Editor's Page

Plea From the Father of a Kidnapped Son

Dear Friend,

This is a desperate plea from Gustavo Belluscio and his family.

My son Pablo Belluscio of Buenos Aires was kidnapped on September 22 at 12:30 a.m. by an extortionist gang of criminals over a month ago, and they cut off two joints of his right index finger and sent them to us - together with indescribable and “explicit” videos. And further, they threaten to continue amputating and to kill him.

They demand an amount of money impossible for us to raise. He is in the hands of sadistic extortionist kidnappers. Today it’s our beloved Pablo, but tomorrow it could be the son or daughter of any Argentine family, because there have already been over 40 cases in less than two months, and the figure is increasing.

This is all surrounded by sepulchral silence, we desperately need all possible collaboration from all the mothers and fathers of the whole world. We don’t want money, we only want this to become known to everyone, we must make it known, not cover reality with a blanket of silence, regardless of how horrible it is.

The means we consider to be helpful is simple and peaceful: send emails to the Argentine government, the Federal Police, radios, newspapers, television, saturating them with requests for information by all friends and friends of friends, using the maximum pressure, that this not be silenced, that no one is
I, Gustavo Belluscio, and my family will be eternally grateful. Our beloved son Pablo is in mortal danger as tomorrow could be the son or daughter of any family. It is terrible that a family is obliged to pay the mutilators, executioners of its own son.

This is a country where the people must pay for the cutting down of members of their families. IT CANNOT BE, THIS CANNOT BE SILENCED, it must be revealed to the whole world, and especially saturate the press, justice, government, police, etc. of the Argentine Republic.

Thank you, friend, it is not only Pablo, it is for ALL AND ANY ARGENTINE CHILD AND/OR OF ANY NATIONALITY.

Grateful from my heart whoever you may be and God bless you.

On November 6, 2003, Pablo was released after his family paid a ransom of 147,500 US dollars. He was found wandering in shock on a highway dressed only in his underwear. A guard for a gated community spotted him, gave him a jacket and sent him home in a taxi. He had been in captivity for 43 days. Physically - except for missing two-thirds of his right index finger - he seems to be all right. His psychological condition is unknown. Meanwhile, his father had sent the above message not only to the press, but by email to everyone he knew, with the request to forward it. It eventually reached thousands of Argentines who finally felt that this was the last straw. Huge demonstrations took place place in Buenos Aires, with citizens demanding an end to these horrors. Do demonstrations affect criminals? Of course not, but Gustavo Belluscio and the public were demonstrating against the government, banging their pots and pans. The last time this happened the previous government (De la Rua) fell. There is strong suspicion, almost certainty, that the corrupt Buenos Aires provincial police are involved in these kidnappings, either organizing them or providing "free zones" for their perpetration, then getting a cut of the ransoms. The president (Kirchner) screamed, yes, yes, we must stop this. And suddenly, after Pablo was released, eight people from a shanty town were arrested. No one knows yet if are really really guilty or only "the usual suspects". The government expressed its satisfaction that Pablo had been freed.
But Pablo's father isn't finished. He sent another message saying expressing satisfaction isn't enough. He wants the ransom money back, "if only to burn it", for if not it will finance more kidnappings. Police chiefs are being purged, the Federal Police have organized a special task force for kidnapping cases, the armed forces may even be used.

To be fair, this government is relatively new and seems to be sincere in its desire to reverse the trend of violence and insecurity. But the mafia is well entrenched in police and political circles, corruption is the order of the day and poverty is epidemic. [Editor]
Hi, Frank,

There is a piece from your Editor’s Page of the last SCR that I would like to comment on:

Bush & Co. swore right and left that the United States was in imminent danger of attack from Iraq because they had or were developing atomic weapons and held vast stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. Furthermore, bin Laden and his al Qaeda were bosom buddies with Saddam Hussein and they probably plotted 9-11 together. All this has turned out to be false.

The matter of WMD has become a core-question that even might become crucial for Bush’s reelection. His popularity is melting away like snow in the spring sun. A whole armada of US-inspectors did not find a rat’s tail of WMD so far. Bush declined any international inspectors to search independently who could verify any findings. Now GWB has started his preparatory election campaign, and he said he is sure that his inspectors will find WMD in Iraq.

So something is pretty sure: They WILL find WMD quite soon, I guess. Some special task force has had ample time for hiding such weapons somewhere in a lonely place. They need the time for making the proof water-tight. That is why they have not "found" them as yet.

If the next weeks will prove that I am wrong, so much the better. But there is such overwhelming evidence of frauds in the past that any trust in presidents like the present one would be naive.

The people of my country used to be firm admirers of American freedom and everything. Now deep disappointment of the official political representatives is far spread and the bookshops are full of such literature, much of it by US authors. But our cultural elite over here
differentiates well. For example, Susan Sontag will be awarded the "peace prize" of the German Booksellers. (A similar message as the Nobel peace prize to Jimmy Carter last year.)

Sad regards,
Oluf Böhm
Germany

Frank,

"Dreams" is not very good. I started this piece sometime in early July, and then a funny thing happened on my way to the computer. I got a tremendous pain in my back and within 24 hours-whammo! Two nurses, three assistants and a surgeon laid me on a downy white sheet and tinkered with my heart for four hours.

Everything came out OK, but since that day 3 months ago, I haven't been able to write a thing. As you know I am fairly new to writing, I will celebrate my first anniversary in December. I told a friend of mine who also writes, about my inability to focus. She said it was 'Writers Block' and recommend that I read a lot and make myself sit down at the computer and stare at the blank screen for at least a half hour a day.

I have taken her advise. I have been reading a lot lately. I came across this terrific short story just by chance, Knock On Wood, by Frank Thomas Smith, and I just wanted you to know how good it is. I also wanted you to know that as I sit today in front of my blank screen, waiting for something to happen, I think about "Knock On Wood" by Frank Thomas Smith and I realize that even if something does happen, it will never be quite as good. And so I turn off my screen, head for the library looking for a book on Writers Block, and promise myself I will never read your stuff again.

Well, maybe?
Regards,

Mike Ingles.

U.S.A

[Mike Ingles has had several stories published in southern Cross Review. See Back Issues. The above letter is in reference to his last submission, which we had to reject.- Ed.]

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am reading your translation of Towards Social Renewal* right now and am grateful for your work. I am wondering how you are applying this in your life personal and professional. I live in America and am finding all of Steiner's works so healing but almost invisible. The Waldorf schools are so financially unhealthy, and what about all the BD potential?

Peace to you,

Jane Parker

U.S.A.

*The real, literally translated title is "Basic Issues of the Social Question". "Towards Social Renewal" is the title finally agreed on with the print publisher (Rudolf Steiner Press, London) when the translation was first published in 1975. Actually the editor wanted "Towards Social Harmony"- to which I objected strenuously, so "Towards Social Renewal", with the subtitle "Basic Issues of the Social Question", was a compromise. A new translation (not by me) was issued by the same publisher in 1999. Title? You guessed it: "Towards Social Renewal", with the subtitle: "Rethinking the Basis of Society". - Ed.]
Mr. President, the Emperor has no clothes. This entire adventure in Iraq has been based on propaganda and manipulation. Eighty-seven billion dollars is too much to pay for the continuation of a war based on falsehoods.

In 1837, Danish author, Hans Christian Andersen, wrote a wonderful fairy tale which he titled The Emperor's New Clothes. It may be the very first example of the power of political correctness. It is the story of the Ruler of a distant land who was so enamored of his appearance and his clothing that he had a different suit for every hour of the day.

One day two rogues arrived in town, claiming to be gifted weavers. They convinced the Emperor that they could weave the most wonderful cloth, which had a magical property. The clothes were only visible to those who were completely pure in heart and spirit.

The Emperor was impressed and ordered the weavers to begin work immediately. The rogues, who had a deep understanding of human nature, began to feign work on empty looms.

Minister after minister went to view the new clothes and all came back exhorting the beauty of the cloth on the looms even though none of them could see a thing.
Finally a grand procession was planned for the Emperor to display his new finery. The Emperor went to view his clothes and was shocked to see absolutely nothing, but he pretended to admire the fabulous cloth, inspect the clothes with awe, and, after disrobing, go through the motions of carefully putting on a suit of the new garments.

Under a royal canopy the Emperor appeared to the admiring throng of his people - - all of whom cheered and clapped because they all knew the rogue weavers' tale and did not want to be seen as less than pure of heart.

But, the bubble burst when an innocent child loudly exclaimed, for the whole kingdom to hear, that the Emperor had nothing on at all. He had no clothes. That tale seems to me very like the way this nation was led to war.

We were told that we were threatened by weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but they have not been seen.

We were told that the throngs of Iraqis would welcome our troops with flowers, but no throngs or flowers appeared.

We were led to believe that Saddam Hussein was connected to the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, but no evidence has ever been produced.

We were told in 16 words that Saddam Hussein tried to buy "yellow cake" from Africa for production of nuclear weapons, but the story has turned into empty air.

We were frightened with visions of mushroom clouds, but they turned out to be only vapors of the mind.
We were told that major combat was over but 101 [as of October 17] Americans have died in combat since that proclamation from the deck of an aircraft carrier by our very own Emperor in his new clothes.

Our emperor says that we are not occupiers, yet we show no inclination to relinquish the country of Iraq to its people.

Those who have dared to expose the nakedness of the Administration's policies in Iraq have been subjected to scorn. Those who have noticed the elephant in the room -- that is, the fact that this war was based on falsehoods - have had our patriotism questioned. Those who have spoken aloud the thought shared by hundreds of thousands of military families across this country, that our troops should return quickly and safely from the dangers half a world away, have been accused of cowardice. We have then seen the untruths, the dissembling, the fabrication, the misleading inferences surrounding this rush to war in Iraq wrapped quickly in the flag.

The right to ask questions, debate, and dissent is under attack. The drums of war are beaten ever louder in an attempt to drown out those who speak of our predicament in stark terms.

Even in the Senate, our history and tradition of being the world's greatest deliberative body is being snubbed. This huge spending bill has been rushed through this chamber in just one month. There were just three open hearings by the Senate Appropriations Committee on $87 billion, without a single outside witness called to challenge the Administration's line.

Ambassador Bremer went so far as to refuse to return to the appropriations Committee to answer additional questions because, and I quote: "I don't have time. I'm completely booked, and I have to get back to Baghdad to my duties."

Despite this callous stiff-arm of the Senate and its duties to ask questions in order to represent the American people, few dared to voice their opposition to rushing this bill through these halls of Congress.
Perhaps they were intimidated by the false claims that our troops are in immediate need of more funds.

But the time has come for the sheep-like political correctness which has bowed members of this Senate to come to an end.

Mr. President, the Emperor has no clothes. This entire adventure in Iraq has been based on propaganda and manipulation. Eighty-seven billion dollars is too much to pay for the continuation of a war based on falsehoods.

Mr. President, taking the nation to war based on misleading rhetoric and hyped intelligence is a travesty and a tragedy. It is the most cynical of all cynical acts. It is dangerous to manipulate the truth. It is dangerous because once having lied, it is difficult to ever be believed again. Having misled the American people and stampeded them to war, this Administration must now attempt to sustain a policy predicated on falsehoods. The President asks for billions from those same citizens who know that they were misled about the need to go to war. We misinformed and insulted our friends and allies and now this Administration is having more than a little trouble getting help from the international community. It is perilous to mislead.

The single-minded obsession of this Administration to now make sense of the chaos in Iraq, and the continuing propaganda which emanates from the White House painting Iraq as the geographical center of terrorism is distracting our attention from Afghanistan and the 60 other countries in the world where terrorists hide. It is sapping resources which could be used to make us safer from terrorists on our own shores. The body armor for our own citizens still has many, many chinks.

Have we forgotten that the most horrific terror attacks in history occurred right here at home! Yet, this Administration turns back money for homeland security, while the President pours billions into security for Iraq. I am powerless to understand or explain such a policy.
I have tried mightily to improve this bill. I twice tried to separate the reconstruction money in this bill, so that those dollars could be considered separately from the military spending. I offered an amendment to force the Administration to craft a plan to get other nations to assist the troops and formulate a plan to get the U.N. in, and the U.S. out, of Iraq. Twice I tried to rid the bill of expansive, flexible authorities that turn this $87 billion into a blank check. The American people should understand that we provide more foreign aid for Iraq in this bill, $20.3 billion, than we provide for the rest of the entire world! I attempted to remove from this bill billions in wasteful programs and divert those funds to better use. But, at every turn, my efforts were thwarted by the vapid argument that we must all support the requests of the Commander in Chief.

I cannot stand by and continue to watch our grandchildren become increasingly burdened by the billions that fly out of the Treasury for a war and a policy based largely on propaganda and prevarication. We are borrowing $87 billion to finance this adventure in Iraq. The President is asking this Senate to pay for this war with increased debt, a debt that will have to be paid by our children and by those same troops that are currently fighting this war. I cannot support outlandish tax cuts that plunge our country into potentially disastrous debt while our troops are fighting and dying in a war that the White House chose to begin.

I cannot support the continuation of a policy that unwisely ties down 150,000 American troops for the foreseeable future, with no end in sight.

I cannot support a President who refuses to authorize the reasonable change in course that would bring traditional allies to our side in Iraq.

I cannot support the politics of zeal and "might makes right" that created the new American arrogance and unilateralism which passes for foreign policy in this Administration.

I cannot support this foolish manifestation of the dangerous and destabilizing doctrine of preemption that changes the image of America into that of a reckless bully.
Mr. President, the emperor has no clothes. And our former allies around the world were the first to loudly observe it.

I shall vote against this bill because I cannot support a policy based on prevarication. I cannot support doling out 87 billion of our hard-earned tax dollars when I have so many doubts about the wisdom of its use.

Mr. President, I began my remarks with a fairy tale. I shall close my remarks with a horror story, in the form of a quote from the book Nuremberg Diaries, written by G.M. Gilbert, in which the author interviews Hermann Goering.

"We got around to the subject of war again and I said that, contrary to his attitude, I did not think that the common people are very thankful for leaders who bring them war and destruction.

"... But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship."

"There is one difference," I pointed out. "In a democracy the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and in the United States only Congress can declare wars."

"Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country."
Schooling the Imagination

by Todd Oppenheimer

Waldorf schools, which began in the esoteric mind of the Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner, have forged a unique blend of progressive and traditional teaching methods that seem to achieve impressive results -- intellectual, social, even moral.

DRIVING down out of the foothills of Yuba County, California, at dawn recently, past wide, flat fruit orchards, abandoned stony gold mines, and endless river levees, I asked my escort, Ruth Mikkelsen, the principal of the local school for juvenile offenders, what the area's main industry was. "Methamphetamine," she said with a chuckle. Yuba County lives with some of California's most dismal demographic statistics. Its unemployment rate is 12.8 percent, twice the state average. Teen pregnancy rates and the proportion of children on welfare are among the state's highest. The county sends a larger percentage of its adults to prison than any other county in the state. It also has the highest proportion of children classified as low-income (68 percent), and the state's stingiest dads when it comes to child-support payments.

As we entered Marysville, the county seat, we passed a scattering of burnt-out storefronts bandaged with dry, broken boards -- reminders that until the 1950s this town was locally famous for its rich economy of bars, brothels, opium dens, and gambling houses. Descendants of those days now fill Ruth Mikkelsen's classrooms at Thomas E. Mathews Community School. "If you take all the kids who are being thrown out of school and put them in one room, those are the kids we have," Mikkelsen said. "One of those kids in a normal class will pretty much destroy that class." It was easy to see what she meant. When we pulled up to the school, a group of boys playing basketball on a crumbling court out front were guarding each other with real hostility. Inside, a dozen boys and girls, dressed in the school's official uniform of blue jeans and white T-shirts, jostled and sassed each other in the tiny common room. One hulking skinhead leaned against the wall, alone, slump-shouldered, quiet, angry.

Underneath this toughness, one could see signs of softness and hope. Before I'd even started exploring, Gary, a skinny fourteen-year-old, spontaneously grabbed me for a quick tour of what I had come to watch: how the Waldorf-school movement, an old, Austria-bred system of private education, is working in a new venue -- a hard-boiled public institution for troublemakers. After introducing me to each of his teachers, Gary walked me past the primary tools of the Waldorf day: the recorders every student learns to play, the numerous paintings and art projects, and a pile of "main lesson books" -- lengthy creative reports by students on their studies in each academic subject, which they must generate every few weeks.

Later, during an English class, I noticed a fifteen-year-old I'll call Robert waving his hand desperately. A small boy with an angelic walnut-brown face, Robert had been expelled from his previous school for smoking marijuana; soon after his arrival at Mathews, he jumped out the probation officer's window and ran away. On the day I visited, Robert sat attentive throughout a two-hour class. When the teacher finally
called on him, he flawlessly recited six lines memorized from The Merchant of
Venice. In the early days, Evelyn Arcuri, the teacher, said later, when she asked the
students to return their materials, "they would just toss stuff at me. Now there's
better control. They're more engaged." I noticed something similar. One
twelve-year-old boy sat with me after school, regaling me, in enthusiastic detail, with
a creative mixture of Greek and Roman history. The boy could barely read, but he'd
been inspired by the oral storytelling that Waldorf teachers emphasize. These
roughnecks even like Waldorf's focus on art. Thomas, an outgoing and restless
seventeen-year-old, had found that when he was forced to draw pictures of stories
he had read or heard, "you get more visual ideas of what you're doing." Arcuri
believes she can see that the students are learning more from what they draw. "This
year kids are saying, 'Can I take this home?' We never had that happen before."

Mikkelsen and her teachers attribute these changes to the battery of skills they
learned at Rudolf Steiner College, a small private school near Sacramento that
serves as the West Coast teacher-training center for Waldorf schools. Much of what
teachers learn there is how to reach children through all their senses.
Child-development experts have long advocated a multisensory approach to
learning -- as a way both to deeply imprint lessons in a youngster and to
accommodate the different learning styles that are bound to exist among diverse
students, particularly those with learning difficulties. Yet few education systems in
this country have the history with these methods that Waldorf schools do. "I now
have a way to give it to them many times, in different ways," Arcuri told me. "We had
tried everything with these kids," Mikkelsen recalls. "Nothing worked. You can't
lecture to them. Independent study doesn't work. They need constant support and a
lot of socializing." During Mikkelsen's discussions with teachers at the Steiner
College, "I said to them, 'If this is so good, if Rudolf Steiner is as hot as you say,
then this will work for our kids. Otherwise, it's another bunch of elitist B.S.'"

Several years later an outside evaluator dropped by the Mathews School. After his
visit he told Mikkelsen that the effectiveness of her program for juvenile offenders
couldn't be fairly judged, because it was clear that she did not have truly problem
kids. "I suddenly realized it was working," Mikkelsen recalls. John Cobb, the local
probation manager, has a similar impression. "Kids who can't make it anywhere else
can make it here," he told me.

The main lesson books at Mathews and other Waldorf schools illustrate Waldorf's
unusual mixture of teaching techniques. The books are filled with students' careful
records of field trips and classroom experiments; impressions of the teachers' regular oral presentations; and, in more advanced classes, syntheses of what the
students have read in primary sources. (Waldorf teachers avoid textbooks, considering their digested information a poor substitute for original material.) The
texts were neatly handwritten, with fountain pens. They were also often
accompanied by detailed drawings and poetry, some of which the students had
written themselves. Playfulness is encouraged in these books, because Waldorf
teachers believe that imaginative wanderings can be just as educational as objective
facts and conclusions, if not more so.

This notion, that imagination is the heart of learning, animates the entire arc of
Waldorf teaching. When that concept is coupled with the schools' other fundamental
goal, to give youngsters a sense of ethics, the result is a pedagogy that stands even
further apart from today's system of education, with its growing emphasis on
national performance standards in subjects such as mathematics, science, and
reading and its increasing rigor in standardized testing -- to say nothing of the
campaign to fill classrooms with computers. This is not to suggest that Waldorf
schools have a monopoly on contrarian ideas; Quaker and other religious schools teach ethics too. And various alternative private schools have been practicing innovative approaches to learning for years. Obviously, some Waldorf practices will resemble those in many of these schools. But that makes the Waldorf method all the more intriguing, because the daily experiences of one creative education system ought to tell us something about the challenges and possibilities for other schools, both alternative and traditional.

It is odd, actually, that the public knows so little about Waldorf schools, because they've been operating in this country since 1928 and have collected quite a few famous followers (Waldorf parents have included Paul Newman, Joe Namath, John DeLorean, and Mikhail Baryshnikov; graduates include Victor Navasky, the publisher of The Nation, and Ken Chenault, the president of American Express). During the past twenty-five years in particular, Waldorf schools have proliferated vigorously; roughly 130 now operate in the United States, and 700 worldwide. Waldorf schools are quite possibly the world's fastest-growing independent school system; David Alsop, the chairman of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, calls them the world's "best-kept education secret."

The secret is getting out. In the past decade a dozen public schools have adopted Waldorf methods, in an effort to enliven classrooms that many educators see as having become sterile job factories. Unfortunately, some of the Waldorf methods have caused trouble of their own, both in public schools and in private Waldorf classrooms. There has been controversy and a lawsuit, stemming largely from the attention that Waldorf teachers pay to an unorthodox form of spirituality. (To some critics, this threatens the prevailing taboo against teaching religion in a public school.) Running through these bumps, however, is a substantial record of achievement -- one that has earned the respect of a number of leading figures, from Howard Gardner, the prominent Harvard professor of education and psychology, to the well-known education reformer Theodore Sizer, to Saul Bellow, whose hero in the novel Humboldt's Gift is fascinated by the philosophy of Waldorf's creator.

Proletarian Beginnings

WALDORF education was born one spring day in 1919, when Rudolf Steiner, a maverick Austrian philosopher and scientist, visited the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany, to give a speech to its workers. The First World War had ended just five months earlier, and Steiner talked about the need for a new social order, a new sense of ethics, and a less damaging way of resolving conflict. After the lecture Emil Molt, the factory owner, asked Steiner if he would consider starting a school for the workers' children. Steiner agreed, insisting on some conditions, including that his school be run by the teachers. (That rule has spawned occasionally chaotic but cooperative styles of Waldorf-school management today. And it prefigured the modern-day theory, popularized by the Yale psychiatrist and school reformer James Comer, that for education to work, teachers and parents must be involved in school decisions.) Steiner also insisted on a highly ambitious curriculum. "The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility -- these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education," he once said. Twenty years after the Stuttgart school opened, the Nazis shut it down, along with six other Waldorf schools that had sprung up by then. The reason, according to the state press at the time, was that Germany had no room for two kinds of education -- one that educated citizens for the state and another that taught children to think for themselves.

By then seven other Waldorf schools had been started around the world -- three in
Switzerland, and one each in London, Budapest, Oslo, and New York City. (The Waldorf schools in Germany reopened after the Nazi regime collapsed, and the German contingent now numbers approximately 140.) Today, although the schools' Old World academic philosophy runs counter to some academic trends, it may dovetail with others. "All the things you read about public schools," Mikkelsen told me, "that you need to do this, you need to do that -- hell, they've been doing it for eighty years."

Mikkelsen was referring to myriad reforms that policymakers incessantly propose to reverse a range of problems besetting American youngsters: gradually weakening morality and family structure; students' shrinking capacity for creativity and self-discipline, and their increasing turns to violence; diminishing appreciation for the nuances of language in reading, writing, and conversation; and graduates' spotty preparation for the professional world. When pressed on such issues, school administrators often grumble that they're being asked to handle problems better solved outside school -- at home or, later, in the workplace. That may miss the main piece in the education puzzle. Steve Grineski, the interim dean of the College of Education and Human Services at Moorhead State University, in Minnesota, said, speaking before the Littleton, Colorado, horror, "The most serious problem in schools is kids not getting along. The reason people get fired isn't their lack of job skills, it's their lack of social skills." That is precisely why Mikkelsen was attracted to Waldorf. "It's like learning to be a really good parent, plus tapping into every creative thing you ever thought of," she says. Ben Klocek, a high school senior at the Sacramento Waldorf School, whose family has been involved in Waldorf for years, says, "Have you ever heard of that thing about emotional intelligence?" He is referring to Daniel Goleman's provocative book Emotional Intelligence (1995), which suggested that IQ isn't nearly as important as personal traits such as self-awareness, confidence, and flexibility. "Waldorf," Klocek says, "gives you very high emotional intelligence."

Although the Mathews School has embraced Waldorf teaching techniques with enthusiasm, it has chosen to forgo parts of the Waldorf curriculum, which can be too involved for a thinly educated student body that comes and goes as this one does. I was eager, therefore, to visit some of the private Waldorf schools elsewhere in California and on the East Coast, where the full program has been practiced for decades. There, I hoped, I would see how both teachers and students have fared in their attempts to realize Steiner's dreams of enriching people's imaginations and ethical sensibilities, and putting them to work in modern daily life.

The Primacy of Imagination

WALDORF teachers offer roughly the same subjects other teachers do. Before introducing facts, however, they take a few steps back, and sideways.

Rudolf Steiner believed that people actually have twelve senses -- the accepted five plus thought, language, warmth, balance, movement, life, and the individuality of the other. Vague as some of these additional "senses" sound, most of them have been roughly confirmed by modern research. John Bloom, who was the administrator of the San Francisco Waldorf School at the time of my visit, said, "We try to engage and connect the thinking and feeling realms. When you separate those, therapists get [students] as adult patients." On my visits to Waldorf schools I felt as if I were watching sensory foundations being built in each class, almost in layers.

Walking into the kindergarten class at the San Francisco Waldorf School one morning, I felt my stomach relax. The lights were dim, the colors soft pastel.
Intriguing materials for play were everywhere. The children had organized them into a half dozen distinctly different fantasy worlds -- there was a make-believe woodshop in one corner; in another, reminiscent of a farmhouse bedroom, two girls were putting a curiously bland doll to bed in a cradle. This doll, I learned, is standard issue in Waldorf kindergartens. It's the old-fashioned sort, simple stuffed cotton, with almost no facial features. "The only thing an intelligent child can do with a complete toy is take it apart," a kindergarten teacher told me. "An incomplete toy lets children use their imaginations." There were also wild hats and capes, pinecones and driftwood, bowls of nuts and other items from the natural world. John Bloom explained that the raw materials are meant not to celebrate nature but to challenge children's spatial creativity.

Most adults think it's cute when children imitate whatever they see. Waldorf teachers take it seriously. Susan Kotansky, a kindergarten teacher at the recently closed Westside Community School, in Manhattan, which used the Waldorf methods for several years, said that at first her students imitated superheroes they'd seen on television. In time, after they had cooked with their teachers, worked with them on other projects, and listened to fables and fairy tales with their moral lessons (a staple in Waldorf primary grades), "their play changed and got more purposeful." Learning through practical experience is a concept long advocated by progressive education leaders, particularly the turn-of-the-century reformer John Dewey. In recent years the idea has been gaining popularity, though it is still rarely put into practice.

To my surprise, young Waldorf children seemed to understand the principles embedded in their exercises -- so well, in fact, that they could comfortably explain Steiner's methodology themselves. At the original U.S. Waldorf school, the Rudolf Steiner School, housed in two limestone townhouses on Manhattan's Upper East Side, I fell into a provocative discussion one morning with a dozen fourth-graders. The class was finishing a year-long project: making mallets for wood carving out of stubborn pieces of hardwood, which they were patiently filing and sanding by hand. One boy, who had finished his mallet, was making a knife out of teak, and regularly paused to feel its smoothness on his cheek. Waldorf students work on some kind of art project virtually every day. Recalling her early years, Eliana Raviv, a ten-year-old, told me, "We never had green or purple. We make it out of vermilion, red, yellow, and blue, two kinds of blue. It's important to get forms out of your own painting. That way you learn how to develop forms." Waldorf students aren't graded on their work until around the seventh grade; Eliana's classmate, Maisie Weir, told me about a friend in a traditional public school in Atlanta. "All they think about is tests," she said. "They don't even have recess anymore." In the early grades students also do quite a bit of drawing with crayons -- not the standard paraffin Crayolas but thick chunks of beeswax imported from Germany. Beeswax that can be molded after warming in the hand is also used to teach sculpting. There is an almost bland conformity to most student artwork in the early grades -- an oddity that repels more than a few parents. But the purpose is to build a foundation of technique. Sure enough, in the work of older students one sees plenty of refinement and individuality.

But why learn an archaic art like wood carving moments before we enter the twenty-first century? "You almost need it as a balance for the high-tech world," Tove Elfstrom, the woodshop teacher at the Washington Waldorf School, in Bethesda, Maryland, explained to me during my visit. "So they can make something. To give them an innate sense of material." Various studies have found that engagement with physical tasks -- those requiring great dexterity but also surprisingly simple activities -- helps to build other skills, both intellectual and psychological. Or, as Elfstrom put it, "Your finger sense develops your overall brain capacity." Waldorf teachers believe
that one of their primary jobs is to help youngsters develop a strong will. To do that, they argue, students must learn that the rewards they reap from an experience require a commensurate amount of effort -- mental, physical, even emotional. Many Waldorf loyalists lay the blame for some of the troubles of today's youth on cultural forces that tilt the balance -- technology being chief among them. As Douglas Gerwin, a Waldorf high school teacher, puts it, technology "promises an experience by which we don't have to do anything to make it happen." This is why teachers discourage younger students from watching television and don't generally expose them to computers until the eighth grade or later. The delay doesn't seem to do much harm. Peter Nitze, who graduated from the Rudolf Steiner School, Harvard, and Stanford, is now a global-operations director at AlliedSignal, which manufactures aerospace and automotive products. At a recent open house at the Steiner School, Nitze told the audience, "If you've had the experience of binding a book, knitting a sock, playing a recorder, then you feel that you can build a rocket ship -- or learn a software program you've never touched. It's not a bravado, just a quiet confidence. There is nothing you can't do. Why couldn't you? Why couldn't anybody?"

Emphasis on the creative also guides the aspect of a Waldorf education that probably frightens parents more than any other: the relaxed way that children learn to read. Whereas students at more-competitive schools are mastering texts in first grade, sometimes even in kindergarten, most Waldorf students aren't reading fully until the third grade. And if they're still struggling at that point, many Waldorf teachers don't worry. In combination with another Waldorf oddity -- sending children to first grade a year later than usual -- this means that students may not be reading until age nine or ten, several years after many of their peers. In earlier times the idea that children might come to reading later, at their own pace, was considered appropriate. David Elkind, a noted child psychologist at Tufts University, cites prodigious evidence, particularly from other countries, that late readers ultimately fare better at reading and other subjects than early readers. A number of prominent figures, including Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein, were very late readers. But in today's competitive frenzy the drive in this country is to get children to learn as much as they can, about reading or anything else, as early as possible.

It's no surprise, then, that Waldorf parents occasionally panic. Others may distrust Waldorf education because they have heard tales of parents who pulled their children out of a Waldorf school in the third grade when the kids still couldn't read. "That's like a standing joke," Toba Winer, the mother of two graduates of the Rudolf Steiner School, told me. "People say, 'Oh, can your kids read?' There was no concerted effort to drum certain words into the kids. And that was the point." Before teaching sound and word recognition, Waldorf teachers concentrate on exercises to build up a child's love of language. The technique seems to work, even in public schools. Barbara Warren, a teacher at John Morse, a public school near Sacramento, says that two years after Waldorf methods were introduced in her fourth-grade class of mostly minority children, the number of students who read at grade level doubled, rising from 45 to 85 percent. "I didn't start by making them read more," Warren says. "I started telling stories, and getting them to recite poetry that they learned by listening, not by reading. They became incredible listeners." Many Waldorf parents recall that their children were behind their friends in non-Waldorf schools but somehow caught up in the third or fourth grade, and then suddenly read with unusual fervor.

Still, the system isn't fail-safe. Although Waldorf teachers learn techniques, phonic and otherwise, that can pinpoint reading troubles, some have such faith in the
Waldorf way that they overlook children with real disabilities -- a problem that school leaders consider the teacher's failing, not the system's. Nonetheless, I spoke to several disgruntled parents whose children were later found through outside testing to have dyslexia or other reading difficulties. Such accounts obviously inflame the worries of some reading experts; others are less concerned. Lucy Calkins, a well-known reading specialist at the Teachers College of Columbia University, says that in most public schools children who start reading later tend to do worse, and Waldorf students might benefit slightly from starting earlier. But, she says, "I would not necessarily be worried in a Waldorf school. The foundation of literacy is talk and play."

Music's Power

MUSIC is as central as art in the Waldorf curriculum. Practice begins in first grade, with recorders that are stored in cases the students knit themselves; in fourth grade they each choose an orchestral instrument. A typical Waldorf school offers several different music classes -- at least one choir, an orchestra, and a jazz ensemble in which students learn to improvise and sometimes make their instruments.

In the past decade a half dozen scientific studies have supported the notion that the study of music enriches a youngster's thinking capacities. Some of those studies are tentative, but a few suggest powerful associations. In one study, for example, Swiss and Austrian researchers increased students' music lessons from one or two to five a week while cutting back on math and language studies. After three years the students were as good at math as students who had stuck with the standard curriculum, and even better at languages. Researchers found the music students to be more cooperative with one another as well.

What's going on here? The answer may lie in a German study, by Gottfried Schlaug, now at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, in Boston. Schlaug determined through MRI scans that intense exposure to music actually expands brain mass. Musicians he studied who had perfect pitch also had an unusually large planum temporale in the left hemisphere of the brain. When comparing nonmusicians with those who had started playing music as young children, Schlaug found that the musicians also had a larger mass of nerve fibers connecting the brain's two hemispheres. The implications of this last finding are significant. A person's creativity and analytical skills depend greatly on the ability to think with both hemispheres of the brain; yet many of us lack this agility.

Ambitious as these assertions seem, I sometimes felt as if I were experiencing their genesis myself in Waldorf's musical exercises. On one occasion, when I joined a Waldorf teacher-training class, I started the day by learning a complex singing round. As I struggled to keep up, I could feel my thinking being pushed. The process exhausted and stretched me in unfamiliar ways, and made me envious of Waldorf students. My envy peaked one evening in New York City, at a parents' night for the Steiner School. As part of a fundraiser, several faculty members had arranged to sing cabaret songs; when they finished, some of the eighth-graders, who were helping to serve food, decided that they would sing something too. Moments later the adults sat transfixed as half a dozen teenagers performed James Taylor's "That Lonesome Road" a cappella, in slow, layered parts, with the polished harmony of a professional chorus. "All I could think," Chris Huson, a banker and the parent of a Waldorf second-grader told me later, "is that when my kids grow up, I want them to be just like those guys."

This Is Math?
A central objective of Waldorf teaching is to create a sense of wonder about each subject, even math. Sixth-graders study geometric progression by doing graphic-art projects. In San Francisco, I observed second-graders studying arithmetic by creating concentric circles of times tables and musing about their similarity to planetary patterns; later they sang out complex multiplication drills while clapping and hopping across an exercise room in syncopated rhythm -- a display of mental and physical dexterity that would be beyond most adults. "Their numbers are in their bodies," John Bloom, the school administrator, explained.

A standard exercise in Waldorf classes is a riveting game called "mental math." One day at the Mathews School, when students were particularly disruptive, Evelyn Arcuri, the teacher, clapped her hands and said, "Okay, I'm thinking of a number." The students quickly turned quiet. "If you add twelve," she said, "subtract twenty, multiply by nine, and subtract six, the answer is thirty. What's the number?" Within moments -- before I could recall the arithmetic steps of the exercise or even the numbers -- several students were pumping their hands in the air, promising answers, often the correct one. (The answer, by the way, is twelve.) As students get older, the formulas get more complex and are recited more quickly.

Beau Leonhart, who has taught math for twenty-two years at the Marin Academy, a non-Waldorf high school in California, and her husband, James Shipman, also a long-time teacher at Marin, have found that Waldorf graduates tend to exhibit unusually long attention spans. Shipman says, "Waldorf kids aren't the ones out the door when the bell rings. They're the ones who tend to linger, who want to carry on a conversation. If anything, they're a little slower, because they're thinking about it." Leonhart adds, "If they can't do it one way, they'll go at it from another angle." Shipman, who teaches aikido, among other subjects, told me, "In thirteen years I've had two black belts, both Waldorf kids. They know the meaning of focus and discipline. They have a depth, there's no way around it. They're very present." It may be no coincidence that Waldorf schools concentrate on building athletic foundations in children's early years -- balance, coordination, agility -- before introducing competitive sports in the upper grades. It seems to pay off. School news clips are full of accounts of victories over teams from schools two or three times their size.

Waldorf students' capacity for concentration may be stimulated by an old-fashioned but increasingly rare practice: allowing time for reflection. Science classes are an example. In the average school, teachers introduce a concept first and then do a demonstration or an experiment to illustrate it. "It takes the kid out of it," Mikko Bojarsky, the science teacher at the Sacramento Waldorf School, told me. Waldorf teachers turn this process around, doing an experiment before giving the concept much discussion. "Then you let it go to bed for the night," Bojarsky said. "They literally sleep on it. A lot happens in their sleep life." The next day, he said, students generally come in with many more questions than they had the day of the experiment, often including some the teacher never considered. "Nowadays we always push people to think so fast, instead of letting them reflect," Bojarsky continued. The process institutionalizes an important principle that evades many a teacher -- to let students struggle toward their answers and individual understanding. "One of the things I had to learn," Bojarsky said, "was to not answer their questions, especially in the twelfth grade. If you give them answers, they'll just shut down. It's amazing what they'll come up with if you wait long enough."

A Sense of Ethics

EACH morning when Waldorf students in the elementary grades first get to class,
they find their teacher standing in the doorway, waiting to look them in the eye and
shake their hands. "You can tell so much by how they shake hands, who's a little
off," Lynda Smith, at the time a San Francisco teacher, told me. Moments later, after
the students have taken their seats, they rise for another Waldorf tradition: recitation
of the morning verse.

This is a short poem, written by Steiner, that aims to inspire students about nature
and good work. (The verse for the first through fourth grades, for example, says in
part, "I revere, Oh God, the strength of humankind, which Thou so graciously has
planted in my soul, that I with all my might, may love to work and learn.") When
possible, classes may go for a walk to recite these verses on a riverbank in
Sacramento, say, or in New York's Central Park. Cloying as this ritual may seem,
many graduates remember the verses fondly. One admits that he still says his
morning verse while shaving.

The solemnity of the verses sets the tone for the morning "main lesson," an intense
two-hour class. (Coincidentally, carving out large blocks of study time like this has
become a popular reform today.) Teachers are supposed to avoid reading from
books when presenting their lesson material, and to prepare original oral
presentations virtually every day. The emphasis placed on these presentations
occasionally fills class time with more droning lectures than engaging student
projects -- a borrowing from traditional education's more oppressive side. But there
are other features that can make classes lively. Teachers are taught to present
lessons as topics for open discussion, and to create a dramatic atmosphere in which
the moral principles involved in a given subject can be not only pondered but felt.
First-graders, for example, will pretend that they are gnomes in a fairy tale that
poses concepts of good and evil. Fourth-graders may act out Nordic myths, fiercely
stomping their way through a poem's iambic and dactylic rhythms. The poems also
talk about Norse gods who symbolize pride, loss of innocence, and the power of the
intellect -- issues that Waldorf teachers believe are just beginning to dawn on
fourth-graders.

Waldorf's assorted lessons in goodness (the schools also ask students to do regular
community service) seem to have their effect. "A lot of optimists come out of here,"
says Damon Saykally, a recent Sacramento Waldorf senior who entered the
program as a sophomore and describes himself as a nihilist. "When I first came
here, I was shocked at how much they think they can help the world. I think it's
great."

Waldorf's philosophy of teaching through living out stories may be unusual, but it
comes out of a long tradition, from the folkways of ancient cultures to the
modern-day theories of child psychologists such as Bruno Bettelheim and Robert
Coles. In his well-known books on the development of a moral and spiritual
intelligence in children, Coles stresses an immersion in moral stories. Waldorf
teachers go even further. They believe that when students go through school without
such stories, their ability to develop a sense of empathy is inhibited, and that limits
their capacity to find meaning in life. Pointing to the psychologist Jean Piaget's
famous theories about a youngster's gradual stages of development, Waldorf
teachers argue that traditional schools aggravate this problem by imposing
intellectual demands on students before they're ready for them. This only
discourages youngsters, they say, leaving them prone to become unfeeling but
clever cynics or, worse, simply apathetic.

One big plank in Waldorf's platform that is a bit difficult to get a grip on is the
exhaustive references to the "soul." The word comes up, Saykally told me, "all the
time." ("Soul" occurs no fewer than four times in the nineteen lines of the upper-school morning verse.) I was perplexed by the ubiquity of this term and by the apparent lack of discussion of its meaning, so I began asking students what it meant to them. "Regardless of what you do, it's who you are," a San Francisco eighth-grader said. "What you believe and think," one of her classmates said. "How you act with that in the world," another said. Pretty good answers, I thought. An hour or so later David Weber, the head teacher of their school, abruptly pulled me aside. "Don't interview them about that!" he said. "They're not at that level yet. It's too analytical. That's for the eleventh grade. Now they're just feeling it. It's just an experience. That's where it should stay." Later, when he had cooled down, Weber explained his concern more fully: questions from a reporter might encourage eighth-graders’ tendency to be judgmental, a trait that Waldorf teachers try hard to temper. "How healthy is it for children to make judgments at this age?" he asked me. Eighth-graders want to see everything as “black and white,” he said. "It's cool or it sucks. Some never get beyond that. We're trying not to dignify this kind of self-absorbed judgment."

Though aspects of Weber's goal sound laudable in theory, they can prove elusive in practice. During my visits I saw many seventh- and eighth-graders roll their eyes at various exercises meant to feed the soul (a puppet show of a fairy tale in a school assembly; the relentless morning verses; and, once, a seventh-grade science lesson wrapped in a fable, in which a king ordered an alchemist to get the dirt out of his salt). When I asked students about these exercises, I got mixed but mostly respectful reactions. Some outsiders, however, are considerably more distrustful, having sensed a huge piece of Waldorf philosophy that teachers keep largely hidden from their students.

**Covert Spirituality**

IN early 1998 Dan Dugan, a disenchanted Waldorf parent in San Francisco, sued the Sacramento school district and another nearby for introducing the Waldorf philosophy in two public schools in the mid-1990s. Dugan argued that the movement has a secret agenda that violates the Constitution's First and Fourteenth Amendments: the indoctrination of children into Waldorf’s "religious doctrines of anthroposophy." Anthroposophy is the name Rudolf Steiner gave to his theories about the evolution of human consciousness, drawn from a multiplicity of disciplines -- anthropology, philosophy, psychology, science, and various religions, particularly Christianity. As Steiner wove these disciplines together with his own research, he created his own brand of spirituality, some of which complements the New Age movement. A number of Steiner's beliefs are now somewhat accepted -- for example, the notion that virtually all fields of study, from the humanities to the sciences, share a foundation of explanation. Yet many of his theories remain suspect -- in large part, no doubt, because of the dreamy way in which Steiner expressed them. In a typical essay, "The Roots of Education," he argued, "If you observe man's development with the means of inner vision of which I have already spoken -- with the eyes and ears of the soul -- then you will see that man does not consist only of a physical body . . . but that he also has supersensible members of his being."

These notions make Dugan, who is a sound engineer, smile and shake his head. "I'm opposed to magical thinking; I'm a secular humanist," he told me as we chatted recently in an office stuffed with electronic equipment on one side and dozens of anthroposophy books on the other, all of which he claims to have read. In Dugan's view, Steiner's theories are simply "cult pseudo-science." After Waldorf began
spreading into public school classrooms, Dugan formed a group called PLANS (People for Legal and Non-Sectarian Schools) to declare what he calmly calls "epistemological warfare." His goal, he says, is to sort out two questions: "What is reliable knowledge? How is it obtained?"

Waldorf teachers counter that they don't formally teach anthroposophy. This is true; in fact, their own rules prohibit them from doing so. They do study it, however -- most intensively at the Steiner College, where virtually every class text was written by Steiner or another anthroposophist. (The Steiner College does expect student teachers to come to it with standard bachelor's degrees.) Waldorf teachers say they hide anthroposophy not because they see anything evil or dangerous in it but because they don't want to push their philosophy onto the students. The purpose of the teachers' anthroposophical studies is to enliven their own sensibility and deepen their understanding of evolution. Only then, according to Waldorf theory, can they inspire students with the wonder and curiosity that make for profound learning. Steiner himself encouraged this distinction. "If I had my way," he wrote,

I would give anthroposophy a new name every day to prevent people from hanging on to its literal meaning.... We must never be tempted to implement sectarian ideas... We must not chain children's minds to finished concepts, but give them concepts capable of further growth and expansion.

Steinerian pronouncements of this sort have excited legions of Waldorf teachers. Ruth Mikkelsen, of the Mathews School, noticed this when she first observed Waldorf classes. "Why do they think these kids are so special?" she remembers wondering. "Thousands of times I've sat with teachers and heard them say, 'I want to kill Johnny,' or 'I can't wait till I get home and can have a glass of wine.' At Waldorf they say, 'How can we help little Ronnie, who's, you know, killing puppies now?'" That attitude may be precisely the point. Jerome Kagan, a developmental psychologist at Harvard, says, "In most of the curriculum changes schools make, if there's any benevolent effect on students, it's because the teacher is now motivated and passionate. And kids benefit from that, not from the curriculum."

But anthroposophy still "leaks into the curriculum," as Dan Dugan puts it. "They try to hide it, but they can't," Rebecca Bolnick, a recent graduate of the Sacramento Waldorf School, told me. Take, for example, Steiner's belief that each child's temperament matches one of the four medieval types: choleric (bold), phlegmatic (deliberate), melancholic (brooding), or sanguine (lighthearted). Steiner also believed that physical and spiritual development fall into distinct seven-year periods, the first beginning with the arrival of a child's permanent teeth.

Suspect as these ideas may seem, the outside experts I spoke to consider them relatively innocent. ("When you think of what the learning-disability people cook up, this is very mild," a prominent expert on early education told me.) Harmless or not, zealotry in the practice of Steiner's theories usually has a much simpler cause: bad teachers. Although this problem afflicts every school, Waldorf wrestles with an extra challenge by being one of the last refuges for the countercultural values of the 1960s. "A lot of people think Waldorf schools are the place for the kids of ex-hippies," says Eugene Schwartz, the director of teacher training at Sunbridge College, in Spring Valley, New York. That image often attracts teachers who are "dropping out from the world of competition or power," Schwartz says. They can find great comfort in Steiner's spirituality, and become more devoted followers than even Steiner himself might have wished. The result is that students sometimes learn more about Steiner's scientific theories than about Isaac Newton's. "People often think


Waldorf offers an easy way to teach the sciences," Schwartz says. "In fact it's just the opposite."

As public school officials collaborate with Waldorf leaders (who come to public schools by invitation only), they are working out some interesting armistices in response to their critics' epistemological warfare. There is no uniform system as yet, and given the diverse interests of the nation's school districts, there may never be one. Some schools follow Waldorf's practice of using the Old Testament in the early grades, in world-literature studies and for inspiration on student projects; others avoid it. Most adopt Waldorf's accelerated approach to basic arithmetic and some form of its relatively slow, layered approach to reading. The initiatives show intriguing signs of success, particularly with underachieving minorities. For instance, although reading scores are often low in the early years, they generally rise dramatically by eighth grade. But the partnerships have also presented challenges. The Waldorf pedagogy and class readings are heavily Eurocentric; public school teachers must modify this orientation to accommodate American literature and, increasingly, multicultural points of view. (In California, for example, white students may be inspired by gardening, but Hispanics generally aren't.) And dramatic change in schools never proceeds smoothly. When teachers are asked to try, as adults, learning to sing, play music, and paint, many suddenly find their old ways quite attractive. As for any broad troubles with religious indoctrination, the classes in public Waldorf schools have been pretty well stripped of explorations of the spiritual.

**The Second Mother**

**ONE** of the unusual aspects of Waldorf education is a system called looping, whereby a homeroom teacher stays with a class for more than a year -- in Waldorf's case, from first through eighth grade. The practice has an intriguing combination of pros and cons, and is attracting growing attention in other education circles both private and public.

Although Waldorf students work with other teachers each day in subjects such as music, foreign languages, and physical education, the main lessons are taught for eight years by the same teacher. The purpose of this is to build solid, long-term relationships and to teach students how to do that themselves. "If you get in an argument with someone, you have to work it out," says Karen Rivers, a Waldorf educator and consultant in California. (This is a fair point of pride -- by all accounts Waldorf teachers do spend considerable amounts of time talking with students and their parents.) For students, looping offers a base of support. "I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have a second mom," Ivi Esguerra, a recent graduate, told the audience at the Steiner School open house. "The caring went beyond the academics."

The downside of looping, however, is substantial. Although the task of preparing new lessons each day keeps material fresh for the teachers and students, it also restricts the teacher's ability to perfect given lessons with repetition. And conflict between teachers and students isn't always overcome; even when it is, tension can remain. "Our teacher was great," Ben Klocek, the recent Sacramento senior, told me. "But it was way too much. By the eighth grade you're completely sick of each other." Perhaps most important, the holes in a given instructor's teaching aren't always readily filled later. Scott Embrey-Stine, a Waldorf high school teacher in Sacramento, has spent most of his career in public schools, and has been impressed by the rare skills that Waldorf develops in students. Still, after two years at Waldorf, he says, he could identify the strengths and weaknesses in the lower-school teachers by the distinct character of each class. "You see the imprint of
the class teacher," he says.

**A Different Citizen**

IN the end the measure of a school lies in the graduates it produces. The Waldorf record seems pretty impressive. Consider students' scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests. Despite Waldorf students' unfamiliarity with standardized tests, their SAT scores have generally come in well above the national average, particularly on verbal measures. "The concepts, they've got," Kathleen O'Connor, who is the college counselor at the Washington Waldorf School, told me. "When they get direction on how to take multiple-choice tests, their scores soar." More important, considering the limited extent to which SATs measure ability, Waldorf students seem to do well in college admissions. Graduates from the New York and Washington schools are enrolled at many of the country's top private colleges, including Amherst, Stanford, Princeton, Swarthmore, Wellesley, and Yale.

Waldorf graduates have never been carefully tracked in this country; the only longitudinal study is a German survey, published in 1981, in which three independent researchers looked at 1,460 Waldorf graduates. They found that 22 percent had passed a rigorous German achievement test -- triple the rate for state-school students. Evidence here in the United States is anecdotal but encouraging. College professors who have had Waldorf graduates as students have been impressed with their humble confidence, passion for learning, and intellectual resourcefulness. And alumni rosters are replete with professional acclaim in fields as varied as industry and the arts, medicine and the military.

Still, a persistent fear about Waldorf schools is that their noncompetitive approach doesn't prepare students to fit in and succeed in a dog-eat-dog world -- a criticism that some Waldorf leaders acknowledge is sometimes justified. Indeed, many students choose demanding schools after leaving Waldorf precisely because they, or their parents, want more pressure and rigor in their lives. Karen Rivers, who talks frequently to worried parents in her role as a Waldorf consultant, thinks many miss the point. "We're not trying to teach them to fit in," she told me. "They already know how to fit in. We're trying to educate them to create a better world." But what about those who don't change the world -- who, like most people, don't even rise to the top? At a Steiner School alumni gathering in New York, Deborah Grace Winer, now a freelance writer, recalled that her mother always told her, "Life is not a horse race." Because someone will always beat you? I asked. "Yes," she answered. "And when someone does finally beat you, you have nothing."

Winer's comment reminded me of my visit to the Mathews School for juvenile offenders, where students begin each day already behind, with little of the foundation that Winer now has. A feel for music is but one example. "Our kids have no sense of rhythm," Evelyn Arcuri told me. As the students master a musical instrument, teachers say, their sense of rhythm grows. This seems to provide an anchor that strengthens their confidence in other work. "The recorders are just excellent," Thomas, the outgoing seventeen-year-old, told me. "It calms you down, helps you think better." Thomas was kicked out of his previous school for getting in fights. Now his grandmother says, "He's different when he's in that school. He doesn't come home as frustrated as he did." As I watched several students practice playing their recorders one morning, I understood what Thomas's grandmother meant. When the students hit a difficult section, some gave up, and a few stomped out of the room. Most soon returned. "I screwed up too," the teacher told them, "but I don't let that stop me. Just play through. Persevere. That's what this is about." They tried again and then again, did better, smiled.
How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot
tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was--so
persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of
truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which
quite amazed me;--I mean when they said that you should be upon
your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my
elocution. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon
as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great
speaker, did indeed appear to me most shameless--unless by the force
of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for is such is their meaning, I
admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well,
as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me
you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their
manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No,
by heaven! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me
at the moment; for I am confident in the justice of my cause (Or, I am
certain that I am right in taking this course.) At my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator—let no one expect it of me.

And I must beg of you to grant me a favour: If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the agora, at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age, and appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country:—Am I making an unfair request of you? Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and give heed to that: let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.

And first, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go on to the later ones. For of old I have had many accusers, who have accused me falsely to you during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are the others, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. The disseminators of this tale are the accusers whom I dread; for their hearers are apt to fancy that such enquirers do not believe in the existence of the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they were made by them in the days when you were more impressible than you are now—in childhood, or it may have been in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And hardest of all, I do not know and cannot tell the names of my accusers; unless in the chance case of a Comic poet.

All who from envy and malice have persuaded you—some of them having first convinced themselves—all this class of men are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and cross-examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defence, and argue when there is no one who answers. I will ask you
then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds; one recent, the other ancient: and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I must make my defence, and endeavour to clear away in a short time, a slander which has lasted a long time. May I succeed, if to succeed be for my good and yours, or likely to avail me in my cause! The task is not an easy one; I quite understand the nature of it. And so leaving the event with God, in obedience to the law I will now make my defence.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what is the accusation which has given rise to the slander of me, and in fact has encouraged Meletus to proof this charge against me. Well, what do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit: 'Socrates is an evil-doer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.'

Such is the nature of the accusation: it is just what you have yourselves seen in the comedy of Aristophanes (Aristoph., Clouds.), who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he walks in air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to speak disparagingly of any one who is a student of natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could bring so grave a charge against me. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbours whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon such matters...You hear their answer. And from what they say of this part of the charge you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; this accusation has no more truth in it than the other. Although, if a man were really able to instruct mankind, to receive money for giving instruction would, in my opinion, be an honour to him. There is Gorgias of Leontium, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens by whom they might be taught for nothing, and come to them
whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them.

There is at this time a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way:--I came across a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: 'Callias,' I said, 'if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding some one to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses, or a farmer probably, who would improve and perfect them in their own proper virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there any one who understands human and political virtue? You must have thought about the matter, for you have sons; is there any one?' 'There is,' he said. 'Who is he?' said I; 'and of what country? And what does he charge?' 'Evenus the Parian,' he replied; 'he is the man, and his charge is five minae.' Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a moderate charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

I dare say, Athenians, that some one among you will reply, 'Yes, Socrates, but what is the origin of these accusations which are brought against you; there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All these rumours and this talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, what is the cause of them, for we should be sorry to judge hastily of you.' Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavour to explain to you the reason why I am called wise and have such an evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think that I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth.

Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, wisdom such as may perhaps be attained by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit; that witness shall be the God
of Delphi—he will tell you about my wisdom, if I have any, and of what sort it is. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the recent exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether anyone was wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of what I am saying.

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, 'Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest.' Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is, for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

Then I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me,—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by
the dog I swear! --for I must tell you the truth--the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the 'Herculean' labours, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable.

After the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be instantly detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them--thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. The poets appeared to me to be much in the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans. I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;--because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.

This inquisition has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not
speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make enquiry into the wisdom of any one, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing:--young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and proceed to examine others; there are plenty of persons, as they quickly discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!--and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practise or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected--which is the truth; and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are drawn up in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians; Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of such a mass of calumny all in a moment.

And this, O men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet, I know that my plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Hence has arisen the prejudice against me; and this is the reason of it, as you will find out either in this or in any future enquiry.

I have said enough in my defence against the first class of my
accusers; I turn to the second class. They are headed by Meletus, that good man and true lover of his country, as he calls himself. Against these, too, I must try to make a defence:--Let their affidavit be read: it contains something of this kind: It says that Socrates is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who does not believe in the gods of the state, but has other new divinities of his own. Such is the charge; and now let us examine the particular counts.

He says that I am a doer of evil, and corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus is a doer of evil, in that he pretends to be in earnest when he is only in jest, and is so eager to bring men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavour to prove to you.

Come hither, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. You think a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Yes, I do.

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is.--Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws.

But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

What, do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and
improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

By the goddess Here, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience,--do they improve them?

Yes, they do.

And the senators?

Yes, the senators improve them.

But perhaps the members of the assembly corrupt them?--or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

That is what I stoutly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if you are right. But suppose I ask you a question: How about horses? Does one man do them harm and all the
world good? Is not the exact opposite the truth? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many;--the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or of any other animals? Most assuredly it is; whether you and Anytus say yes or no. Happy indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. But you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about the very things which you bring against me.

And now, Meletus, I will ask you another question--by Zeus I will: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; the question is one which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbours good, and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend, the law requires you to answer--does any one like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbours good, and the evil do them evil. Now, is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too--so you say, although neither I nor any other human being is ever likely to be convinced by you. But either I do not
corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally--no doubt I should; but you would have nothing to say to me and refused to teach me. And now you bring me up in this court, which is a place not of instruction, but of punishment.

It will be very clear to you, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons by which I corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist--this you do not lay to my charge,--but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes--the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter--that you are a complete atheist.

What an extraordinary statement! Why do you think so, Meletus? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, like other men?

I assure you, judges, that he does not: for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.
Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras: and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them illiterate to such a degree as not to know that these doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, which are full of them. And so, forsooth, the youth are said to be taught them by Socrates, when there are not unfrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (Probably in allusion to Aristophanes who caricatured, and to Euripides who borrowed the notions of Anaxagoras, as well as to other dramatic poets.) (price of admission one drachma at the most); and they might pay their money, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father these extraordinary views. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Nobody will believe you, Meletus, and I am pretty sure that you do not believe yourself. I cannot help thinking, men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking to try me? He said to himself:--I shall see whether the wise Socrates will discover my facetious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them--but this is not like a person who is in earnest.

I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind the audience of my request that they would not make a disturbance if I speak in my accustomed manner:

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings?...I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute-playing, and not in flute-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?
He cannot.

How lucky I am to have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court! But then you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies,—so you say and swear in the affidavit; and yet if I believe in divine beings, how can I help believing in spirits or demigods;—must I not? To be sure I must; and therefore I may assume that your silence gives consent. Now what are spirits or demigods? Are they not either gods or the sons of gods?

Certainly they are.

But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons—what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you to make trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same men can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and demigods and heroes.

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defence is unnecessary, but I know only too well how many are the enmities which I have incurred, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed;—not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Some one will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to
consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong--acting
the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, upon your view, the
heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis
above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace;
and when he was so eager to slay Hector, his goddess mother said to
him, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he
would die himself--'Fate,' she said, in these or the like words, 'waits for
you next after Hector;' he, receiving this warning, utterly despised
danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in
dishonour, and not to avenge his friend. 'Let me die forthwith,' he
replies, 'and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the
beaked ships, a laughing-stock and a burden of the earth.' Had
Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man's place
is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been
placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of
danger; he should not think of death or of anything but of disgrace. And
this, O men of Athens, is a true saying.

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when
I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at
Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me,
like any other man, facing death--if now, when, as I conceive and
imagine, God orders me to fulfill the philosopher's mission of searching
into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of
death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might
justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I
disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was
wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretence
of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the
unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear
apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is not
this ignorance of a disgraceful sort, the ignorance which is the conceit
that a man knows what he does not know? And in this respect only I
believe myself to differ from men in general, and may perhaps claim to
be wiser than they are:--that whereas I know but little of the world
below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and
disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and
dishonourable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than
a certain evil.

And therefore if you let me go now, and are not convinced by Anytus,
who said that since I had been prosecuted I must be put to death; (or if
not that I ought never to have been prosecuted at all); and that if I
escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words—if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to enquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing so again you shall die;—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend,—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens,—are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing, says: Yes, but I do care; then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less. And I shall repeat the same words to every one whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren.

For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to the God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if any one says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whichever you do, understand that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.

Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an understanding between us that you should hear me to the end: I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I believe that to hear me will be good for you, and therefore I beg that you will not cry out. I would have you know, that if you kill such an one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Nothing will injure me, not Meletus nor yet Anytus—they cannot, for a bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself. I do not deny
that Anytus may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is inflicting a great injury upon him: but there I do not agree. For the evil of doing as he is doing—the evil of unjustly taking away the life of another—is greater far.

And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep), and you think that you might easily strike me dead as Anytus advises, and then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you sent you another gadfly.

When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this:--if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; such conduct, I say, would be unlike human nature. If I had gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in my doing so; but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of any one; of that they have no witness. And I have a sufficient witness to the truth of what I say--my poverty.

Some one may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at sundry times and in divers places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being
a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly striving against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds which are done in a state, will save his life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one.

I can give you convincing evidence of what I say, not words only, but what you value far more--actions. Let me relate to you a passage of my own life which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that 'as I should have refused to yield' I must have died at once. I will tell you a tale of the courts, not very interesting perhaps, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of senator. The tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae; and you proposed to try them in a body, contrary to law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death.

This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And many will witness to my words.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I
had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always
maintained the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing?
No indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other man. But I have
been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and
never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are
slanderously termed my disciples, or to any other. Not that I have any
regular disciples. But if any one likes to come and hear me while I am
pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he is not excluded.
Nor do I converse only with those who pay; but any one, whether he be
rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and
whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, neither result can
be justly imputed to me; for I never taught or professed to teach him
anything. And if any one says that he has ever learned or heard
anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, let me tell
you that he is lying.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing
with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this
matter: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to
wisdom; there is amusement in it. Now this duty of cross-examining
other men has been imposed upon me by God; and has been signified
to me by oracles, visions, and in every way in which the will of divine
power was ever intimated to any one. This is true, O Athenians, or, if
not true, would be soon refuted. If I am or have been corrupting the
youth, those of them who are now grown up and have become sensible
that I gave them bad advice in the days of their youth should come
forward as accusers, and take their revenge; or if they do not like to
come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other
kinsmen, should say what evil their families have suffered at my hands.
Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who
is of the same age and of the same deme with myself, and there is
Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of
Sphettus, who is the father of Aeschines--he is present; and also there
is Antiphon of Cephisus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are
the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is
Nicostratus the son of Theosdotides, and the brother of Theodotus
(now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not
seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodocus, who had
a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother
Plato is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus,
whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, some of whom
Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of his
speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten--I will make
way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort which
he can produce.
Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the injurer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only—there might have been a motive for that—but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice, and because they know that I am speaking the truth, and that Meletus is a liar.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is all the defence which I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be some one who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself on a similar, or even a less serious occasion, prayed and entreated the judges with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a host of relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. The contrast may occur to his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at me on this account. Now if there be such a person among you,—mind, I do not say that there is,—to him I may fairly reply: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not 'of wood or stone,' as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons, O Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-assertion or want of respect for you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But, having regard to public opinion, I feel that such conduct would be discreditable to myself, and to you, and to the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, ought not to demean himself. Whether this opinion of me be deserved or not, at any rate the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that such are a dishonour to the state, and that any stranger coming in would have said of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honour and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who have a reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are far more disposed to condemn the man who gets up a
doleful scene and makes the city ridiculous, than him who holds his peace.

But, setting aside the question of public opinion, there seems to be something wrong in asking a favour of a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal, instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is not to make a present of justice, but to give judgment; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and we ought not to encourage you, nor should you allow yourselves to be encouraged, in this habit of perjury--there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonourable and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and in defending should simply convict myself of the charge of not believing in them.

But that is not so—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.

(Socrates is condemned.)

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say, I think, that I have escaped Meletus. I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, any one may see that he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is my due? What return shall be made to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care for--wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and
speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions.

What shall be done to such an one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, and who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no reward so fitting as maintenance in the Prytaneum, O men of Athens, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness, and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty fairly, I should say that maintenance in the Prytaneum is the just return.

Perhaps you think that I am braving you in what I am saying now, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But this is not so. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged any one, although I cannot convince you--the time has been too short; if there were a law at Athens, as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you. But I cannot in a moment refute great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year--of the Eleven? Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of life, if I am so irrational as to expect that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and
have found them so grievous and odious that you will have no more of
them, others are likely to endure me. No indeed, men of Athens, that is
not very likely.

And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city,
ever changing my place of exile, and always being driven out! For I am
quite sure that wherever I go, there, as here, the young men will flock to
me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their
request; and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me
out for their sakes.

Some one will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue,
and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with
you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer
to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to
the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not
believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about
virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining
myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the
unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe
me.

Yet I say what is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to
persuade you. Also, I have never been accustomed to think that I
deserve to suffer any harm. Had I money I might have estimated the
offence at what I was able to pay, and not have been much the worse.
But I have none, and therefore I must ask you to proportion the fine to
my means. Well, perhaps I could afford a mina, and therefore I
propose that penalty: Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my
friends here, bid me say thirty minae, and they will be the sureties. Let
thirty minae be the penalty; for which sum they will be ample security to
you.

(Socrates is sentenced either to death or permanent exile. He chooses
death.)

Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for the evil name
which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you
killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise, even although I
am not wise, when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little
while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now not to all of you, but only to those who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: you think that I was convicted because I had no words of the sort which would have procured my acquittal--I mean, if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone or unsaid. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words--certainly not.

But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to do, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I maintain, are unworthy of me. I thought at the time that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger: nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them.

And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death,--they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award--let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated,--and I think that they are well.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more
inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them.

If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about the thing which has come to pass, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then a little, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. O my judges--for you I may truly call judges--I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the divine faculty of which the internal oracle is the source has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either when I was leaving my house in the morning, or when I was on my way to the court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching the matter in hand has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this silence? I will tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good; for one of two things--either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private
man, but even the great king will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others.

Now if death be of such a nature, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamantus and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs.

Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that the time had arrived when it was better for me to die and be released from trouble; wherefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason, also, I am not angry with my condemners, or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you
trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing,--then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways--I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.
The Immigration Trial of Tarjei Straume

Introduction:

In 1969, I spent six months in prison for cannabis offenses in Norway. In the 1970´s I had to get special permission, a "waiver of grounds of excludability," each time I entered the United States.

Between 1976 and 1988, i.e. for twelve and a half years, I lived in America illegally. Not even president Reagan´s temporary immigration reform bill could prevent me from being forced to move back to Norway - after a total continuous absence of 18 years.

In 1989, when I was still endeavoring to find a legal way out, I communicated my dilemma to the U.S. Embassy in Oslo by clothing it in a play. There was nothing they could do to help me, because the federal statutes ban me for life from ever obtaining a green card, but the play was so popular that the employees at the embassy handed out roles and played it among themselves even before it was completed. (The second act was sent to them later - everything in handwriting at the time.)

Thus the play is perhaps somewhat dated, a cultural piece of history frozen in time (1989). But here it is:

The Immigration Trial of Tarjei Straume
THE IMMIGRATION TRIAL OF TARJEI STRAUME

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

Dramatis Personae:

Tarjei Straume, defendant
Richard Nixon, his legal counsel
Rev. Jerry Falwell, prosecuting attorney
Magistrate
Uncle Sam
Justice (a male)
Cherubs
Jurors
Security guards
Redd Eggbuster, witness
John Lennon, witness
Lyndon LaRouche, witness
Martin Luther King, witness
Nancy Reagan, witness
Ronald Reagan, witness
George Gordon Liddy, witness
Thomas Jefferson, witness
Lt. Oliver North, witness
William Shakespeare, witness
Portia, alias Mercy

Courtroom audience including:
Jimmy Swaggart
Johnny Carson (with his Tonight Show
in the background)
Hugh Hefner
Morten Downey
Shirley McClaine
Jesse Jackson
Phil Donahue, Dan Rather and many
more.....

ACT TWO:
ACT ONE

STAGE DIRECTIONS:

The scene is a court of law in a highly unorthodox setting. Upstage Center is an enormous, elevated throne upon which Justice (a male) sits blindfolded with a pair of scales in his left hand and with his right hand resting upon a stack of law books. He reads in Braille. Above and slightly beyond Justice there are two winged cherubs on small clouds above the left and the right shoulders of Justice.

Center Stage, immediately below and in front of the throne of Justice, the Magistrate is seated behind an office desk with a gavel and a few law books, wearing a long black robe. Downstage Right is the pew box with twelve jurors. They are all American citizens from a random variety of vocations.

Downstage Left are the pews for the courtroom audience, which includes some notable celebrities: Morten Downey, Jessie Jackson, Shirley McClaine, Jimmy Swaggart, Hugh Hefner, and many others. The rear part of this audience is a mixture of Downey's mob (wearing Downey's T-shirts) and Swaggart's converts (carrying Bibles and posters).

Upstage Left, between the courtroom audience and the Magistrate, and next to a big American flag, sits Uncle Sam, replete with his long white hair and beard, his coat and striped pants, and with his star spangled hat in his hand.

Upstage Right, a little farther off, sits Johnny Carson with his
Tonight Show and his laughing audience, which is heard faintly in the distance. He is reading the defendant’s file and the Immigration Code, and every line gets a lively response. This continues throughout the play with appropriate commercial breaks, during which Mr. Carson approaches the stage in order to witness the proceedings.

Downstage Center, off to the left toward the courtroom audience (in order not to upstage the Magistrate) are two seats for the defendant and his counsel.

Center Stage Left, between Uncle Sam with the flag and the Magistrate, is the seat for the Prosecutor. When the curtain goes up, the men arrive through the courtroom entrance which is located Upstage Right between the Magistrate and Johnny Carson.

Curtain Up

Attorney and ex-president Richard M. Nixon arrives first with his client, defendant and immigration applicant Tarjei Straume, approaching the Magistrate.

Nixon (to the Magistrate in a low voice): I understand my client has been informed by Embassy officials that the American citizenship of his mother might possibly help his case?

Magistrate: That is correct.

Nixon: I understand also that the prosecution seeks to establish that my client is an undesirable?

Magistrate (looking at Uncle Sam, who shrugs): I believe so.

Nixon and Straume take their seats Downstage Left Center while the Prosecutor Reverend Jerry Falwell enters and approaches the Magistrate with a triumphant and self-confident smile.

Falwell (to the Magistrate): The defendant is here?

Magistrate: Yes he is. You seek to convince the jury that Mister Straume is an undesirable?

Falwell (walks up to Uncle Sam, pats him reassuringly on the
shoulder, and announces cheerfully to the whole ensemble): With the Good Lord's help we are going to save our dear Uncle Sam from a merciles invasion by this drug pushing godless communist, anarchist and humanist peacenik hippie who is nothing but a subversive pervert plotting to overthrow our government and undermine the morality of America with polygamy, polytheism, pornography, drugs, Eastern philosophy, astrology, terrorism, devil worship and black magic.

*Justice almost drops the scales. The cherubs tremble.*

**Straume:** Oh my God!

**Magistrate:** Mister Falwell, it would please this court if you would spare us from all of this and stick to the facts of the case at hand. We have no laws against humanism, astrology, or Eastern philosophy, nor against devil worship for that matter. We have laws against polygamy, but not against polytheism. And whatever a peacenik hippie is, we have no laws against that either.

**Falwell** *(still confident, brandishing his leather Bible):* That's because you don't have *this!* *This* is the law!

**Jimmy Swaggart** *(rising from the pew):* Right on, Brother Jerry!

**Falwell** *(vehemently):* Shut up, you pervert!

*Mixed reactions in the courtroom audience.*

**Magistrate** *(pounding the gavel):* Order! Mister Falwell, will you please call your first witness?

**Falwell:** With pleasure. The prosecution summons Mister Redd Eggbuster!

*Mister Eggbuster enters, looking around for a witness chair, which is swiftly brought in by a security guard. He sits down. He is quite fat, with a mustache and a crew cut, wearing a motorcycle outfit with boots, leather jacket, colors and an earring. He is a little unsteady due to his obvious intoxication. He speaks with a Kentucky drawl which has been filtered down over the years he has lived in Texas.*

**Nixon** *(shocked and surprised):* Your witness, Reverend?
Falwell: He may not belong to our congregation at the present time, but if he does something for the Lord today, the Lord will reward him tomorrow and wash his sins away.

Eggbuster: Don't mind that one bit meself. I've always believed in God, and I guess I could use some salvation and reward and blessin'.

Magistrate: You may question the witnes, Mister Falwell.

Falwell (licking his lips): Very well. Mister Eggbuster, I understand you saw Mister Straume when he lived in Texas?

Eggbuster: Yeah, I saw him all right when he drove his ol' Chevy to the health club and when he went shoppin".

Magistrate: Excuse me, Mister Falwell. Mister Eggbuster, did you ever see Mister Straume do anything illegal?

Eggbuster: Huh....... nothin' illegal, but........ huh......... kinda suspicious.........I say unamerican.

Magistrate: Mister Straume, do you know this man?

Nixon (to Straume): You don't have to answer him.

Straume: I don't mind. I don't recall ever having seen this person, sir.

Magistrate: Thank you. You may proceed, Mister Falwell.

Falwell (licking his lips, smiling): Redd, tell the jury and the Lord about the suspicious activities of the defendant.

Eggbuster: Well...... huh ....... he ain't no good ol' boy, that's for sure.

Magistrate: Could you please be more specific?

Eggbuster: He's got a weird accent. He's a foreigner.

Magistrate: So are all immigrants, Mister Eggbuster.

Eggbuster: He's a hippie, and we don't like hippies. I'm sure Sammy don't like hippies. 'Specially them hippies mess'n 'round with dope.
Magistrate: Have you seen the defendant with drugs?

Eggbuster: Huh....... well, i ain't seen nothin' meself, but that's what he's been doin', ain't it? Over in Europe?

Magistrate: So far, this isn't much of a case, Mister Falwell.

Falwell: Redd, isn't the defendant a subversive radical liberal?

Eggbuster: Yeah, he's a card-carryin' member of the A.C.L.U.!

Falwell: No further questions, your honor.

Magistrate (to Nixon): You may cross-examine the witness.

Nixon: Thank you, your honor. (He rises, enters Center Stage slowly, and abruptly sticks his long nose up to Mister Eggbuster's mouth.) How much have you been drinking today, Mister Eggbuster?

Eggbuster (looking at Falwell, who shakes his head): Nothin'.

Nixon: Your breath says otherwise. My close friend Chuck Colson tells me that if you lie, especially in a court of law, you'll fry like bacon in Hell for eternity. No reward, no blessing, no pardon, no mercy. Now tell me again, Mister Eggbuster, how much have you been drinking today?

Falwell: Objection!

Magistrate: Mister Nixon, what is the relevance of this?

Nixon: The defense seeks to clarify the competance of the prosecution's witness concerning substance abuse, which is the key charge against my client.

Magistrate: Very well. Objection overruled. Mister Eggbuster, you may answer the question please.

Eggbuster: Huh....... ask me a question then.

Nixon: How much have you been drinking today?

Eggbuster: Coupla sixpacks o' Bud. My brother gave me some Scotch.
Nixon: And how much grass have you been smoking today?

Eggbuster: Coupla joints Hawaiian.

Nixon: Any additional chemicals worth mentioning?

Falwell: Objection!

Magistrate: Sustained. It's mister Straume's drug abuse this is all about; not Mister Eggbuster's.

Nixon: Mister Eggbuster, have you ever seen Mister Straume's A.C.L.U. membership card?

Eggbuster: No I ain't seen nothin', but....... huh.........

Nixon: Very well. Mister Eggbuster, what organizations are you a card-carrying member of?

Magistrate: Mister Nixon, what's the relevance of this?

Nixon: You'll see.

Eggbuster (pulling a card out of his wallet): Here! (Proudly:) The National Rifle Association!

Nixon moves to take the card, but with a swift surprise act he grabs the wallet instead, prompting a violent uproar in the courtroom audience.

Angry voices from the pews: Thief! Crook! Nasty ol' Tricky Dick! Giv'im back the wallet!

Nixon: Let's take a look at this.

Magistrate (pounding the gavel): Quiet! Order in this court! You are way out of line, Mister Nixon!

Nixon: No I'm not. (He takes a stack of cards out of Eggbuster's wallet and lays it on the Magistrate's desk. He picks up the cards one by one and reads them off to the jury:) Hell's Angels, Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Brotherhood, John Birch Society, Syndicated Burglars, Cons Incorporated. Your honor, the Aryan Brotherhood is still fighting the Civil War and seeks to overthrow the Government and the Constitution. When are you going to
overthrow the Government, Mister Eggbuster?

**Falwell:** Objection!

**Magistrate** *(weary)*: Mister Nixon, what's all this?

**Nixon:** The Prosecution is accusing my client of subversion.

**Falwell:** And perversion!

**Nixon:** My question is relevant.

**Magistrate** *(with a tired sigh)*: Very well. Objection overruled. Mister Eggbuster, answer the question.

**Eggbuster:** Yeah, the question, yeah.........huh.........

**Nixon:** When are you going to overthrow the Government?

**Eggbuster:** Well, if them Yankee politicians won't do nothin' sensible, we gotta do somethin' about it soon, you know.

**Nixon:** No further questions.

**Magistrate** *(to Eggbuster)*: Pick up your wallet and leave this building at once. *(To the jury:)* You will disregard the testimony of this witness. *(To Falwell:)* What do you think this is? A circus?

**Falwell** *(licking his lips, grinning)*: Well, the Lord works in mysterious ways. If God wants a circus, that's what you'll get, your honor.

_The Magistrate shakes his head in disbelief while Eggbuster exits with his wallet and cards._

**Magistrate:** Mister Nixon, you may call your first witness.

**Nixon:** Certainly. The defense calls Mister John Lennon!

_A gasp sweeps through the audience as John Lennon enters and takes a seat on the witness chair. He looks exactly like he did in 1980, the last year of his life._

**Magistrate:** Mister Nixon, I find this highly unorthodox. I
thought we would have live witnesses here, personally acquainted with the defendant.

**Nixon:** Your honor, every one of my witnesses is essential to our case. Besides, I gained intimate knowledge of Mister Lennon's case when I was President. I beg your indulgence, sir, (turning to the jury) and yours.

**Falwell:** Objection! Another godless humanist anarchist communist subversive radical liberal dope hippie! This is God's country! And Sammy's! (patting Uncle Sam on the shoulder.) The witness was never a citizen!

**Magistrate:** This is our country, Mister Falwell. Objection overruled. Mister Nixon, you may proceed. As a precedent, the Lennon case may be of interest to the jury.

**Nixon:** Thank you, your honor.

**Lennon:** Wait a minute. (To the Magistrate:) Excuse me, sir. (To Straume:) Man, I don't know you, but I know you're in the same jam I was in back in the early seventies, and that's why I showed up here to help you out. But now you've picked this Tricky Dick character to defend you. That's the man who kept trying to deport me just because I'd been busted for cannabis in England like you have in Norway. Why did you pick him of all people?

**Straume:** Richard Nixon is the sharpest legal and political mind in the world. Besides, he's a good man, a decent human being who wants to help.

**Lennon:** You're out of your skull. I don't need this. You don't need me. (He begins to leave.)

**Straume:** No wait!

**Nixon** (to Straume): Let me handle this. (Catching up with Lennon, blocking his exit:) Mister Lennon, I deeply deplore what happened between us back then. The country was at war on the outside and on the inside. You and I both wanted to make peace, but we got in one another's way.

**Lennon:** Now you're being honest.

*The courtroom audience breaks into another violent uproar, especially among Downey's fans.*
Morten Downey (yelling from the pew): He's never honest! He's a liar! He's a crook! Don't buy it, John!

Loud boos and jeers throughout the audience.

Magistrate (pounding the gavel): Order! Quiet! Mister Nixon, what is going on here?

Nixon: Your honor, Mister Lennon is crucial to my client's defense. I will endeavor to demonstrate that the odds against this musician were far more formidable than the problems of Mister Straume. And yet, he won his case against my wishes at the time. (Turning to the jury:) I will explain some things to Mister Lennon that he has a right to know and your understanding of which has an immediate relevance to the case at hand.

Falwell: Objection! It's too much to expect poor Uncle Sam to go through all this!

Magistrate: Objection overruled. Uncle Sam can take it, right? Uncle Sam nods with a bored smile.

Magistrate: And what does Justice have to say about this?

Justice: Richard Nixon's point is valid.

Nixon: Thank you, Justice. Let's sit down, Mister Lennon.

Nixon and Lennon take their seats.

Lennon: I always knew the cannabis thing was just an excuse that you wanted me out because I agitated against your politics.

Nixon: It wasn't just because you were against me. A lot of people were. But you didn't know half the stuff you got into. You supported fifteen ultra-radical leftist groups, including the Black Panther Party and the Irish Republican Army. The FBI had filed you as a subversive. You had a lot of wealth and a powerful influence as a very popular celebrity. You had scores of blind followers who were also violent revolutionaries. I thought......

Magistrate: Mister Nixon, you are getting us all sidetracked with
Nixon: Your honor, this is very important.

Uncle Sam: It was important, Richard. Not any more. Those memories are very sensitive to me. Let's forget it and talk about drugs instead. That's what ties these cases together; not subversive political activism.

Nixon: Very well, Sam. My point is that the odds against Mister Lennon went beyond drugs. He was very much an undesirable, and yet he won his case. I am urging the jury to keep that in mind.

Magistrate: You have made your point. Now proceed.

Nixon: Thank you, Mister Lennon, I understand that you won your immigration through a technicality concerning the definitions of marijuana and of cannabis, and that you said you had established a precedent that would help future immigrants in the same dilemma; is that right?

Lennon: That's right. The precise wording of the restriction code said something about marijuana. I was busted for cannabis. I got off the hook because the two are not identical.

Nixon (to the jury): Please note that my client was convicted for cannabis and not marijuana just like John Lennon and that it happened almost twenty-two years ago!

Falwell: Mister Lennon was charged with possession only! Mister Straume was charged with more than that! Besides, the code says "marijuana, drugs, narcotics," and that includes cannabis, counsel! (To Lennon:) How in the world did you get off on that technicality, Mister Lennon?

Lennon: I paid my lawyer a lot of money, and he found a way.

Falwell: Must have been some liberal hippie-judge who grew marijuana in his own back yard. Probably a practicing homosexual heroin addict with AIDS.

Magistrate: Spare us, counsel. They didn't have AIDS back then.

Nixon (taking charge, using the whole stage): My point is this: John Lennon won his case against the INS in spite of the fact that he was a subversive anarchist associated with known
revolutionary terrorist groups, in addition to being a convicted drug offender. (Raising his head, addressing Justice:) I charge that it is a severe miscarriage of justice to deny Mister Straume his immigration just because he doesn't have the wealth and the fame that Mister Lennon had, in spite of the fact that Mister Lennon was ten times more undesirable as an immigrant! (Turning to Sam:) Isn't that right, Sam?!!

Uncle Sam (startled): Yeah, you're right!

Falwell: Objection! Mister Nixon is browbeating and bullying this whole court!


Justice: Objection overruled! (All turn toward Justice, startled.) Mister Nixon's last argument was poignant, and it would please us if the jury would take special note of it.

Magistrate: The court stands corrected. Mister Nixon, do you have any more questions to Mister Lennon?

Nixon: No further questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Mister Falwell, you may cross-examine.

Falwell (licking his lips and grinning): Mister Lennon, you've been dead about nine years now, haven't you? Or is it ten?

Lennon: Ten.

Falwell: Will you please tell the jury, the public, and the Lord what Hell is like after a decade? You must have been roasting like a Thanksgiving turkey!

Nixon (low key): Objection, your honor.

Magistrate: Sustained. (Taking a deep breath:) Mister Falwell, I beg you not to tire this court with your nonsense, especially your malicious, slanderous and sadistic wishful thinking. Do you have any relevant questions to this witness?

Falwell: Isn't it relevant that the key witness for the defense is conjured up from the pitts of Hell?

Magistrate (ignoring Falwell): Mister Lennon, you are excused.
Lennon: Thank you. (Exits.)

Magistrate (tired): Mister Falwell, you may call your next witness.

Falwell (pleased): Very well. The prosecution summons Mister Lyndon La Rouche!

Straume (burying his head in his hands): Oh my God!

Nixon (to Straume): You're lucky, kid. You don't have to talk to him.

La Rouche enters, looks around with suspicion and a little fear, startles when he sees Justice and the cherubs, and sits down in the witness chair.

Falwell: Mister La Rouche, you're quite an expert on global drug traffic, aren't you?

La Rouche: Yes I am.

Falwell: And what conclusions have you reached about the Straume case?

La Rouche: What is very interesting, Reverend, is that less than two years after his drug conviction in Norway, Mister Straume moved to England where he spent five years.

Falwell: And why is that so interesting?

La Rouche: Well, if you’ve watched my programs and listened to my speeches over the years, Reverend, you are well aware that the British Royal Family controls most of the international drug traffic. Mister Straume has been working for Queen Elizabeth all along for the queen and her Freemasons. In 1975 he made a trip to Miami from London. Miami! (looking around at the jury, the Magistrate, and the audience.) Miami! London! Drugs! The Queen of England! That trip he made to California in 1976 was a dope run for Her Majesty. In Los Angeles he got doublecrossed by the Hong Kong Triad. Queen Elizabeth sent him up to her Las Vegas connection where he received further instructions. He went south from Nevada to a spot where a jet from the British Royal Air Force coming through Mexico made a drop for Mister Straume to pick up in Arizona. Anyway......
**Magistrate:** Mister La Rouche, can you substantiate your allegations? Do you have any proof?

**La Rouche (agitated):** Proof?! God is my witness! God told me all this! God talks to me!

**Falwell:** That's right. God told *me* that He'd informed Mister La Rouche about the drug crimes of Mister Straume.

**Magistrate:** I see. God's intelligence network and information bureau has given you all this. We're quite impressed. That's all we need to hear. I wonder what *you* have been smoking today, Reverend. The same as Mister La Rouche?

**Falwell:** That's uncalled for, sir. A satanic assault against God's people.

**Magistrate:** One more remark like that, Mister Falwell, and I'll have you in contempt of court. Mister Nixon, you may cross-examine.

**Nixon:** Mister La Rouche, isn't it true that you've been convicted for campaign fraud and tax evasion, and that you've been confined to prisons and mental institutions?

**Falwell:** Objection!

**Nixon:** No further questions, your honor.

**Magistrate:** Objection overruled. The witness is excused.

*La Rouge leaves.*

**Magistrate:** Mister Nixon, you may call your next witness.

**Nixon:** Very well. The defense calls Mister Martin Luther King!

*Awed reactions throughout the court. Dr. King enters, appearing exactly as he looked in 1968. He does not sit; he remains standing, gesturing to the jury and the audience throughout his speech. His voice is deep and powerful.*

**Falwell:** Your honor, isn't this quite irregular? The defendant's counsel conjuring up characters long gone by means of sorcery,
black magic and witchcraft?

**Magistrate:** Mister Falwell, the defense does not seem to have a monopoly on irregular witnesses here. But with all due respect, Mister Nixon, you have called a witness who has never met the defendant and who even died before the drug offenses concerned were committed. I fail to see how Doctor King can help illuminate any relevant facts. It appears to me that you have called this witness solely for the dramatic effect of having the court listen to his personal opinions and comments.

**Nixon:** The defense finds it natural and expedient to invite witnesses whose great dreams and philosophies have shaped our legislature. *(To Justice:)* And I am sure Justice will be very pleased to hear a dear old friend like Reverend King speak.

**Justice:** It would warm us to hear his voice.

*The cherubs nod.*

**Falwell:** This isn't fair.

**Magistrate:** Mister Nixon, you may question your witness.

**Nixon:** Reverend King, you agreed to appear as a witness for the defense because you feel that justice is best served if my client is approved as an immigrant to the United States. Could you elaborate on that?

**King:** I once said that an unjust law is no law at all. If Mister Straume cannot be legally admitted to the United States as an immigrant exclusively because he broke the law in Norway twenty-two years ago and even paid for his mistake by spending time in prison, then the law is unjust.

**Magistrate:** With all due respect, Reverend King, isn't it a little far fetched to draw a parallel between America's old segregation laws and the restriction codes against drug offenders entering our country? You went to prison for openly violating unjust laws in order to have them changed; the defendant went to prison for breaking perfectly just and necessary laws.

**King:** That was then. This is now. I am speaking up for Mister Straume because I see a man of noble spirit in conflict with an unrighteous law which says that for the rest of his life he is to be punished for a crime which he paid for over twenty years ago by
being forever barred from the country he loves deeply and needs desperately. I believe "cruel and unusual punishment" is an appropriate term. Let freedom ring from Washington to Oslo, from London to Los Angeles! Let freedom ring for Tarjei Straume! Let freedom ring!

Nixon: Thank you, Reverend King. No further questions, your honor.

Magistrate: You may cross-examine, Mister Falwell.

Falwell (licking his lips, grinning): You're quite a subversive little communist, aren't you, Reverend King? And a sex fiend?

King: I beg your pardon?

Falwell (to Uncle Sam): Doesn't the FBI have a substantial dossier on this man concerning his subversive revolutionary communist activities as well as his wild sexual exploits?

Uncle Sam: J. Edgar Hoover had an obsession against black progress and a personal hatred of Reverend King. Hoover abused my agency to intimidate King, simply because he was a "fellow traveller" - he had communist friends. Hoover kept projecting his prurient fantasies upon his suspects. Listen, Jerry, Martin is my favorite Reverend not you. Sorry about that, pal, but Martin Luther King's birthday is a national holiday not yours.

Falwell: But he's a peacenik and a nig..... I mean, he's another peacenik hippie, Sam! A peacenik!

Uncle Sam: Well, I'm a peacenik too, Jerry. I've got my Peacekeepers.

Falwell: Missiles for Jesus! Praise the Lord and His Uncle Sam! Let's nuke the Devil and all His works!

Another uproar occurs in the camps of Swaggart and Downey.

Downey: Let's nuk'em!

Fans: Nuk'em! Nuk'em!

Swaggart-Follower: Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

Others: Praise the Lord and nuke the Devil! Praise the Lord and
nuke the Devil!

Magistrate (*pounding the gavel*): Order! Quiet! Mister Falwell, do you have any further questions for this witness?

Falwell (*all smug again*): I do, your honor. Mister King, you are saying that an unjust law is no law at all, isn't that correct?

King: Yes, that is correct.

Falwell: You're an anarchist, Mister King! If a law is unjust in your personal subjective opinion, you just pronounce it invalid, and then you go out and break it! Maybe your name got to your head and you fancied yourself to be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the author of all laws!

Justice: Reverend Falwell, would you call me an anarchist?

Falwell (*off guard and confused*): Huh?

Justice: What Reverend King said about unjust laws being no laws at all wasn't something he just cooked up out of the blue. It was a higher truth which I revealed to him. He was my messenger. Reverend Falwell, am I an anarchist?

*Jerry Falwell is speechless. He sits down next to Uncle Sam, dumbfounded. The jurors appear a little uneasy, a trifle off guard.*

Magistrate: Any more questions, Mister Falwell?

Falwell (*defeated*): No more questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Doctor King, this court has been greatly honored by your appearance, and we thank you. You may leave.

King: Thank you, your honor. (*Exits.*)

Magistrate: Do you have any more witnesses, Mister Falwell?

Falwell: I certainly do, your honor.

Magistrate (*with emphasis, leaning forward*): A respectable and reliable witness, Reverend?

Falwell (*back to life again*): You bet your robe. The Prosecution summons Mrs. Nancy Reagan!
Mrs. Nancy Reagan enters in sneakers, bluejeans, and a T-shirt sporting "JUST SAY NO" in big letters. She sits in the witness chair.

Falwell: Mrs. Reagan, as First Lady you launched an admirable campaign against the drug scourge in America. You are appearing as a witness for the prosecution because you feel it is consistent with the "Just Say No"-policy and to stem the tide of drugs and drug offenders invading and destroying this country, isn't that true?

Mrs. Reagan: That's right, Reverend. When we say, "Just Say No", that means No! It means Absolutely No! No no no!!! The defendant is a convicted drug offender who wants to come to America. I say No! (She rises and walks up to the jury:) Just say No! No no no!!

Magistrate: Is that all, Mrs. Reagan? Are you through?

Mrs. Reagan: No! I mean, Yes, I'm through.

Magistrate: Any more questions, Mister Falwell?

Falwell: No, your honor.

Magistrate: You may cross-examine, Mister Nixon.

Nixon: I have no questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Mrs. Reagan, the court thanks you for appearing. You may leave.

Mrs. Reagan: Thank you, your honor. (As she approaches the exit, she stumbles into Ronald Reagan.) Oh Ron! I didn't hear them call you.

Reagan: They didn't? Well you see, Nancy, I don't know if the battery is still working on this hearing aid......

Magistrate: I believe you're too early, Mister Reagan. (To Falwell:) Your next witness, I assume?

Nixon: Our next witness, your honor. It's our turn.

Mrs. Reagan: Ronnie! How can you defend this man against our
good and dear friend Jerry who is fighting for a moral majority and a clean, drug free America?

**Reagan:** But he's a Norwegian actor who wants to come to Hollywood and be an American, Nancy. And Richard is a much closer friend than Jerry.

**Mrs. Reagan:** But the kids, Ronnie, the kids! This man will drug the children of America!

**Reagan:** You're too pessimistic, Nancy. You always think the worst.

**Mrs. Reagan:** I can't help it, Ron.

**Reagan:** It's been a rough day for you, Nancy. Mars is too close to Pluto. Tomorrow you'll feel a lot better.

**Mrs. Reagan:** Not if you say Yes to a drug offender. *(Pulling his arm:)* Come, we're leaving.

**Magistrate:** Mrs. Reagan, you husband's presence is required in this courtroom immediately. Mister Nixon, you may call him in.

**Nixon:** The Defense calls Mister Ronald Reagan!

**Reagan** *(gets applause as he enters, and sits down)*: Why are people always trying to push me around?

*Mrs. Reagan exits.*

**Nixon:** My old friend Ronald, you agree that my client ought to be approved as an immigrant. Why?

**Reagan:** Well Richard, I just told Nancy that Tarjei Straume is a Norwegian actor. Besides, he's made of solid stuff because he's a Taurus with his moon in Virgo and ruled by Venus. Just look at Harry Truman. He and Tarjei Straume were both born on May 8th. Yes, when I studied the defendant's horoscope, I was thinking to myself: America needs this guy.

**Nixon:** Thank you, Ronald.

**Reagan:** I also felt I owed you one, Richard, for all the help you've given me with foreign policy.
Nixon: I have no further questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Mister Falwell, you may cross-examine.

Falwell: My dear Ronald Reagan, I always thought you were a faithful servant of the Good Lord Who put you in the White House twice.

Reagan: I am. I believe in God and Country just like yourself and Pat Robertson.

Falwell: Yes, but this backsliding into the Devil's astrology and voodoo economics has mislead you to the point of defending a godless, perverted and subversive hippie anarchist drug addict.

Nixon: Objection, your honor.

Magistrate: Sustained. The jury will disregard Mister Falwell's last remarks. Mister Falwell, your polemics against the defendant have no foundation in reality. Your opinion of Mister Reagan's religious philosophy has no objective interest outside your own church.

Falwell: In that case, your honor, Mister Reagan's astrological nonsense has no validity outside the lodges of witches and the cocktail parties of Shirley McClaine!

Shirley McClaine (rises from her pew, visibly offended): Reverend Falwell, my artistic and spiritual work is no cocktail party. Social consumption of liquor is not on my list of leisure activities either. I......

The court goes into another uproar, with the Downey's yelling at Falwell and the Swaggart's attacking McClaine, calling her a witch. Reagan is flabbergasted.

Magistrate (pounding the gavel): I want order and quiet in this court before I have it cleared! As for you, Mister Falwell, I've just about had it! In view of the high probability that some of our jurors understand astrology, Mister Reagan's remarks may prove helpful to their assessment of the defendant's character. This does not mean that astrology is officially recognized by this court.

Falwell: But astrology is immoral! It's evil!

Jimmy Swaggart (shouting from the pew): Tell'em the truth,
Brother Jerry!

**Falwell** (facing the jury, waving the Bible): So you understand astrology. Do you understand this, God's Word? Let me read you a passage from Daniel......

**Magistrate** (pounding the gavel): This has no relevance to the case, Mister Falwell! Call your next witness! Thank you, Mister Reagan. You are excused.

**Reagan:** Thank you. *(Exits.)*

**Falwell:** The Prosecution calls Mister George Gordon Liddy!

*Nixon groans. Liddy enters and sits in the witness chair.*

**Nixon** (aside, to Straume): If it hadn't been for that nut, I wouldn't have lost my Presidency.

**Falwell:** Mister Liddy, you're quite an expert on dope-hippies, peaceniks, subversives, perverts, anarchists, communists, demonstrators, nay-sayers, fornicators, terrorists, vagabonds, masturbators, drifters, derelicts, pacifists, whoremongers, warmongers and warlocks, aren't you sir?

**Liddy** *(smiling)*: Yes, I've been combating those creeps all my life. And my father before me. And his father before him. Adolf Hitler had a sense for that too.

**Falwell** *(with great caution)*: You're not really a Nazi, are you, Mister Liddy?

**Liddy** *(laughing)*: No, only when I was a little kid. I'm a very patriotic American all the way. I'm all God and Country just like you, Reverend.

**Falwell** *(with great caution)*: You're quite a specialist in covert investigations and operations, Mister Liddy. What is your assessment of the defendant's character?

**Liddy** *(smiling)*: He's probably not very dangerous, but his background is so controversial that I think the national interest is better served if he is barred from entering the United States.

**Falwell** *(with great caution)*: Do you base that conclusion upon personal experience with adversaries of similar profiles through long years of loyal
service to your country?

**Liddy:** That's correct. For instance, during President Nixon's re-election campaign there were some really violent dope-smoking hippies.......

**Nixon:** Objection! Mister Falwell is leading his witness and getting me dragged into Watergate all over again in order to discredit both the defendant and his counsel!

**Magistrate:** Objection sustained. Mister Falwell, it has been established that the defendant is a convicted drug offender and an ex-hippie, just like your witness here is a former convict and an ex-Nazi, with all due respect to his high service with the FBI. Nothing else. Please don't tire this court with irrelevant squabble about masturbation, communism and anarchism, OK?

**Falwell:** But the jury and the public has a right to know that the defendant is a godless sinner!

**Magistrate:** Irrelevant, Mister Falwell. Mister Nixon, do you wish to cross-examine this witness?

**Nixon (with a deep sigh):** I guess so. George, why are you doing this to me?

**Liddy:** I'm not doing anything to you, Dick. I'm helping the Reverend clean up the country.

**Nixon:** Morally?

**Liddy:** Morally.

**Nixon:** In 1972 you were pimping call girls on Miami Beach in order to nail down Democratic candidates. Do you call that moral?

**Liddy:** We were at war, Dick. That's when the end justifies the means.

**Nixon:** George.....

**Falwell:** Objection, your honor. This is all irrelevant.

**Magistrate:** Objection sustained.
Nixon: I have no further questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Thank you, Mister Liddy. You are excused.

Liddy: Thank you, your honor.

Magistrate: Mister Nixon, do you have another witness?

Nixon: We do, your honor. The Defense calls Mister Thomas Jefferson!

Reactions throughout the court.

Magistrate: The Thomas Jefferson, counsel?

Nixon: The one and only, your honor.

Falwell: Devil-magic! This is satanic justice! (Pointing his finger accusingly at Justice:) I rebuke thee in the name of Jeeezuss!! I rebuke thee.....

Thomas Jefferson enters in garb and appearance exactly as he looked toward the end of his Presidency, ca.1808. He takes a keen interest in Reverend Falwell's gesticulations and rebukes against Justice, who pays no attention to this. Falwell discovers Jefferson and freezes, transfixed. Like Dr. King before him, President Jefferson remains standing throughout his testimony.

Nixon: Mister Jefferson, I understand you have been brought up to date concerning our cultural, political, legal and economic history?

Jefferson: Yes I have.

Nixon: And you have been briefed about my client's case?

Jefferson: Yes I have.

Nixon: Will you tell this court why you have found my client deserving of your support?

Jefferson: In the twentieth century there has been much talk about "freedom for every nation." These are fine-sounding words, but they make no sense. You cannot have free nations unless you have free individuals to begin with. In my day immigrants were
admitted freely and without restriction. The import of slaves was repugnant to me. Today freedom has been abrogated throughout the world by an excessive bureaucracy.

**Nixon:** Mister Jefferson, what do you have to say about my client, the defendant?

**Jefferson:** I say, set him free; give him his immigration. This man spent many years in America without freedom, because he did not have the legal right to be there. Give him the taste of American freedom. Don't punish him for something that is long forgotten.

**Nixon:** Thank you, Mister Jefferson. No further questions, your honor.

**Magistrate:** You may cross-examine, Mister Falwell.

**Falwell** *(faces Jefferson, pauses, and finally finds his voice, brandishing his leather Bible)*: Mister Jefferson, you are of course familiar with this book; it is the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

**Jefferson:** Yes, I used to have one.

**Falwell** *(gaining confidence)*: And you believe the Holy Word of God, as a good Christian, Founding Father and all?

**Jefferson** *(puzzled)*: Of course.

**Falwell** *(triumphant)*: And you agree that the infallible Word of God should be the law of the land?

**Jefferson:** I beg your pardon, sir, but what you have there is not the infallible Word of God. It is a masterful renditions in English of sacred Jewish scriptures. The New Testament does teach us about the salvation of all mankind, but in my day we established a separation of church and state in order to prevent members of the clergy like yourself from undermining our God-given right to liberty, especially in spiritual matters.

**Falwell:** You're..... you're a liberal?!!

**Jefferson** *(laughing at Falwell's dismay)*: I most certainly am. I'm a revolutionary; you're a reactionary. Not only did I write the Declaration of Independence; I also created the Democratic Party. If you value freedom, you must fight for it every day. To do that,
you must be a liberal. The infallible Word of God is not to be found on dead print, but in the living hearts of all free men. That was a problem for us when we drafted the Constitution. Alexander Hamilton was a believer in the printed word; I wasn't. I have complete faith in the free spirit.

Falwell: But... but the Bible....

Jefferson: The Bible cannot be used for the purpose of legislation, but I agree that every gentleman ought to read it.

Falwell (almost begging): But Mister Jefferson.....

Magistrate: Mister Falwell, if you wish to continue this, I suggest you invite Mister Jefferson to your church. The witness is dismissed.

Jefferson (slightly bowing his head): Gentlemen. (Exits.)

Magistrate: Do you have another witness, Mister Falwell?

Falwell: I certainly do. The Prosecution summons Lieutenant Oliver North!

Audience reaction. North gets applause from Downey's crowd when he enters and sits in the witness chair.

Falwell (back to his smug old self again): Brother Ollie, you've been out there in the jungle defending America all by yourself, haven't you?

North: Yes sir.

Nixon (aside to Straume): Another Rambo, just like George.

Falwell: Will you please tell the jury and the Lord what is threatening America today?

Nixon: Objection!

Magistrate: What's the idea here, Mister Falwell?

Falwell: We will establish that the defendant is a threat to our national security.

Magistrate: Objection overruled.
Falwell: What is threatening America today, Brother Ollie?

North: Drugs and hippies, communist guerillas and anarchists.....

Nixon: Objection!

Magistrate: Sustained. Lieutenant North, your military intelligence activities have been chiefly down in Central America, right?

North: Yes sir.

Magistrate: Did you ever see the defendant down there..... in Ortega's army with a joint in his mouth or anything like that?

North: No sir.

Magistrate: Have you ever seen the defendant at all?

North: No sir.

Falwell: Your honor, I must protest. None of Mister Nixon's witnesses have seen the defendant either. This court is biased!

Magistrate: Mister Falwell, the difference is this: Every one of Mister Nixon's witnesses has been an important figure in the creating and shaping of our legislature and jurisprudence, or as in the case of Mister Lennon, has had a decisive influence upon the practical application of the Immigration Code at hand. Every one of your witnesses, however, has been a breaker rather than a maker of law, with the sole exception of Mrs. Nancy Reagan, and Mister Liddy's expertise in the FBI notwithstanding. With all due respect to the Lieutenant's career and integrity, your witnesses, Reverend, are all convicts. You most certainly created a fine company for the former First Lady. To top it all off, we have to listen to your tedious fundamentalist outbursts. Mister Nixon is a lawyer. You are a preacher playing lawyer to impress your congregation and your TV audience. Either you let me run this court, or you get back to your church where you can play God. Am I making myself clear?

Falwell is too furious to answer.

Magistrate: Any questions for this witness, Mister Nixon? You may cross-examine.
Nixon: No questions, your honor.

Magistrate: Lieutenant North, you are excused.

North: Thank you, your honor. (Exits.)

Magistrate: Your next witness, Mister Nixon.

Nixon: Very well. The defense calls Mister William Shakespeare!

Audience reaction. Shakespeare enters in his customary garb, pointed shoes, goatee and all. He remains standing.

Nixon: Mister Shakespeare, you are no ordinary witness; you are an initiate and a seer.

Falwell: Satanic sorcery and witchcraft! I rebuke.....

Magistrate: Any more outbursts like that, Mister Falwell, and I'll have you in contempt of court! I'll have you eighty-sixed! Is that understood?

Falwell (with suppressed anger): Yes, your honor.

Nixon (continues): I assume that through your higher faculties of cognition you may have some knowledge of my client?

Shakespeare: He came to my attention when he was a theatre student in England. He studied my plays and sonnets, and he played some of my characters.

Nixon: And you recommend him to America?


Nixon: As you know, my client was convicted for drug offenses prior to his years in England. This bars him from immigration to America. Will you tell the jury why they should make an exception if the law authorizes a waiver?

Shakespeare (facing the jury): Initially, I would say that the defendant is exceptionally well prepared through his study of English and other European history and classical literature. Secondly, he is also well versed in American history and culture. But my third and most important point is that in addition to
Justice seated on his throne here, we need the presence of Mercy. Where is she?

Magistrate: It hasn't been customary.....

Shakespeare: What a shame. Who remembers Portia's speech about mercy from "The Merchant of Venice"?

Nixon (smiling): I know that one.

Shakespeare (shouting): Portia! Come in here!

_Portia enters, a beautiful young woman dressed up as a man of the sixteenth century. Shakespeare leads her over to the jury._

Shakespeare (to Portia): The American Immigration Code prohibits our friend from entering the land he loves and needs because he was convicted and punished for a crime almost twenty-two years ago.

Portia: Then must the jury be merciful.

Shakespeare: On what compulsion must they? Tell them that.

Portia (to the jury): The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the heart of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, jury,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy. I have spoken thus much
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
Which if thou follow, this strict court
of the United States of America
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the defendant there.

**Justice:** We need her. Leave her with us. Pull up a throne.

*The cherubs bring a throne and place it on the right hand side of Justice. Portia is given a beautiful dress and is crowned with a wreath of flowers.*

**Shakespeare:** Your name is now Mercy. Go and sit on your throne next to Justice.

**Falwell:** Objection! She's a hippie! A flower girl!

**Magistrate:** Objection overruled.

**Falwell:** But she's..... she's indecent! She's..... she's sexy!

**Magistrate:** Does she have an arousing effect on you, Reverend?

**Falwell (blushing):** She's Satan's own daughter!

**Shakespeare:** Modern men who choose religion as their profession are driven by a variety of instincts, some of which are of the baser kind. Certain theologians have a strong inclination to develop a chronic obsession with prurient sensuality. I believe Reverend Falwell's pathological condition is sufficiently advanced to warrant his immediate dismissal from this court. Mercy is a pure and innocent virgin, and I urge the court to protect her safety.

**Falwell:** Objection! Objection!

**Magistrate:** Overruled!

**Uncle Sam (patting Falwell on the shoulder):** Take it easy, Jerry. Go and spend a couple of days in one of my Nevada cat houses. The girls there say they miss you. You'd better go fast, Jerry. This is gett'n outa hand.

**Falwell:** But we were going to close them down!

**Uncle Sam:** That would be very unhealthy for you, Jerry.

*Two security guards enter to escort Falwell out of the building.*

**Falwell:** You can't do this to me! It's my turn to cross-examine!
**Magistrate:** You can argue with Shakespeare about the King James Bible in your church! You are dismissed.

**Falwell:** But..... but your honor! I have more witnesses!

**Magistrate:** We have learned all we need to know about your guerilla warfare against masturbating subversive peaceniks.

**Falwell:** But..... but my closing argument!

**Magistrate:** We've heard that too about astrology and communism and fornication. Have a good day, Mister Falwell.

**Falwell:** Huh..... (*He is escorted out.*)

_Nixon and Straume both grab Shakespeare's hands and thank him affectionately and profusely._

**Nixon:** You even got rid of the Prosecution!

**Shakespeare:** No, I didn't. She did. (*He points to Mercy.*)

_Mercy is radiating a beautiful, loving smile enhanced by the wreath of flowers on her head and her summer dress. Justice has removed his blindfold. He looks down with his sharp and clear countenance._

**Justice:** She gave me my sight.

**Mercy:** Justice is no longer blind.

**Straume:** They make a great pair, don't they?

**Nixon:** Yes, they really do.

**Shakespeare:** I must leave. Best of luck to you. (*He shakes Straume's hand.*)

**Nixon:** I'll miss you, Ol' Bill.

**Shakespeare:** "Ol' Bill," I like that. You know, I could have written a great tragedy around Watergate.

**Nixon (musing):** A tragedy? More like a Comedy of Errors. Well,
there were plenty of books and a few movies.

**Shakespeare:** Yes, but nobody got to the bottom of it the way I did with Julius Caesar, Richard III, and King Lear. So long. *(He exits.)*

**Magistrate:** Mister Nixon, do you have a closing argument?

**Nixon** *(clearing his voice):* Yes I do, but before I begin, I would like to relate a conversation I had with Socrates about my client's plea.

**Magistrate:** You had a conversation with Socrates?

**Nixon:** Yes I did. He was supposed to be my next witness, but he has many other commitments, and after the removal of the Prosecution it should suffice if I explain to you his feelings about this matter. When the Athenian Senate made a judgement against Socrates, he was given the choice between permanent exile from Greece or death by poison hemlock. Socrates chose the hemlock. To my client, America is Greece, from which he is being held in forced exile. It was this I discussed with Socrates. Nobody else has shown me a deeper empathy with my client's inner suffering. Socrates knows, because to him, banishment from Greece would have been unbearable. I am asking the jury to remember Socrates during their deliberation.

**Magistrate:** They will, counsel. Do you have your closing argument ready?

**Nixon:** I do, your honor. *(Facing the jury:) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: The Prosecution's case has collapsed due to its extremely exaggerated endeavor to discredit my client's character. The defense stakes its reputation upon the claim that Tarjei Straume is not an undesirable. Our friend Shakespeare brought us Mercy so Justice would not have to be blind. I myself experienced mercy when I received my pardon through President Gerald Ford. People said I got off Scot free, but the loss of two and a half years of my own Presidency hurt me more than even a decade in prison could have done. I also experienced mercy when I found it possible to be an effective author and political advisor. I feel mercy today when I get to spend most of my time reading philosophy and classical literature. *(He walks over to Straume with a heavy gait and lays a hand on his shoulder.) We are asking the jury for mercy. Thank you all. *(He sits down.)*
Magistrate: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: The prosecution's case has been a fiasco. You must not let the preacher and his witnesses influence your decision, with the notable exception of former First Lady Mrs. Nancy Reagan. Counsel Nixon has presented an effective defense of Tarjei Straume, and it is your solemn duty to weigh the testimonies of these witnesses against the strict requirements of the law (giving Uncle Sam a quick glance). Keep in mind the John Lennon case. You will now be given Mister Straume's immigrant visa application, which you will bring to the deliberation chamber where you will be joined by Justice, Mercy, and the cherubs.

Nixon (taking a large envelope out of his briefcase and handing it to the jury): Here is my client's passport, his fingerprint card, his medical report, his photos, and his completed application.

The jury exits, followed by Justice, Mercy, and the cherubs, while the curtain falls.

Continue to ACT TWO
The immigration Trial of Tarjei Straume

ACT TWO

STAGE DIRECTIONS:

The scene is the same court of law as described in Act One. Upstage Center are two enormous, elevated thrones where Justice sits, without blindfold, with young Mercy on his right hand side. Above these thrones are the winged cherubs, now seven in number. Otherwise, the court room is exactly as in the first Act, and the audience is the same. There is no jury. When the curtain goes up, however, the audience has not been admitted. The Magistrate is speaking with Jerry Falwell, Richard Nixon, Tarjei Straume, and Uncle Sam. A security guard is watching the door.

Curtain Up

Magistrate: Mister Straume, are you prepared to plea bargain on Reverend Falwell's conditions?

Straume (to Nixon): Richard, what's going on?

Nixon: The jury voted in your favor, but Uncle Sam here won't give an inch. He is clinging adamantly to his prerogative to keep you out.

Uncle Sam: You're the one who's turning my judicial branch into a circus, Richard. Just take a look at that happy horseshit you arranged up there (pointing to Mercy and Justice). Justice without blindfold! And a male! With Mercy and seven cherubs! (Shaking his head.) Get'em out of here. This is my country and my court with my laws. Blindfold Justice at once and give the son of a bitch a sex change! Two cherubs are enough. Get the other five out.

Magistrate: Very well, Uncle Sam. (To Mercy:) We have been very pleased with your presence, but I'm afraid you have to leave and take five cherubs with you.

Mercy, looking very sad, exits quietly with five cherubs. On her way out, Falwell reaches out to pinch her luscious buttock, but Uncle Sam stops him.
Nixon (to Straume): Our only chance now is the power and goodwill of the President.

Straume: I wish you were still President, Richard.

Nixon (with a deep and nostalgic sigh): So do I, son. So do I.

Magistrate: You see, Mister Straume, the incumbent Republican administration has a vested interest in the approval rating among Reverend Falwell's..... huh ..... fans.

Falwell (licking his lips with a smile): The faithful sheep of the Lord's loyal servant.

Magistrate: Well..... yes, so we have to accept the Reverend back in this court, regrettable as it may be to you, Mister Straume.

Nixon: What this means, Tarjei, is that you'll have to publicly confess your sins and renounce your evil ways as a born again Christian.

Straume (gawking at Nixon in disbelief): You didn't.....

Nixon: No, but my good and close friend Chuck Colson did. And Falwell is a tough plea bargainer.

Falwell (patting Straume friendly on the shoulder): Lay your problems on God's shoulders, and He'll find a way.

Uncle Sam (rising, donning his star spangled hat): This is bullshit, Jerry, and you know it! I won't stand for it! I don't want this drug pusher on my territory!

Nixon: Sit down and take off your hat! (To Straume:) You see, if you want to be an American against Uncle Sam's wishes, you need the Reverend as well as the President and myself as your allies.

Straume (shrugging in surrender): OK.

Falwell (giving Straume a Bible): Welcome to the club, Brother Tarjei. Here's the Falwell Edition of the Holy Scriptures, with all my footnotes and commentaries. I've autographed it for you.

Straume (accepting the gift): Thank you, Reverend. Thank you, Jesus.

Falwell: Praise the Lord.
Uncle Sam: Jerry, what the hell got into you?

Falwell: Well Sam, I took your advice and had a terrific holiday in Nevada. When I heard that Nixon was appealing to the President, I knew I had to do something. Then God gave me a jackpot on a slot machine while He told me that He needed Straume as His servant in His plan to save America from your mistakes, Sam.

Uncle Sam (indignantly): You're turning on me, Jerry. What were you saying at first about saving me from this subversive drug pusher?

Falwell: You're the one who turned on the Lord when you refused to accept His Holy Scriptures as the law of the land!

Uncle Sam (clenching his fist): You'll regret this! I'll have your tax exempt operation investigated, and I'll see your holy ass in my personal federal pen!

Falwell (with an arrogant smile): That won't work, because all my books are clean and wide open.

Uncle Sam: Including what you just dropped at the brothels and casinos in Nevada?

Falwell (still smiling): The Lord gave His loyal servant a cash jackpot that covered all expenses.

Uncle Sam: You son of a bitch.

Falwell: Besides, I got the sheriff to close down some of those brothels, which has earned us very good publicity and multiplied our donations from Moral America. When the Lord giveth, He giveth in plenty. My cup runneth over.

Uncle Sam: So you're a man of God, a Christian soul. What about those poor girls you put out of work, did you ever think of them?

Falwell (very smug and still smiling): They all fell on their knees and gave their lives to Jesus. They're in our congregation now, laboring for the Lord.

Nixon: In what capacity, may I inquire?

Falwell: They're prepared to obey the Lord in all His commandments.

Nixon: And if the Lord wants His servant to have his own secret harem as a tool to seduce his competition?

Falwell: If the command comes from the Lord..... Why are you trying to trick
me, Brother Richard? We're waving the same flag now.

**Nixon:** That's right, Reverend. I'm sorry. *(To Uncle Sam:)* What got into you, Uncle Sam? I thought you agreed that my client's plea was a just one.

**Uncle Sam** *(with an angry growl):* Don't try to push me around. You stopped the best war I ever had and made me lose the sucker. You terminated the draft. It's because of you I can't get any wars off the ground these days.

**Nixon:** No, it's because Congress hit us in the head with that War Powers Act.

**Uncle Sam:** Bullshit. It's your fault. It's all your fault. Everything's your fault. Ask anybody.

**Nixon:** I did my best to help you. Now I feel sorry for you.

**Uncle Sam:** Son of a bitch.

**Nixon** *(to Straume):* Never mind him, kid. Come here. *(Walks Downstage Right with Straume, away from the others.)* Uncle Sam's got his back up. I'm afraid, but Jerry Falwell is ours. Never trust that preacher. He's a snake, but he's ours.

**Straume:** What do you mean?

**Nixon** *(pulling a small tape recorder from his pocket):* Here's everything he said about his Nevada vacation.

**Straume** *(suppressing a triumphant outburst):* You.....

**Nixon** *(very warm):* This is not just any tape recorder, Tarjei. This is a Tricky Dick Special. He'll fear this more than he fears the Lord.

**Straume** *(deeply impressed):* Wow!.....

**Nixon** *(half whispering):* Don't breathe a word. It's our ace in the hole. I guarantee you that Falwell will play ball all the way. *Our* way if need be.

**Straume:** Then I won't have to confess that conversion!

**Nixon:** It's too late to call that off. Besides, it's a good gambit. Remember, you're not a liberal. You're an archconservative. God has made you see the Light in the Right.

**Straume** *(adjusting to the idea):* God has made me see the Light in the Right. OK.
**Nixon** (patting **Straume's shoulder**): You've got it, kid.

**Magistrate** (as Nixon and Straume return): All set, everybody? 

*Falwell and Nixon nod.*

**Uncle Sam**: Wait a minute. With Jerry goin' turncoat, who's prosecuting?

**Magistrate**: You are, Uncle Sam. You're the only reason Mister Straume is not an American. You with your Section 212 (a) (23) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

**Uncle Sam** (walks up to Straume, white with rage): If you ever put your dope-stinkin' foot on my territory again, it'll be over my dead body! Or yours!

**Nixon** (putting his hand on Straume's shoulder): Easy, kid. Don't talk back to him. You have to be a citizen to do that. (To Uncle Sam:) Sammy, you're an absolute ass today! I don't know why, but you're behaving like a jerk! Now you apologize to my client and sit down before I write a very ugly book about you!

**Uncle Sam** (reluctantly): I apologize, Mister Straume. (Sits.)

**Magistrate**: Uncle Sam, when we begin, I can't accept any expletives about dope hippies or anything like that. Just stick to your section in the law, OK?

**Uncle Sam** (pressured): OK.

**Magistrate**: Everything is set. Let them in.

*The audience trails in: Downey, Swaggart, Hefner, McClaine, Donahue, etc. the same old crowd, with Johnny Carson and his audience off Upstage Right.* 

*No jury is present. Three White House aides enter the jury box, however, where they set up a complete monitoring and communications system replete with recorders, cameras, telephones, cables and faxes. An NBC crew comes in and sets up cameras and microphones all over the courtroom. Everybody gets makeup. Bright lights.*

**Nixon** (to Straume): Listen, Falwell is getting his circus, and you're his dancing elephant. Trust me, Tarjei: If he gets out of control, I'll use my weapon on him: The Tricky Dick Special. OK?

**Straume** (with a forced smile): OK.

**Magistrate** (hitting the gavel): The court is in session. Ladies and gentlemen,
you notice that the jury is no longer required. They have all signed a petition to the White House for Mister Straume's official Americanization.

**Uncle Sam:** Then why are we wasting our time here?

**Nixon:** We're going to force you, with a little help from the President, to give my client a U.S. passport and accept him as a citizen.

**Uncle Sam:** Never!

**Nixon** *(moving up close to Uncle Sam's face)*: We'll see! We'll see!

**Uncle Sam:** I don't need another disgrace to my flag just like you've always been! And your mama!

*Audience reaction. Angry shouts from Downey's mob.*

**Magistrate** *(pounding the gavel)*: Knock it off all of you! And that ghetto talk won't get you anywhere, Uncle Sam. Mister Falwell, please explain to this court why you, after having prosecuted the defendant, now recommend that the President intercede for him.

**Falwell:** My dear brothers and sisters, let's talk about The Good News you all know from The Old Time Time Gospel Hour The Good News about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has the power to change the worst sinner's heart and make a new servant for His holy cause. Let me introduce to you such a new Christian soul, a new born baby: The defendant, Tarjei Straume!

*An overwhelming applause fills the courtroom and thirty million TV-homes as Straume rises and takes a deep and humble bow. Swaggart and his friends are sobbing and weeping profusely, hugging each other and praising God.*

**Magistrate:** Mister Falwell, what's all this?

**Falwell:** A revival, your honor. God's holy circus. We're on national television, and the President is watching. *(To Straume)*: Please tell America what Jesus has done for you.

**Straume** *(a little bashful, clearing his throat)*: Well, huh.... well.... I was a sinner. I was a liar and a cheat. I used drugs. I was a hippie and a liberal.

**Falwell:** A political liberal?

**Straume:** Yes.
Falwell: A communist, an anarchist, and a secular humanist?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: You were a card-carrying member of the A.C.L.U?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: Did you also fool around with liberal theology?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: With astrology and reincarnation?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: With rock'n'roll, drugs and sex?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: And you used obscene language?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: And you watched HBO?

Straume: Yes.

Falwell: And you were sexually active?

Nixon: Objection, your honor. My client is being humiliated, intimidated, and coerced.

Magistrate: Objection sustained. Are you a Jesuit, Reverend? This sounds perilously like the Inquisition.

Falwell: Well, the defendant wants to be a citizen of God's country, and in order to make an omelet you have to break some eggs.

Nixon: I still won't stand for the destruction of my client's personal dignity, Reverend. Especially not on live national television.

Falwell: That dignity of yours will only keep you out of Heaven, counsel. You can't be saved by Jesus unless you're stripped naked. You have to break down and cry in desperation.
Nixon: So you can gloat over it in front of millions of people? No way.

Falwell: In that case I see no reason why my Christian audience out there should re-elect the President unless he declines to help your client.

Nixon: Your honor, may the Reverend and I approach the bench?

Magistrate: All right. Come on over.

Nixon gives Straume a knowing wink as he and Falwell confer quietly and inaudibly with the Magistrate. Falwell reappears dumbfounded and pale, but when he regains his voice, he cannot conceal a quick blush.

Falwell: I don't want anyone to misunderstand my last remark. Of course it's our holy duty to support God's man in the White House in 1992, a man who is obviously going to help this brave Norwegian servant of the Lord who has left all his sins behind and given his life to Jesus. Brother Tarjei, tell us about Jesus.

Straume: Well.... huh.... Jesus forgave all my sins and saved me. He made me see the Light in the Right. My hippie liberalism with drugs and sex was really Satan having a strong hold on my soul. When Brother Jerry brought Jesus into my life, I found a completely new way of looking at things at politics, for instance. I believe in strict laws, tough enforcement, a strong and active military establishment, respect for the flag, hard work, no free lunch for anybody, apple pie, the girl next door, honor to our dear Uncle Sam, small town values, and the safe re-election of President George Bush. And, of course, The Ten Commandments, The Sermon on the Mount, picking up the cross and following Brother Jerry and Jesus Christ.

Uncle Sam (rising, donning his star spangled hat, walking up to Straume): Bullshit! If I bought that line of hogwash from you, I wouldn't be fit to run and own the most powerful government ever! Jesus and apple pie my ass, what are you trying to pull?

Nixon (stepping in between Straume and Uncle Sam): If you were fit for your job, Sam, the country wouldn't be in such a mess now, would it? You blame it on us Presidents, but you're the one who screws things up. Now sit down, and take off your hat!

Uncle Sam and Nixon both sit down.

Falwell (responding to a demanding stare from Nixon): The Moral Majority, Brother Tarjei, counsel Nixon and myself want you to clean up your act, Sam. Clean up your language and show respect for God's people. Applause from the
Swaggart-camp.

**Uncle Sam (in anger, to the Magistrate):** They all seem to think they can bully me as they please, but that bum ain't get't'n into my country! *(Pointing at Straume):* I've got my Section 212 (a) (23))!! And I'm sitt'n on it!

White House Chief of Staff John Sununu bursts into the courtroom, startling the security guards who back off once they see this human pit bull in all his fury. Accidentally knocking down an NBC light, Sununu charges straight up to Uncle Sam like a rhino through the jungle, ignoring the Magistrate.

**Sununu (to Uncle Sam):** You're sitt'n on what?

**Uncle Sam:** Section 212 (a) (23) of the Immigration and Nationality Act!

**Sununu:** Then eat it! I'm the one who decides if Straume is to be an American! I and the President!

**Uncle Sam (rising, donning his hat):** No it ain't! It's my 212 (a) (23)! It's my Constitution! And it's my country!

**Sununu:** So he can't get a waiver. Fuck it! He can't have a visa. Fuck that too! He won't need any of that chickenshit if we decide he's an American!

**Uncle Sam:** You can't decide that!

**Sununu (pointing his finger in a threat):** Watch us, Sam. Watch us.

**Uncle Sam (to the Magistrate):** He can't do that, can he?

**Magistrate (shrugging, shaking his head):** I don't know. I don't think so.

**Straume (rising, taking charge):** Let's find out. *(To Sununu:) You wanna do it?*

**Sununu (with a haughty arrogance):** Why should I?

**Straume (pulling Sununu Downstage Right, off the cameras and away from the microphones):** Because I'm a son of a bitch just like you are, and I think we can make a deal. *(To Nixon:) Richard, come over here.

**Nixon joins Straume and Sununu Downstage Right, where he takes the tape out of his Tricky Dick Special and hands it over to Sununu.**

**Nixon (to Sununu):** With this tape you have a healthy chunk of the Religious
Right in your pocket. Falwell will ask his TV audience to vote exactly as you
tell him, and my client is out of the circus.

**Sununu** (*shaking Straume's hand*): Welcome to America, you crazy son of a
bitch.

**Nixon**: Now you can be a communist and an anarchist all you want. You can
have a Mormon harem in Utah or a brothel in Nevada. You can join any racket
on the market. You're a citizen, and with a little help from the A.C.L.U. or with
the right amount of cash, you can get away with anything you want.

**Straume**: You mean, I've got my freedom.

**Nixon**: Exactly.

**Straume**: What about your House of Unamerican Activities Committee?

**Nixon**: Dissolved years ago. A bad idea. Too unamerican.

**Straume**: I'll try to be nice to Uncle Sam. Maybe I can butter him up.

**Sununu**: That won't be easy. Tomorrow the President and I will have to twist
his arm so he'll sign for your citizenship. We need his signature. He is, after
all, the nation. See you around. (*He exits.*)

**Straume**: There's something else, Richard. I don't have any money, so I can't
pay you right now.

**Nixon**: Forget it, son. Just remember I'm not that bad guy people seem to think
I am.

**Straume**: But I have an idea that could cover a lot more than your fee.

**Nixon**: Tell me about it.

**Straume**: You could help General Electric beat the Japanese competition.

**Nixon**: How?

**Straume**: Show me that tape recorder.

*Nixon gives Straume the tape recorder.*

**Straume**: We'll have a unique photograph taken of you in silhouette with a big
costume and hat so that your distinguished face is immediately recognized with
that famous nose. Then we go to Madison Avenue and launch a global
campaign for the fantastic TDS tape recorder!

Nixon (with joy, amusement, and wonder): The Tricky Dick Special!

Straume: Exactly. You can expand the idea into all kinds of electronic appliances, using the TDS logo: Transistor radios, beepers, computer games, cameras, calculators, you name it. Let's do it!

Nixon: Well like I said, you don't have to pay me for representing you.

Straume: But I'd like to. And maybe you'll offer me a decent piece of the action.

Nixon: Yes of course, it's your idea.

Straume: Partners?

Nixon: It's a deal.

They shake hands.

Curtain Falls.

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For more interesting stuff (also Anthroposophy) see Tarjei's Home Page at http://UncleTaz.com
Manifestations of Karma

Individual Human Karma, Karma of the Higher Beings

Rudolf Steiner
Lecture, May 1910 in Hamburg.

From stenographic notes in German not reviewed by the author. The text may therefore not be completely accurate. [ed.]

There is much still to be said about the various manifestations of karma; but as this is our last lecture, and time is necessarily short for so wide a subject, you easily understand that much that could be said, perhaps much of that which is on your minds in the way of questions, cannot be dealt with this time. But our anthroposophical movement will continue, and that which in one course of lectures must necessarily remain unanswered, can on another occasion be carried on and explained further.

It will repeatedly have come before your minds that in the law of karma, man experiences something which is so organised that at every moment of our life we can look upon what we have gone through, upon what we have done, thought and felt in the incarnations preceding our own, and we shall always find that our momentary human inner and outer fate may be understood in the light of a life-account, in which on one side we set down all the clever, reasonable and wise experiences, and on the other all that is unreasonable, wicked or ugly. On one side or the other there will be an excess which signifies at any moment of life the destiny of that moment.

Now various questions may arise in this connection, and the first one would be: How is what human beings do as a society connected with what we call Individual karma? We have already touched upon these questions from other aspects. If we look back at any event in history, for instance to the Persian wars, it will be impossible for us to believe that these events looked at from the Greek point of view represent something only to be written in the book of fate of individual men, who upon the physical plane may appear to be the persons most directly interested. Think of all the leaders in the Persian wars, of all the men who sacrificed themselves at that time, of all that was done by individuals from the leaders down to the separate individuals in the Greek legions at that time. If we really consider such an event in a reasonable light, could we possibly ascribe what each separate person did at that time solely to the karmic account of that individual? We should find it impossible to do so.

Can we imagine that in the events which happen to a whole nation or to a great part of civilised humanity, nothing further occurs than that each separate human individual simply lives out his own karma? This is not possible. We
must in the course of historical evolution always proceed from one event to the
next, and we shall see that in the evolution of mankind itself both meaning and
significance are to be found, but that such events cannot be identical with the
particular karma of separate individuals.

We may reflect on an occurrence such as that of the Persian wars, and ask what
significance they had in the course of human evolution. In the East a certain
brilliant civilisation had developed. But as every light has its shadow, so must
we clearly see that this Eastern civilisation was only to be attained by
humanity at the cost of certain darker shadowy elements which should have
had no place in human evolution. This civilisation had one pronounced
shadow-side: the impulse to extend its frontiers by means of physical force. If
this desire for aggrandisement had not been there, it is evident that the whole
of that Eastern civilisation would not have come into being. The one cannot be
thought of without the other. In order that man might evolve further, the Greek
civilisation, for instance, had to develop from quite different principles. But the
Greek civilisation could not of itself make a direct beginning. It had to obtain
certain elements from outside and it borrowed these from the Eastern
civilisation. Various legends about heroes who from Greece passed over to the
East, do in fact represent how the pupils of certain Greek schools went over to
the East and brought back to the Greeks those treasures of Eastern culture
which could then be transformed by means of the national Greek talent. But for
this it was necessary to eradicate the shadow-side of this culture: the impulse
to press forward to the West by means of purely external force. The Roman
civilisation which succeeded the Greek, and all that contributed to the
evolution of European mankind would not have been possible if the Greeks
had not prepared the ground by a further development of the Eastern
civilisation: if they had not beaten back the Persians and what pertained to
them. Thus that which had been created in Asia was purified by the driving
back of the Asiatics.

Many events in the evolution of the world can be considered in this way, and
one then obtains a striking picture. If we gave a course of lectures extending
over three or four years and during that time gave our thought only to the
traditional, historical documents of humanity, we should then see the unfolding
of something which we might really call a plan in the evolution of mankind.
We could then survey such a plan and say to ourselves, this had to be attained;
it had this shadow-side which later had to be cast off; the treasures which had
been acquired had to pass over to another, and there be perfected further.

After the Greeks had carried on with the acquired treasures for a certain time,
the downfall of Greece occurred, and Rome took its place. In this way we
should arrive at a plan of human evolution, so that when speaking of this plan
we could never fall into the error of saying: How did it come about, for
instance, that just Xerxes or Miltiades or Leonidas had this or that individual
karma? We must consider this individual karma as something which must be
determined by and interwoven with the plan of the evolution of mankind. This
cannot be understood in any other way; and this, too, is the view of Spiritual Science. But if this is the case, we must say: In this well-planned advance of human evolution we must see something which is a thing by itself, which is continuous in itself, in a similar way to that in which karmic events in individual human lives are connected with each other, and we must further enquire: What relation does such a plan of the whole evolution of mankind bear to the individual karma of man? Let us first of all consider what one might call the destiny of human evolution itself.

When we look back we see how one civilisation after another arises, and how the evolution of one people follows upon that of another. We see further how one nation after another acquires this or that which is new, how something remains out of the separate national civilisations which is permanent but how just on that account the nations must die out, so that the treasures each separate nation has acquired may be saved for the corresponding later epochs of human evolution. We must, therefore, find quite comprehensible what Spiritual Science has to say, that in the continuous advance of human evolution one can in the first place clearly distinguish two currents. Consider how in the whole course of the evolution of humanity there is what we may look upon as a continuous current, within which wave after wave develops, and that which the foregoing wave has acquired is carried over into the next.

We can get an idea of this if we look back to the first civilisation of the Post-Atlantean age, and observe the great achievements of ancient India. But if we compare that with the feeble echo of it which is contained in the old Vedas, which are, to be sure, wonderful enough, but which are but a faint reflection of that to which the Rishis attained and of what Spiritual Science relates to us of the great culture of the Indians, we then are compelled to admit that the original greatness of what this people accomplished for mankind had already faded when a beginning was made to preserve this treasure of human culture in those beautiful poetical productions. But what the Indian culture first gained flowed over into the general course of human evolution and this alone made it possible for that to develop later which again was required by a young people, not by a people already grown old. The Indians had first to be driven back to the southern Peninsula, and then the Zarathustran view of the world evolved in Persia.

How sublime was this view of the world when it arose, and how low had it fallen in a comparatively short time in the people who had received it! In Egypt and Chaldea we see the same thing happen. Then we see the passing over of the Eastern wisdom into Greece, and we see the Greeks beat back that which is Eastern on the external physical plane. We then see all that the whole East had acquired taken up into the lap of Greece and interwoven with much that had been acquired in various domains of Europe. Out of this there was created a new culture, which then in various indirect ways became capable of receiving the Christ Impulse and of transplanting it into the West.
We find this continuous stream of civilisation in which we see wave after wave, and each successive wave is both a continuation of the preceding and a new contribution to mankind. But what was the origin of all this? Remember all that each nation experiences in its own culture. Think of the accumulation of emotion and perceptions in countless individuals, of wishes and enthusiasms fostering the impulse of this culture. Think how the individuals were united in the one cultural impulse, so that through countless centuries of human development, one nation after another, developing the successive cultural impulses, each one lived its enthusiasms; but lived too in a sort of illusion. Every one of them believed the particular achievement of that culture to be not transitory but eternal. For that reason only was the devoted work of the separate peoples made possible, because the illusion always survived. Even today the illusion exists; although we are not so absolutely bound by it and do not speak of our culture as necessarily everlasting.

There you have two things necessary to national civilisations, and which are only beginning to change in our own day. For the first domain of human spiritual life in which such illusions cannot persist, is that of Anthroposophy. It would be a grave error for an anthroposophist to believe that the forms in which our knowledge is now clothed and the train of thought which we are able to give out today from our anthroposophical thought, feeling and will, are eternal. It would be very short-sighted to suppose that in three thousand years there would still be persons who would speak of the anthroposophical truths just as we ourselves do today. We know that we are compelled on account of the conditions of our time to impress something of the continuous stream of evolution into present forms of thought and that our successors will express their experiences of these things in completely different forms. Why is this so? Throughout many centuries and many thousands of years of human culture, civilisation imposed on single individuals experiences through which a contribution was made to the collective evolution of the nations. Think of the numberless experiences which were gone through in ancient Greece, and think of what issued from that later as an extract for the whole of humanity! You will then say: There is more in this than merely the individual currents. Many things occur for the sake of this primary current.

So we must observe two things: first, something which must spring up and die away, in order that from its entirety a second thing, which reckoned by quantity is the smallest part, may survive as something lasting. When we realise that in the evolution of mankind since there has been human individual karma, two powers or beings are at work whom we have always found to be active, Lucifer and Ahriman, then only shall we understand the progress of human evolution. For the aim of this evolution is that finally, when the earth shall have attained its goal, those experiences which were gradually embodied in the whole human evolution out of the different civilisations will bear fruit for every separate individual, quite regardless of what particular destiny he may have had. But we can see this goal only if we look at the evolution of the world in the light of Anthroposophy. For let no one deceive himself. To think
of such a goal in the right way, with the full strength of the human
individuality, without the merging of the individuality into some nebulous
pantheistic unity, but in such a way that the individuality is completely
maintained, so that into it flows that which mankind as a whole has acquired
this goal can only be clearly and definitely seen when the soul develops by
means of Anthroposophy.

If we glance back at the earlier civilisations, we see that ever since human
individualities have incarnated, Lucifer and Ahriman have had a share in the
evolution of humanity. Lucifer on his side always seeks to take part in the
progressive stream of civilisation by settling down into the human astral
bodies, and impregnating them with the Lucifer impulse. Lucifer carries on his
existence during the course of the evolution of mankind by working in upon
the human astral bodies. Man could never acquire what Lucifer gives him
solely from those powers which bring about the continuous stream of
civilisation just described. If you separate this stream of civilisation from the
whole progressive course of mankind, then you have as ever increasing wealth
that which the normally progressing spiritual beings of the hierarchies cause to
be poured down into humanity. We must look up to the hierarchies and say:
Those who go through their normal evolution furnish the earth civilisation with
that which is the lasting possession of humanity, which was, it is true,
transformed later, but has nevertheless become a lasting possession. It is just
like a tree and the pith within it. And so we obtain a continuous living stream
in the progressing civilisations.

Through these powers who are going through a normal evolution on their own
account, man would have led his Ego more and more with this progressing
enrichment of human evolution. From time to time there would have flowed in
that which develops man. Man would have filled himself more and more with
the gifts of the spiritual world, and at last, when the earth had reached its goal,
it stands to reason that man would have possessed within himself everything
which was given from the spiritual worlds.

But then one thing would not have been possible. Man would not have been
able to develop the original, sacred ardour, devotion and enthusiasm arising in
one age of civilisation after another. Out of the same soil from which springs
every wish and every desire, springs forth also the wish for great ideals, the
desire for the happiness of humanity, for the accomplishments of Art in the
successive periods of human civilisation. From the same soil whence spring
injurious desires leading to evil, springs forth also the striving after the highest
which can be accomplished upon earth. And that which enkindles the human
soul for the highest good, would not exist if the same desire could not sink into
wickedness and vice. The possibility of this in human evolution is the work of
the luciferic spirits. We must not fail to recognise that the luciferic spirits have
brought freedom to mankind at the same time as the possibility of evil.

But we have seen on other occasions that everything provoked by Lucifer finds
its counterpart in Ahriman. We see Lucifer and all his hosts work in what gave
to human evolution the impulse of Greek civilisation, Greek heroes, the great
men and artists of Greece. He penetrates into the astral bodies and enkindles
enthusiasm within them for that which they honour as the highest. So that what
was to flow into evolution through Greece became at the same time an
enthusiasm in the soul of the people. This is precisely Lucifer's realm, because
Lucifer owes his power to the Moon-evolution and not the Earth-evolution. He
is a challenge to Ahriman, and as Lucifer develops his activity from one age to
another, Ahriman joins in and, bit by bit, spoils that which Lucifer has brought
about on earth. The evolution of man is a continual action and reaction
between Ahriman and Lucifer. If Lucifer were not in humanity, the zeal and
fire for the continuous progress of human development would be lacking; if
Ahriman were not there, he who in nation after nation destroys again that
which comes not from the continuous stream, but from the luciferic impulse
then Lucifer would want to perpetuate each civilisation. Here you see Lucifer
drawing down his own karma upon himself. This is a necessary consequence
of his evolution on the old Moon. And the consequence now is that he must
always chain Ahriman to his heels: Ahriman is the karmic fulfilment of
Lucifer.

Thus in the example of the ahrimanic and luciferic beings we get an insight
into the karma of the higher beings. There also karma reigns. Karma is
everywhere where there are egos. Lucifer and Ahriman naturally have egos
and therefore the effects of their deeds can react upon themselves. Many of
those secrets will be touched upon in the summer, in the series of lectures on
Secrets of the Bible Story of Creation, but there is just one thing to which I
should now like to draw your attention, showing you the profound importance
of each single word in the true occult records.

Have you never thought why it is that in the Bible History of the Creation, at
the end of each day of creation comes the sentence: And the Elohim saw the
work, and they saw that it was very good! That is a significant statement. Why
is it there? The sentence itself shows that it refers to a characteristic of the
Elohim who evolved in a normal way on the old Moon [This refers to the
previous incarnation of the Earth, not the present moon. ed.] and whose
opponent is Lucifer. It is given as a sort of characteristic belonging to the
Elohim that after each day of creation they saw that it was very good. It is
given for the reason that this was the degree of attainment reached by the
Elohim. They could on the Moon only see their work as long as they were
performing it, they could not have a subsequent consciousness of it. That they
were able subsequently to look back reflectively upon their work, marks a
particular stage in the consciousness of the Elohim. This only became possible
upon the earth, and their inner character is shown by the fact that the element
of will streams out from the being of the Elohim, so that when they saw it they
saw that it was very good. Those were the Elohim who had completed their
work upon the Moon and who, when they looked at it afterwards on the earth,
were able to say: It can remain, it is very good. But for that it was necessary
that the Moon-evolution should be completed.

Now what of the Lucifer beings, who had not completed their Moon-development? They must also try to look back upon their work when on earth, for instance, to their share in the ardour and enthusiasm of the Greek civilisation. They will then see how, little by little, Ahriman crumbled it away; and they will have to say, because they did not complete it: They saw their day's work, and behold, it was not of the best; it had to be blotted out!

That is the great disappointment of the luciferic spirits; they are always trying to do their work over again, always trying to swing the pendulum again to the other side, and always they find their work again destroyed by Ahriman. You must think of it as an ebb and flow in the tide of human evolution, a continuous rousing of new forces by beings who are higher than we are, and the experiencing by them of continual disappointments. That comes into the experience of the luciferic spirits in the earth-evolution. Man had to take up this karma into himself, because only thus could he attain to real freedom which can develop only when man himself gives the highest purpose to his earth Ego. That Ego which man would have had, if at the end of the earth-evolution all goals were given to him, could not in a true sense be free; for from the beginning it was predestined that all the good of the earth-evolution should flow into him. Man could only become free by adding to the Ego another Ego which is capable of error, which is always swinging backwards and forwards between good and evil, and which still is able to strive again and again after that which is the purpose of the earth-evolution. The lower Ego had to be joined to man through Lucifer, so that the upward struggle of man to the higher Ego should be his own deed.

Only thus is free will possible to mankind. Free will is something which man may acquire gradually, for he is so situated that in his life free will floats before him as an ideal. Does there exist a moment in human evolution when the human will is free? It is never free, because at any moment it may succumb to the luciferic and ahrimanic element; it is not free because every person, when he has passed through the gates of death, in the ascending time of purification perhaps during several decades has impressions which are definite and determined. It is the essential part of kamaloca [a region the spiritual world. ed.] that we should see to what extent we are still imperfect by reason of our failings in the world, that we should see in detail in what way we are imperfect. From that issues the decision to reject everything which has made us imperfect. Thus life in kamaloca adds one intention to another, and the decision that we make good again everything that we did and thought which lowered us. What we then feel is imprinted into our future life and we enter into existence through birth with that decision and intention, thus charged with our own karma.

Therefore we cannot speak of free will when we have entered into existence through birth. We can say we are approaching nearer to free will only when we
have succeeded in mastering the influences of Lucifer and Ahriman, and we can obtain the mastery over the luciferic and ahrimanic influences only by means of knowledge. Firstly, through self-knowledge, we make ourselves more and more capable even in the life between birth and death of learning to know our weaknesses in all three elements of the soul, in thought, feeling and will. If we constantly strive to yield to no illusion, then that strength grows within our Ego by means of which we are able to resist the luciferic influence; for then we shall realise more and more how much those treasures of mankind are really worth. Secondly, we can obtain this mastery by means of the knowledge of the external world, which must be supplemented by self-knowledge both must work together. We must unite self-knowledge and the knowledge of the external world with our own being and then we shall be quite clear as to how we stand regarding Lucifer.

It is characteristic of Anthroposophy that through it we are able to throw light upon the questions of how far inclinations and emotions, and how far Lucifer and Ahriman play into every human action. During these lectures we have explained how in many different ways the luciferic and ahrimanic forces work in our lives! In our present age enlightenment as to the luciferic and ahrimanic forces may begin, and man must be enlightened regarding these if he really wishes to contribute something towards the attainment of the goal of earthly humanity. If you look around you, everywhere where human feeling and human thinking exist, you can see how far removed people still are from a true enlightenment of the influences of Lucifer and Ahriman, and you will find that by far the greater number of people do not wish for such enlightenment. You will see a great part of mankind succumbing to a certain religious egotism, and being overcome by the feeling that above all they should in their own souls attain the greatest degree of well-being.

This egotism is such that people are not in the least conscious that the strongest passions may play a part in it. Nowhere does Lucifer play a greater part than when people, driven by their emotions and desires, strive to ascend to the divine without having had the divine illuminated by the light of knowledge. Do you not think that Lucifer is frequently involved where people believe they are striving for the highest? But the forms which are striven for in this way will also belong to the disenchantments of Lucifer, and those people whose erroneous desires cause them to believe that they are able to receive this or that form of spiritual culture, who preach over and over again that Anthroposophy is so bad because it believes in something new, ought to reflect that it does not depend upon human will that Ahriman fastens himself to the heels of Lucifer. That which came about in the course of evolution in the forms of religion will, because Ahriman mingles into them, go under again through Lucifer. The continuous stream of human evolution will alone be preserved.

In a preceding evolution, as we know, certain beings sacrificed themselves by retarded development. These beings live out their karma for our sake, so that we may in a normal way express what these beings can bestow on us. Indeed
Jehovah originally poured into mankind by means of the Divine Breath the capacity for absorbing the Ego. If only that Divine Breath had entered which pulsates in the human blood, without that which leads us away from it; if in fact the luciferic as well as the ahrimanic impulse were not at work, man would, it is true, have been able to attain to the actual gift of Jehovah, but he would not have perceived it with a self-conscious freedom.

Today we may indeed look back upon many disappointments of Lucifer, but we can also look forward to a future in which we may learn more and more to understand what the real current of evolution is. Anthroposophy will be the instrument for the understanding of this and will help us to be more conscious of the influences of Lucifer, more able to recognise it within ourselves, and therefore more able to make good use of it consciously; for formerly it worked but as a dim impulse. The same applies of course to ahrimanic influences.

In this regard I may perhaps call attention to the fact that an important period of human evolution is before us, an age in which soul-forces are reversed. It is an age in which certain persons very few will develop capacities different from those recognised today. For example, the human etheric body can be seen only by those who have undergone a methodical training. But even before the middle of the twentieth century there will be people possessed of a natural etheric clairvoyance, who, since mankind has reached the epoch in which this will develop as a natural gift, will perceive the etheric body as permeating the physical body and extending beyond it. Just as man, once able to see into the spiritual world, has descended to the merely physical perception and intellectual comprehension of the external world, so he begins gradually to evolve new and conscious capacities which will be added to the old ones. I should like to characterise one of these new capacities.

There will be people at first only a few, for only in the course of the next two or three thousand years will these capacities evolve in larger numbers, and these first forerunners will be born before the end of the first half of the twentieth century who will have an experience something like the following. After taking part in some action they will withdraw from it, and will have before them a picture which arises from the act in question. At first, they will not recognise it; they will not find in it any relation to what they have done. In the end they will see that this picture, which appears to them as a sort of conscious dream-picture, is the counterpart of their own action; it is the picture of the action which must take place in order that the karmic compensation of the previous action may be brought about.

Thus we are approaching an age in which men will begin to understand karma not only from the teachings and presentations of Spiritual Science, but in which they will begin actually to see karma. Whereas until now karma was to man an obscure impulse, an obscure desire, which could be fulfilled only in the following life, which could only between death and a new birth be transformed into an intention, man will gradually evolve to a conscious perception of the
work of Lucifer and its effect. Certainly only those will have this power of etheric clairvoyance who have striven after knowledge and self-knowledge. But even in normal circumstances men will have more and more before them the karmic pictures of their actions. That will carry them on further and further, because they will see what they still owe to the world, what is on the debit side of their karma. What prevents us from being free is that we do not know what we still owe and so we cannot really speak of free will in connection with karma. The expression free will itself is incorrect, for man only becomes free through ever-increasing knowledge, through rising higher and higher and growing more and more into the spiritual world. By so doing he fills himself with the contents of the spiritual world, and becomes in greater degree the director of his own will. It is not the will which becomes free, but man who permeates himself with what he can know and see in the spiritualised domain of the world.

Thus do we look upon the deeds and the disappointments of Lucifer and say: In this way, thousands of years ago, the foundations were laid for that on which we stand; for if we did not stand upon those foundations, we should not be able to evolve to freedom. But after we have enlightened ourselves about Lucifer and Ahriman, we can gain a different relation to these powers; we can gather the fruits of what they have done; we can, as it were, take over the work of Lucifer and Ahriman. Then, however, the acts of which Lucifer is the author, and which have always led to disillusionments must be transformed into their opposite when they are performed by us. The deeds of Lucifer necessarily roused desires, and led man into what could result in evil. If we are to counteract Lucifer, if we are to regulate his affairs in the future, it will only be the love in us which can take the place of the acts of Lucifer: but love will be able to do it.

In the same way, when we gradually remove the darkness which we interweave into external substance so that we completely overcome the ahrimanic influence, shall we recognise the world as it really is. We shall penetrate to that of which matter really consists to the nature of light. At the present day science itself is subject to manifold deceptions as to the nature of light. Many of us believe that we see light with our physical eyes. That is not correct. We do not see light, but only illuminated bodies. We do not see light, but we see through light. All such deceptions will be swept away so that the picture of the world will be transformed; for necessarily under the influence of Ahriman it was interwoven with error, but hence-forward it will be permeated with wisdom. Man, in pressing forward towards the light will himself develop the psychic counterpart of light which is wisdom.

By this means Love and Wisdom will enter the human soul. Love and Wisdom will become the practical force, the vital impulse which results from Anthroposophy. Wisdom which is the inner counterpart of Light, Wisdom which can unite with Love, and Love when it is permeated with Wisdom; these two will lead us to the understanding of what at present is immersed in external
wisdom. If we are to partake in the other side of evolution, and to overcome Lucifer and Ahriman, we must permeate ourselves with Wisdom and Love, for these elements will flow from our own souls as our offering to those who as the luciferic and ahrimanic powers in the first half of the evolution sacrificed themselves to give us what we needed for the attainment of our freedom. But it is indispensable that we should be aware of the following. Because evolution must be, we must accept the civilisations that are the expression of it. We shall gladly and lovingly devote ourselves to an Anthroposophical culture which will not be eternal; nevertheless we shall accept it with enthusiasm, and we shall create with love what was before created under the influence of Lucifer; we shall, too, develop within ourselves a superabundance of love, without which culture after culture could not be developed. We shall not be under the delusion that everything will last for ever, for by our attitude we shall counter-balance Lucifer's disappointments; we repay to Lucifer consciously the services he has done us and by this repayment we redeem him.

That is the other side of the karma of higher beings - that we develop a love which does not remain in mankind alone, but penetrates right into the cosmos. Love will stream into beings who are higher than we are and they will feel it as a sacrifice. This sacrifice will rise to those who once poured their gifts upon us; just as in early days the smoke of sacrifice ascended to the Spirits, when men still had spiritual possessions. At that time men were only able to send up the symbolical smoke of sacrifice, but in the future they will send up streams of love, and out of the sacrifice higher forces will pour down to men which will work with ever increasing power in our physical world as forces guided from the spiritual world. Those will be magical forces in the true sense.

Thus human evolution is the working out of human karma and the karma of higher beings. The whole plan of evolution is connected with individual karma. If a higher being or superhuman individuality in the year 1910 did this or that which was carried out on the physical plane by a human being, a contact is established between them. The person is then interwoven into the karma of the higher beings and human karma is fructified by the universal karma of the world.

Consider Miltiades, or some other important personality who played a part in the history of his nation. This part was necessary to the karma of the higher powers and so each man is placed at his post. Into the individual karma is poured part of the karma of humanity which then becomes his own karma as soon as he performs some action connected with it. Thus do we also live and weave into the macrocosm the individual karma of a microcosm.

We have now reached the end of this course of lectures, although not the end of the subject. But that cannot be helped. I may just add a few words more, namely, that I have given this course of lectures on those very human questions which are able to stir the human heart so deeply, and which again are connected with the greatest destiny, even of the higher beings. When I say that
I have given this course really from the depths of my soul and am happy that it was possible for once to speak of these things in an anthroposophical circle, among anthroposophical friends, who have come here from all directions in order to devote themselves to these considerations, these words come from the bottom of my heart. Those who will have the opportunity of hearing further courses will see that much will be answered of what one may have in his soul in connection with this course. But those also who will not be able to hear the summer courses will later have the opportunity to discuss something of the subject with me. And so I may again say on this occasion that I have endeavoured to speak of these things in such a way that they should not be mere abstract knowledge, but so that they should pass over into our thought, feeling and will, into our whole life, so that one should be able to see in the anthroposophists who are out in the world a likeness and picture of that which we may call the deepest anthroposophical truths. Let us endeavour to bring ourselves completely to this, for only then shall we have an anthroposophical movement which in our small circle exists for the study of spiritual knowledge. Then, however, this knowledge must first of all in the circle of our members become life and soul to us, and as such pass over into the world. And the world will gradually see that it was not in vain that at the turning-point of the twentieth century there were honest and upright anthroposophists people who honestly and straightforwardly believed in the might of the spiritual powers. And when they themselves believed in it, they became filled with the force with which to work for it. Faster and faster will civilisation proceed in our lives, if we within ourselves transform that which we hear into life, into action and into deeds and not by trying to convince other people. The present age is not yet ready for that. Those only will be convinced who come to Anthroposophy out of the deepest impulse of their hearts; the remainder will not be convinced. We have karma in the mental sphere too, it was something called forth by materialism; and we must look upon these defects as those against which Anthroposophy must show itself to be a spiritual power.

Therefore that which we have to give to the world must be given out of the conviction that it is the most important thing. Each one who has transformed Anthroposophy into an inner force of his soul will be a spiritual source of strength. And whosoever will believe in the supersensible may be absolutely convinced that our anthroposophical knowledge and convictions work in a spiritual way, that is to say, they spread invisibly into the world if we make ourselves truly into a conscious instrument, filled with the life of Anthroposophy.
What is Karma?

*Background music – “Yesterday”, Lennon, McCartney*

Jens Roland Prochnow

*Who* was I? The Empress Sissi? Napoleon? Or better still Tchaikovsky? Not Goethe, that would be going too far, but maybe Winckelmann? And who before that? A pharaoh, mystery priest or even a martyr? One daydreams half an afternoon away and considers himself extremely important. I am actively involved in a historical world mission, so to speak.

Therewith I avoid one question however. No wonder, for it points to less glamorous results: Who am I? An undetermined being who somehow wangles his way through the world’s necessities, or the sensations which often press despairingly against these necessities. Am I as other people see me? Or is there something else waiting to be discovered – by me as well as by those in my surroundings?

“*Give me just one proof of karma!*” an acquaintance once demanded, quite excitedly. I was speechless at first, until I realized how deeply rooted is the inclination to ask false questions in order to avoid breaking out of old habits of thought. What kind of proof could be given? A dove fluttering down from heaven? A weeping statue of the Virgin Mary?

Facts of the inner life can only be experienced within the inner life and thus proved. Only when I have lived a certain time with the idea of karma can I arrive at experiences and decide if this impulse is viable. A fact, which I have recognized as true in my inner self, is not arbitrary or “dreamed up”, but just as proven as are other things – although this proof is an individual step in life which no other than myself can take.

Karma means justice, although I live in a world that is not always just.
Instead of exhausting myself over the contrast between I and world, I concentrate on the interplay of cause and effect. Is the injustice I experience, the pain I feel, an effect of a past cause? Or the cause of a future effect? Or even – both together? The more intensively I involve myself in this interplay – in calm thoughts or in direct everyday experience – the wider the limits of my self becomes. And if I penetrate so far as to find the effects and causes within my own being, I become Lord of Karma.

Karma doesn’t mean an inflexible mechanism in the works of which my destiny proceeds. The old needs to be lived through, and new karma created. I stand in the world between both, old and new. And the world in me.

Who am I? Who was I yesterday? Who will I be tomorrow? These questions receive a new quality with each level of my perception of cause and effect – karma. “Every soul is born of soul.” From where do I obtain the soul substance from which I am born – or I create myself? From my environment, which is just as soul penetrated as I myself am. And from the being that I once was and one day will be. The images of karma which I form change with the evolution of my own being. They are never static and cannot be objects of faith – only facts of experience.

The ways of karma are sometimes inscrutable: it is a very common convenience to attribute every human failing to “karma”. But karma is not an excuse. The purpose of karma isn’t to explain away actions, but to explain, fathom them. If I can’t understand this fine distinction, I will lose myself in illusions.

Occasionally, though, illusions can be very useful, a necessary helping process which embraces me and gently and cautiously leads me to the reality of the idea.

For who doesn’t like to dream? On the Internet there is a “Karma-Oracle” that can relieve one of difficult decisions and research: To the spectacular question “Who was I in my previous life?” I get the answer: “Astronomer somewhere in the region of today’s Iran around 850”, including a personality profile of me then. Someone very well read in Rudolf Steiner’s works immediately cried: “Harun al Raschid!” Okay,
Harun al Raschid then—I can think about who I am now tomorrow.

Why live in today when there is always a yesterday?

This article originally appeared, in German, in Info3. Translation: FTS
Dear Friends and Fellow Zoroastrians:
It is important that I mention right at the beginning of my talk that I am not speaking in the capacity of a research scholar or an authority on the subject of the Zoroastrian Religion, but as a lay-person, informing the listeners about a movement, a philosophy and a world-conception which deeply reveres the teachings of Zarathushtra, and which has an approach to the subject which is different from the conventional approach. Where this difference lies, I shall try to elaborate and clarify in my talk, which has the sole purpose of providing information for listeners. It should in no way be regarded as trying to convince or convert.

One of the fundamental principles underlying this philosophy and movement is the principle of freedom, and accordingly this speaker wishes to leave listeners free to accept or reject what is being presented. This very principle of freedom also underlies the basic tenets of the Zoroastrian religion, so there we have the foundation on which to base a dialogue.

Over the years scholars, historians, theologists and archeologists have toiled, studied and done research in various academic fields in order to provide information for those interested in these subjects. In their writings, commentaries and interpretations, these scholars make valuable information accessible to those who don't have the opportunity to be scholars but who, nevertheless, have the desire for more knowledge. Much knowledge which in former times was remote and the domain of a chosen few is now open to all who wish to acquire it. Yet time and again we observe that these research scholars also differ in their views, in their interpretations, sometimes even on very basic ideas, depending on the school they represent or the mode of interpretation they use. Why is this so? No doubt the method of research is scientific, the theories well-founded and the data meticulously worked upon by the highly qualified and well-trained scholars, but this does not change the given situation that external science can have recourse only to data of the material world. Scholars and scientists must rely on experimental results and documentation, which is not always available to lay inquirers.

Great truths of the past ages, spiritually significant events, had their physical-material working on the earthly plane, and these facts were documented by the seers and the scribes of those times. In later times, these truths have to be imparted in a form suitable for the epoch in which they are communicated. In our present epoch, the scientific one, the form of communication is scientific too, hence material.
In ancient times, when scientific thinking and intellectual activity, through which we can perceive the realities of the physical-material world, were not yet consolidated to such a degree as is the case in our times, there lived clairvoyants who could perceive, and thereby had direct access to, the realities of the supersensible and the spiritual worlds. Today in many circles one cannot even mention such things any more, because of a general tendency to deny the existence of a world other than the one which can be perceived by the senses. But even if individuals of the present times do not possess the gift of clairvoyance, the realm of pure thought has been proven to act as an organ of perception for realities which transcend the momentary and the visible. The proof of this is communicated to us by the seers.

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century there lived an Austrian by the name of Rudolf Steiner. He was gifted with the rare combination of clairvoyance and highly developed scientific thinking. These faculties, combined with his love for humanity, enabled him to develop and establish a philosophy and Weltanschauung—(world conception) which he called Anthroposophy, the wisdom of the human being. Later he founded the Anthroposophical Society which has members from all walks of life in all parts of the world.

Dr. Steiner had a close connection to, and was influenced by, the teachings of Zarathushtra. These teachings are in harmony with the ideas of Anthroposophy, the spiritual science which Steiner inaugurated. According to Steiner, the evolution of humanity is directly linked with the development of human consciousness. The great initiates who have brought decisive impulses of spiritual and cultural renewal to their people and their times have the task on one hand to lead them and give them guidance, and on the other hand to form a link in general cultural and spiritual development over the ages.

Zarathushtra was the great initiate and spiritual leader of his people for his time. Every spiritual stream in the world has its particular mission. These streams are not isolated and are separated only during certain epochs; then they merge and mutually nourish each other. But conceptions of the world and life do not move through the air as pure abstractions. They are borne by Beings, by Individualities. When a system of thought comes into existence for the first time it must be presented by an Individuality, and when these spiritual streams unite and influence each other, something definite must also happen in the Individualities who are the bearers of the world-conceptions in question.

It was the Being of Zarathushtra, his Individuality, which was destined to receive the spiritual and cultural impulses in ancient Persia and impart it to the people of his times and of times to come. So lofty was the stage of development of Zarathushtra, that he could make provision in advance for the streams of culture which were to follow.

Occult research has shown how this has been possible. In order to understand and accept what one reads in the field of occult research, it is necessary to acquaint oneself with certain theories, one of them being the theory of
reincarnation. Great initiates who have lived on earth in various epochs have had their pupils carry on their work in a different form in a later age because they could carry this knowledge with them from life to death into rebirth. This would have to be explained to those who do not believe in reincarnation.

A certain religion or a particular school of philosophy finds a renaissance in another epoch in a different part of the world and reappears in a metamorphosed form, as a new impulse. But when one follows the stream of thought and comes to the source, one observes that it is fundamentally the same spiritual impulse now in a new form. One can explain this phenomenon at various levels, one of them being from the point of view of the theory of reincarnation, that great souls closely connected to the founder of a religion or a philosophy, in later incarnations bring back the spiritual impulse, at a later period in another part of the world, in a form suitable for the prevailing circumstances.

It is this renewal which saves the religion or philosophy from dying out, or even worse, from hardening into a set of laws and dry theories which have no relevance to the life and times of present-day human beings striving for self-knowledge and an understanding of the world. This renewal further saves the religion or philosophy from gross misinterpretation at the hands of unenlightened people. Here again, freedom has to be exercised. Everyone encountering a new, or renewed, religious teaching must evaluate it by sound judgement and a feeling for truth, before he or she can believe in it and be nourished by it.

Anthroposophy as a spiritual science helps contemporary people to become aware of the spiritual side of earthly events in a language easily understood by means of pure reason and reflection.

For one born of Zoroastrian parents, basic knowledge of the Good Religion is acquired by means of stories, books, rituals and ceremonies. It is the bond of religious tradition, strengthened through active participation in religious ceremonies and prayers, that is maintained within the family and handed down from generation to generation. Yet time and again we see that many a pious follower of the Good Religion reaches a stage in his or her life when doubt and questioning begin to cloud the mind.

One reason that can be given for this attitude is that practical understanding of the religion and its impact on daily living is at times not strong enough to connect the follower of the religion to his or her general activity in daily life. There are fundamental principles of the religion which tend to remain only ideas and ideals, because practical life in modern times has changed to such a degree that it cannot cope with the ideals. The idea fails to become reality. Let us take an example: agriculture. It was Zarathushtra who showed the people of his times that the earth, if left barren and untended, would fall prey to the dark forces. For this reason agriculture, the culture of cultivating the earth so that it would become a bearer of the corn and the fruit which would grow by means
of the light of the life-giving sun, the rain and the air, became the principle culture of our forefathers.

In this manner, the four elements combined to provide the human being with nourishment which would sustain him and help him to fight the good fight against the dark forces as represented by Ahriman. Through the intake of this food, the human being imbibes also the forces of the sun which free in him the light which vitalizes the knowledge and carries it into human life through right activity. But in our increasingly materialistic world, which is being dominated by Ahriman to an alarming degree, even agriculture has been adversely affected. Artificial chemical fertilizers, poisonous insecticides and lack of understanding of the advantages of crop rotation have damaged the living organism that is earth. Anthroposophy has recognized the working of Ahriman also in this sphere according to Zarathushtra's teachings and a new form of agriculture, bio-dynamic agriculture, has been developed which enables the farmer to cultivate the earth and grow corn and fruit without the dependence on destructive methods which the farming industry in present times so willingly employs. The idea is re-humanization in all spheres of active life by means of which the sun-being can assert itself through the good deeds of consciousness. In this manner the power and influence of Ahriman recedes into the background.

Materialism, which kills all religious belief and feeling and which dehumanizes the human being, may not disappear completely, but can be dealt with or balanced out in this manner. Materialism is a necessity in modern times; it cannot be overlooked nor can it be denied. It is excessive materialism which binds and chains the human being to the domain of the Ahriman forces. By harnessing this force and using it in the interest of spiritual progress, one can overcome its negative qualities and thereby free oneself. The Zarathushtrian teaching stresses the revitalizing and renewing of the earth through righteous activity. It is the will which frees us to choose the Good, even though Ahriman appears in us and around us in the most varied forms imaginable, increasing his influence with the passage of time.

Steiner stresses the need of modern human beings not to take this ethical and cosmic battle as an abstract concept, but to recognize its reality through wakefulness, through consciousness. Right consciousness is the best weapon against Ahriman. It is this very wakeful consciousness which has the freedom to choose between the light forces, rather than choosing the narrow confines of hardened intellect which fail to transcend the world of the senses in all its limitations. Thus the ancient religion of Zarathushtra has to be experienced anew and made relevant for all aspects of human life on earth.

Another realm which is not sufficiently taken into consideration in our lives is the realm of sound. When a Zoroastrian says his daily prayers and understands what he prays, he can consider himself fortunate for having had the possibility to learn the language of our prayers. The force of thought behind the prayer
intensifies the effect.

But the power of sound alone, when the prayers are recited correctly has an effect too, because the use of the consonants and the vowels and their combination within the words helps us to connect ourselves with the positive aspects of the stars and the planets, thereby weakening the negative aspects. This science of understanding the workings of the spoken word helps us to use the word as a means of healing education. What is taught is very important, but even more important is the manner in which it is taught. Within the time given to me to speak on the subject today, I have tried to make my listeners aware of one approach to our religion, without going into details of the actual results such a method of investigation delivers.

You will agree with me when I say that our religion can be understood and practiced on many levels, depending upon the individual; it is a state of mind. I am sure there are no two Zoroastrians who have an identical understanding of the good religion and its practice, but that each one strives to the best of his efforts and abilities to realize in daily life by one's actions, what one thinks and feels, so that one's thoughts, words and deeds should be good and in harmony with the environment.

This talk was given by Aban Bana to Vohuman.org, a Zoroastrian Educational Institute.
During the Renaissance and scientific revolution -- so the conventional story runs -- our ancestors began for the first time to see the world. For inquirers such as Alberti, Columbus, Da Vinci, Gilbert, Galileo, and Newton it was as if a veil had fallen away. Instead of seeking wisdom in a spiritual realm or in appeals to authority or in the complex mazes of medieval ratiocination, the great figures at the dawn of the modern era chose to look at the world for themselves and record its testimony. It was an exhilarating time, when the world stood fresh and open before them, ripe for discovery. And they quickly discovered that certain questions could be answered in a satisfyingly precise, demonstrable, and incontestable way. They lost interest in asking how many angels can dance on the head of a pin and turned their attention to the pin itself as a physical phenomenon available for investigation.

There is some truth in this rather-too-neat view of the past -- a truth that makes the central fact of our own era all the more astonishing: as scientific inquirers, we have shown ourselves increasingly content to disregard the world around us. Judging from the dominant, well-funded scientific and technical ventures, we much prefer to navigate our own arcane labyrinths of abstract ratiocination, whether they consist of the infinitely refined logic we impress upon silicon, or the physicist's esoteric classificational systems for subatomic particles, or the universe-spanning equations of the cosmologists. It's true that we no longer ask, "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" but we are certainly entranced with the question, "How much data can we store on the head of a pin?" And our trance is only deepened when the answer turns out to be: "a hell of a lot".

What many haven't realized yet is how easily our preoccupation with the invisible constructions on that pinhead blind us to the world we originally set out to perceive and understand in its full material glory. The alluring data, fully as much as any dancing angel, distracts us from more mundane realities. We have, as a result, been learning to ignore as vulgar or profane the "crude" content of our senses. This content may be useful for occasional poetic excursions, but it is only a base temptation for the properly ascetic student of science, who moves within a more rarefied, mathematical atmosphere. "It must be admitted", remarked the British historian of consciousness, Owen Barfield,

that the matter dealt with by the established sciences is coming to be composed less and less of actual observations, more and more of such things as pointer-readings on dials, the same pointer-readings arranged by electronic computers, inferences from inferences, higher mathematical formulae and other recondite abstractions. Yet modern science began with a turning away from abstract cerebration to objective observation! (1963)

It is not that we lack all interest in the material world, but only that our interest is of a
peculiar, one-sided sort. Surrounded by the remarkable physical machinery bequeathed to us by science, we are more concerned with manipulating the world than with seeing it profoundly. In fact, the distinction between seeing and manipulating scarcely even registers within science any longer. Philosopher Daniel Dennett tells us that the proper discipline of biology "is not just like engineering; it is engineering. It is the study of functional mechanisms, their design, construction, and operation" (1995, p. 228).

It may seem counterintuitive at first, but I will argue that our preoccupation with workable mechanisms, far from contradicting our preference for abstract cerebration, is itself a primary symptom of our flight into abstraction and our refusal to see the world. And there is every reason to believe that our failure to interest ourselves in seeing and understanding the observable world (as opposed to manipulating it like so much gadgetry) is as fateful for our knowledge enterprises today as their own abstractions were for the inquiries of our medieval forbears. One consequence of our failure is that we have felt justified in substituting sadly inadequate mechanistic models for the world we no longer bother to observe.

On Making a Game of Life

There is a computer program called the Game of Life. The program divides your computer screen into a fine-meshed rectangular grid, wherein each tiny cell can be either bright or dark, on or off, "alive" or "dead". The idea is to start with an initial configuration of bright or live cells and then, with each tick of the clock, see how the configuration changes as these simple rules are applied:

- If exactly two of a cell's eight immediate neighbors are alive at the clock tick ending one interval, the cell will remain in its current state (alive or dead) during the next interval.

- If exactly three of a cell's immediate neighbors are alive, the cell will be alive during the next interval regardless of its current state.

- And in all other cases -- that is, if less than two or more than three of the neighbors are alive -- the cell will be dead during the next interval.

You can, then (as the usual advice goes) think of a cell as dying from loneliness if too few of its neighbors are alive, and dying from over-crowding if too many of them are alive.

What intrigues many researchers is the fact that, given well-selected initial configurations, fascinating patterns are produced as the program unfolds. Some of these patterns remain stable or even reproduce themselves endlessly. Investigations of such "behavior" have led to the new discipline known as "artificial life".

Referring to the Game of Life and the three-part rule governing its performance, Dennett has remarked that "the entire physics of the Life world is captured in that single, unexceptioned law". As a result, in the Life world "our powers of prediction are perfect: there is no [statistical] noise, no uncertainty, no probability less than one". The Life world "perfectly instantiates the determinism made famous by LaPlace: if we are given the state description of this world at an instant, we observers can perfectly predict the future instants by the simple application of our
one law of physics” (Dennett 1995, pp. 167-69).

These are startlingly errant statements from one of the most influential philosophers of our day. The three-part rule, after all, is hardly a law of physics. It is an algorithm -- roughly, a program or precise recipe -- and its deterministic, LaPlacian perfection holds true only so long as we remain within the perfectly abstract realm of the algorithm's crystalline logical structure. Try to embody this structure in any particular stuff of the world, and its perfection suddenly vanishes. For example, if you install it in a running computer, you can be absolutely sure that the algorithm will fail at some point, if not because of spilled coffee or a power failure or an operating system glitch, then because of normal wear and tear on the computer over time. Contrary to Dennett's claim, you will find in every physical implementation of this algorithm that there is noise, no certainty, and no probability equal to one.

Dennett's comments about the Game of Life illustrate how the world can disappear behind a grid of abstractions. He is so transfixed by the logical perfection of the algorithm that he loses sight of the distinction between it and the real stuff that happens to embody it. With scarcely a thought he shifts in imagination from disembodied rules to physics -- a move made easy by the fact that his physics is essentially a mere reification of the rules. This carries huge implications. If, as he tells us, biology is engineering, and if the devices we engineer are nothing in essence but their algorithms, then real dogs, rocks, trees, and people dissolve into a fog of well-behaved, abstract mentation.

While it is not the topic of this essay, the enveloping and thickening fog of abstraction is evident on every hand. Look, for example, at almost any branch of the public discourse and you will find that its subjects -- the elderly, the sick, victims of war, soldiers, political leaders, terrorists, corporate CEOs, wilderness areas, oil wells, fetuses, doctors, voters -- appear only as generalized debating tokens torn loose from complex, full-fleshed reality. Their assigned place in an established logic of discourse is almost all that matters. The public discussion then becomes nearly as lifeless and predictable as the Game of Life.

The Externality of Machine Algorithms

We can, I believe, learn a great deal about certain tendencies of science and society by looking more deeply into this symptomatic disappearance of the material world into abstraction -- a disappearance that will seem as strange to our successors as medieval attempts to understand motion by ruminating over Aristotelian texts now seem to us.

It will help, in understanding these tendencies, to grasp as clearly as possible the relation between an algorithm, such as the one embodied in the Game of Life program, and the machine executing it. And the first thing to say is that the algorithm really is there -- in the machine (so long as it is working properly) and therefore in the world. Which is to say: we can articulate the parts of a machine so that, when viewed at an appropriate level of abstraction, they "obey" and manifest the rules of the Game of Life.

But it is crucial to see the external and nonessential nature of these rules. Yes, they are embodied in the machine -- but only in a rather high-level and abstract sense. The rules are not intrinsic to the machine. That is, they are not necessary laws of the copper, silicon, plastic, and other materials. To see the rules we almost have to blind ourselves to the particular character of these materials -- materials that could, in fact, be very different without altering the logic of arrangement we are interested in.
In other words, the determining idea of the machine as a humanly designed artifact is something we impose upon it “from the outside”; there is nothing inherent in copper, silicon, and plastic that dictates or urges or even suggests their assembly into a computer. We had to have the idea, and we had to bring it to bear upon the materials through their proper arrangement. The functional idea of the computer abides in this arrangement, and will be there only as long as the arrangement holds.

This external relation between the material machine and the logic of the idea imposed upon it explains a double disconnection. On the one hand, the logic fails to characterize fully the material entity it is associated with. We can construct computers out of vastly different materials and still see exactly the same rule-following when they execute the Game of Life. The game's algorithm leaves its embodiment radically undefined (or "underdetermined").

But just as differently constructed physical machines can, at a certain level of abstraction, follow the same rules, so, too, the same machine can be made to follow different rules. This is obvious enough in the case of a computer, which can execute entirely different software algorithms. But it remains true more generally: when a new context arises, an existing piece of technology may become a tool for a previously unforeseen function -- as when, trivially, the handle of a screwdriver is used to hammer in a tack, or when a typewriter's alphanumeric keyboard serves to construct graphic images rather than text. The underlying artifact remains unchanged even as the rules of its use and its meaning as a tool change.

So we see that machines of completely different materials and configuration can serve the same function, and a machine of given materials and configuration can serve different functions. The functional idea, then -- whether it is a computer algorithm or the cleaning procedure of a washing machine -- is by no means equivalent to a full understanding of the machine as a part of the material world. The parts of the machine present us with a physical reality we are able to employ in a mechanical construction, but our employment of them does not explain the physical reality, nor does the physical reality explain the employment.

There is some irony in all this. To recognize a governing idea externally imposed upon the parts of a machine through the manner of their arrangement is to grant an irreducibly human and subjective element in every machine as a machine. As Michael Polanyi remarked many years ago, a knowledge of physics and chemistry can never tell us what a machine is (1962, pp. 328-35). For such an understanding we have to know (among other things) something about the human context in which it will operate, the human purposes it was designed to serve, and the particular functional idea that guided the builders in coordinating the machine's physical principles.

So while mechanistic thinkers profess a great fondness for objectivity, which they interpret to mean "freedom from human influence", their predilection for machine-based explanations marries them to human-centered, designer-centered modes of thought. In fact, for all their tough-mindedness, it is they who indulge an unhealthy anthropocentrism. The world, after all, is not a humanly designed machine. Whatever material principles we summon to account for the phenomena we observe, they will fail in the accounting if they go no deeper than the mechanistic principles we impose externally and abstractly upon pre-existing matter.

Does Mathematics Alone Give Us the World's Essence?

As I have already suggested, one indication of our tendency to ignore the
observable world lies in the force of our temptation, following Dennett, to separate
the machine's algorithm from the machine itself and then allow the former to
overshadow the latter. The temptation is no small matter, given the overwhelming
commitment to machine-like explanations within mainstream science. For a
mechanistic science, the machine's reduction to an abstraction is the world's
reduction to an abstraction.

Many are eager for the reduction. Peter Cochrane, former head of research at
British Telecom, believes "it may turn out that it is sufficient to regard all of life as no
more than patterns of order that can replicate and reproduce" (undated). When
Cochrane says "no more than patterns of order", he seems content to let the
substance manifesting these patterns fall completely out of the picture.

Likewise, robotics guru Hans Moravec describes the essence of a person as "the
pattern and the process going on in my head and body, not the machinery
supporting that process" (quoted in Rubin 2003, p. 92). And Christopher Langton,
founder of the discipline of artificial life, has surmised that "life isn't just like a
computation, in the sense of being a property of the organization rather than the
molecules. Life literally is a computation" (quoted in Waldrop 1992, p. 280).

Could there be a clearer attempt to dissociate the world's essence from
sense-perceptible matter? Pattern, algorithm, computation -- these formal,
mathematically describable abstractions are made to stand alone as self-sufficient
explanations of reality. Economist Brian Arthur captures a sentiment widespread
within all the sciences when he remarks that to mathematize something is to "distill
its essence". And if you've got the essence, why bother looking for anything more?

The derivation of mathematical relationships can indeed be valuable. But to leave
the matter there -- and nearly all those who share Arthur's sentiment about the
mathematical essence of things do leave the matter there -- is to reveal a blind spot
at least as gaping as any irrational lacuna in the thought of our ancestors. After all,
mathematics in its purely formal exactness tells us nothing at all about the material
world until it is brought into relation with the stuff of this world. And we can establish
this problematic relation -- we can have more than our pure mathematics in mental
isolation -- only by understanding the non-mathematical terms of the relation.
Mathematics alone cannot tell us what the mathematics is being applied to.

This is already evident with simple, quantitative statements. It's one thing to say "5"
and quite another to say "5 pounds of force" or "5 pounds of mass". In the latter
case, while we may take comfort from the conciseness of "5", we're now also up
against the conceptual darkness of "force" and "matter". The number, however
exact, can illuminate the material world only to the degree we know what we mean
by "force" and "matter" -- terms that have vexed every scientist who ever dared to
think about them. What physicist Richard Feynman said about energy is true of
many other fundamental scientific concepts as well: "we have no knowledge of what
energy is" (Feynman, Leighton, and Sands 1963, p. 4-2).

To ignore the darkness in key terms of our science -- to claim that mathematics
gives us the essence of things when we can't even say what the things are and we
have no non-mathematical language adequate to them -- is to be no less in the grip
of nonsense than were those medieval thinkers who were content to explain the
character of gold by appealing to an occult quality of "goldness". Mathematics, as a
self-contained, "essence-yielding" discipline, offers a pseudo-explanation no more
helpful than the occult quality. It does no more good for us merely to assume we
know what the mathematics is being applied to than it did for our predecessors to
assume they knew what goldness was.
An elementary point, you might think. But the scientist and engineer have shown a powerful tendency to conceive their desired mechanisms through an ever more disciplined focus upon mathematics, algorithm, and software, blithely inattentive to the character of the world the experimental apparatus is coercing into algorithmic "obedience". It is true (and a remarkable accomplishment) that, unlike our medieval forerunners, we have perfected a method for obtaining workable devices. In fact, many such as Daniel Dennett ("biology is engineering") would more or less collapse our entire project of understanding into a single-minded pursuit of workable devices. But in doing so they increasingly attend, in their anthropocentric way, only to the sort of clean, mathematical structure they temporarily manage to impose upon these devices at a high level of abstraction. That is, they are interested in seeing only machines, and in seeing machines only as manageable abstractions.

Accordingly, the device itself, as physical phenomenon, recedes from view while the immaterial logic we have associated with it consumes our attention. In our quest for understanding we have become obsessed with the equivalent of angelic hosts bearing data in a timeless algorithmic dance, and whether the dance proceeds on the head of a pin or along silicon pathways or within the deeply worn logical grooves of our own minds hardly matters. The dancers are, from our preferred point of view, pure and chaste, insubstantial, uncontaminated by gross matter. They give us a kind of otherworldly "physics", as Dennett claimed, free of noise and uncertainty.

The only way for us to break the hypnotic spell of our own abstract cerebrations is to open our senses again so as to re-experience the world we have been fleeing, much as our ancestors of several centuries ago broke the medieval spell and looked out at a new world. But just as it took those earlier pioneers centuries to understand what breaking free really meant -- medieval thought habits persisted even in Newton -- so, too, it may require a long time for us to escape the trance of mechanistic thought and begin to recognize the living qualities of the substances we have learned to ignore behind a veil of precisely behaved abstractions.

Looking Ahead

It is time to pause and ask where these prefatory remarks might lead us in examining mechanistic science and its technological foundations. I offer here a bare statement of several theses as a kind of prospectus for future articles in this series.

First, as we have begun to see, the resort to mathematical formalism, whether it is a formalism of equations, rules, logic, or algorithms, is inadequate even to explain a machine. The explanatory logic -- conceived by us and imposed upon the machine -- relates to our purposes and operations, and, as a genuine lawfulness, remains in a sense external to the actual substance of the machine. If our science is a science of such formalisms governing a world-machine, then it cannot give us any full understanding of this world-machine.

Second, nothing in the natural world -- including inanimate nature -- is machinelike if by "machine" we refer to the human artifacts we usually call by this name. The governing idea of a machine is imposed upon it by a designer through a proper arrangement of parts; the idea is not intrinsic to the parts, not demanded by them, not the necessary expression of their existence.

Nature, on the other hand, has no designer -- at least not one of this external sort. We cannot think of laws on one side and a substance obeying or "instantiating" the laws on the other. Rather, the laws belong to the substance itself as an expression of its essential character. The lawfulness of a machine is in part a cultural artifact;
the lawfulness of the physical world is through and through the intrinsic expression of its own being. And we can understand this being only to the degree we penetrate and illuminate the more or less opaque terms of our science -- "force", "mass", "energy", and all the rest.

Third (looking forward), the immanent mathematical lawfulness we do discover in the natural world is never the law or the explanation of whatever transpires in the world. It is merely an implicit aspect of the substantive (but largely ignored) phenomenal reality that must be there in order for there to be something, some worldly process, that exhibits the given mathematical character. The relation between the mathematical character and the reality in which it is found is the relation between syntax and semantics. We see this same relation between the formal grammar and the meaning of our speech. The grammar is an implicit lawfulness. But, given the grammatical structure alone, we cannot know the meaningful content of the speech. The structure is abstracted from this content, leaving behind much of what matters most.

This, I believe, is a crucial point, deserving a great deal of elaboration (which I will in the near future try to provide).

Fourth (and finally), many readers will by now be yelling at me in their minds: "You fool! Pay attention to different levels of description!" What they are getting at is something like this:

\textit{Of course} rules such as those defining the Game of Life are inadequate to provide a complete explanation of the machine executing them. The rules describe the machine only at a high level of abstraction. But we can also provide descriptions of the same sort at progressively lower levels of abstraction, until finally we have described the fundamental particles constituting the machine. All these descriptions together tell us everything we could possibly know about the machine, and also about the world.

But this appeal to descriptive levels fails utterly to bridge the gap between mechanistic explanations and an adequate explication of the world's lawfulness. The problem is that the shortcoming of the mechanistic style of explanation follow you all the way down. If, when you finally arrive at the particles, you try to describe them as if they were little machines -- if, that is, you remain faithful to your mechanistic convictions -- then your rules, algorithms, mathematics, and logic explain no more about these particles than the Game of Life does about the concrete machine it is running on. But now you are at the supposedly fundamental level of understanding, so the limitations here apply to the entire edifice you have erected upon this foundation.

If you want a true understanding of the world's order, the crucial gap you have to leap is not the gap between levels of description. Rather, it is the distance between unembodied mathematical, logical, and algorithmic formalisms on the one hand, and the full content of the world these formalisms are abstracted from on the other. Highlighting this gap will be one of my primary aims in forthcoming essays.

Summarizing, then:

- Mechanistic explanations do not even explain machines.
- The world is not in any case a machine.
● A mathematical regularity, or syntax, is implicit in the world's phenomena and can be said to explain the world no less and no more than the grammatical syntax of a speech explains the content of the speech.

● If, when appealing to a hierarchy of descriptive levels, we remain committed to mechanistic explanation, then the limitations of such explanation afflict us all the way down the hierarchy.

Those of you acquainted with the philosophy of science will recognize in these statements implications of the most radical sort, even though so far I have done little more than offer brief justification for the first thesis of the four. In the end we will find ourselves confronting, among other things, an entirely new (or, rather, very old and forgotten) style of explanation based on form.

We will also see the necessity for reversing the far-reaching decision within science to ignore qualities. This decision, if not reversed, must lead ultimately to the disappearance of the world, which is not there apart from its qualities -- and therefore it will lead also to the annihilation of the science that began with such promise as a resolve to reject levitated abstraction and observe the world.

Bibliography


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Steve Talbott, author of The Future Does Not Compute: Transcending the Machines in Our Midst currently edits NetFuture, a freely distributed newsletter dealing with technology and human responsibility. NetFuture is published by The Nature Institute, 169 Route 21C, Ghent NY 12075 (tel: 518-672-0116; web: http://www.natureinstitute.org). You can reach Steve at stevet@oreilly.com

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EVERY SNOWFLAKE HAS A NAME

Hannah M.G. Shapero

Life online has its own type of virtual “weather,” and usually it’s snowing. It’s not snowing little flakes of ice, it’s snowing SPAMS. Every day I view the deposit of junk e-mail caught in my spam-filter, like a drift that piles up against the wall of a house. A few errant flakes of SPAM make it through a gap in a window, to appear on my active e-mail list, where I sweep them away as if with a puff of warm air.

In a snowstorm, uncounted zillions of flakes can fall, and each one of them is proverbially unique. I am told that billions, perhaps trillions of SPAM messages get sent every day, and fascinatingly, most of them are also unique – not through the turns of Nature, but as the result of clever, endlessly recombining word-and-number generators which ceaselessly attempt new ways to get through the filters.

In an idle moment, I took a look at some of the SPAMS stuck in the filter file, actually opening them to see what they said (NOT any attachments of course!). I know that opening the messages is still not a good idea, but curiosity got the better of me. What are all the snowflakes trying to say? Inside their misleading titles (“I finally found you!”, “Dinner tonight?” “Someone in this office likes you”...) were the now-familiar ads for penis enlargement pills, Viagra and other drugs, mortgage financial schemes, and of course pornography. From the sheer number of penis and Viagra ads, it seems that the Net has taken on a decidedly phallic quality, a virtual temple to Priapus, though it’s a Priapus that seems to need a lot of assistance.

But what impressed me the most about the lineup of SPAMS was that most of them were attributed to a person’s name, cited in the “sender” field. Bogus of course, and paired with a bogus address, but still a personal name. This is adopted as a strategy to get through the filters, though since they were caught by my filter, it wasn’t a very good strategy. Yet one after another, each SPAM mail had a person’s name attached to it. I looked at a week’s worth of SPAM – (yes, I have too much time on my hands) and found hundreds and hundreds of these names. I was receiving penis enlargement ads and drug ads from a whole crowd of people who were only names – a crowd of ghosts.

It is said that if you name something, then it has a kind of existence; it is made at least virtually real. Here on my screen was an endless roster of virtually real people: Mel Nolan. Timmy Clark. Rachael Fair. Theresa Schultz. Goldie Serrano. Debbie Cooper. Jed K. Burgos. Blair Harden. Kerry Cardenas. Anita Barone. Kitty Langston. Ruthie Yu. Irvin Flynn. Ellen Stephens. Dalton Avery. Tyrone Garces. Patricia Watkins. Michael Dominguez. Darin Sutherland.….the list goes on and on and on. I collected more than three hundred names, all different. I have no idea how many other people received mail from these phantom names, but for me, every snowflake had a name, and none of them repeated. There were no repetitions of even common names like “Smith” or “Jones” or “Martinez.”

I started to wonder: who were these people? A kind of sociological curiosity arose in me, and I started taking notes. I noticed that the ethnic range of these names was rather limited. Apart from a couple of Chinese or Jewish names, almost all of the names were either “Anglo” or Latin, and even the Latin names often had an “Anglo” first name. There were also numerous names which seemed to fit the stereotype of an “African-American” or black-sounding name. But other than the one or two I observed, there were no Chinese or Japanese names, no Vietnamese or Indian or Middle Eastern names, and no African or other ethnic names either. There were also no names that were clearly “European” such as German, Italian, or French names. And, more subtly, there seemed to be no “British” – sounding names either – no one named Trevor or Nigel or, for that matter, Camilla.

The phone book of any American city is filled with a global variety of ethnicities and ethnic names. Plundering the phonebook to randomly generate names would not yield such an exclusive selection. Where did these names come from? They were contemporary names, not ones from the past with their
Biblical and historical allusions. And they were American names, this earnest mixture of Anglo and Latin. Where were these people? Were they really real somewhere? They were not cute internet nicknames, they were given names. Were they plundered from mailing lists, hacked from office rosters of companies and firms or insurance listings or internet providers’ memberships? I have heard that names and addresses of “real” people are commonly stripped and used as the origin of spams, in a scam known as a “joe job.” Were all of these hundreds (thousands!) victimized this way? Was there really a Kirk Perry, a Frederic Beal, a Hugh Sandoval, a Stanley Godwin, an Arline Booth, a Carrie McIntyre, or a Jay Rodriguez, now cursing and frantically changing his or her e-mail address because his name and identity have been stolen in order to promote a penis enlargement pill? If some sort of “random name generator” is being used, it is sophisticated; it hardly ever comes up with something that sounds odd or absurd.

As I often do, I had surrealistic thoughts. The SPAMS, as thick as snowflakes in February, fill the virtual air, each with its own “realistic” sender name: Danielle Corcoran, Cassandra Pace, Coleman Lamb, William Fisher, Cathy Ann McNeil, Mariana Perez, Toby Bruce, Benjamin Bailey, Daniel Knowles, Jennifer Shore. Billions of SPAMS, every day. One day’s worth of SPAM has far exceeded the population of the entire Earth. Each day, astronomical numbers of virtual people are being named and thus, in a ghostly way, created. Do they have souls? Do they have lives, working in their offices somewhere in another dimension created by the unrelenting machinations of SPAM coders? Whole cities full of people, working tirelessly to send you penis enlargement ads and mortgage scams and Viagra and amateur teen girl webcam pictures?

I have read speculations by imaginative physicists who posit that there are an infinite number of universes, parallel but unreachable from ours, and in at least some of them are Earths just like ours, with people just like us. In fact, somewhere out there, supposedly, is our exact duplicate. Is this snowfall of personalized junk e-mail really the whisper across the dimensions of other universes, filled with uncounted but named beings, whose only trace on our consciousness is a subject line with a name that sounds tantalizingly real: Clark Bernard, Robert Allen, Shawnda Ivan, Merrill Nichols, Averyl Sanders, Dwayne Negron, Nadia Duran, Janet Filson Davis, Andrea Nichols, J.D. Martinsen, Florence Siegel, Margaret Madden…..?

Afterword: A little research on the Net (Google) revealed the source of these names, or something like it: the Kleimo Random Name Generator: http://www.kleimo.com/random/name.cfm which has adjustable parameters to "create" as many people, with as common or as unusual a name as you want. It takes names from the U.S. Census and scrambles them to create an instant crowd of virtual friends.

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**Hannah M.G. Shapero**, is an American artist, writer and incorrigible baseball fan. Check out her website for some beautiful work.

[www.pyracantha.com](http://www.pyracantha.com)
It turned out that Richard had ample time to sit and watch girls, boys, old men, old ladies, and various dogs as they walked by without taking any notice of the six large canvasses that Uwe had grudgingly removed from storage and propped up for display. The two men had come down to Sparks street early to stake out a section of the Artist’s Strip, an area of the shopping district where painters, sketchers, and artisans commonly sold their wares, and since the weather promised to stay dry and warm, they were prepared to stay most of the day. The cobblestone street lacked the quiet ambience of the gallery, but as Richard kept pointing out, at least there were people here. He wasn’t really expecting many to show an interest in taking a painting; they were large canvasses, and not everyone would have space for such things; but it irked him that no one gave them more than a passing glance. Surely they must have at least provided a source of novelty next to the potters and landscape painters. Don’t you understand? Richard felt like berating them, you can take these things home for free!

The apathy of the passers-by did not seem to matter to Uwe, however; he was contentedly engrossed in a discussion with the resident portrait artist who scribbled away nearby. Uwe seemed to be in excellent spirits (even though he had imbibed none), a far cry from the suicidal slouch Richard had envisaged the day before. It seemed that his friend had reached the bottom of despair and was now coming up again; for now he had even picked up a pencil and sketchpad to try his hand at the portraitist’s art. This was, of course, the kind of transformation Richard was hoping for, and of course he felt relieved that his friend was applying himself in some fashion. He just wished it had not occurred at the expense of his infallibility. I told you so, Uwe could say, as if it needed saying: I told you no one would want these old paintings. Richard’s erstwhile certainty that he enjoyed Uwe’s work because of some intrinsic, direct appeal was now beginning to waver. As he looked at the canvasses on display—all of them with similarly bright, diagonal bars on dark fields, a few
with lines intersecting—he began to seriously consider whether his appreciation was merely a function of market forces which had been unconsciously transmuted into aesthetic principles. This possibility made him extremely uncomfortable, for it suggested that he was not in control of his own tastes, but had been a puppet of those forces all along. Perhaps he had merely convinced himself that he liked geometric art because it came with a respectably large price tag; and wasn’t that the way one judged things in the old régime, by looking at the market price? The better something was, the more it cost. Of course, it wasn’t too hard for someone to disrupt the integrity of the price-quality relationship, and it could even happen without anyone’s maliciously intending it.

Presently someone stopped to examine the paintings, someone who looked as though he were actually interested in taking one of them home.—Aha, Richard thought, it was just a matter of time. There has to be one true art lover for every hundred Philistines; I’ve just been waiting for him to walk by. And here he is, a work of art himself, dressed all in black with a black beret and a streak of blue strap where his knapsack is slung. All he needs is a vandyke and a few more earrings. . . .

“Hi there,” Richard greeted as he approached the customer, hands-in-pockets, salesman style.

“Bonjour,” said the man, briefly glancing away from his absorption in a canvas. Richard feared the fellow might be francophone (Richard spoke little French), but the “bonjour” turned out to be an affectation rather than linguistic necessity. “Are you the artist?” the man asked.

“I’m not, no. I’m just helping Mr. Kuefer sell—er—market his work. If you’d like to speak with him, he’s just over here, and he’d be happy to talk to someone who appreciates his art.”

“Oh, yes, do ask him,” was the response.—I knew it, thought Richard; just a matter of time. He practically ran to notify Uwe, who was annoyed at having to interrupt his drawing but curious to see the “customer” nonetheless.

“Now remember,” Richard cautioned, “you’ve got to sell yourself. Pretend you’re trying to make a living.”

In a moment they were vis-à-vis the man in black, whom Uwe greeted in the most affectedly businesslike manner. Richard smiled expectantly.

“It’s nice to see someone resisting this movement to more representationality in painting,” the man remarked. “It’s so refreshing to see such pure composition.” Uwe seemed almost won over by this compliment, but he instantly expressed his suspicions.

“Are you an artist yourself?” he inquired.

“Yes, but I’m just an amateur,” the man confessed. “I’m studying art at
the University, actually. It’s pretty much the only place you’ll see work like this produced these days.”

“Ahh,” sang Uwe in an expression of recognition. “A fellow artist—sorry Richard, this one doesn’t count—and a university product, too. Now, tell me, sir, which one of these canvases do you think ‘works’ best?”

“Well, they’re all very good. . . . This one—‘untitled’—I think the dynamic balance, with this heavy red down here and the pink bars in the corner”—he pointed as he spoke—“makes for a very effective composition.” He paused, and Uwe said nothing as he, too, contemplated the painting with what Richard recognised as a mock intensity.

“I’d like to take it,” the man in black decided, “but I’m not driving, and it’s too big for me to carry on a bike. If you can arrange to deliver it to me, I’d love to have it.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Uwe began—“what’s your name?”

“Chris.”

“I’ll tell you what, Chris, I’ll draw you a little diagram.”

Uwe took up the pencil and sketchpad with which he had been working and began to make a diagram of the untitled painting in question, to the confusion of Chris and the consternation of Richard, who could see where this was going. The diagram represented the canvas itself, with each coloured bar drawn in proportionately heavy or light pencil lines and marked with a label indicating its approximate colour.

“Here you go,” smiled Uwe as he tore off the sheet, “now you can reproduce it for yourself. You can even customise it to fit your house—there aren’t many walls that will properly accommodate something this size anyhow. And if you have any friends who like it, they can make one of their own, too.”

Chris took the paper, looked nervously at Uwe and Richard, and smiled; apparently, he thought this was all a jest at his expense. “Seriously, though, Mr. Kuefer,” he resumed, “I think I can arrange to bring this with me somehow. I’ll get a van from the lending lot.”

“Suit yourself,” said Uwe. “But feel free to paint over it. That’s the best thing about my recent work, I suppose; it’s not textured with splatter and bits of newspaper like some of the crap I did in the nineties, so it’s still recyclable.” Having thus dismissed his would-be patron, he turned and walked away again without further adieu. Richard could only shrug his shoulders when the man in black turned to him with an inquisitive look.

“I’d still come back and take it if I were you,” Richard advised. “This painting might be worth money some day.” His bewildered customer regarded him even more quizzically for a moment, smiled wanly, then left him to his
otherwise uneventful vigil.

—Artists are all crazy, Richard thought.

Not long after this episode, and soon after Richard had made himself comfortable in his chair again, he found himself no longer watching the passers-by (except for the young and the shapely), but the various persons working diligently along the street. The shop owners and managers, he observed, were a relaxed lot: if no one was visiting their shops, they would sit out in the sun chatting, eating, or reading magazines—sometimes even ignoring the people who did enter their shops. They obviously enjoyed the peculiar freedom gratuitism afforded, namely the absence of concern about theft. Their only occupation, other than procuring stock, was to help people find what they wanted, or provide information about their wares. No books to keep, little if any advertising to worry about, little if any staff—what could be easier? They could even open and close whenever they pleased, and close up and take a holiday if they felt so inclined. Richard saw that it would be difficult to convince such people that they were better off under monetarism, even if there were queues for gas and coffee rationing now. These kinds of inconveniences paled in comparison to those which used to trouble the lives of small business people.

From where he sat, Richard could also see a group of men replacing one of the enormous ground-level windows of what used to be the Dominion Bank building, and what was now a “freespace” where goods of all kinds were left and taken. It was a long, difficult process, replacing such a window; Richard counted seven men at work on the project, together with an enormous truck that both carried the glass and provided the crane with which the pane was set in place. Two men warded off approaching pedestrians, two guided the glass from the outside, two from inside the building, and a seventh stood back to judge whether all the edges were lining up in the frame. It had to go in perfectly the first try, Richard gathered, and even with a finely-adjustable crane, it was painstaking work getting the glass positioned properly. When it was finally accomplished, however, an onlooker could almost see the warmth of camaraderie those workers felt; a feeling, Richard guessed, like that which he used to have when the team won at baseball or hockey. It was a feeling that was forever fostered, but never really produced, among the mercenaries of the financial community to which he had once belonged. There was actually a flame of envy within him for a moment as he observed the workers’ bonds from afar; but this soon faded into cold indifference when he remembered that these men were working, not playing, and theirs was a kind of work that was beneath an educated man like himself.

Something else caught his attention now, too. Since arriving downtown that morning, he had several times made eye contact with a woman minding the clothing store across the way; and here she was now, approaching him like a mingler at a party. Richard did not feel immediately attracted to her (though
he remarked to himself that she had nice eyes), but he felt a nervous flutter in his breast as she came closer, a flutter such as he had not experienced since a certain girl in high school had provoked it.

“Hi,” she opened hospitably. Richard registered the lines around her eyes and guessed she was probably a little older than he was. He noticed that her hair was jet black, which together with her broad cheeks suggested native Canadian blood in her ancestry. Her blue eyes, however, were French, as were her clothes, or so it seemed to Richard; beneath her red, broad-shouldered jacket peered a ruffled white blouse which was opened just enough to reveal a golden crucifix about her neck.

“G’d afternoon,” Richard sang casually. His voice indicated a powerful attraction which nonetheless remained beneath consciousness.

“I see you’ve had no takers,” she observed.

“Yeah. It’s too bad. There was one fellow who really wanted this piece here, but the artist—that bean pole with the beard over there—he scared him away, I think. He doesn’t like his own paintings. So what can you do?”

“Can’t say I blame him,” said the woman as she frowned upon “Untitled”; “I wouldn’t feel too badly about it, though. I’ve seen much better art than his get ignored on this street. People’s tastes are still warped.”

—Still warped. A gratuitist sentiment, not surprising coming from a working merchant, and a woman at that. Obviously means that though the economy has straightened itself out, tastes remain perverse.

“Is that your store?” Richard asked, feeling compelled to keep the conversation going.

“Oh, no, I’m just minding it for my friend while she takes her turn minding our kids. She usually brings them here, but it’s such a nice day, we decided one of us should take them out to the country.”

“And you’re stuck here minding the shop,” Richard commented, thinking that she must feel as he did.

“Oh, it’s not that bad. It’s only six hours, and it’s always nice to get a break from one’s children, even though mine are angels,” she boasted, looking away wistfully. “I could have just closed up shop, of course, but I figured it’s also a nice day for people who want to do some shopping, you know?” There was an empathetic logic here that Richard could not quite comprehend, so he moved on to his next question.

“So what do you normally do, when you’re not here, I mean?”

“I make clothes—a lot of the clothes in our store,” she said, gesturing towards the display window. “Actually, I’m trying to set up a large-scale
production facility with some other ladies and a man who used to be a big designer in Montreal. We’re going to take up the slack left by the oriental imports. It’s not coming together at this point though. . . .”

How industrious, Richard thought disdainfully. Although he could not help feeling some respect for a woman who took such initiatives—it was the entrepreneurial spirit he had been taught to worship in business school—it was still disturbing for him to think that she was making gratuitism work by volunteering so enthusiastically.

“Did you make your outfit yourself?” he asked now, directing the conversation towards something more palatable to him.

“This? Oh, yes, the jacket and the skirt. Not the blouse, though. It’s so hard to get decent silk nowadays.”

There’s the weakness, Richard concluded. Bring this woman a boatload of Chinese silk and she’ll probably support whichever politician you want her to. As he reflected on this idea, Richard’s eyes lingered on the woman’s blouse just long enough for her to take charge of the conversation.

“And is this your regular occupation, vending unwanted art?”

“Oh—no,” he said, looking up at her guiltily, “I do other things.” At first, Richard wanted to say “yes” to stifle further enquiry, but he saw that the truth would be easier in this case.

“What kinds of other things?”

He was suddenly defiant. Why should he try to hide his allegiance with vague terms? “I work for the Monetarist Lobby,” he said proudly.

“Oh,” she responded, obviously disappointed; then, with an edge of cynicism: “Unwanted art and unwanted economics: a winning combination.” With that, she turned coldly and walked back into her shop. It was as though he had told her that he was a violent criminal or something.—What, he felt like remonstrating with her, what is so bad about thinking that the most successful and durable economic system in history should be reinstated in this country?

It was not long, however, before Richard made eye contact with her again, only this time it was while she was talking to a customer who was also looking his way.—They must be talking about me, he speculated. How quickly the chickens alert one another when a big, bad wolf is discovered in their midst.

He was a strange kind of wolf, however, for try as he might he could not prevent himself from caring what his prey thought of him; once the heat of his defiance had dissipated, he found himself with a cold insecurity about the woman’s question: what was his occupation? Out of protest, he had none. But was it really the right course of action? In other words, was his protest worth
the discomfort of knowing that he was somehow dragging down everyone around him, whatever their political opinions, because he would not contribute to the common good? It’s easier for a man like Tony, he thought; Tony makes speeches, attends policy meetings, and keeps track of supporters; Tony strengthens the community by providing a voice for its discontents. My only real responsibility is to keep track of the gasoline supply, which is neither challenging nor beneficial to anyone else—not like the important job I used to have at the embassy. I want to do more.

“Had enough?” Uwe interrupted his reverie. The artist had been to the corner store to pick up a bottle of juice for himself and for Richard, who suddenly realized how thirsty he had become. It was late afternoon now, and the parching late April sun had appeared from behind a highrise to the south of them. Across the way, next to the clothing store, a group of tradesmen who had been renovating the upper story of a shop paused to bask in the sunlight that would soon be obstructed by another highrise.—Efficient, thought Richard: work stops when the sun comes out. The men looked in his general direction, said something, and laughed; making fun of Uwe’s art, no doubt. My kid could paint that, they would be saying.

“The triumph of the Philistines,” Richard thought aloud. Uwe either didn’t hear him or didn’t pay any attention, for he began making suggestions about what they should make for dinner, since Bill would be out at a friend’s.

“Let’s pack these things up and go, eh, Richard?” he said finally.

And so they did.

Pamela had spent the better part of the week working at the offices of Shaw, Brady, and Levant, the firm which had helped draw up her divorce papers for her. It was a much cozier office than any she had worked in or visited before, which no doubt had something to do with the fact that two of the partners were woman and the third a genuinely gay man. When first she had come through the front entrance of the post-war brick mansion with its hardwood floors and Persian rug and brass fixtures and walls decorated with the most wonderful oil paintings—and the luxurious furniture!—Pamela almost forgot why she had come in the first place and she decided, then and there, I have got to work here—if they’ll let me. She was even more determined after being smitten with the elegance and friendliness of Ms. Shaw, a “happily divorced woman” herself, who treated her to cappuccino, home-made cheesecake, and a half-hour’s indulgence as Pamela railed mightily against the cruel, unfaithful, and inept Richard.

“He sounds like a perfect brute,” Ms. Shaw declared after hearing how he would ignore his wife at social functions, even while flirting with other women in her presence (Pamela did not, of course, mention how she would retaliate in kind with her own flirtations). “But you really can’t expect any
better in this day and age. When you’ve been a divorce lawyer for as long as I
have, you come to the realization that men really are pigs, and the best you can
do is to keep a lover at arm’s length so that you’re always the one in control. If
you don’t have to marry for security—and no one does any more—then there’s
no point taking any of those silly, old-fashioned vows.”

“I totally agree,” Pamela had said, although she was not sure if she
really did agree.

Towards the end of that first meeting, she had asked if she could help
draw up the papers since she was, after all, an experienced legal secretary; and
then she mentioned that she wouldn’t mind coming by to volunteer for a few
hours a day, on a continuing basis, if the other partners didn’t object. Ms. Shaw
couldn’t really say no, even though she hinted that Pamela was a little beneath
her class and a little foolish for demanding so little from her soon-to-be
ex-husband. Ms. Shaw certainly wouldn’t have let her husband get away with
better than half of what they owned. Arrangements were nevertheless made to
have Pamela Kerr (not Spendler) begin work at once.

The new job was every bit as enjoyable as Pam thought if would be.
The work was so easy; none of the clients seemed interested in going to court
when their demands for stewardship were refused by their spouses; it just
wasn’t worth the trouble when a new car or piece of furniture could be had for
free. The only cases that required any effort were those involving battles for
custody of children. These were just as grueling and disturbing as they had
ever been; but as Ms. Shaw put it, you always felt good about fighting for the
right side, and without the necessity of earning money by it, you simply didn’t
take cases if you didn’t think your client was in the right.

It was just such a case that Pamela found herself working on as she
began her second week as a volunteer at the office. She would come in around
noon every day and relieve Jan, another assistant who had worked with the
firm for almost twenty years, and would pick up where the other left
off—typing up affidavits, tracking down prospective character references,
taking notes during meetings, and setting up appointments. Although it was not
altogether certain that their client in the custody battle was in the right—she
openly admitted to being a poor disciplinarian—Pamela became engrossed in
the woman’s battle against yet another in what seemed like a world full of
wicked husbands.—Why, she wondered, do women like us always seem to fall
for men like that? That harshness, coarseness, that inability to discuss feelings
openly—why does it always seem to come in such an alluring, tall, dark, and
handsome package?

One day Pamela decided to come in early to do some research on
visitation rights, more for her own edification than for the benefit of their
client. She found the office strangely deserted. Was it possible that all three
attorneys were in court today?—No, she thought; Ms. Levant’s case is in
recess. They must be upstairs in the library. Pamela was satisfied with this
conjecture, but as she went to the kitchen to brew a new pot of coffee, she heard voices coming from the back porch where, on pleasant days, the ladies and gentleman in the office would take their breaks.

“Beverly tells me she’s a very diligent worker,” said one of the voices. Ms. Levant’s voice, Pamela noted.

“Oh, I’m sure she is. She obviously knows what she’s doing, even if she can’t type very fast.”

—Jan. No, I can’t type very fast, I’m out of practice. I was every bit as fast as you before I got married. . . . Wait. Maybe they’re not talking about me.

“I don’t mind her working around the office,” Ms. Levant went on, “but I really think we should keep her out of the courtroom, if at all possible. I don’t think she dresses very professionally, and we don’t want judges thinking that our clients consort with trollops.”

—Trollops! Can’t dress professionally! How dare you talk that way about me!

“I don’t see why she makes herself up like that just to come here anyway. It’s not like she’s going to meet any men here. I mean, did you see that skirt she was wearing yesterday? And that garish nail polish?”

“Don’t be too hard on the poor thing, Jan. Remember, she’s been out of the country for a long time, and maybe that look is acceptable right now overseas. Like I said, we’ll just keep her busy here in the office and it won’t make any difference.”

There was a faint creak from outside, as though one of the women had lifted herself out of a chair. Fearing that they might walk in and realize that they had been overheard, Pamela hurried upstairs to the bathroom.—I’m too angry to face them, she thought. She could not escape their resounding words, however, especially once she beheld herself in the large mirror that graced the privy.

—Well, at least I’m dressed sensibly today, she thought; no one will be scandalised by the sight of my legs with these baggy slacks covering them. The bitches! they’re just jealous because they haven’t had any in years, and they’re both too old and dumpy to attract a decent-looking man any more. Pamela looked at her reflection more closely.—I’m not getting any younger either. Those lines are deeper. Too much time spent in the sun. But men tend to overlook those kinds of things when you’ve got a nice figure.

She drew back from the mirror again, struck a defiant cover girl pose, and tossed her unbound tresses proudly. Hair longer than shoulder length will be worn pinned up in a professional manner, the old dress code had read.—At least I don’t have to conform to that any more. We’ll see if they try to keep me out of the courtroom when I start coming in looking more classy than they do.
—Blast! Why must they be so damned obsessed with appearance! You’d think women as smart as they are would know better.

On the evening of the day after Richard’s disappointment as an artmonger, there happened to be a meeting of the Monetarist Lobby Association’s executive, and Richard was urged to attend since he was now a minor officer in the organization. Not that he needed any urging; since his encounter with the woman in red, he had grown increasingly eager to do something for the common good, even if he wasn’t going to get paid for it. In a way, the meeting was going to be less exciting than the inspiring public conference held by the Lobby the week before, but Richard looked forward to it for different reasons. At the conference, he had watched and listened; now, he would have a chance to contribute his own ideas and expertise.

The executive met in an enormous boardroom near the top of a skyscraper which had once housed the offices of an insurance company. It was one of the few such buildings that had not fallen prey to rezoning initiatives, whereby commercial and retail spaces were being converted into residential, educational, and studio space. Here, organizations like the MLA executive could hold meetings and use office equipment with little or no interference from others, even while enjoying a bird’s-eye view of the metropolis through the expansive windows. The only thing amiss about the building, as far as Richard could tell, was that all of the potted plants in it were either dead or dying. Apparently, no one had taken upon themselves the responsibility of watering them.

The boardroom was state-of-the-art, complete with a projection screen into which information from microcomputers could be fed and displayed for the purpose of presentation. There were firm, comfortably upholstered chairs around a wonderful oak table which, though large, was not so wide as to prevent one from handing papers across it. Richard took his appointed place near a corner of the table furthest from the chairman and Prime Minister-in-waiting, Mr. De Champlain. As others took their places, Richard recognised some of the faces from the conference: there was Mr. White with his quick, beady eyes; and Mr. Reich, the balding, bearded fellow who had given the opening speech; and Grant Chandler, the former Conservative party president. Mr. Tan, the Director of Foreign Affairs, took the seat next to Richard and briefly introduced himself while they waited for the late arrivals to take their places.

Mr. De Champlain began the meeting with a review of the minutes from their last meeting, then drew attention to the newest member of the executive.

“For those of you who haven’t heard, Mr. Spendler comes to us from a strong background in international trade, having spent the past four years with
our consulates in China. He will be reporting to us on the dynamics of the oil supply both in the Capital Region and abroad. I speak for all of us, Richard, in welcoming you to our organisation.” The chairman smiled, displaying a disconcertingly wide mouth full of shiny teeth, and took his seat again.

Richard thanked the chairman, then surprised them by offering to deliver a report he had already prepared on the current local oil supply situation, together with some recommendations for publicising the negative implications and extrapolations to be derived from his data. It seemed to him, he explained at length, that monetarists would have to do a lot more than create web pages and Internet news groups to reach the public with such information; they were preaching to the converted through such media, since the general public simply avoided what they didn’t want to know or hear. Confidently addressing the dark-suited assembly of expectant-faced men, Richard motioned that they try to infiltrate print media with journalists who could report and interpret world events from a monetarist point of view.

“It’s a good idea, Richard,” conceded a Mr. Davies, the MLA’s chief publicist; “and don’t think we haven’t tried things of that sort. But you’ve got to understand that if you want to publish a paper with our kind of slant to it, you pretty much have to start from scratch. We had an editor at the Sun at first—lots of monetarist editors at first, all over the country—but they were kicked out by their own reporters, even by pressmen sometimes. People simply wouldn’t work for us, and we no longer had any leverage to use against them. So if you want a monetarist newspaper, you have to find monetarist reporters, editors, layout people, press people, and distribution people. Television is just as bad, with all those technicians. It’s not that easy.”

“There is our radio station, though,” someone suggested.

“Yes—there is that.” Davies was distracted by some recollection, then continued: “It’s worse than the web page, though, for bringing in new recruits and getting our message out. It’s all preaching to the converted, like you say.”

Thus was Richard’s small contribution to the meeting regrettfully dismissed. All present seemed to agree that the only way they would get better exposure was by making more effective use of the pre-election media circus, that is, by waiting for a time and place when their message would have a willing if unsympathetic audience.

The matter of their sabotaging tactics was far more engaging for the entire assembly, for this was their strength, their domain of creativity, and their theatre of activity. Each man (for there were no ladies among their number) seemed to fancy himself a freedom fighter who, by impeding the economic system of his misguided nation, was an unknown hero akin to the black marketeers in Soviet Russia or the Resisters in Nazi-occupied France.—At least, they fancied themselves so when their rationality yielded to conceit and base desire. Richard was, however, perfectly rational in this respect, and felt
some of the others could use a reality check.

“I can’t imagine,” he addressed them emphatically at one point, “that my waiting in a gas station line-up for half an hour a day will have any effect on our popularity. I mean, it doesn’t much matter if someone waits 25 minutes or half an hour. Even cumulatively, and even if everyone in this room does it regularly, I don’t see that it’ll accomplish much.”

This criticism was met with the endorsing nod of most present, but Richard noticed several disgruntled turnings-aside as well. It seemed that he had reopened an issue that was once heavily debated.

“None of us has to wait in line-ups if it’s too much work,” said Mr. Reich, the real-estate man, with derision.

“I don’t think you should underestimate the cumulative effect,” added Tony. “But most of us, I think, tend to agree with you. It’s something we still suggest to new officers like yourself, though, because it’s something everybody can do and something with an obvious, though as you say, slight impact.”

“You haven’t told Mr. Spendler of our other activities, have you Mr. Bounderby?” asked Mr. White.

“No, but I suppose it’s an appropriate time,” Tony mused. “Actually, he’d be most impressed if I took him out to the warehouse so he can see for himself.”

“Yes—I think we can trust Mr. Spendler,” said Mr. White, almost grudgingly. “If no one else has an objection.”

“Good,” said Tony when he saw that no immediate objection was raised, and before anyone could arrive at any deliberated objection. “By the way, Richard, your report was very thorough and informative. I’m sure we’re all a little encouraged about our prospects now that you’re on board.”

Richard was glad to hear this somewhat patronising praise, which was supported by the other men’s nods of assent, but he could scarcely think of a gracious way of accepting it now that the mysterious “warehouse” Tony mentioned had taken hold of his imagination. What could they be storing there? Barrels of oil? Explosives? Slave-girls? Tony would not say; he merely excused himself from the meeting (which no doubt turned to discussing the contents of the warehouse) and motioned to Richard that he should follow.

The quiet hall and elevator of the old office building somehow added to Richard’s suspense as he followed Tony down to the almost vacant parkade where they had left the car. It felt as though they were sneaking around, operating behind the back of the big, bad government like the Resistance in Paris. Richard was excited by the thought that the whole building might be bugged, and before they knew it they would be in a car chase outrunning some
kind of secret police.

Rather than give him directions, Tony asked for the car keys so that he could drive the two of them to the secret location in Merivale. “Sure; here you go,” Richard assented, then warned: “Watch for potholes.” It was to little avail, however; Tony could not avoid them all.

“The roads in this city might as well be closed,” he complained as he swerved past a particularly rough patch.

It suddenly occurred to Richard that the roads’ almost impassable condition must be part of yet another government conspiracy to reduce vehicle traffic and thus gasoline consumption.—Of course! The lower consumption would, over time, make gas easier to get, while the blame for the continued inconvenience of driving would shift to the public itself, since its laziness was responsible for the poor roads. Or was it that the petroleum compounds used in surfacing bitumen were being rationed along with gasoline? An increasingly intricate conspiracy evolved itself in Richard’s anxious mind, the pieces of which he suggested to Tony as quickly as he could assemble them. The latter was engrossed by the road in front of him, but occasionally he would smile or nod in acknowledgement.

The industrial park harboured a surprising amount of traffic and parked vehicles for such a late hour. Is it possible, Richard wondered, that people are working out here at eight o’clock in the evening? That plastic container plant—why would anybody be there at this hour? Why would anyone be working there at all? No one could possibly be that bored. And what’s with all these transport drivers on the road? Surely they’d be happier if they weren’t driving around after dark. . . .

As Tony slowed the car before coming to what had to be the warehouse, Richard saw that the building was not unusual in any way: it presented a perfect cover for whatever subversive activity it housed. It was just another huge white building in an industrial park full of huge white buildings, different only in that there were no trucks or trailers parked in its vicinity. By the light of the pale orange streetlights, Richard noted that a large wooden sign, no doubt a relic of the days of monetarism, labelled the building as the property of a Taiwan-based electronics firm. In the wake of deteriorated relations with China, passers-by would naturally assume the building to be vacant. Its locked doors, however, would indicate occupants who feared the theft of some rarities or—less likely—occupants who feared that their hoarding activities might be discovered.

Tony, who had been nervously checking the rearview mirror while he drove out, now looked nervously about him as he climbed out of the car and produced a key to unlock the door to the building.

“You never know who’s watching,” he explained in a conspiratorial tone.
—This must be really big, Richard thought. Once they were inside with
the door closed behind them again, he felt as though he were in a James Bond
movie, and this was the inevitable scene in which the evil genius decides to
show 007 his superior technology before trying to kill him.—I’m even dressed
for the part, he remarked as he glanced down at his suit—although perhaps a
white tuxedo would have been even better.

The door admitted them into a front office which was gutted of
computers, photocopiers, and other signs of business, so that it felt eerily
empty; then came a hallway leading to other offices; then a steel door that
opened to the warehouse proper and which required yet another key. Tony
fumbled with his keys briefly, found the correct one, then unlocked and opened
the door. It was dark until he found a light switch.

The space was enormous—it must have been over 10,000 square
feet—but it seemed quite empty except for a forklift, a series of empty racks,
and four of five rows of laden pallets stacked three units high. Richard could
not make out what was on the pallets, but it looked to him like large rolls of
paper stacked on their ends and strapped with nylon twine.

“So this is the big secret—we’re hoarding paper?” Richard asked
without attempting to conceal his disappointment.

“But paper,” said Tony as they began to walk towards the stacks. The
click of their hard-soled shoes on the concrete echoed as they went. “Paper
isn’t that important; this is cotton. Thousands of yards of it, removed from the
system until we come to power again, at which time it will sell at a premium,
finance a new government, and set us up with the lifestyles we had before we
were dispossessed.

“You see, Richard, we can’t very well hoard gasoline—it’s difficult to
hide it, you need facilities, and the government monitors its distribution too
carefully. But you can store textiles anywhere—this isn’t our only place—and
you can frustrate people even more by taking it out of the system, since they’ll
want new clothes and discover there’s no cloth to make them with. That’s why
we’re hoarding cotton. What’s more, cotton gets used for everything, and you
can’t grow it very well here, so people will know that government trade policy
is to blame.”

“I don’t know,” said Richard, thinking for a while. “Once it becomes
rare enough, don’t you think the department is going to keep a close watch on
who takes shipments, and where?”

“That will become a problem, yes; but we’ve got things planned so that
the shortage will come upon them so suddenly, they won’t realise there’s a
hoarding problem until it’s too late. We’ve also calculated our operation such
that availability will become an issue in about six months from now—"
“Just in time for elections,” Richard filled in the blank.

“Exactly. And the other thing is this: as you probably know too well, garments and sheets were the last imports to be cut off in our trade with Oriental producers; there’s already a demand that’s not being filled anymore, you see. So just when the gratuitists discover that they need to build up their own textile industry here, they’ll also discover that there’s no material to do it with.”

“Which will make the government look even more foolish for losing such valuable trading partners on account of their poor diplomacy.”

“Exactly.”

“Ah.” Richard saw the plan clearly now. “Very clever.”

“It was all my idea, really,” boasted Tony. “That fussbudget, White, just takes care of the details.” They shared a knowing glance over this remark, and Richard shook his head and smiled.

“You’re just the kind of guy who would think something like this up, Ton. I guess all that experience trading futures comes in handy even now.” Richard looked at his friend admiringly, then back at the rolls of cotton. It didn’t look like much in this gargantuan building, but there must have been enough there to make a pair of socks for everyone in metropolitan Ottawa.—Do they need the material that badly, though, he wondered?—I haven’t bought anything new in over two years. . . . Then again, the shortage need not be felt directly. A few pessimistic laments from empty-handed clothiers themselves would be enough to sway public opinion, even the female vote.

“I learned a lot trading futures,” said Tony as he led them back to the steel door, “but I think my genius, if you would go so far as to call it that, comes from my personal involvement in the whole question of gratuitism. As you know, Richard, my ex-wife works for the Department of Justice in the present administration, which she supports wholeheartedly; she left me and took my two young daughters, who she’s managed to turn against me by filling them with all kinds of lies. As for my son, Phil, he had enough sense to stay with his father at first, but as you know, he’s off on his own now, and no comfort to me. You see, this isn’t just about reclaiming the wealth and power we used to deserve, it’s a matter of revenge for me. You know, whiners like Reich think that they’ve lost so bloody much, but he’s still got his wife, his jag, his family, even his old mansion.” Tony paused in his stride and his speech, put his hand on Richard’s shoulder, and looked at him earnestly. “It’s men like you and I, Richard, for whom the restoration of monetarism is a matter of deep, personal importance. That’s why we’ll be the ones with the good ideas that will bring it about.”

This was said with contagious confidence, as was always the case when
Tony spoke, whether privately or publicly. It made Richard feel honoured again to have him sharing his house; not only was this man clever, eloquent, and self-assured, he even recognised Richard as belonging to the same class as he: an elite within the elite of the MLA executive. This man, Richard was sure, would lead them to power again.

Much to Richard’s displeasure, however, Tony ended up leading them into the giant potholes of their street when he drove home afterwards. It seemed that the car remained intact this time, but Richard nonetheless decided that Tony was not going to drive his car again, genius or no genius.

The events of the day conjured in Richard’s mind a vivid and rather disturbing dream, the images of which he tried to piece together when he awoke in the morning. In one scene, no doubt precipitated by his visit to the secret warehouse, Richard found himself in the deserted offices of the Canadian Embassy in Hong Kong; only it was not in China, but downtown Ottawa, and he was with Tony and some other men from the MLA executive. There was some kind of protest outside, a siege of their headquarters. People—thousands of them, mostly Chinese, it seemed—threw bottles and shards of glass at the building, and Richard was afraid because the windows lacked panes and there might have been molotov cocktails in the crowd. He noticed that his fellow captives had guns, but he could see that it would not be enough against such a mob.

Then he was at some kind of Arabian bazaar full of veiled women and turbaned men who never came too near, but who always seemed to be looking his way and talking amongst themselves. When he noticed, in the distance, that some of them were disassembling what looked like his car—the wheels were already gone—he realized that he could not move for some reason. He looked down at his legs and saw that they were locked into some kind of stocks. He was relieved when Uwe suddenly appeared at his side, but his friend wore a turban now, too, and with his bushy, dark beard looked just like the foreign men at the bazaar. “I can’t let you go until they’re finished” Uwe said. He grinned insanely and, despite Richard’s protestations, disappeared into the crowd. That was when Richard woke up.

He brooded over the flitting images of these dreams all morning, almost savouring the feeling of terror they had instilled. When he began with his daily weight training, he found that the afterimage of the siege became too distracting for him to focus well enough on the weights; when he glimpsed Uwe sketching in the morning light of the back yard, the memory of the turbaned Uwe came back to haunt him. It was only when he began looking at pictures of nude women on his computer that he was able to put the dreams out of his mind, but he was soon distracted by something else instead: a rumbling old five-ton truck pulled up in front of the house. He peered through the dirty panes of the front window and saw that it was two moustachioed men, neither
of whom Richard recognised, undoubtedly come to take away Pamela’s bulky China cabinet and the lime-green chair. She had managed to find volunteers for the task after all.

“I wasn’t expecting you guys,” Richard said as he opened the door for them. “You might have called ahead.” He noticed the rippling bulkiness of their arms and chests and thought to himself, no wonder these boys volunteer for this kind of work—they probably find it easy.

“We talked to a fellow named Uwe here on the phone yesterday evening, and he said someone would be here for sure ’bout this time,” remarked the stockier of the two. “By the way, my name’s Ray, and this is my partner, Jean.” They both offered their hands in the by now familiar gratuitist fashion.

This brief introduction taken care of, Richard brought the movers into the dining room and pointed across the table to the cabinet against the far wall. “That’s the unit, there,” he said.

“Well that’s no good,” scowled Ray. “The china hasn’t even been packed away. You really weren’t expecting any movers at all, were you?”

“Actually, I was,” Richard replied, “but it just didn’t occur to me to pack those things up because I really don’t care what happens to them. It’s all my ex-wife’s stuff, eh?”

The movers glanced at one another, as if to remark “what an idiot,” which glance Richard noted and correctly interpreted. He was foolish not to have packed the dishes away, he realized, and he immediately sought to rectify the situation.

“I’ll tell you what,” he said, “I’ll get a box and some newspaper and I’ll have those plates packed up and out of there in fifteen minutes. You guys can just make yourselves comfortable for a little while—have a seat here in the living room.” The men retained their frowns, but they took the offered seats nonetheless. Richard, though anything but eager to exert himself for Pamela’s sake, set to packing away the china and glass such that it would not rattle and break during transport. Of course, it took somewhat longer than fifteen minutes (Richard being inefficient at such tasks), but the movers didn’t seem to mind the wait once Richard engaged them in conversation.

“Who's the weight lifter?” asked Ray, spying Richard’s gym through an open door.

“Oh, those are mine. I don’t lift seriously—just an hour a day, usually, to keep fit. I’m sure it’s nothing compared to the kind of gym you guys use.”

“Actually,” said Ray (Jean remained perfectly silent), “I haven’t been to a gym in two years—not since I started working as a mover. I find it’s a lot easier to get motivated to lift people’s furniture for them than to pump iron in a
gym, where you don’t accomplish anything besides flexing your muscles.”

“I see. So . . . what kind of work did you do before?” Richard asked tentatively, asking himself at the same time: Why do I always enter into this topic?

“Me, I used to sell cars. Jean here used to drive a Brinks truck, right Jean?” (The other nodded.) “I tell you, life is a lot easier now that I’m out of that rat race.” (Of course, Richard thought; easier because you’re less productive.) “It was stressful, I tell you, trying to sell your quota every month, wearing a goddamn tie every day. . . . I wouldn’t want it back.”

“I can imagine,” said Richard. He found himself suddenly resenting the fact that he, too, had at one time been obliged to wear a shirt and tie every day. He appreciated the uniform’s function as a sign of reliability and power, but it wasn’t always the most practical thing to wear, especially in the tropics.

“And what sort of work do you do, Mr. Spendler?”—Shit. The inevitable question. “Oh, I take care of the house—I’ve got three housemates, none of which do much work around here; I help my friend display his art; I—I do some work for the Department of Trade.” Lies! All lies! yelled his conscience. But he immediately appeased it by telling himself that insofar as his statements were untrue, he would endeavour to make them true; he resolved in that moment to clean up the house after these men were gone, and he could convince himself that he really was still working for the Department of Trade, indirectly—No, he reconsidered; I have lied outright. But what does it matter? I have lied a thousand times before. . . .

“Well,” Ray remarked, “if you’re interested in doing some real work instead of just lifting weights, you can give me your number—we take on some pretty big jobs sometimes, so I like to keep a list of guys who can help out once in a while. What d’you say?”

“Thanks, but I don’t think I’d be much help.” Once again Richard felt foolish for not being entirely honest, that is, for not saying that it was a matter of principle with him not to volunteer.

“You fellows can start carrying this thing out of here now,” he announced after a while. The men rose, glanced at him a little disparagingly, then cleared themselves a path by moving aside the dining room table and chairs. Next, they went back to their truck to get a pair of long straps and a dolly with which to accomplish their task. Richard was actually rather disappointed to see them using anything more than their bare hands (enjoying as he did a good display of sheer strength), but he realized that if one lifted things all day, one would try to make it as easy as possible; only a man pumping iron in a gym went out of his way to make his work harder for himself. It was curiously irrational, like most things one did to try to please the opposite sex.—Or was it that he worked out to please his own vain self?
Wasn’t that why they’d put up all those mirrors in the gym he used to visit, so you could see how good you looked all flexing and sweaty? These thoughts troubled Richard briefly as he watched the massive piece of mahogany descending his front stairs under the guidance of the two soft-spoken giants. Feeling somewhat inadequate afterwards, he took it upon himself to carry out the chair (which was by no means light) and two boxes full of dishes (which moved with scarcely a rattle).

—I could do this job, Richard thought to himself; it’s not as if it takes any skill. I would be wasting all the time I’ve spent being educated as a trade expert, though—not that that education is very useful to me right now.—What a ridiculous train of thought! You’d think I took the notion of working as a mover seriously.

“So I suppose you’re taking this to a house on Shelley street,” Richard ventured when the movers had finished with the cabinet.

“Actually, no,” said Ray as Richard passed a box of dishes up to him. “We were told to deliver the cabinet to a freespace, and the chair and dishes to a condo near downtown. I’m surprised you didn’t know.”

“A condo, eh?” mused Richard, his interest piqued. Apparently, Pamela hadn’t stayed at her parents’ for very long. Richard wondered what she could be doing. Was she working? Had she already found some other guy? It was almost three weeks since the day that she’d left; did she have any regrets? Richard found himself longing for her suddenly. “What’s the address?” he asked innocently.

“Maybe you’re not supposed to know,” interrupted Jean before his partner could divulge the information. “Maybe your ex-wife doesn’t want you to know where she lives.” The erstwhile mute man fixed Richard with his piercing blue eyes, as though he could somehow read the truth behind Richard’s innocent expression. Richard stared back with equal intensity, thinking how annoying it was that this meddling security guard remembered everything one told him.

“Maybe she doesn’t want me to know; maybe she couldn’t care less. But you’re taking my stuff away, right? So I have a right to know where it’s being taken, don’t you think?”

“According to the woman who called us,” Ray recalled, “these items belong to her. I assume that’s why you let us take them out of your house in the first place?”

There was no arguing against that, Richard knew; still, he could not let this exchange end on such a tense note. “Okay, you’re right,” he conceded. “It doesn’t really matter anyway—I’m just curious whether she’s had to move down in the world, that’s all.”
“I haven’t seen that address,” said Jean, “but I’m sure she’s improved on this arrangement.” This was said with more malice than could be expected from someone who had only been acquainted with Richard for a short time, and even the more sociable Ray regarded his partner with surprise. He did not, however, seek to make amends, as would have been appropriate among small business people in a monetarist world.

Once again, Richard lamented, it was the social buffer of money that was lacking; people who served you were either too friendly or too hostile, for they didn’t care if you did business with them in the future or not. They treated their customers as their equals or, worse yet, as though power lay on the side of those who served. In fact, it seemed that serving others was the only way one could acquire any power in the inverted world of the gratuitists.

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rlzimmer@hotmail.com

Previous chapters: Back Issues. Continued in the next issue of SCR.
Wearing a beige suede jacket and a blue beret low over his right ear, James Frederick Dellinger stepped out onto his porch and looked around uncertainly at the new day. Clamping his aged leather satchel under his arm, he succeeded in locking his recalcitrant door and had just stashed the key under the fern in the Florentine terracotta vase when the expected shrill voice called: “Jimmy, now you mustn’t forget to water your tomatoes every day in this period. You’ll soon see the rewards of perseverance … and Jimmy, you shouldn’t leave your key like that. This neighborhood is not safe as it was when your poor mother was alive … bless her heart!”

He looked at his neighbor on the next-door porch and searched in vain for a caustic but inoffensive answer. He disliked the woman’s daily interventions in his life, her wise counsel, and her loving advice; she had known him all his life and had been a friend of his mother, but he thought of her as a spy who seemed to see into every crook and cranny of his being.

“It’s kind of you, Janet, to follow my garden,” he said, hopefully too softly for her to catch every word. “It’s my first attempt. I never had much experience with nature.”

“Well, you’re getting the hang of it fast, Jimmy.”

Above all he disliked her calling him Jimmy. The diminutive was a form of alienation. He thought nicknames vulgar and disliked initials in general and had always hated having to sign, James F. Dellinger.

He would have liked to be called Frederick but nearly everyone in town insisted on Jim or Jimmy. At the university people had called him James—and, some few, James Frederick. He had married one of the latter. He still smiled when he recalled that in Italy people had called him Federico, which made him feel closer to life.
“Sometimes you talk as if you didn’t grow up in these parts, Jimmy. Your poor mother had a vegetable garden.”

“She might have, Janet.”

“I always tell everybody,” she continued as he reached the front yard, “that now that Jimmy is back at home he has no more illusions about the world. You saw it all but you always knew where home was!”

“Yes, home is where you start from,” he said, so ambiguously that his neighbor cocked her head to one side and peered at him suspiciously. He knew that her words concealed more than they revealed. Just asking him about those foreign places that she claimed she had never cared to see would have been a sign of disrespect for their hometown. Stubbornly single-minded, he thought, she was condemned to be forever true to herself.

“Even if Anne insists you’re a strange man!”

Janet said the last with a certain reproach in her lowered voice. She liked nothing better than quoting his ex-wife who lived a few houses down the street, especially if it reflected on his lifestyle—his bizarre furnishings, his Mexican patio, his paintings hung outside, the loud operatic music booming from his house each evening, his two old parrots. Anne, she thought, was probity itself, and had once determined his criteria of good and bad lifestyle—until he rebelled and abandoned her.

Since his retirement a year earlier and his definitive return home from where he had “started out,” James Frederick had come to think of his three now unmentionable years in Italy as the highlight of his life. Magnetic and brilliant, they hung on the horizon, still a beacon of the real world.

Although he would have liked to speak of his experiences abroad, he had become used to the closed minds of his neighbors; gradually those untold memories had sunk so far back into the misty myth of youth that they seemed never to have happened.

Yet, he held onto the symbols of that period as paradigms of the full life—his lasting ambitions, his passions and his links with the rest of humanity. His stay abroad was the expression of his individual self. Without those places and times he would sink into the oblivion he felt around him. The barely surviving symbols kept intact the link between his past and his present.

He pushed strands of long thick pepper-and-salt hair under his beret and as every weekday morning set out along Montford Avenue toward
downtown and the public library. Libraries were so much a part of his life that he concentrated better in the main reading room than in his study at home. He imagined he made an exotic image for people along his route—a tall man with a full beard and extravagant dress and often carrying a black umbrella. A man from another world.

The weather was perfect. The spring was as it should be—crisp mornings and pleasant afternoons and cool nights, with plenty of the rain that he loved. As much as he admired the variety of architecture of the old houses of the tree-lined streets—Victorian, Greek Revival, Neo-classical, Colonial Revival—something in him rejected the ease and perfection of the life they reflected here in the mountains.

With a sense of self-justification he repeated to himself the lines from Gibran Kahlil addressed to the people of New York, which he had once quoted in a lecture on freedom and which no one had understood:

“You shall be free indeed when your days are not without a care nor your nights without a want and a grief, but rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound.”

His situation felt queer. In his secret interior self James Frederick consoled himself that he didn’t belong here. His hometown was increasingly distant from him—or he from it. He could never decide which. Most certainly, he admitted, he was withdrawn.

When he caught himself thinking this was the “last phase” of his life, he corrected himself aloud that change is always possible. He was, if nothing else, obstinate. He knew he still had another existence ahead.

This is home, he thought purposefully as he crossed the overpass over I-240. Home in the traditional sense. So why reject it? Who would I be without it, and where? My former life is only a mirage. A chimera. No wonder I feel abstract at times, separated from myself.

Jimmy is home again—but Federico is still out there in the real world. Not that I belonged in Italy either. For Chrissakes, I’m already forgetting the language!

Before he went to Italy to live, now fifteen years ago, he had first imagined that his existence there—a chaotic life so colorful, inviting and different—would be just as it had seemed when he visited there as a tourist. So he was surprised by the feeling of unbelonging that had come over him in the new reality. He hadn’t properly understood the words of an American writer friend who said, “Italy is the country to go to when you want to escape yourself.”

Like smells of long ago one set of memories remained: he could
conjure the sensation of walking across an Arno bridge or the Piazza della Signoria or through the Historic Center in Rome and being vividly conscious of his foreignness and otherness and wondering what it consisted of.

Far from escaping himself, Italy had made him become truly conscious of his own self—of his grossness, his diversity, his strangeness, even of his different walk, manners, and eating style, as compared to Europeans. It was a feeling that distanced him more and increased his sense of unbelonging and foreignness. He blushed when he recalled his attempts to bridge the gap by wearing broad hats and black capes. He had never acquired a grasp on the world.

Since his return home the memory of the sensation of his unbelonging abroad dominated his images of his real past. But gradually he became aware that he now felt the same unbelonging here, too. It was as if the lapse of the unbelonging three short years abroad had sliced into his life and removed from his memory the common but forgotten experiences he must have once shared with others here. Only vague memories of his schools occasionally surfaced, while there were no boyhood friends with whom he could exchange memories of how things once were. No wonder the world seemed misty and cloudy. He felt a void.

He walked around the strange town as if on a secret mission, alienated by the void but hungry for union and filled with unclear longings and desires and aware that he would not find the meaning of life in detachment. His links somehow had to be restored.

He turned into Haywood Street toward the downtown. On the spur of the moment he decided to look into the Basilica of St. Lawrence again. Yesterday he had sat in the last pew in search of some Florentine atmosphere. Again he took the same seat and began examining the stained-glass windows and Guastavino’s great dome. He hoped someone would again play the organ.

He was not Catholic. He was not anything. But the church stirred in him contradictory emotions—on one hand the coalescence of the foreignness he had felt here at Christmas masses as a boy and the slight accent of Italy he carried within him and, on the other, the mystery of why he found it so difficult to believe.

It was about the time he moved from Florence to Rome that he came to realize that far from regretting his unbelonging, he should cherish his feeling of foreignness. It was an exhilarating sense of freedom. The memory of his former belonging and then the awareness of unbelonging and his foreignness created in him a sense of suppleness
and liberation from his origins.

Noting that the priest ambling up and down the nave kept looking his way, furtively as if fearful of disturbing him, he realized that Anne was right: other people were put off by the distance inherent in him.

The priest seemed very tall in his black cassock. James Frederick looked up at him and smiled:

“Buon giorno, Padre,” he said spontaneously.

“Buon giorno, Signore!” the other answered and stopped near him.

He started when he determined that the priest only looked much younger than he was—though strangely pale, his was a smooth, wrinkleless face topped by close-cropped hair. His eyes were blue. His expression was morose.

“Are you new here?” the priest asked.

He stood up, held out his hand, and introduced himself as James Frederick.

“Padre Teodoro!” the other said.

The priest smiled, holding onto his hand longer than necessary, and said, “Federico, eh. We see more Italians here recently—but you’re not Italian, are you? I’ve almost forgotten my Italian from my seminary studies in Rome…. Maybe you lived there, too? Are you here looking for the past?”

“The present, too.”

“Oh yes, the eternal problem.” The priest chuckled. “I meant to say the usual problem!”

It was true. His return from Italy had been bitter disappointment from the start. No one was interested in where he had been. No one needed his observations about the world he had returned from. As the years passed, first at his old university downstate, then finally back home, he was surprised that he had become a stranger in his own land.

So what held him here? He could strike out again. But where can I go, he asked himself each day? What can I do … to feel less alone?

“Trying to get a grasp on things,” he said. “I sit at home, I walk around town, I sit in the library, and ask myself everywhere why I felt free there—when I was not free at all—and why I feel like a prisoner here where I’m as free as ever in my life.”

The priest sat down in a pew facing him across the aisle, a tolerant smile on his face.
“And have you found any answers?”

“Sometimes I think oblivion would be desirable—maybe inevitable. Can God be there? In oblivion, I mean? In nonmemory? At least I would feel the freedom I used to feel in my foreignness in Italy.”

“Foreignness?” A puzzled light in his eyes, the priest looked out the open door toward the street, and back to James Frederick. “I’ve long been struck by this passage in Chronicles—‘For we are here but for a moment, strangers in the land as were our fathers before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon, without a trace.’”

After a pause, during which his serene gaze wandered around his basilica, the priest added, “Interesting that the Lord promises to preserve strangers.”

James Frederick stroked the smooth back of the oak pew in front of him and wondered what the words meant. He too turned his eyes toward the magnetic dome. Inexplicably he felt his face flush with embarrassment.

“You mean if we’re all strangers then no one is a stranger?”

“I think that’s the meaning.”

“How terrible!” James Frederick murmured.

“If we don’t make our mark!” the priest added.

As each day he stopped at the Civic Center to read placards of upcoming events—something or someone unexpected would surely arrive any day. He pondered the priest’s words. Is it true that our presence on earth is only a shadow? How tragic, if that is all. No trace? Then what kind of a god is that? Why did he go to the trouble of creating us? Are we then just unthinking and unaware protoplasm? But yes, thus far, my presence on earth has been truly a shadow. It’s the not knowing that gnaws in our bellies.

At Malaprops, a thick book in the window display caught his attention—Empire and Revolution. Every title with the word “revolution,” every mention of the word, had always struck a cord in the darkness of his self. In his “secret heart,” as he referred to it, he loved and admired rebels.

Anne used to laugh at his revolutionary fantasies. Lamentably his flight had been only rebellion. With sarcasm he told himself he was one of those willing to execute the coup d’état but too pusillanimous to carry out the revolution. Flight and escape had therefore become the mood of
his life. Oh, my craven soul!

But in reality—except for those three years in Italy—his life had been static; his marriages, his academic life, his once popular off-beat lectures, his research, and academic papers now seemed to have been aimed at repressing his childishly violent instincts. If not for chance—he boasted to himself—he could have been born Che Guevara.

He occupied his place in the rear of the library at a window looking over Lexington Avenue and the Interstate below. While waiting for the matinal Elizabeth bearing him a cup of coffee—always milked and sugared, which he detested—he spread on the polished table his own books, notepad, and a small map of the Florence area.

The Anglo-American society there of the 1930s—the subject of his now nearly unlearned dissertation, which twenty-five years ago was so researched as to seem to him today like a forgery—still fascinated him; he often caught himself projecting himself into that fictitious ambience and trying to imagine the Scandicci hills of D.H. Lawrence or Berenson at Fiesole.

Elizabeth’s musical “Good morning, James Frederick” melted him. He smiled up at her as he took the white plastic cup from her hand. The young-looking, forty-five-year-old, divorced and bookish-sexy librarian reminded him of his second wife. She even had Samantha’s sensuous habit of keeping a cigarette in the corner of her mouth for long seconds after she lit it. He felt it in his loins. Sometimes he liked to imagine those lips wrapped around him.

Her “What can I do for you today?” rang like an offer of her body. He felt himself blush, again delighted by her openness. Here was a woman who knew what she wanted. How many times he had said exactly those words about both Samantha and Anne. He had married two sexy masculine women and here was another for the taking.

“I read about a new biography of the American-English writer, Iris Origo. The bookstore doesn’t have it yet.”

Though James Frederick had lived in Fiesole overlooking Florence where the writer’s villa was situated, he had met Signora Origo only in Rome, a couple years before her death when she was already feeble but still eager to share her experiences of that unique period in Tuscany. She was his major source about the rich Anglo-American society in Florence up until World War II: Bernard Berenson had been her tutor and she knew writers there like Sinclair Lewis, D.H. Lawrence, Edith Wharton, and Harold Acton. One line attributed to her rich New England father had made her forever exotic to James Frederick: “Iris should grow up as a little foreigner.”
Sensuous Elizabeth looked him full in the face. The air conditioner blasted a gelid brush across his forehead. He felt trepidation at the idea of hurting this good woman, and simultaneously wondered how she saw him—old, young, foreign, horny?

“Then we probably don’t have it, either. I’ll check.”

Elizabeth put a hand on her hip in the whorish manner he liked, looked past him with a half smile, and asked sardonically, “So how is your famous garden doing?”

This was standard fare. She brought the coffee, offered herself together with her services, and then bore in on his personal life. She wanted him to invite her home. Since he had twice taken her to lunch at a café down the street she acted as if they had a relationship going. That was far from his mind. He had just wanted someone to talk to. Thus far the library had been fine with him.

Though the book he wanted had not arrived, he felt he owed her something. He invited her to lunch at the Bistro on Pack Square. Over sandwiches and beer he watched her smoke one cigarette after the other, taking long drags and her head tilted backwards letting the smoke spiral slowly out through her nostrils, and leering at him.

Something stirred in his solar plexus. He hadn’t been with a woman in over a year. And even that was not especially successful since it was with his ex-wife.

“You’re brooding again,” she said at one point as she sometimes did in the library when she caught him staring into space.

In that same moment he was wondering if he shouldn’t invite her to his house after all. By that time her lips had arrived in his lower belly. He shook his hand hard as if to shake away his trepidation of a hasty decision, the kind that could set off a concatenation of events which two times before had ended up in something different than what he intended: marriage. He would like to go to bed with Elizabeth. He would not like to enter into a lasting relationship.

“Yes, I have to stop brooding,” he said. “Actually I was just wondering about how we believe others see us must differ from the way they really see us. Did you ever think that?”

As he spoke he was aware that his head was inclined toward his right shoulder like hers, a body position he remembered Anne used to assume just before exploding in passion—or rage—at his “indifference.” He closed his mouth, lowered his hands onto his thighs, palms up, and forced himself to breathe slowly.

“I think most of us care how others see us and that we believe they see
us much as we do ourselves.”

“Do you really? Amazing! Oh, I hope not!”

He drank off his beer and ordered another. He had a sudden urge to get drunk, something he had permitted himself rarely in his ordered and controlled life. From somewhere echoed the lines, *O, won't we have a merry time, drinking whisky, beer and wine.* Each time it had been disaster. No, he would not invite her today.

“Yet, I see everyone doing the same things I do. Shopping, eating, talking to neighbors, everybody in more or less the same manner. It must have been the same one hundred years ago. Everybody thought they were moving in a straight line toward God—just as their grandfathers and great-grandfathers had done. Life is just repetition. Plagiarism. Though I’ve learned that we’re all different, we still seem to resemble each other.”

“I have exactly the opposite opinion of you.”

“You do?” He was genuinely surprised. “I’ve been writing about other people’s lives too long. I’m ashamed of it but I sometimes don’t even know whether I like a book or a film until I read other opinions. Don’t you ever feel that way?”

“I try not to.”

“Then you’re more heroic than most people here!” He followed the smoke whirling upwards from around her face. It cast her in a new light. Elizabeth’s carefree fuck - the - world stance mirrored his dreams of transcendence more than she could imagine.

“It’s only a role,” she said, and grinned confirmation that he was not wrong. “But it gets easier with patience, practice, and persistence.”

When he told her what the priest had said about everyone’s being strangers in life, she looked at him with a puzzled look. But she understood he was putting her off.

Again in the library, distracted and disturbed, and feeling pleasantly licentious from the pull in his lower belly each time Elizabeth passed—Liz, he was now saying to himself—he looked more out the windows than at his books. Decadent daydreams of shadowy couplings. Merging with images of Liz’s voluptuous lips, the soft words of Padre Teodoro in the basilica.

Finally convinced that the strange priest was concealing something more in the church—perhaps true truth and magical
transcendence—he loaded his satchel, put on his jacket, and took guilty leave of Elizabeth:

“I have to ask the priest about strangers in Rome.”

“What can a priest tell you that I can’t?” she said.

“I want to ask him what I’m to do.”

“Oh!” she said, as if he meant about her.

Something about the priest had made him think of the mystery of his nearly forgotten father. When James Frederick used to ask why there were no photos of him in the house, his religious mother would press her lips together and turn away. Even Janet refused to mention him by name. Perhaps, the ten-year-old James Frederick had thought, he had never really existed.

He had come to wonder if his father’s hinted at dubious sexuality had rubbed off on him. Though he had been married twice, he had no children and he sometimes thought of himself as androgynous. He had long suspected that men not only did not respect him but also considered him not quite manly. He recalled with both shame and amusement the drunken weekend party when he had tried to get his second wife, Samantha, in bed with a muscular history professor. She never believed it was just alcohol and licentiousness.

He had always been infatuated with easy women and older single women. It was easier for him to demonstrate his manliness to them. It must mean something, he thought, that both his wives had an abundance of masculine qualities yet at the same time they delighted in his most manly attributes. All in all he had found the routine of living with his two wives tiring and boring. When asked how he would sum up his marriages, he said he thought of them as “shared experiences.” He had sincerely liked both his wives. Maybe loved them, too. Yet today, no, even immediately after his separations, he felt as distant from them as before marriage. Samantha said that the problem was that he had been largely absent.

The two women and the two marriages stood like milestones of the time divisions of his diverse existences. Anne symbolized the period between adulthood and Italy and Samantha, post-Italy until their separation now—how many years was it?—seven years ago. He missed neither but still retained great admiration for both. It was a paradox that while women had always liked him because, his analyst believed, they sensed his underlying phylogeny, he could never explain that he was simply a poor lover.
The basilica harbored none of the mystery of the now indistinct images of boyhood Christmas masses. Its simplicity mirrored a tranquil beauty. Serenity. Sunrays reflecting yellow and orange through stained glass onto front pews and the visible smell of incense rising in the white air choreographed the morose priest standing near his altar, his head again turned upwards, gazing at his dome.

Yes, *his* church, James Frederick thought as he sat down in the front row.

The priest had changed to a reverend’s black suit and white collar. His pale eyes swept down across his nose and fastened on James Frederick.

“I was still thinking of you,” he said.

“Still?”

“I couldn’t help but note the effect on you of our talk about strangers.”

“Yes, Father. I spent so many years charting the lives of expatriates that I can’t find a place for myself in Asheville. There must be a place for me.”

Curiously he studied the face of the old man, wondering if he should tell him more since today he was unusually garrulous. Strange that he had been waiting for him.

“What can I do?” he added.

“That’s the main problem—How to live and what to do for salvation? For myself I found I had to return to real life—into today, year two, third millennium.”

“Return? Return from where, Padre? You sound like a monk. Are you an ascetic?”

“In a sense, yes. Or I was once—a real one.”

“You mean caves and fasting and sleep deprivation and breast chains and all that?”

Father Theodore laughed and slapped lightly the back of the pew.

“Well, I still eat and sleep little but I was unfulfilled by the seclusion and the silence. Admittedly I need the flesh—I’m a man—so I chose the route of besieging and harassing the foe! No Mount Athos for me! I’m just a low-level believer. I had to settle for the way of contemplation and deprivation, both of them moderate! Still, sometimes even that
seems a hopeless battle.”

Intermittently the priest took several paces in each direction, all the time looking down at James Frederick, alternating looks of desperation, salvation and madness in his eyes.

“God speaks to us in many ways—to some through art, to others through nature, to others through love. I mean earthly brotherly love. And the love of the Great Mother, too. Not everyone can maintain the vow of silence. I loved culture too much for the ascetic life. And beauty and the word. Beauty is as fundamental to my faith as is reading books.”

“Yes, but what is salvation? I ask that over and over.”

“I believe salvation is simply the end of the suffering of the innocent. The acid test is not always the beliefs you hold but the acts you perform. I believe redemption lies in the moral life. My Christ is very human. Besides, in my personal faith, not Judgment Day counts as much as the new world to come.”

“Padre, you sound unorthodox, to say the least. I too have difficulty with all the right-thinking people! But I’m a rebel, not a priest. Besides, I grew up in the Baptist Church.”

“Oh, oh!” Father Theodore gazed down at him with a sad expression in his face. “I’m so sorry, figliolo!”

“I feel far from God … though I’m a spiritual person. I never really see the essence of us humans. The right thing to do and the word have been my obsessions. But I’m too selfish to act.”

Though this talk had willy-nilly become a confession, it would have been too embarrassing to reveal his daydreams of heroism. Of the heroic act to save—to save whom?

“Yes, it’s a question of the innocent,” he murmured.

“We have the children,” Father Theodore said softly.

“The children?”

“You’ve heard of them, no?” Again the priest flashed his tolerant laugh.

“We have an orphanage next door. We have one child with little life because she can’t talk. She doesn’t know any words.”

“I think life without words is … is a pitiful existence.” He had nearly said, paradise. “But then words are nothing to believe in, Padre.”

“Maybe not, but the fact is few people succeed in the ascetic life.”
The priest laughed with no attempt to mask his irony and gazed in his face for a long moment. He cleared his throat and tugged at his round collar.

“But you couldn’t bear the silence?”

“It was more than the silence,” the priest said, looking around furtively again, as if looking for an escape, James Frederick thought. “It was the images emerging from the silence. Unhealthy images. A sick silence that lead me into temptation. I couldn’t resist.”

“This is Mary. Maybe her real name is Maria. We don’t know. Someone left her here two years ago.”

The little girl gazed up at them distance and terror in her huge black eyes and sat down on the floor and fixed on her writhing and twisting hands. She had long curly black hair, slim olive limbs, a high forehead marred by a dark swollen spot just above her left eye.

“Physically she is healthy. Child psychiatrists visit her regularly. But she has never spoken a word as far as we know. Maybe she doesn’t even speak English—or any language for that matter.”

“She is beautiful,” James Frederick said softly so as not to frighten her. My mother’s name! She’s so sad. Pure, celestial spirituality. No, never will sexuality mark her face. Yet in her face he seemed to see the Madonna of the orthodox icons: he knew her Motherhood was concealed; it was just starting the long slide down through her body from behind those dark eyes.

“Remarkable,” he said.

“You can try to give her the word, if you like,” Padre Teodoro whispered.

The next morning James Frederick left his satchel of books and papers at home. Instead he carried a pink box, tied with a red ribbon, with inside a multicolored Mexican rag doll. He locked his door, put the key under the fern, and ignored Janet staring at him from her front porch. In his mind, her face smiled with malice and she spoke in her grating voice: ‘Oh, Jimmy, you think you’re special, don’t you? Well, you’re not, Jimmy. You’re just like everybody else in your hometown. Water your tomatoes every day, Jimmy! Don’t leave your key outside for the thieves, Jimmy. Take your pictures inside out of the rain, Jimmy!’

Oh God, oh God, let something happen.
Thank God, no library today! No temptations of the flesh either, he thought with an interior smile, images of both sexy Elizabeth and the once sinful, Christ-like ascetic Teodoro in his eyes.

Mary was sitting in a small chair in the playroom adjoining a garden. She was staring with an empty expression at the other children running about, laughing, and shouting. She looked up at him with no evident sign of recognition. She took the pink box and held it in her hands as if wondering what to do with it.

“Open it,” he said softly. “Open.”

He leaned toward her, untied the ribbon, and removed the lid. The doll’s tiny black eyes stared out.

“Baby,” he said.

Mary touched the doll, took it from the box, and laid it on her lap.

“Baby,” he repeated. Madonna-like she gazed at him. Was there a smile hidden in her dark eyes? “Baby!”

She didn’t resist when he took her hand. “Bring Baby,” he said.

As agreed with Father Theodore they walked up the short incline to the Basilica. He held her hand. The organist would play this morning. They sat in a rear pew. She looked at the stained-glass windows and followed his finger pointing at the great dome.

When the organist began a Bach fugue he said, “music.”

This time she looked straight into his eyes. Yes, he believed there was a smile there. He kissed her thick hair.

When he went for her the next morning she was sitting in the same small chair. Baby was on her lap.

“Baby is beautiful,” he said. “Muy bonito,” he added, just in case.

She looked at him and maybe her lip twitched. He took her hand in his. She held the doll on her lap in the church as they listened to the organ.

“Music,” he said. “Beautiful music.” He kissed her hair and the black place on her forehead, too.

After the music the next day they walked down Haywood Street, passed the library, and looked into the bookstore. For the first time in his life he examined seriously the children’s books—until his eyes lit on a picture book of Sleeping Beauty standing on a low table at Mary’s level.

She pointed her finger at the girl dressed in white and looked up a
James Frederick. She smiled. He picked her up, took the book, and put it in her hands.

For two weeks and two days the daily routine lasted. The walk to the orphanage, a quarter-hour of organ music, ice cream at Pritchard Park, and return to the library to read *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* or *Snow White* and to look at Elizabeth.

Mary - Maria liked to walk hand in hand and often looked him in the eyes and smiled when she was pleased by one thing or the other. The spot on her forehead had gradually gotten smaller and turned light gray.

On Friday morning of the third week the organist was late. Impatiently they walked around the church, examining now a painting, now a small statue. Mary's eyebrows were pinched, a puzzled look in her eyes. Padre Teodoro turned from a vase of flowers he was arranging on the altar and shrugged when James Frederick pointed toward the organ on the loggia.

They stood in the nave near their regular pew. Mary looked up at him as if asking—What were they to do? What did he know, the stranger? He was unused to deciding such questions. It was the basilica. It was the sinner-priest blessing. He felt like Saul of Tarsus.

He leaned toward her and studied the beauty in her eyes.

It lasted only an instant. A flash and it was gone. What remained was a shadow. It was the tenderness and sadness and serenity of the Madonna in a Russian icon—she too was both the heavenly Queen and God's Mother of the future.

The sudden blast of the organ over their heads startled both.

Mary tightened her grip, and still looking up at him suddenly pronounced loudly: “Beau-ti-ful music.”

He suppressed his surprise and led her to their pew. As they listened, he seemed to see the magical matinal notes of the crazed organist rise to the dome in a whorl, then echo off the stained-glass windows, and crash down among the oaken pews.

James Frederick felt redeemed. The universe surrounded him. He seemed to meld into it. Inexplicably he wanted to pronounce the embarrassing word: “spirit.” Was it so easy to feel the deity? Maybe salvation after all did depend on a word.

He looked down and saw that the spot on her forehead had vanished.

Suddenly James Frederick felt the flush overcome him—a divine desire to procreate. Later, he thought, he would invite Elizabeth to dinner at his house. He would cook spaghetti *alla carbonara* and she would watch and wait, a hand on her hip and a cigarette hanging from her mouth.

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This is the title story of Gaither Stewart’s book (print) of short stories, some of which appeared for the first time in Southern Cross Review. The book may be ordered directly from Wind River Press – or Amazon or B&N.

**Gaither Stewart** is a journalist who currently makes his home in Italy. A regular contributor of both essays and fiction to Southern Cross Review, Gaither has also authored several novels published by SCR E-Books and, in print versions, by Wind River Press.

E-mail: GaitherStewart@libero.it
Little Red Riding Hood

By The Brothers Grimm

Once upon a time there was a dear little girl who was loved by every one who looked at her, but most of all by her grandmother, and there was nothing that she would not have given to the child. Once she gave her a little cap of red velvet, which suited her so well that she would never wear anything else; so she was always called "Little Red-Cap."

One day her mother said to her, "Come, Little Red-Cap, here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine; take them to your grandmother, she is ill and weak, and they will do her good. Set out before it gets hot, and when you are going, walk nicely and quietly and do not run off the path, or you may fall and break the bottle, and then your grandmother will get nothing; and when you go into her room, don't forget to say, 'Good-morning,' and don't peep into every corner before you do it."

"I will take great care," said Little Red-Cap to her mother, and gave her hand on it.

The grandmother lived out in the wood, half a league from the village, and just as Little Red-Cap entered the wood, a wolf met her. Red-Cap did not know what a wicked creature he was, and was not at all afraid of him.

"Good-day, Little Red-Cap," said he.

"Thank you kindly, wolf."

"Where are you going so early, Little Red-Cap?"

"To my grandmother's."

"What have you got in your apron?"

"Cake and wine; yesterday was baking-day, so poor sick grandmother is to have something good, to make her stronger."

"Where does your grandmother live, Little Red-Cap?"

"A good quarter of a league farther on in the wood; her house stands under the three large oak-trees, the nut-trees are just below; you surely must know it," replied Little Red-Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "What a tender young creature! what a nice plump mouthful -- she will be better to eat than the old woman. I must act
craftily, so as to catch both." So he walked for a short time by the side of Little Red-Cap, and then he said, "See Little Red-Cap, how pretty the flowers are about here -- why do you not look round? I believe, too, that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk gravely along as if you were going to school, while everything else out here in the wood is merry."

Little Red-Cap raised her eyes, and when she saw the sunbeams dancing here and there through the trees, and pretty flowers growing everywhere, she thought, "Suppose I take grandmother a fresh nosegay; that would please her too. It is so early in the day that I shall still get there in good time;" and so she ran from the path into the wood to look for flowers. And whenever she had picked one, she fancied that she saw a still prettier one farther on, and ran after it, and so got deeper and deeper into the wood.

Meanwhile the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Little Red-Cap," replied the wolf. "She is bringing cake and wine; open the door."

"Lift the latch," called out the grandmother, "I am too weak, and cannot get up."

The wolf lifted the latch, the door flew open, and without saying a word he went straight to the grandmother's bed, and devoured her. Then he put on her clothes, dressed himself in her cap, laid himself in bed and drew the curtains.

Little Red-Cap, however, had been running about picking flowers, and when she had gathered so many that she could carry no more, she remembered her grandmother, and set out on the way to her.

She was surprised to find the cottage-door standing open, and when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself, "Oh dear! how uneasy I feel to-day, and at other times I like being with grandmother so much." She called out, "Good morning," but received no answer; so she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange.

"Oh! grandmother," she said, "what big ears you have!"

"The better to hear you with, my child," was the reply.

"But, grandmother, what big eyes you have!" she said.

"The better to see you with, my dear."

"But, grandmother, what large hands you have!"

"The better to hug you with."
"Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!"

"The better to eat you with!"

And scarcely had the wolf said this, than with one bound he was out of bed and swallowed up Red-Cap.

When the wolf had appeased his appetite, he lay down again in the bed, fell asleep and began to snore very loud.

The huntsman was just passing the house, and thought to himself, "How the old woman is snoring! I must just see if she wants anything." So he went into the room, and when he came to the bed, he saw that the wolf was lying in it. "Do I find you here, you old sinner!" said he. "I have long sought you!" He raised his rifle and just as he was going to fire at him, it occurred to him that the wolf might have devoured the grandmother, and that she might still be saved, so he did not fire, but took a pair of scissors, and began to cut open the stomach of the sleeping wolf.

When he had made two snips, he saw the little Red-Cap shining, and then he made two snips more, and the little girl sprang out, crying, "Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf;" and after that the aged grandmother came out alive also, but scarcely able to breathe. Red-Cap, however, quickly fetched great stones with which they filled the wolf's body, and when he awoke, he wanted to run away, but the stones were so heavy that he fell down at once, and died.

Then all three were delighted. The huntsman skinned the wolf and went home with the skin; grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine which Red-Cap had brought, and revived, but Red-Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never by myself leave the path to run into the wood when my mother has forbidden me to do so."

It is also related that once when Red-Cap was again taking cakes to the old grandmother, another wolf spoke to her, and tried to entice her from the path. Red-Cap, however, was on her guard, and went straight forward on her way, and told her grandmother that she had met the wolf and that he had said "good-morning" to her, but with such a wicked look in his eyes that if they had not been on the public road she was certain he would have eaten her up.

"Well," said the grandmother, "we will shut the door, that he may not come in." Soon afterwards the wolf knocked, and cried, "Open the door, grandmother, I am little Red-Cap, and am fetching you some cakes." But they did not speak or open the door, so the grey-beard stole twice or thrice round the house, and at last jumped on the roof, intending to wait until Red-Cap went home in the evening, and then to steal after her and devour her in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what was in his thoughts. In front of the house was a great stone trough, so she said to the child, "Take the pail, Red-Cap; I made some sausages yesterday, so carry the water in which I boiled them to the
trough."

Red-Cap carried until the great trough was quite full. Then the smell of the sausages reached the wolf and he sniffed and peeped down, and at last stretched out his neck so far that he could no longer keep his footing and began to slip, and slipped down from the roof straight into the great trough, and was drowned. But Red-Cap went joyously home, and never did anything to harm any one.

Retail Egyptology
Doug Tanoury

In the supermarket
Where navel oranges are stacked high
With great precision
Like the great pyramid of Giza,
And Santa Rosa plums
Form a lesser monument
For a more mediocre monarch
In The Valley of the Kings.

I am the jackal-faced god,
A duster of old bones
And petrified flesh,
Who breathes the desert air
At 5:00 a.m. and peers wearily
Over the meat counter,
For a fleeting glimpse
Of the floating head
Of Queen Nefertiti
In hopes her regal gaze
Will fall on my English cut roast.

Awake Osiris to the sound
Of the Nile’s water
And sea birds calling from the reeds
To catch the gleam of light
On stainless steel countertops
For it is the deli meats
Hanging in long strands from the ceiling,
Indeed it is the garlic bologna and hard salami
That unites the upper and lower kingdoms.

Rolling In The Aisles

In my little corner of the cosmos confusion reigns
And randomness has taken a rather malicious turn.
Causality has conspired so comically against me
It would make even Shakespeare slap his thighs
And writhe with the most mad and unmanageable mirth.
It would send the audience rolling in the aisles.
But me, I'm feeling rather somber and not the least amused,  
For I fail to see the humor of a fortune so befuddled,  
Where providence wears the most profoundly puzzled look  
Of an old woman standing dazed in the aisle at the local grocery,  
Staring silent and stupefied over a stainless steel meat counter,  
Unable to speak, all her plans and purposes momentarily forgotten.

Venus Rising

I have seen a vision of Venus  
Standing statue-like on the escalator  
And rising as if on the waves,  
Wearing a summer garment of many colors,  
A pagan goddess walking amid  
The merchandise in the temple of commerce,  
As a chorus sings and instrument strums  
From invisible speakers, the melodies  
Seeming to emanate from the very air,  
And I am breathless before an image  
Botticelli would paint,  
Of fresco smiles over wet plaster teeth,  
And I understand now the judgment of Paris  
Was a no-win dilemma, an Olympian gotta  
So inescapable and impossible.  
This is the fickled goddess of bargain days,  
The patron of retail sales that I kneel before  
In abject genuflection.  
Awaken you Muse!  
Arise you Greek Poets!  
Rouse yourselves Athenian Playwrights!  
For I have seen Aphrodite walking  
Up the marble temple steps  
Wearing only one leather sandal.

Lazy Geometry

Lying prone in the backyard hammock,  
In the combined shadows of the maple and the ash  
I study the invisible movement of the sun toward zenith  
And the afternoon light that pushes back the shade,  
And when the breeze blows, just so, in the trees  
I occasionally feel the sunlight on my face,  
Fulgurant and fleeting,
A brightness penetrating just for a moment
The sleepy darkness of closed eyelids.

I have observed for long hours,
The serrated edges of each maple leaf,
And the teardrop foliage of the ash,
The boughs and branches rising,
Like arms of the devout uplifted in worship
They reach to touch the soft circumference
Of a summer sky,
Found only in the lazy geometry
Of a July afternoon.

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Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing and Athens Avenue. Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra’s English class, Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c)1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.
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