managed to come through this crisis by effecting a profound religious conversion and adopting his own version of Christianity which involved a renunciation of his aristocratic title, his wealth, his wife, and all the other trappings of temporal success, and leading a life of austerity and poverty which rivalled the sentiments of Saint John of the Cross that we saw in the last chapter. In addition to all this we shall find that his particular version of Christianity which came to be known as anarchist Christianity considered that the essence of love is the total pacifist non-resistance to evil, and we shall attempt to understand how Tolstoy could have actually derived some joy and solace out of such a doctrine. First we shall go back to what William James has to say about Tolstoy as 'the divided self' and then we shall do a general review of his new religion of anarchist Christianity and we shall ask the question how such a doctrine could have possibly enabled him to resolve his crisis, and find sufficient pleasure and meaning in this to make him want to continue to live.

The last lecture was a painful one, dealing as it did with evil as a pervasive element of the world we live in. At the close of it we were brought into full view of the contrast between the two ways of looking at life which are characteristic respectively of what we called the healthy-minded, who need to be born only once, and of the sick souls, who must be twice-born in order to be happy. The result is two different conceptions of the universe of our experience. In the religion of the once-born the world is a sort of rectilinear or one-storied affair, whose accounts are kept in one denomination, whose parts have just the values which naturally they appear to have, and of which a simple algebraic sum of pluses and minuses will give the total worth. Happiness and religious peace consist in living on the plus side of the account. In the religion of the twice-born, on the other hand, the world is a double-storied mystery. Peace cannot be reached by the simple addition of pluses and elimination of minuses from life. Natural good is not simply insufficient in amount and transient, there lurks a falsity in its very being. Cancelled as it all is by death if not by earlier enemies, it gives no final balance, and can never be the thing intended for our lasting worship. It keeps us from our real good, rather; and renunciation and despair of it are our first step in the direction of the truth. There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose the one before we can participate in the other.

In their extreme forms, of pure naturalism and pure salvationism, the two types are violently contrasted; though here as most other current classifications, the radical extremes are somewhat ideal abstractions, and the concrete human beings whom we oftenest meet are intermediate varieties and mixtures. Practically, however, you all recognize the difference: you understand, for example, the disdain of the methodist

convert for the mere sky-blue healthy-minded moralist; and you likewise enter into the aversion of the latter to what seems to him the diseased subjectivism of the Methodist, dying to live, as he calls it, and making of paradox and the inversion of natural appearances the essence of God's truth.

The older medicine used to speak of two ways, *lysis* and *crisis*, one gradual, the other abrupt, in which one might recover from a bodily disease. In the spiritual realm there are also two ways, one gradual, the other sudden, in which inner unification may occur. Tolstoy and Bunyan may again serve us as examples, examples, as it happens, of the gradual way, though it must be confessed at the outset that it is hard to follow these windings of the hearts of others, and one feels that their words do not reveal their total secret.

Howe'er this be, Tolstoy, pursuing his unending questioning, seemed to come to one insight after another. First he perceived that this conviction that life was meaningless took only this finite life into account. He was looking for the value of one finite term in that of another, and the whole result could only be one of those indeterminate equations in mathematics which end with $0 = 0$. Yet this is as far as the reasoning intellect by itself can go, unless irrational sentiment or faith brings in the infinite. Believe in the infinite as common people do, and life grows possible again.

"Since mankind has existed, wherever life has been, there also has been the faith that gave the possibility of living. Faith is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself, but continues to live on. It is the force whereby we live. If Man did not believe that he must live for something, he would not live at all. The idea of an infinite God, of the divinity of the soul, of the union of men's actions with God – these are the ideas elaborated in the infinite secret depths of human thought. They are ideas without which there would be no life, without which I myself," said Tolstoy, "would not exist. I began to see that I had no right to rely on my individual reasoning and neglect these answers given by faith, for they are the only answers to the question."

Yet now believe as the common people believe, steeped as they are in grossest superstition? It is impossible, - but yet their life! their life! It is normal. It is happy! It is an answer to the question!

Little by little, Tolstoy came to the settled conviction – he says it took him two years to arrive there – that his trouble had not been with life in general, not with the common life of common men, but with the life of the upper, intellectual, artistic classes, the life which he had personally always led, the cerebral life, the life of conventionality, artificiality, and personal ambition. [Note: Read here all the normal values of human civilization.] He had been living wrongly and must change. To work for animal needs, to abjure lies and vanities, to relieve common wants, to be simple, to believe in God, therein lay happiness again.

"I remember," he says, "one day in early spring, I was alone in the forest, lending my ear to the mysterious noises. I listened, and my thought went back to what for these three years it always was busy with – the quest of God. But the idea of him, I said, how did I ever come by the idea?"

“And again there arose in me, with this thought, glad aspirations towards life. Everything in me awoke and received a meaning... Why do I look farther? a voice within me asked. He is there: he, without whom one cannot live. To acknowledge God and to live are one and the same thing. God is what life is. Well, then! live, seek God, and there will be no life without him...

“After this, things cleared up within me and about me better than ever, and the light has never wholly died away. I was saved from suicide. Just how or when the change took place I cannot tell. But as insensibly and gradually as the force of life had been annulled within me, and I had reached my moral death-bed, just as gradually and imperceptibly did the energy of life come back. And what was strong was that this energy that came back was nothing new. It was my ancient juvenile force of faith, the belief that the sole purpose of my life was to be *better*. I gave up my life of the conventional world, recognizing it to be no life, but a parody on life, which its superfluities simply keep us from comprehending,” – and Tolstoy thereupon embraced the life of the peasants, and has felt right and happy, or at least relatively so, ever since.

As I interpret his melancholy, then, it was not merely as accidental vitiation of his humors, though it was doubtless also that. It was logically called for by the clash between his inner character and his outer activities and aims. Although a literary artist, Tolstoy was one of those primitive oaks of men to whom the superfluities and insincerities, the cupidities, complications, and cruelties of our polite civilization are profoundly unsatisfying, and for whom the eternal veracities lie with more natural and animal things. His crisis was the getting of his soul in order, the discovery of its genuine habitat and vocation, the escape from falsehoods into what for him were ways of truth. It was the case of a heterogeneous personality tardily and slowly finding its unity and level. And though not many of us can imitate Tolstoy, not having enough, perhaps, of the aboriginal human marrow in our bones, most of us may at least feel as if it might be better for us if we could.

How to Resist Evil

(From *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*)

Tolstoy, a military veteran who had seen action as a Russian officer fighting in the Caucasus, later became an ardent advocate of nonviolent resistance. In this selection from an essay that influenced Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., he gives his reasons: the teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth.

PEOPLE ARE ASTONISHED that every year there are sixty thousand cases of suicide in Europe, and those only the recognized and recorded cases – and excluding Russia and Turkey; but one ought rather to be surprised that there are so few. Every person of the present day, if we go deep enough into the contradiction between his conscience and his life, is in a state of despair.

Not to speak of all the other contradictions between modern life and the conscience, the permanently armed condition of Europe together with its profession of Christianity is alone enough to drive anyone to despair, to doubt of the sanity of humankind, and to terminate an existence in this senseless and brutal world. This contradiction, which is a quintessence of all the other contradictions, is so terrible that to live and to take part in it is only possible if one does not think of it – if one is able to forget it.

What! All of us, Christians, not only profess to love one another, but do actually live one common life; we whose social existence beats with one common pulse – we aid one another, learn from one another, draw ever closer to one another to our mutual happiness, and find in this closeness the whole meaning of life! – and tomorrow some crazy ruler will say some stupidity, and another will answer in the same spirit, and then I must go expose myself to being murdered, and murder people – who have done me no harm – and more than that, whom I love. And this is not a remote contingency, but the very thing we are all preparing for, which is not only probable, but an inevitable certainty.

To recognize this clearly is enough to drive people out of their senses or to make them shoot themselves. And this is just what does happen, and especially often in the military. People need only come to themselves for an instant to be impelled inevitably to such an end.

And this is the only explanation of the dreadful intensity with which people of modern times strive to stupefy themselves, with spirits, tobacco, opium, cards, reading newspapers, traveling, and all kinds of spectacles and amusements. These pursuits are followed up as an important, serious business. And indeed they are a serious business. If there were no external means of dulling their sensibilities, half of humankind would shoot themselves without delay, for to live in opposition to one's reason is the most intolerable condition. And that is the condition of all people of the present day. All people of the modern world exist in a state of continual and flagrant antagonism between their conscience and their way of life. This antagonism is apparent in economic as well as political life. But most striking of all is the contradiction between the Christian law of the brotherhood of all people existing in the conscience and the necessity under which all men are placed by compulsory military service of being prepared for hatred and murder – of being at the same time a Christian and a gladiator.



Just as in a wicker basket all the ends are so hidden away that it is hard to find them, in the state organization the responsibility for the crimes committed is so hidden away that people will commit the most atrocious acts without seeing their responsibility for them.

In ancient times tyrants got credit for the crimes they committed, but in our day the most atrocious infamies, inconceivable under the Neros, are perpetrated and no one gets blamed for them.

One set of people have suggested, another set have proposed, a third have reported, a fourth have decided, a fifth have confirmed, a sixth have given the order, and a seventh set have carried it out. They hang, they flog to death women, old men, and innocent people, as was done recently among us in Russia at the Yuzovsky factory, and is always being done everywhere in Europe and America in the struggle with the anarchists and all other rebels against the existing order; they shoot and hang people by hundreds and thousands, or massacre millions in war, or break their hearts in solitary confinement, and ruin their souls in the corruption of a soldier's life, and no one is responsible.

At the bottom of the social scale soldiers, armed with guns, pistols, and sabers, injure and murder people, and compel people through these means to enter the army, and are absolutely convinced that the responsibility for the actions rests solely on the officers who command them. At the top of the scale – the tsars, presidents, ministers, and parliaments decree these tortures and murders and military conscription, and are fully convinced that since they are either placed in authority by the grace of God or by the society they govern, which demands such decrees from them, they cannot be held responsible.

Between these two extremes are the intermediary personages who superintend the murders and other acts of violence, and are fully convinced that the responsibility is taken off their shoulders partly by their superiors who have given the order, partly by the fact that such orders are expected from them by all who are at the bottom of the scale.

The authority who gives the orders and the authority who executes them at the two extreme ends of the state organization, meet together like the two ends of a ring; they support and rest on one another and enclose all that lies within the ring.

Without the conviction that there is a person or persons who will take the whole responsibility of his acts, not one soldier would ever lift a hand to commit a murder or other deed of violence. Without the conviction that it is expected by the whole people, not a single king, emperor, president, or parliament would order murders or acts of violence. Without the conviction that there are persons of a higher grade who will take the responsibility, and people of a lower grade who require such acts for their welfare, not one of the intermediate class would superintend such deeds.



Christianity is at once a doctrine of truth and a prophecy. Eighteen centuries ago Christianity revealed to people the truth in which they ought to live, and at the same time foretold what human life would become if they would not live by it but continued to live by their previous principles, and what it would become if they accepted the Christian doctrine and carried it out in their lives.

Laying down in the Sermon on the Mount the principles by which to guide people's lives, Christ said:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. (Matt. 7:24–27)

And now after eighteen centuries the prophecy has been fulfilled. Not having followed Christ's teaching generally and its application to social life in nonresistance to evil, we have been brought in spite of ourselves to the inevitable destruction foretold by Christ for those who do not fulfill his teaching.

People often think the question of nonresistance to evil by force is a theoretical one, which can be neglected. Yet this question is presented by life itself to all people, and calls for some answer from every thinking person. Ever since Christianity has been outwardly professed, this question is for people in their social life like the question which presents itself to a traveler when the road on which he has been journeying divides into two branches. He must go on and he cannot say: I will not think about it, but will go on just as I did before. There was one road, now there are two, and he must make his choice.

In the same way, since Christ's teaching has been known by people they cannot say: I will live as before and will not decide the question of resistance or nonresistance to evil by force. At every new struggle that arises one must inevitably decide; am I, or am I not, to resist by force what I regard as evil.

Tolstoy wrote *The Kingdom of God is Within You* well over a hundred years ago. His words are as fresh and pertinent today as when they were first written. Virtually every aspect of Judeo-Christian capitalist military-industrial society is contrary to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. There will be a reckoning.

Nekhlyudov Seeks Redemption

(From *Resurrection*)

When he had read the Sermon on the Mount, which had always touched him, he saw in it for the first time today not beautiful abstract thoughts, setting forth for the most part exaggerated and impossible demands, but simple, clear, practical laws. If these laws were carried out in practice (and this was quite possible) they would establish perfectly new and surprising conditions of social life, in which the violence that filled Nekhlyudov with such indignation would cease of itself. Not only this, but the greatest blessing that is obtainable to humankind – the kingdom of heaven on earth – would be established. There were five of these laws.

The first (Matt. 5:21–26), that man should not only do no murder, but not even be angry with his brother, should not consider anyone worthless: “Raca,” and if he has quarreled with anyone he should make it up with him before bringing his gift to God – i.e., before praying.

The second (Matt. 5:27–32), that man should not only not commit adultery but should not even seek for enjoyment in a woman’s beauty, and if he has once come together with a woman he should never be faithless to her.

The third (Matt. 5:33–37), that man should never bind himself by oath.

The fourth (Matt. 5:38–42), that man should not only not demand an eye for an eye, but when struck on one cheek should hold out the other, should forgive an offence and bear it humbly, and never refuse the service others demand of him.

The fifth (Matt. 5:43–48), that man should not only not hate his enemy and not fight him, but love him, help him, serve him.

Nekhlyudov sat staring at the lamp and his heart stood still. Recalling the monstrous confusion of the life we lead, he distinctly saw what that life could be if people were brought up to obey these rules, and rapture such as he had long not felt filled his soul, just as if after long days of weariness and suffering he had suddenly found ease and freedom.

What Is the Meaning of Life?

*(From *The Kingdom of God Is within You*)*

In this ringing conclusion to his classic essay, Tolstoy sums up the answers he has found to the questions that have haunted him all his life.

WHATEVER NAMES we dignify ourselves with, whatever uniforms we wear, whatever priests we anoint ourselves before, however many millions we possess, however many guards are stationed along our road, however many policemen guard our wealth, however many so-called criminals, revolutionists, and anarchists we punish, whatever exploits we have performed, whatever states we may have founded, fortresses and towers we may have erected – from Babel to the Eiffel Tower – there are two inevitable conditions of life, confronting all of us, which destroy its whole meaning: (1) death, which may at any moment pounce upon each of us; and (2) the transitoriness of all our works, which so soon pass away and leave no trace.

Whatever we may do – found companies, build palaces and monuments, write songs and poems – it is all not for very long. Soon it passes away, leaving no trace. And therefore, however we may conceal it from ourselves, we cannot help seeing that the significance of our life cannot lie in our personal fleshly existence, the prey of incurable suffering and inevitable death, nor in any social institution or organization. Whoever you may be who are reading these lines, think of your position and of your duties – not of your position as landowner, merchant, judge, emperor, president, minister, priest, soldier, which has been

temporarily allotted you by men, and not of the imaginary duties laid on you by those positions, but of your real positions in eternity as a creature who at the will of Someone has been called out of unconsciousness after an eternity of nonexistence to which you may return at any moment at his will. Think of your duties – not your supposed duties as a landowner to your estate, as a merchant to your business, or as emperor, minister, or official to the state, but of your real duties, the duties that follow from your real position as a being called into life and endowed with reason and love.

Are you doing what he demands of you who has sent you into the world, and to whom you will soon return? Are you doing what he wills? Are you doing his will, when as landowner or manufacturer you rob the poor of the fruits of their toil, basing your life on this plunder of the workers, or when, as judge or governor, you ill-treat others, sentence them to execution, or when as soldiers you prepare for war, kill and plunder? ...

It cannot be.

Even if you are told that all this is necessary for the maintenance of the existing order of things, and that this social order with its pauperism, famines, prisons, gallows, armies, and wars is necessary to society – at the bottom of your heart you know yourself that it is not true, that the existing organization has outlived its time, and must inevitably be reconstructed on new principles, and that consequently there is no obligation upon you to sacrifice your sentiments of humanity to support it. ... If you did not desire your position, you would not be doing your utmost to retain it. Try the experiment of ceasing to commit the cruel, treacherous, and base actions that you are constantly committing in order to retain your position, and you will lose it at once. Try the simple experiment, as a government official, of giving up lying, and refusing to take a part in executions and acts of violence; as a priest, of giving up deception; as a soldier, of giving up murder; as landowner or manufacturer, of giving up defending your property by fraud and force; and you will at once lose the position which you pretend is forced upon you, and which seems burdensome to you.

A man cannot be placed against his will in a situation opposed to his conscience.

If you find yourself in such a position it is not because it is necessary to anyone whatever, but simply because you wish it. And therefore knowing that your position is repugnant to your heart and your head, and to your faith, and even to the science in which you believe, you cannot help reflecting upon the question whether in retaining it, and above all trying to justify it, you are doing what you ought to do.



It would be perfectly simple and clear if you did not by your hypocrisy disguise the truth which has so unmistakably been revealed to us:

Share all that you have with others, do not heap up riches, do not steal, do not cause suffering, do not kill, do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you, all

that has been said not eighteen hundred, but five thousand years ago, and there could be no doubt of the truth of this law if it were not for hypocrisy. Except for hypocrisy human beings could not have failed, if not to put the law into practice, at least to recognize it, and admit that it is wrong not to put it into practice. ...

There is one thing, and only one thing, in which it is granted to you to be free in life, all else being beyond your power: that is to recognize and profess the truth.

And yet simply from the fact that other people as misguided and as pitiful creatures as yourself have made you soldier, emperor, landowner, capitalist, priest, or general, you undertake to commit acts of violence obviously opposed to your reason and your heart, to base your existence on the misfortunes of others, and above all, instead of fulfilling the one duty of your life, recognizing and professing the truth, you feign not to recognize it and disguise it from yourself and others.

And what are the conditions in which you are doing this? You who may die any instant, you sign sentences of death, you declare war, you take part in it, you judge, you punish, you plunder the working people, you live luxuriously in the midst of the poor, and teach weak people who have confidence in you that this must be so, that one's duty is to do this, and yet it may happen at the moment when you are acting thus that a bacterium or a bull may attack you and you will fall and die, losing forever the chance of repairing the harm you have done to others, and above all to yourself, in uselessly wasting a life which has been given you only once in eternity, without having accomplished the only thing you ought to have done.

However commonplace and out-of-date it may seem to us, however confused we may be by hypocrisy and by the hypnotic suggestion which results from it, nothing can destroy the certainty of this simple and clearly defined truth. No external conditions can guarantee our life, which is attended with inevitable sufferings and infallibly terminated by death. Our life therefore can have no significance except through faithfully doing what is demanded by the Power which has placed us in life with a sole certain guide – the rational conscience.

That is why that Power cannot require of us what is irrational and impossible: the organization of our temporary external life, the life of society, or of the state. That Power demands of us only what is reasonable, certain, and possible: to serve the kingdom of God, that is, to contribute to the establishment of the greatest possible union between all living beings – a union possible only in the truth; and to recognize recognize and to profess the revealed truth, which is always in our power.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matt. 6:33).

The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity by contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God, which can only be done by the recognition and profession of the truth by every human being.

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20–21).

Tolstoy has been criticized for adopting a too legalistic or literal interpretation of Christ's sermon on the mount. In fact the primary message he extracts from it is that the essence of love is the non-violent resistance to evil. He builds his whole theology around a negative precept. It has been pointed out that this would make human society totally unworkable. In fact following Tolstoy a group calling themselves Christian anarchists was formed. But that is surely the point. Tolstoy himself did everything he could to divest himself of his title, his wealth, and all the trappings of civilized life. He had a profound conviction that human society itself is evil and he wanted it to self-destruct.

