

THE LAND OF HYPNAGOGIA

Adam Crabtree

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The Land of Hypnagogia: Book One

BOOK ONE

HYPNAGOGIA

And so they set forth toward the region which they had vowed to conquer, a band of gallant knights, all bedight in massy armor and bravely bearing lances and swords, all seated on steeds which were both swift and sure. But as soon as the first had crossed the border of that region his weapons became like rotten wood, the joints of his armor began to gape widely, and his proud steed altered to a sorry jade, which stumbled at every pebble in the way. And thus fared it with every knight as he crossed, for lo, it was an enchanted boundary.

—Walter Franklin Prince, *The Enchanted
Boundary*

I have long been subject to unbidden images and impressions that impose themselves on me with forceful insistence. I became explicitly aware of these intrusions in relation to falling asleep or upon awakening. It took me some time to find out what these experiences are called. They are named “hypnagogic images.” Although this term is now in general use, and some few people have written about

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them—describing them in a cursory way—I discovered that only rarely have they been closely studied.

In recent years, I have come to realize that these impressions can impose themselves anytime, anywhere. If you pay close attention to them, you come to see that, although incredibly diverse in form and feel and content, they make up a kind of experiential region I have come to call the “Land of Hypnagogia.”

The older I get, or, perhaps I should say, the more time I spend with these images, the more territory the Land of Hypnagogia takes over. Also, I have had a growing awareness of the nature of the relationship between this peculiar region and the Land of the Ordinary. They are certainly distinct, but as my experiences of the hypnagogic multiply, so does my difficulty, on some occasions, to make out the territory where the two touch up against each other. I have also seen over time that the hypnagogic is much richer and more interesting than the ordinary—and in an important way, more real.

I haven't been able to find much to help me understand the hypnagogic in psychological or anthropological sources. Although most people can identify the hypnagogic in their own experiences, they rarely allow their curiosity free rein in that direction.

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Many feel outright fear of coming too close to the hypnagogic. There might be any number of reasons for that fear, but one of the principal ones is fear of the unknown—and therefore uncontrollable. But I want to tell you about the few bits of information I have come across. Then I want to say a couple things about the conclusions I have arrived at from my personal experiences in the Land of Hypnagogia. But first, a late-night revelation.

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A Hypnagogic Landscape

I arose from my bed around 1:30 a.m. and went to my bathroom. I stood in front of my sink and looked in the mirror. The lights were bright, and to protect myself from the glare, I closed my eyes. As soon as I did this, I became aware of my inner thoughts and images: my inner mental world. I was immediately struck by the nature of that inner mental flow. I realized these inner impressions, with their accompanying connections, along with the quality of my inner thought processes, were radically different from those that I had been experiencing just a second before.

I already knew about hypnagogic experiences, of course. Throughout my life, I had noted their presence when going to sleep or waking up, but now I was intently focusing on these hypnagogic images, paying attention to them, and marking their peculiarities.

From out of the inner cacophony of impressions assaulting me that night, I became aware of an overarching image, or hallucination, or vision. I saw and felt myself standing before a vast sloping hillside that gradually inclined away from me, and that seemed to expand in every direction into an immense distance. On this seemingly endless, gently sloping hillside were a vast multitude of scenes or centers of action—all of them moving along in their individual streams of time. They were all in motion at once, each with its own living story. I had the powerful

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feeling that this great panoply of life was always churning away inside of me: all going on at the same time.

I noticed that running along about twenty feet in front of where I stood was a flimsy one-rail fence that bordered the bottom of the hillside from left to right, separating me from all that action. Then I saw, about fifty feet to my right, two figures of some kind who were standing, one on each side of the railing, and conversing with each other. The one on the far side of the railing was a being that seemed to be composed of cardboard. It was what might result if you laminated fifty layers of cardboard and then shaved the edges of the laminate into the shape of something humanlike. The shape was very primitive and simple. I could make out legs and arms and a beaked head; its eye seemed to have been formed by drilling a four-inch hole all the way through the laminate. This creature was talking to the other figure, who seemed to be an ordinary person, standing on my side of the railing. The cardboard creature was saying, "Now listen, Brian, you don't realize what is going on here." Somehow I knew, without any question, that this "Brian" was me.

Then I noticed, close beside me on my left was a rather short person talking incessantly. He was rattling on monotonously, with no inflection or feeling and in excruciating detail, describing what was going on in front of us. I found this recital so boring, so dull, so trivial, so meaningless, that I became very annoyed with him.

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I opened my eyes again onto my bathroom and immediately realized that, in contrast to what I had just been experiencing, I was now thinking ordinary thoughts in my ordinary way. The contrast was something of a shock. Throughout this visionary experience, I could feel my hand gripping the sink in front of me and had a vague awareness of my bathroom environment.

Through the years, I have come to accept my experiences of this sort of altered perception of reality as part of life.

Hypnagogic Experience, December 10, 2002

PART ONE

The Hypnagogic: A Personal Statement

No longer path! Abyss and silence chilling!
Thy fault! To leave the path thou wast too willing!
Now comes the test! Keep cool eyes bright and
clear!
Thou'rt lost for sure, if thou permitest fear.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*

Friedrich Nietzsche has long fascinated me. My interest is due, in no small degree, to his unflinching confrontation with the ever-present existential abyss of human reality and the dread it instills. It has long seemed clear to me that the dread was not of something intrinsically negative or diabolical, but of the unknown. The abyss creates dread, not because of its destructive content, but because we shrink in the face of a largely unexplored world of experience that we cannot adequately prepare to deal with.

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Nietzsche's great message was that we in the West, who had for ages inhabited a world made secure by the authoritative teachings of religious belief, had in more recent times come to see that somehow we had wandered off that safe, well-worn path. We had left behind the comfort of a naïve faith, and stumbled to the edge of a terrifying abyss that fell off into unknown and perhaps unknowable depths. The sight of that abyss filled us with a terror from which we could find no relief. The world we thought was so solid, so dependable: the world of religion, science, and rational thought, was crumbling around us. We could sense despair building within and a terror of the as yet undefinable dangers that lay ahead.

It is my conviction that this lurking dread and our experience of the hypnagogic are intimately connected. That is why Nietzsche must be part of this exploration. He, better than anyone, was aware that the great vocation of the human community is to face the abyss. My contribution to the discussion he initiated is the notion that the hypnagogic is the path that leads not only to mysterious depths, but eventually to the utter source of our existence.

The hypnagogic is the borderland territory between waking and sleeping. We human beings live in one reality—a shared reality that connects us all and provides the basis for our communicating with each other. But as we live our lives, we have radically different experiences of that one reality. The experience of the hypnagogic at my bathroom sink

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is startlingly different from what we take to be an ordinary everyday experience. Through the hypnagogic, I did not encounter a different reality. But my faculty of perception was so altered that I might mistakenly think I was in another world. That otherworldliness, that eeriness, is disorienting, and it has taken some getting used to. In my life, I seem to have been particularly prone to not only having such experiences, but also to remembering them and taking them seriously.

The experience of human depth seems to present two dimensions. There is a vertical dimension by which we seem to go down into the more and more obscure, down through layers, all the while seeming to be moving toward sources and origins. The experience of human depth also exhibits a horizontal dimension, a kind of spreading out, in which the layers of depth expand into experiential geographies. It is because of this dimension that it makes sense to talk about a “land” or “lands” of hypnagogia.

As obscure, dark, and unfathomable as it often seems, human depth is also self-revelatory. It exhibits a kind of drive to show itself. It does that through the constant production of hypnagogic images and in dreams that urge themselves on the human explorer.

But, one might ask, how does the ordinary person experience these revelations? Is it only when they are moving into sleep or waking up from it? By no means. Those sleepy crossings of the enchanted

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boundary are only the most noticed by the average person. Hypnagogic revelations from the depths are much more of an integral part of daily life than is realized. One of the things I hope to convey in this book is that the hypnagogic can happen anywhere and at any time. Our culture is so chary around our depths that we are taught to dismiss the manifestations, belittle them, play them down—and then forget them. This is to miss a treasure trove of experiential riches, since in our ordinary living we constantly wink in and out of the hypnagogic.

My personal earliest remembered experience of the Land of Hypnagogia takes me back to 1944. I was five and just old enough to read the “funnies”—the cartoon strips—in the local newspaper. In October of that year, one of the popular comic strips, called *Mandrake the Magician*, published a series that struck terror in my heart. It began with four panels that I can still clearly see in my mind’s eye. Mandrake had been given a chemical formula, which, when applied to a mirror, dissolved the surface in such a way that he was able to walk through it to the other side. Being the adventurer he was, he boldly passed through the mirror and found himself in a place called the Mirror World. I can remember vividly the shiver that went up my spine and the experience of a totally unexpected sense of dread and foreboding from just looking at those few panels.

Suddenly, reality was not what I had thought it was and not what it appeared to be. Instead, it had been altered in a threatening way. It was full of the

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unknown and danger but disguised as normal. I was a kid and my world had felt familiar and friendly. But when I saw these panels, the familiar world suddenly felt *weird* in the Old English sense of the word: alien or uncanny. The upshot of the experience was that I no longer felt safe, no longer could trust what appeared on the surface of things. I had the feeling of another dimension, another world: one I did not know how to deal with. The Mirror World was populated with the same people as the normal world, but there they were more alive, smarter, and not to be trusted. The names of the individual Mirror People were the reverse of their this-world counterparts. So Mandrake's mirror person, for instance, was called Ekardnam. After seeing this cartoon, I was haunted by the fear of suddenly, without warning, breaking through to a world in which familiar things were no longer to be counted on, and might, without warning, show another unexpected side.

It may seem odd that a five-year-old boy could have such an experience. But I did, and I have a memory of it that has not faded over the intervening years. The feeling I experienced, the shivers up and down my spine, the frightening disorientation, the feeling that everything around me had shifted slightly but very significantly, the scary sense of something strange, unpredictable, yet unavoidable—all of this I still feel when I recall that moment in 1944.

It is only now, in my elderly years, that I can penetrate the meaning of that event and identify in it

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an experience to be found in the human community as a whole. It is the experience of a dreadful inner abyss of unfathomable depth. The fear is not of something evil, but of something immeasurable, overwhelming, and awe-inspiring. A reality so vast that it can never be encompassed by human understanding.

Paradoxically, we discover that this astonishing, dizzying depth within is *ours*; in an important sense, we own it. It is our personal possession: it is within, not outside, us. And our terror of it is in part because we cannot escape it. We carry the inner abyss with us—our constant and close companion. It is both continually experienced and at the same time almost totally unknown.

The Mirror People are both ourselves and something totally alien to our sense of ourselves. Try as we might, we cannot get rid of the Mirror People, so we might as well recognize them and their Mirror World. We might as well stop running from them, turn around, and face them: fight the fear, endure the sense of uncanniness, and learn. In retrospect, it seems I have been able to do that. Colin Wilson said of me, in the introduction to one of my books, that I am “a new kind of psychologist—one who intuitively understands that the mind is far vaster and stranger than anyone suspected.” My own sense of myself confirms his observation.

I wandered in my sleep a lot as a child, and into my adult life. In recent decades, I have written a great

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deal about the state of consciousness that accompanies these meanderings. We commonly call them “somnambulistic (sleepwalking) states.” In these states, we are not awake, but neither are we asleep. We don’t usually remember what has occurred when returning to waking, but sometimes we slip into these in-between states with greater self-awareness and do remember them afterwards. At that point we seem to be more on the waking side of the boundary between sleep and waking, and we can then actually label them. We call them “hypnagogic experiences.” That boundary experience is, however, much more than merely the act of crossing a line between sleeping and waking. It constitutes a whole world of experience on its own. The evanescence of that world and the shakiness of our attempts to grab onto it, make it such that we often immediately forget our experiences there. Many people never even become aware that hypnagogic experiences are a part of their psychic lives, but some recall them sufficiently enough to periodically ponder them and mention them to others.

As a child, and all through my adult life, I have had countless experiences of this kind. I have spent a lot of time wandering in the Land of Hypnagogia. They have become a familiar part of my psychic life and, as it turns out, sources of significant enrichment. Hypnagogia can be frightening, exciting, or just plain weird. I have had a good many in each category. I have gradually learned to feel at home in the Land of Hypnagogia and even use them to my waking benefit.

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It seems to me that my Mandrake experience might be considered my first, or at least first remembered, experience of the hypnagogic. I now see that, although these experiences have by no means always been pleasant, I nevertheless valued them all from very early on. As I was growing up, I never heard anyone mention these sorts of adventures, so I kept them to myself. In more recent years, I have become more vocal about them and number hypnagogia among those human events we call “depth experiences.”

For most of my life, I have spent a lot of effort trying to understand something about hypnagogia and depth experiences. My search for reliable knowledge started in my university years. My family was Catholic, and I attended St. John’s University in Minnesota, an institution run by monks of the Benedictine religious order. I secretly hoped that I would find some answers about the nature of depth experiences in such a place, where one might justly expect an interest in the mystical and the mysterious to flourish. This proved to not be the case, however. Eventually, I became a monk at St. John’s Abbey and was also ordained a Roman Catholic priest. On the surface, I probably struck people as quite content, but deep inside I felt myself becoming more and more disappointed, restless, and let down with the worldview of this environment.

In 1965, I was sent by my monastery to do graduate work in philosophy at the University of Toronto. There, I happened to find a community just forming

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that was making the practice of psychotherapy its *raison d'être*. This community, called Therafields, hoped to devote itself to the understanding of the unconscious and the practice of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapy. It was a unique experiment, and, as a product of the ferment of the mid-1960s, an innovative and exciting project. But there, too, my desire to look deeper into the scary and the strange in the human psyche was disappointed. True, one dimension of depth, the psychological unconscious, was given special attention and scrutiny. But the psychodynamic framework, particularly as formulated by psychoanalysis, was becoming a kind of procrustean bed, attempting to forcibly jam the whole of the unanalyzable in human life (which is most of it) into its categories. That system either ignored the uncanny, explained it away, watered it down, or treated it as dangerous. Later, I hoped that the Centre for Training in Psychotherapy (CTP), which I helped to found in 1986, would embrace a less formulaic approach to depth phenomena. To my disappointment, this did not turn out to be the case.

In the late 1970s, working with therapy clients who reported possession and other types of uncanny experiences, and realizing psychoanalytic and psychodynamic therapeutic approaches had nothing to offer them, I turned my attention to those investigators, generally considered to be on the fringe, who actually valued these kinds of experiences and thought them worthy of exploration.

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In 1978, deciding to get some experience within a more unconventional context, I joined a Spiritualist church. Despite the lovely, balanced approach of the minister of the church I attended, it soon became clear that this group had a (for me) suffocatingly narrow range of interests: communications with spirits, messages from the dead, and paranormal phenomena. I felt they expended an inordinate amount of energy on obtaining “proofs of survival”: credible evidence that indicated people do live on after death. I had no trouble accepting that hypothesis, but impressive proofs already existed, and I could not get interested in reinventing this particular wheel. I felt that this approach would never summon the necessary daring to cross over into the depths of the Land of Hypnagogia.

Then, through a stroke of good luck, my clinical practice brought the phenomenon of multiple personality disorder to my attention. I began a period of concentrated work with many who experienced that disorder. I became convinced that this phenomenon offered a startling glimpse into the depth aspect of the human psyche. I launched my initial halting attempt to bring together my ideas about possession and multiple personality in my first book, published in 1985 and titled *Multiple Man*.

By that time, I had already turned my attention to the field of psychical research. I had become acquainted with the now famous scientific association, established in England in 1882, called the Society for Psychical Research. Over the decades since its

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founding, that hotbed of research carried out thousands of experimental studies relating to things uncanny, concentrating especially on telepathy, precognition, altered states of consciousness, and survival. The published results of those explorations form a mass of evidence for such phenomena. But the conclusions, so reasonable, comfortable, and reassuring, did not seem all that helpful to me: someone who sought to understand the confounding depths of the human psyche and experience what it means to look into the terrifying abyss.

Furthermore, my study made it clear that the SPR was not the proper starting point for a history of depth phenomena anyway, for it was itself dependent on an earlier tradition: one that began a hundred years before, in the late 1700s. I speak of the appearance of the healing approach called “animal magnetism,” and the discovery of artificial somnambulism. In my historical research, I stumbled across a truly important moment of exposure to the depths of human experience from 1784. The event was initiated by the Marquis de Puységur, who, after being trained by Franz Anton Mesmer (the discoverer of animal magnetism), struck off on his own and made a discovery that would profoundly affect the evolution of Western culture from that time to the present day. Puységur discovered what he called “magnetic somnambulism” and opened a door to depth experiences that previously had been unavailable for systematic observation and development. In doing

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so, he prepared the way for the exploration of the unconscious. His pioneering work culminated in the development of the psychological systems of Frederic Myers, Pierre Janet, William James, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung, each with their own version of the psyche's hidden dynamic.

So, I wrote books and articles about all these things, mostly with a historical slant, and developed a new way of defining and understanding trance phenomena and hypnosis. Then, again by a stroke of good fortune, I became associated with the Center for Theory and Research at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. That enterprise had for many years been developing seminars related to many aspects of human depth. This magnet for new psychological/spiritual ideas became the energetic center of what would eventually be called the Human Potential Movement. My involvement began in 1998, when I was invited by one of the founders of Esalen, Mike Murphy, to join a newly forming CTR seminar on survival of death. I gladly accepted, and our seminar, which continued for some fifteen years, did some important work in this area and produced two significant books on life after death and relevant anomalous phenomena. In the meantime, I was writing two more books: one (*Memoir of a Trance Therapist*) on the nature of trance states, with a clarified notion of hypnosis, and the other (*Evolutionary Love and the Ravages of Greed*) a study of love that followed from my growing acquaintance with the great American philosopher Charles

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Sanders Peirce, and his wonderful little treatise “Evolutionary Love.”

Then, in 2013, I had the rewarding experience of corresponding with Drew University professor Robert Corrington about the philosophical system he had developed called “ecstatic naturalism.” In 2014, I read a paper at an ecstatic naturalism Congress on the subject of ecstatic naturalism and evolutionary love. I presented another paper to the 2019 Congress concerning a “meta-telos” in nature. It actually took the form of a co-presentation on the subject delivered by Corrington and myself. I found this experience most enjoyable and stimulating. Corrington’s ideas, it seemed to me, offered a solid framework for exploring the philosophical dimensions of depth experiences.

Yet, apart from Corrington’s, all of these ways of exploring depth and the hypnagogic were disappointing. They felt incomplete and so far from explaining the actual gist of things as to be downright misleading. I believe that those of us academics who have toiled to understand the depths of human experience bear a large part of the responsibility for what has gone wrong. As a historian and author in this field, I share the blame and feel the need to make amends.

I have been a significant player in the attempt to show that the Western psychodynamic psychology and psychotherapy that originated in 1784 constituted an unmitigated triumph for human

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progress. In my writings, I pointed out that artificial somnambulism introduced a systematic method for exploring human depth, and gave us the gift of knowledge of the psychodynamic “unconscious.” I even had some success in making that case, particularly in my scholarly writings.

As I have mentioned, I believed that the cultural absorption of the notion of a dynamic unconscious, operative in all human beings, had important effects that deeply shaped our psychological thinking in the West, and I was pleased to note it had recently come to be valued and welcomed in the great cultures of the East, particularly China. The psychodynamic scheme now occupies the seat of power in the West, dominating all other psychological philosophies.

From my clinical work, I knew first-hand its effective healing power. I was fully convinced of the marvelous benefits of this historical “discovery of the unconscious,” as delineated by the great historian of psychotherapeutic systems, Henri Ellenberger. But now, today, I believe that this rejoicing, as valid as it is for as far as it goes, needs to be seriously toned down.

The problematic side of the broad and deep penetration of our culture by this explanatory framework is not due to the notion of the dynamic unconscious itself. That concept has been, and remains, most useful for us all. The notion itself is not wrong. The problem is the way in which this

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approach has been used to imply that, through the application of our model of the unconscious and its associated dynamics, we have reached the ultimate depth of the human being. That is certainly not true. Promoters of the conscious/unconscious schema as the answer to the basic questions of human life are on the wrong track, or perhaps a sidetrack. We can see this in the general naïveté and glibness that characterizes the psychotherapies of our day.

When we look into accounts of human depth in the literature over the ages, it is clear that the psychodynamic schema is no help in accurately observing and incorporating the mass of astounding experiences that have been described. The danger is in overestimating the degree of depth that psychodynamic workers have reached in their explorations. The danger is two-fold: On the one hand, human experiences that cannot be understood in merely psychodynamic terms are given pseudo explanations, drawn from the psychodynamic grab bag, and forced into frameworks that simply do not fit them. The second danger of the claim of having reached the ultimate depth of the psyche, is the explicit or implicit discouragement conveyed to free thinkers and inventive explorers who are trying to go deeper and discover possible new explanations of human experiences that might eventually lead to the dethronement of the psychodynamic. Unfortunately, this has led to a power struggle between the old and the new, which is already in evidence in today's academic and clinical establishments.

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In the meantime, I will simply say that, for now, I believe if we are going to effectively combat the efforts of the psychodynamic view to dominate and stifle other paradigms, we need to supplant the use of the term the *unconscious*, as it is employed in the psychodynamic world, and replace it with the broader, richer, truer, and more evocative term the *hypnagogic*, and designate the world of human depth as the “Land of Hypnagogia.” I will say more about these things later, but for now I must try to further clarify issues relating to depth and the hypnagogic.

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PART TWO

The Enchanted Boundary

And so they set forth toward the region which they had vowed to conquer, a band of gallant knights, all bedight in massy armor and bravely bearing lances and swords, all seated on steeds which were both swift and sure. But as soon as the first had crossed the border of that region, his weapons became like rotten wood, the joints of his armor began to gape widely, and his proud steed altered to a sorry jade, which stumbled at every pebble in the way. And thus fared it with every knight as he crossed, for lo, it was an enchanted boundary.

—Walter Franklin Prince, *The Enchanted Boundary*

Here I repeat the little passage quoted at the beginning of the book. In the folklore genre, it points to a serious flaw in the broadly accepted notion that the fundamental division of the human psyche is the conscious and unconscious. This simplistic schema naïvely suggests that these two aspects of human experience can be easily discriminated, and that there is a delimited threshold that separates them. It is also prone, however unwittingly, to set itself up as the key ingredient in a broad vision of the nature of human beings, when, in fact, it makes only a small contribution. The passage suggests the nature of the

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problem: that some of our kind have crossed the boundary to the region of human depth, the Land of Hypnagogia, but they have found themselves helplessly overcome with fear and false ideas and cannot effectively continue their journey.

What I intend to do here, and in this book as a whole, is to say that the better and truer way of looking at things is to divide human experience into the everyday and the hypnagogic: the practical, measurable, and countable on the one hand, and the meaningful, purposeful, and unfathomable on the other. This division is by no means the same as that between the conscious and the unconscious. But more on that later.

When we cross the enchanted boundary between the two regions, everything changes. If we attempt to use the tools proper to one realm in the other, we become disoriented and helpless. Each realm must be explored with tools adequate for the job. If this rule is followed, we will be able to make progress in each realm and move ourselves forward on what seems to be the shared but unique evolutionary path of the human race.

The commonly accepted meaning of the word *hypnagogic* is the realm between waking and sleep. This may serve as a useful start, but I want to take the discussion much further. The personal hypnagogic experience I describe at the beginning will offer some useful information, or, perhaps better, a useful starting point for getting a sense of

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the strangeness of the region we propose to explore. The narrations that follow, *The Book Moth Lectures* and *Nietzsche At The Well*, will, I hope, provide further insights. Many diverse examples of hypnagogia will be inserted as I go along. But for now, I would like to comment on the enigma of the enchanted boundary.

As you may guess, I do not intend to undertake some kind of intellectual or scientific analysis of the hypnagogic in this book. At this stage of things, I consider that sort of approach to be useless, even counterproductive. Rather, I would like to use descriptions of concrete personal experiences of the hypnagogic as the way into a fuller understanding of the division I am talking about and the challenges involved in moving from one region to the other. Also, although a historical presentation of writings that analyze the hypnagogic could be interesting and helpful in certain ways, I believe it would also to some extent divert us from the path most likely to move us forward.

At this point I would like to examine the term *hypnagogia*. This is a word invented quite recently by Andreas Mavromatis to designate both the hypnagogic state and all the phenomena and experiences encountered there. Similarly, when I refer to the Land of Hypnagogia, I mean to point to the sphere wherein all hypnagogic experiences occur.

When the unknown original author of the *Enchanted Boundary* quote given above refers to the moment

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when everything changes for the knight, he was calling attention to the difficulty in mapping the border between where normal everyday events occur and the Land of Hypnagogia. More specifically, the author attempts to say what it is like when a person crosses the boundary from the ordinary daily experience side. Of course, we also cross in the other direction, back into the practical world, but let us put that aside for the moment.

What can be done with hypnagogic experiences? The story of the enchanted boundary can be used as a guide. When crossing the boundary to the hypnagogic, everything changes. The knight-explorer cannot use his old reliable tools in this enchanted land. He must discover a different approach. The Land of Hypnagogia is a place of feeling, sensing, intuition. It is a region saturated with meaning. The explorer must put aside any notion of containing it, of applying ordinary ideas of making it fully graspable intellectually. The explorer must instead give over to *experiencing* it, letting it lead and trusting it leads somewhere. He must give up any fantasy of dominating it.

The inventor of the term *hypnagogic* was Alfred Maury. He was the first to attempt to identify and locate the region under consideration, writing about it in various essays and books from 1848 to 1878. He tells us the etymological elements he used to invent the word: “hypna,” from *hypnos* or sleep, and “gogic,” from *agogos* or leading. Thus: “That which leads into sleep.” So, his definition is: the region

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between waking and sleep. For my purposes, the generality of this definition is useful, because it would be a mistake to be pinned down in our explorations at the very beginning.

Despite the fact that the Land of Hypnagogia has been stumbled into by human beings for as long as we can imagine, and despite the fact that it has been given a name and some systematic and scientific attention since the early nineteenth century, we still know almost nothing about it. To the degree that it is more or less coextensive with human depth itself, we have to do a lot of work before we can start to feel confident in it as an adequate starting point for working out a cogent vision of human experience and human existence. Turning information deriving from hypnagogic experiences into ghost stories and the object of “woo-woo” curiosity is not going to help us at all. Subjecting it to the tender mercies of laboratory brain wave analysis is, in my opinion, only slightly less useless.

I believe that, for a long time to come, if we are going to make any progress at all, we need to invite the whole human community to become *natural scientists*, in the traditional sense of that term. That is, we need to see ourselves as *amateur scientists* in the original meaning of truly loving and cherishing science, contributing our own experiences of the hypnagogic and our own subjective responses to those experiences as a means to amass data for a comparative science of the Land of Hypnagogia. Like the old naturalists used to do, we should

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become collectors, gather every last specimen we find, pay attention to every last detail, even though we have no idea how they might fit together, and be confident that, over a very long period of time, a future full science of the hypnagogic will come into being, and some kind of understanding will emerge that can provide benefits for the human community.

You might ask, how do we define what hypnagogic experiences are with enough detailed information to be able to identify them when we have them? That is a crucial question, and I can only answer that this whole book is an attempt to provide that information.

As you will see in what is to follow, I have done a bit of that naturalistic comparative work myself. Every night has become for me the equivalent of when the flora and fauna collectors of old would look out their living room windows and study nature as it showed itself to them in their backyards, or walk out into their fields with binoculars in hand and a mind full of childlike curiosity. My nights, and parts of my days too, provide me with wonderful and unexpected experiences that, when looked at with wonder rather than cynical skepticism, expose me to an inner depth that never fails to surprise.

One of the features of hypnagogia, as I experience them, is that they sometimes present a geography or physical setting that shows up repeatedly throughout a series of experiences. This may be a specific building or piece of property (which may or may not

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exist in the ordinary world) that I keep revisiting. Or, I may repeatedly return to a specific outdoor location or an intersection of streets or a nature spot or a landscape with definite features. The setting keeps repeating itself, but the action is different each time.

As an example, I frequently find myself inside a hay-mow, or upper hay storage area, of a very large barn on a farm. It is a huge space, empty at the moment, except for quite a number of very long ladders resting on its floor and reaching to the roof. They are extension ladders and bow with the weight of someone standing on them. I sometimes find myself climbing up one ladder, sometimes another. Each one brings a different perspective on some problem or issue that is bothering me at the time. The perspective or solution reached is not intellectual, but a specific type of feeling that conveys the answer

Before ending this rather disorganized portrayal of the Land of Hypnagogia, I must add one more dimension that seems to have escaped attention. It is the fact that all that has been said about it concentrates on the mental experience, and the feelings, ideas, and images involved. But that is not all there is to it.

A hypnagogic experience can skate along that enchanted boundary in a very surprising way. It can centrally involve compulsions to *take actions*. The compulsion to act can be powerful, but the origin of the compulsion is not seen, and its meaning can only be discerned after the fact. I will give one example

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from my own experience. This is an experience I later talked about with my colleague Jeff Kripal, and he has written about it at greater length in his *Authors of the Impossible*. I will give you a thumbnail of it here.

It happened on June 5, 1968, to be exact. I was a young psychotherapist working in Toronto and living with a Therafields group. The time was shortly after 3:00 a.m. I had been asleep for some time, when I suddenly and instantaneously woke into what seemed like full waking awareness and immediately sat up in my bed. I was startled because I had never awakened so abruptly before in my life. I looked around, trying to discover what had roused me. I found nothing that could explain it: no noise (it was very quiet), no pain, no bad dream—nothing.

Still completely puzzled, I automatically reached over to the bedside table where I had my little transistor radio. It was off. Without thinking, I turned it on. It was tuned to AM 1050, as it always was: my station to listen to the latest popular music. But what came out of the radio was not music, but someone talking. I immediately realized that, being the middle of the night, and with radio waves bouncing all over the place, I was getting a station with the same frequency somewhere far away.

It was a news reporter. I quickly found out that he was in Los Angeles, traveling with the Bobby Kennedy campaign. The results of the California Democratic primary were now in and Kennedy had won. The reporter said he had just given an

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acceptance speech and was heading through the hotel kitchen to a different part of the building for a news conference. I was delighted because I was a great Kennedy fan. The reporter kept talking as they moved through the kitchen. As I listened, I heard sounds of mayhem. The reporter was obviously confused, and when he got his wits together, he said, terribly shaken, that Kennedy had been shot. I then realized that I had heard something like gunshots in the mayhem. I was devastated and glued to that station until we were given the news sometime later that Kennedy had died in hospital.

Beginning as it did with a sudden arousal from sleep, I now retrospectively put this experience in the category of the hypnagogic. But in this case, the borderline state did not show itself in feelings or impressions of that kind, but in actions. Actions that were completely unpremeditated and done without much thought. The first was the sudden awakening. Next immediately sitting up in bed. Then my reaching for the radio and turning it on. Next my staying with the unexpected program and not changing the dial. None of these actions were unusual, but they were, as it turns out, terribly significant. I should add that the time that elapsed between my sudden awakening and the firing of the shots was less than five minutes.

There was no significant mental activity going on in me (what we usually associate with hypnagogia); what was significant were the compulsive/automatic actions I performed. Although the actions were

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pedestrian and ordinary, their combination and result were anything but. Certain elements from within me combined with certain elements in the ordinary world to create this extraordinary personal incident: the extraordinary manner of my sudden awakening (which had never happened before and has not happened since); the fact that I immediately reached for my radio and that it was tuned to the frequency of that particular California station; the fact that the assassination occurred within five minutes of my awakening; and the fact that when I had awoken *nothing had happened yet*.

I am sure that anyone might see this whole incident as mere coincidence, or choose to categorize it as what Carl Jung called synchronicity. But for me, and for my experience of it, it had all the features of occurring on the borderline between the Land of Hypnagogia and the Land of the Ordinary. I also consider that the necessary precision of the simple actions I took, each leading to the wholly unexpected result, had the features of some kind of involvement from an intelligence from within—below my ordinary awareness and beyond anything I could have ever predicted. For me personally, it has the overall feeling of the hypnagogic.

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PART THREE

A FUTURE SCIENCE OF HYPNAGOGIA

There will never be, can never be, a scientific explanation of the ultimate nature of hypnagogia. First, the naïve popular notion of scientific explanation has to be waved aside. Science is incapable to giving the ultimate explanation of any anything. The scientific approach can indeed give us a lot of information about restricted areas of study, enough to gain increasing control of our physical world. But that's it. It can never penetrate to ultimates.

The great strength of science is to gather increasing amounts of information with the intention of identifying correlations between sets of data. In that way, the understanding of many things can be deepened and control over some things attained. This is the proper use and understanding of science. I spent many years ferreting out the simple-minded misconceptions of so many scientists and identifying an accurate way of talking about what is going on in scientific investigation.

Taking science at its best, and taking into account its limitations, there can be a science of hypnagogia. If enough data can be amassed, perhaps we can say

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something significant about those experiences. Can we ever see enough to be able to say that we know a lot about how they work? Perhaps even identify tendencies and flow, some kind of dynamic? And can we ever know enough to actually be able to control the experiences, or better, channel their power? These are valid questions. For me, the answer is Maybe. Just Maybe, we can work to develop a future science of hypnagogia.

But we have a very long way to go. If we want to start off in that direction, there is a clear starting point: gathering a tremendous quantity of information about the experiences in question. We cannot do that without paying attention to them and treating them as worthwhile objects of observation. We do not have much of that today, where the main responses are either setting up a naïve woo-woo thriller sideshow or rushing off to find an exorcist. I would like to see that change. I would like to see a sense of curiosity dominate. I would like to see a sense of adventure animating the process. I would like to see a long term serious project of gathering data which, most importantly, would not short circuit the process by jumping to premature conclusions about what is behind it all.

I would like to take my lead from practices of data gathering that have an honored place in Western

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culture, and that are summed up in what we term “naturalists.” As I have mentioned, over the past two hundred years especially, there have been people who had the interest and the leisure to observe nature and describe what they saw. These people considered themselves *amateur* scientist, people who had a *love* of science. They were specimen collectors. They would go out into their back yards or fields with their binoculars or their magnifying glasses and observe what they saw there: observe and draw and describe to the best of their ability. Some of them even formed admirable collections of the life-forms they were studying.

I believe that is what we need for a future science of hypnagogia. These naturalists of bygone days established the foundations for many different forms of the life sciences, which would come later. In some cases, their records and their specimens formed unique and wondrous collections for those to follow. We can do the same with our hypnagogic experiences. We do not even have to go out into the back yard or the fields to form our collections. We have only to go inside

I would love to see an army of such hypnagogic naturalists, whose curiosity and love of finding out things animates them, pioneers who are interested in contributing to the future of the human

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community, and to a future science of hypnagogia.
This book is meant to be a tiny start in that direction.

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BOOK TWO

THE BOOK MOTH LECTURES

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PREFACE

My name is Adam Crabtree. The story told here is about me. I live in Toronto. When I Google “*adam crabtree*” *Toronto*, I get some eight thousand responses. That is a pretty good indication I exist. But what if I say, “This is a story about a book moth who burrows into my writings and feels called upon to take me to task about the inadequacies of my career”? Would that make this story fiction? Some might say yes. However, for me it is factual and the most realistic summary of my actual experience.

Is this story autobiographical? Yes, absolutely. But that does not answer the question about whether it is factual. After all, autobiography is at best a work of creative fiction and at worst an attempt to evade the truth about oneself. Or better defined, perhaps, as “poetry and truth,” as Goethe called his.

I can say nothing more that would be useful about the issue of fact. Neither can I place this story in any category. It is whatever it is for each reader—nothing more and nothing less.

Adam Crabtree, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

I will not begin by filling you in with all kinds of information about myself. If you were to take me up on the suggestion of Googling my name, you would find there, in the public record, a great deal more than I could ever give you here. So rather than taking the information approach, I will give you a glimpse of me that you will find nowhere on Google (not yet, at least). Nevertheless, it is one that is more true to what I believe myself to be. I will try to do this through a narration of events—through telling a story about myself.

For my whole life, I have been interested in understanding what human beings and life are all about. In recent years, I have had many opportunities to research the nature of human depth. I have done so as a historian, philosopher, clinician, and, most significantly, as me: as a living person. It seemed to me that for all the worthy scholarly contributions to understanding the depths of the psyche, the endeavors of the human community in this direction continue to be held back by a dread in the face of the abyss. A state of affairs that I have so carefully observed for so long. A dread that continues to stifle some of our boldest and most inventive thinkers.

I touched briefly on this problem of depth and dread in an article which was eventually published in 2019

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in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences (JHBS)*. Before that, I had drafted another, more comprehensive article on the problem, which I submitted to a journal that I thought would welcome such a discussion. However, that article was rejected by the journal's editor, who was a friend of mine and whose opinions I greatly respected. That was a blow, and the Rejected Article became an obsession for me.

As I looked over the feedback from the rejecting editor, I realized that his criticism of my article was justified, but not for the reasons given. I felt something else was wrong with it: something fundamental, something more basic than what he came up with. In my dejected state, I couldn't bring myself to make the effort to get it accepted by writing in the suggested changes or finding another journal to publish it. So, the problem of the Rejected Article took center stage in my ruminations and preoccupations and silently festered there.

Yet, for all my fretting, I could not figure out what was missing in the article, or in what I was mistaken. Eventually, I had the article sewn in a cloth binding and put it aside in a vertical file on a tall shelf in my study, hoping that maybe something would eventually come to me to explain my misgivings. Of course, out of sight is not necessarily out of mind, and my agitated pondering continued.

Then, in the summer of 2018, I got help with my conundrum from an entirely unexpected source. No,

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that does not do it justice—from a *fantastic and unbelievable source*. The story of that uncanny experience is the subject of this book.

I beg the reader to stay with me as I unroll this story. Whether you believe me or not—even if you consider it a deranged delusion—it may yet be of interest, particularly if you are yourself trying to get a bead on the phenomenon of depth and dread.

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STONEWELL

I engaged Stonewell Retreat with a five-year lease on September 1, 2016. I called it Stonewell after the old, long-abandoned well located near the northern border of the forty-acre lot. I did not know of the well's existence when I leased the property, but stumbled across it when out walking about a week after I took possession. The heavy stone wall surrounding the well's opening is of large diameter—some eight feet—and stands about three feet high. I satisfied myself that it was safe, carefully inspecting the heavy oak planking that covered the opening. The well is easy to overlook, because it is overgrown with vines and occupies a very brushy area of the woods that covers about half the lot.

The lease was reasonable, considering the crazy prices of real estate in the Toronto area, and, being nine miles north of the city limits, it had not yet been affected by the runaway rents of the metropolis. I felt I needed a place to “get away from it all,” to relax, to think. I was pretty good at thinking, but not so good at relaxing; so, I figured, the farther from my downtown life, the better.

The land has some trees, and a small stream that makes a brief appearance in the northwest corner. Just to the north of the property there begins a hilly area, quite dense with a thick stand of trees. For me, what was most noteworthy about the property was the cottage that occupied the south side, the roadside, of the property. It was beautifully designed

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for my purposes: big rooms, lots of windows. I heard it had been designed and built by an architect in the 1980s: a man who, like myself, needed to distance himself from the bustle to the south.

One thing I liked was that, despite its many windows, the cottage also managed to have a good deal of wall space, which I could use to shelve my considerable library. I had donated several hundred books to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto to form a psychological research collection there, but I still had a large library of books I wanted to keep close at hand for the writing I intended to do at Stonewell.

I did not have much art on the walls, since I wanted the bookshelf space to be at the maximum. When I moved in, I hung a few paintings. One that I am especially fond of is a large painting: a striking copy of Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*, done by a friend, Jerome McNicholl, many years before. The other treasure in the study area was a framed letter written and signed by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Stonewell Retreat is off Yonge Street, situated on Cambridge Road. The building is forty-five feet wide and thirty feet deep. It is painted beige with dark brown trim. It has a front porch, added some years after the building was constructed. It consists of two floors: both with the same dimensions, made possible by a second-floor attic, which allows the ceilings a uniform nine-foot height in all the rooms. There is a straight center stairway to the second

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floor. On the first floor I have a large study on the right as you enter—my main working room—with a great deal of book shelving. On the left there is a living room with a fireplace, and a kitchen at the back. The second floor has a large library room on the right, with an area for creative work and an office desk on the front side. It also has a bedroom and an en suite bathroom on the left.

The building is fairly well insulated and spending time there in the winter is quite comfortable. There is a circular driveway out front, leading south to Cambridge Road. The cottage is a hundred fifty feet from the road, but snow shoveling is not too onerous. Heating is electric and there is no air conditioning. Out back are the remnants of a small vegetable garden, which I intended eventually to develop.

The abundant light and spaciousness make Stonewell a cheerful place, and the few visitors I have seem to enjoy it. At night, the city glows in the distance to the south, but you can actually see the stars. The noise situation is very different from our family home in midtown Toronto, with its never-ending rumble. Stonewell is quiet, especially at night, when the ordinary workday sounds of the rural area have subsided.

This is the pleasant retreat I have gradually grown accustomed to and come to depend on. I experience it as a place of peace, a refuge from the irrelevant. I had been using Stonewell off and on for a year and a

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half when, in January 2018, my routines were interrupted by the need to find a new office space downtown. The office building that my wife, Joanne, and I had been using for our psychotherapy practices was being torn down. I had to take some time, find other offices, and move. This was no small operation, and from February on I had no time for Stonewell. I simply locked it up, and, apart from briefly checking it out from time to time, frankly, abandoned it—not without regret, however. Finally, on July 1, having finished moving and rearranging things downtown, I came back to Stonewell to spend a week or so—as I thought, relaxing and maybe writing.

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THE REJECTED ARTICLE

I arrived at Stonewell mid-morning on July 1. As I walked through the front door and entered my study, I felt a great relief and happiness. I had forgotten what a wonderfully relaxing effect the cottage has on me, and as I sat down at my desk and looked around the room, the books lining the walls felt like old friends. The room, and the cottage as a whole, had become my intellectual retreat and home. Sitting at my desk, I swiveled my chair around to look at the wall of books behind me. My eyes immediately went to the top shelf and the vertical file containing the bound copy of the Rejected Article, which had been resting there undisturbed for some months.

The work on that article had felt important to me. I had long been drawn to explore what we in the West have come to call “human depth.” It is an intriguing fact about depth that we all feel drawn to it, and in the same moment feel dread of it. We are afraid of the depth experience. I am not talking about being aware of depth, in oneself or another, on an intellectual level. That brings no dread at all. It is only when one has an actual *experience* of depth within oneself that this powerful link between depth and dread is felt.

The Rejected Article was titled “Depth and Dread,” and in it I had attempted to explore how through the ages, we, the human community, have had noteworthy historical moments in which we became aware in a special way of an unfathomable expanse

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within us. We feel drawn to explore it, but too often are prevented by a terror of what we might find there. This terror or dread has repeatedly blocked us from discovering much about the depths, and from allowing even our tentative explorations to take their course. How far that explanatory work goes is not limited by an inner barrier, some bottom limit to the depths that we will encounter. There is no bottom; for this reason, it is often referred to as an “abyss.” Human depth is endless and fathomless. That is why the dread: if we turn ourselves loose into that depth, we may never come back. Of course, we experience depth by degrees. But that is not due to any intrinsic limits, but to the barriers or limits that we ourselves construct.

As I have intimated, the article felt important to me. Its rejection was a blow. When I received the rejection notice, I felt suddenly stopped in my tracks, paralyzed and unable to move. It was in that befuddled state of mind that I had taken my copy of the Rejected Article, given it a cloth binding, and stowed it away here at Stonewell. Now, as it caught my eye, I found myself becoming agitated. I no longer felt relaxed and lighthearted. As I gazed at it, ensconced in the vertical file, I was aware of its naggingly unresolved status, and I felt uneasy. But I now realized its defective content was not what was bothering me. It was something else. Something was amiss.

I stood up to scrutinize the vertical file and its contents more closely. The spine of the clothbound

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Rejected Article was turned toward me. It was a cheap binding job. It was, after all, only a draft.

As I stood there, I felt a slight dizziness. The vertical file seemed to grow larger, gradually filling my whole field of attention. I was vaguely aware of the familiar sensation of moving into a trance or hypnagogic state. This experience is not unusual for me, and I have learned to accept it and see what happens next. Gradually, the rest of the room darkened, and the Rejected Article was now taking center stage, becoming an intense focus of my attention.

My mind began wandering to its contents, like a wild dog nosing around a garbage heap, looking for something, anything, to give it some nourishment. I thought of the fact that everyone is in favor of depth. We all want to be thought of as deep. To be shallow is a shameful thing. At the same time, most everyone will confess a fear of going deep. The great pioneers of the human mind experienced that dread, but did not let it stop them. Or did they? True, they boldly stepped into the inner darkness. They saw something uncanny there, and they returned to tell us about it. We marveled at what we heard. They were glad to talk about it and have us marvel alongside them. They took this now exposed creature from the underworld and gave it a name, described it, looked at it from every angle, devised theories about it, and, often, posited a new metaphysics of reality based on it. They fell in love with this strange subterranean creature, treated it as their own child and their exclusive possession.

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By the time they had finished exhaustively measuring every length, width, and angle, it didn't feel uncanny anymore. Its apparent uncanniness was just a misunderstanding. There was nothing to fear from it, they assured us. So, it was given comfortable quarters to live among us, and a litter box too. The lesson to be learned here was that there was really no abyss after all, and any dread of it was just a childish misunderstanding. Then, one day, they come home from work and discover that, for some unfathomable reason, the creature has eaten their iPhone and the family pet. Now they are shocked that they didn't realize what they were unleashing, and that maybe they should have preserved a greater measure of that instinctive fear of the abyss and its creatures.

In the Rejected Article, I had taken exception to this ridiculous denaturing of nature: the denial of its power and mystery. I pointed out that, historically, there was a discernable pattern here:

1. Some genuinely pristine and unexplored region of human depth is discovered; the initial reaction of terror is appropriate.
2. Some hero boldly descends into that depth and brings back word of its marvels.
3. The hero gets spooked, because they sense there are a lot of other fearful things

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down there. They are glad and relieved to limit their attention to the new discovery.

4. The hero becomes a coward and puts the brakes on the whole experiment, saying, “Danger! Thus far and no farther!” They put up a sign at the threshold: “Do not enter; this is a world of demons.”
5. The hero-discoverer dusts off the surprising discovery and displays it for all to admire.
6. The hero bands together with friends and discovers how to tame and water down the power of the discovery. So, while advancing our understanding of depth a tiny bit, at the same time the hero discourages any future boldness.

I was heavily engrossed in these thoughts and others like them, when I noticed an odd sound. It seemed to be coming from the copy of the Rejected Article on the shelf above me. It was a kind of vibration or fluttering. Shocked out of my reverie, I reached up to take hold of that clothbound copy. As I lifted it down, I could feel a vibration in the cover. I sat down with the Rejected Article at my desk. Carefully, I opened the cover. What I saw inside took me aback.

Grooves or tiny tunnels had been gnawed into the area around where the binding met the pages, curling haphazardly into the rest of the paper. In the upper

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corner, near the spine, there was what first struck me as an amorphous shape, but I quickly realized was a fibrous cocoon. As I was trying to take all this in, I noticed vibrations clearly shaking the cocoon itself, then a kind of fluttering and a sudden movement that startled me. I got a glimpse of something scrambling out of the cocoon and flying off. I was so startled that I could not make out where it had gone. I did not even know the direction it took. Stunned, I looked back at the chewed up binding and pages. It seemed a mess, disgusting. I slammed the cover shut, lest something else fly out, and returned the Rejected Article to the vertical file.

There were no more sounds, no vibrations, so I pulled myself together, got to my feet, and walked to the kitchen to see if I could find something to eat. On my last check-in trip, I had brought a few basic provisions in preparation for my stay. I toasted two slices of bread and made myself a cheese sandwich. I found a bottle of wine in the pantry and settled down to shake off the unsettling experience I just had.

After spending a few hours at my computer, I went to my bed on the second floor. I didn't sleep well that night. I tossed and turned, had bits of dreams, got up and paced, went back to bed, and finally fell off to sleep somewhere around 3:00 a.m. I arose at 8:00 a.m., walked downstairs, and made myself some breakfast. I went into the study, sat down at my desk, and thought about whether I wanted to open my computer. Should I write? Maybe. Research? Maybe.

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As I was thinking about this, I became aware of a strange sound—a kind of whine. At first, I thought it was coming from outside the cottage, but as I listened more intently, I knew that was not the case. It was a wailing whine, unlike anything I had heard before.

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THE BOOK MOTH

The whine was oddly irritating, and I had the strange impression that it was meant to be. It seemed to be coming from the area of the vertical file and the Rejected Article. As I came closer to pinpoint the source, I noticed, perched on the front edge of the vertical file, a small brown moth. I assumed this was the moth that had escaped from the cocoon inside the cloth binding. I moved closer to try to get a better look at it. As I did, I had the impression that the whine was being emitted by the moth itself. This astounded me, because I had always thought that moths were not capable of making sounds of any kind. The intensity of the whine grew until I could hear nothing else. I began to realize that again I was moving into a hypnagogic state. Every other sound from the environment seemed to have been somehow canceled out. As I listened, I had the odd feeling that the sound was being emitted within my own brain, totally filling that interior mental space.

As the whine droned on, I seemed to be hearing something that sounded very much like words subtly embedded within it. The experience was so bizarre that I felt an intense fear rising in my chest. The words I heard seemed to be spoken by a tiny, high-pitched voice. Horrified and fascinated, I listened.

The voice was saying, “So, you are *Adam Crabtree*?”

I tensed and looked around to see where these words were coming from. The statement had an ironic

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inflection, as if to say, “I had expected someone more impressive.”

I was so surprised, I almost collapsed where I was standing. It seemed that the words were being spoken by the moth. I tried to get a grip on myself. The words were a statement, but they also seemed to be a question that required a response.

Next, I heard the actual question: “*Are you the pathetic creature that goes by that name?*”

Feeling utterly ridiculous for answering an inquiry from a moth, I stammered, “**Yes, I am.**”

I was stunned and stood there with my mouth open. The moth creature, with not a little impatience said, “*What is the matter with you? You are staring right at me. Don’t you realize I am talking to you?*”

I answered, “**Yes, I guess so. But I am confused. Who are you?**”

The tiny moth creature whined, “*Well, I am what has been most infelicitously called a brown house moth. It is bad enough to be burdened with such a diminutive stature, but then on top of that to have to bear such an insipid appellation is just about too much to endure. Could they not have named me something more dashing, like a “twirler moth,” or more mysterious, like a “sphinx moth,” or more frightening, like a “tiger moth?” But no, the name was to be a “brown house moth.” With such a name, how can other creatures think of me with anything but contempt? It is hard to imagine how I am supposed to gain the ear of any serious*

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person and pass on the significant wisdom I have come to bestow.”

It suddenly dawned on me the absurdity of having a conversation with a self-pitying insect—or any insect at all, for that matter. What on earth had happened to me?

The moth seemed to ignore my look of dumb astonishment and continued, moaning, *“I’d have a better chance if I were one of those giant emerald moths. Then I’d make an impression, for sure.”*

Strangely enough, I was starting to get annoyed with this rant and decided to try to move the conversation in a different direction. Ignoring, insofar as I could, the absurd impossibility of the situation, I chimed in, **“Why not look on the bright side of things? You say you are the bearer of some kind of wisdom—is that right?”**

The moth seemed to take more notice of me and said, *“Yes, that’s true. There’s that to be said for my situation.”*

Now I was starting to feel more engaged in the conversation and more questions were occurring to me. **“How did you know my name?”** I asked.

“Well, there is a simple answer to that. But it will take a long time to give it.”

Stupidly, I blurted out, **“There is no problem that way. I don’t have anywhere I have to be.”**

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“OK,” said The Moth. *“I belong to the insect group Lepidoptera, but that group has evolved a specialized form, to which I belong: one that concentrates on devouring and digesting books and book bindings. For a long time now, our appetite has been evolving more and more in that direction, and away from clothing, bird’s nests, chair stuffing, carpets, and other such goodies that the bulk of brown house moths have traditionally dined on. We have developed a taste for the glue and fibers found in abundance in cloth book bindings, and as time goes on, this predilection is growing stronger.”*

I thought I was getting more information than I probably needed to have, but as The Moth talked I was noticing that the whiny overtone had disappeared and The Moth’s speech was less annoying and more interesting. I asked myself how The Moth could speak at all, not having vocal cords, but realized immediately that this was a much too mechanical way of looking at things and I should expect to discover that some more subtle set of factors was at work in our communication.

The Moth continued: *Certain things follow from this state of affairs—some factors few have noted. You see, the meaning and spirit of a book are not just conveyed in words—no, not at all. The meaning and spirit of the book are distributed throughout the whole book; all that has gone into it is there. True, the author has tried to jam it all into words, but that is a futile undertaking. It is an illusion to think that words are adequate to the task,*

The author, as a living being, puts him or herself into the work, as a whole. Not just as a word emitter, but as an

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Author—with a capital A. This fact, which is obvious to book moths, has not caught on with the less intelligent groups of insects, such as human beings. There have been glimpses of recognition, but no real understanding. When you read a book you meet the Author, and, if you let yourself, you can feel the Author's presence. The book is simply the catalyst for contacting that presence. When that happens, the reading becomes a dialogue, a living encounter that takes you beyond anything that you could get from mere words.

He spat out the final two words with a certain disgust.

Now, there has been a recent article that some of my colleagues have had the opportunity to chomp into and let me know about. (We have our own communication methods, but more about that later). This article, called "Hidden Traces" is a typically clumsy human way of trying to get at the deeper truth of this matter. It states that recent research shows that all kinds of chemical traces with their associated stories are hidden in the physical pages of books, so you don't need to know the words at all to get a feeling of what the author was going through. This is a, albeit weak, beginning of the realization that books are much more than mere words. We book moths know this very well, because, of course, we are actually composed of books, but not just the words of books.

This intriguing assertion touched off an association in my mind. I recalled that my son Andrew, a devotee of Old English, had told me an ancient saying about the book worm. He identified the saying as from the Exeter Book. In translation to modern English, it goes:

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A moth ate words. I thought that was a marvelous fate,

that the worm, a thief in the dark, should eat
a man's words - a brilliant statement
and its foundation is strong. Not a whit the
wiser
was he for having fattened himself on those
words.

(*Exeter Book*, “Riddle 47”)

When I mentioned this ancient riddle, The Moth, of course, knew it well, since it had been devoured and digested by book moths over many centuries.

The Moth, talking about the grub that eats and transforms into a moth, said, *Of course the worm, the grub, is no wiser! The grub can only transform the food into the basic elements needed for the next phases—the pupa and then the moth. Of course, the worm does not grow wise. But the moth—that is another matter! The moth does the real digestion of the book, the whole book, Not just the measly words written on the paper’s surface, but the whole thing. That is why I am saying I have wisdom to preserve and wisdom to impart. My wisdom isn’t just what my grub found in the paper of your Rejected Article. (Yes, I know that is what you call it.) It is what millions of other grubs had devoured in millions of other writings, and not just from present munchings, but also from the feasts of earlier ages. And, more specifically, it is the collective wisdom of the moths, not the grubs.*

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Now, let me give you the bigger picture. The truth is that all us moths are in touch with each other. We have a kind of community of knowledge, a massive treasure trove of wisdom. The amount of knowledge we have digested over the ages is what you, with your limited grasp of things, can never imagine. And we maintain a constant communication with each other about that knowledge. Share and share alike—that is what it's like with us.

At this point my head was spinning. I was trying to find some way to tie in this astonishing view of things with something that made sense to me. So I said, **“Oh, you mean there is a kind of morphic resonance between all brown house moths because they belong to the same species—like Rupert Sheldrake talks about?”**

Spare me your childish theory, please! shot back The Moth. *The reality is way beyond anything you can get your mind around in your primitive stage of education. I am afraid you are just going to have to take it on faith, as you say.*

“OK. But how does this work? Do you all know everything all at once? Do some of you have specializations? Do you, for instance, focus on a certain field of knowledge?”

Well, that is a reasonable question, for a change. Yes, naturally enough, some of us find ourselves more interested in one thing than another. We have our subspecialties—determined by the particular book-meaning we are composed of. And we do have our ways of sorting things out.

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“I can’t imagine what that is like. What could possibly sort out such vast knowledge? Surely that would be an impossible task.”

You have such crude, mechanical methods of sorting knowledge, like your incredibly primitive Google. What we have operates on an entirely different level. I am afraid your tiny brain could never fathom it, said The Moth.

Anyway, time is passing. I am here for a reason, and, being short-lived as I am, I intend to carry out my purpose without further delay. My purpose is this: to give you some salutary lectures on the subject of your life. By “your life” I do not mean the practical details of everyday living, nor do I refer to your personal or social relationships. Let somebody else do that! I mean your life of searching for the real meaning of things—of everything. Here you are, well established in old age, and, I think you will agree with me, the search I speak of has not been all that successful for you. I am here to point out just how unsuccessful it has been and give you advice about how to do better. If you are smart, you will listen to what I have to say. Whether you believe it or not, a book moth can be a very wise counsellor.

I will add one thing. You are fortunate that a moth’s lifespan is short. That means I don’t have a lot of time to devote to these lectures. It will be a crash course, and after I am gone, you can spend the rest of your own life span unpacking the condensed wisdom I have conveyed.

Well, what do you say? Will you listen? Yes or no?

My first inclination was to say, “No! Let me out of here!” I felt I was being pushed by The Moth: forced to move faster than I could absorb what was

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happening. As I gathered together my huffs and puffs of indignation, I thought it was absurd that I should have to sit in my own study and submit myself to lessons from a diminutive insect. I would feel reduced and humiliated—and just plain silly.

Besides, I could imagine what a field day my psychoanalytic colleagues would have if I ever spoke about the scheme proposed by The Moth. I could hear their attempts to construct a psychoanalytic overlay to my ravings, suggesting explanations that would account for this “psychotic fantasy.” They would say that my unconscious had worked out this ridiculous fiction to give my superego—The Moth—a platform from which to berate me. The Moth is just an unconsciously hatched device, they would say (and a rather foolish one at that), that would allow me some measure of unconsciously enjoyed masochistic pleasure. I could just hear them!

While indulging in these self-involved musings, I felt another, very different set of feelings rising from the darkness and sending a shiver up my spine. I had the haunting feeling of being stalked by a sinister and frightening possibility: What if The Moth was what it claimed to be? What if his lectures created some kind of danger for me? What if it shattered the foundations of my worldview? What if his message was explosive in some profound metaphysical sense? What then? What if the result was to cut me adrift from my usual moorings, isolate me from my colleagues, impotent to convey in any adequate way what was happening to me?

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I had long fancied myself an *outsider* (in the sense made popular by Colin Wilson): a bold spirit who sees the world differently from others, an admirable misfit, a respected non-conformist who can hold his head high above the masses of those who don't give a thought to the meaning of things. I had a suspicion that the lectures of The Moth might very well destroy this lovely self-image, and I would be forced to see myself instead as one of Nietzsche's unthinking *herd*. In this scenario, the lectures' revelations would thrust me, unprepared, into a frightening depth that I had been claiming to describe in my Rejected Article, but which in real life would be too much to endure. I would then find myself indeed staring into an abyss that was staring back at me, both mocking and threatening.

However, to say I was both wary and scared of The Moth would not tell the whole story. I was also intrigued. It was like being invited to step into a dream landscape that continually expanded before your eyes, beckoning you ever deeper, and holding out the promise of something both strange and intoxicating. The kind of dream you don't want to wake up from, lest you miss something wonderful.

I looked up at The Moth. Although The Moth was incapable of conveying a feeling through facial expressions as a human being can, I could nevertheless vividly sense his growing impatience. The Moth wanted an answer, and he wanted it now.

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I gathered myself together and, pushing all thinking aside, said, “**The answer is Yes!**”

The Moth immediately said, *Two o'clock tomorrow!* and flitted away.

At this point, I noticed I was getting fatigued. My energy was fading fast and I felt I was losing my ability to concentrate. Up until now, I was so focused on the bewildering experience of The Moth and his truly strange views on things, that I had almost no physical impression of my study: the room in which we were having our exchange. Now, a renewed perception of the room intruded into my awareness with force. I could see every item there in vivid detail. I glanced around me, feeling like one awakening from a dream. When I looked back at the vertical file and the Rejected Article, I panicked. What had happened? Had I imagined everything?

I started moving along the bookshelves lining the wall, trying to find The Moth. True, I was afraid that it was a fantasy or delusion, but my stronger feeling now was one of incredible disappointment. It was like coming down from a high and feeling depressed at the thought of possibly never being able to get it back.

Again, I thought, What just happened? What I remember happening could not have happened. But even as I said that to myself, I knew it *had* happened. Something that should not, could not, happen, *did!* I slowly moved around the room, reacquainting

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myself with reality. As I did, I felt more “back,” securely embraced within the familiar. I went to the kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee.

The light of day was fast dimming. I had not turned on any lights, and as I sat in the deepening twilight, I remembered something.

Some decades earlier, when I was a young therapist seeing clients at 63 Admiral Road in Toronto, I had an odd experience. I was sitting and listening to a client, a young man, talking about some routine matters in a rather flat voice. As I listened, I felt a sleepiness come over me. Suddenly, I saw a thick white mist rising up from the carpet and surrounding the recliner he was sitting on. Now, as I looked at the young man, I saw him sitting with arms folded rather high in front of his chest and wearing a large headdress of some elaborate kind. He was seated alone on a special throne-like seat in a large boat. I could see rowers behind him, with long oars moving the boat across a mirrorlike lake surface. I knew there were others in the boat with him, but they were not distinct, and it was clear that he was the important person there. I could see in the distance, the shoreline toward which the boat was headed. There the lake met not a beach, but a layered man-made surface of granite-like stone. The feeling was that this was a ritual journey and something would take place on that granite stage—something centrally involving the personage in the boat.

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There I was, sitting on my chair in my office, still feeling sort of sleepy, when I suddenly became aware that I was seeing something absolutely extraordinary. As soon as I became aware of myself and the fact that I was having this vision, in a fraction of a second, and with a hissing sound, the mist was sucked back into the carpet, and there was my client, seated on my unremarkable chair and continuing his unremarkable narration.

As I recalled this experience, I realized there was some psychological similarity in the quality of that experience and the one I had just had with The Moth. It reminded me how fragile these kinds of experiences can be: easily disrupted simply by becoming aware of oneself “having an experience.” I also had the impression that, at my present age, having long years of hypnagogic experiences under my belt, it was easier for me to remain focused on the experience without being over-reflective about its impossibility. I speculated that this enhanced ability to dissociate could make the lectures more stable as hypnagogic images and less likely to suddenly dissipate. For some reason, that was a comfort to me.

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THE BOOK MOTH (CONTINUED)

That night I slept well, drifting off as I watched the 1944 film *Murder, My Sweet*. In the morning I was well rested, but as the day went on, I became more and more agitated and uneasy. Stonewell, my wonderfully comfortable refuge from normal life, was taking on a tinge of the uncanny, even the sinister. It was becoming something other than an island of tranquility.

After lunch, I was sat at my computer, answering some emails, when I heard the whine. I felt a shiver move through me. I did not like this. I hadn't realized until that moment that overnight I had neatly assigned the events of the day before to the category of the uncategorizable: the weird that will never be explained and never recur. A curiosity I could talk about with friends, feeling secretly gratified at how unusual I am and how my experiences are indicative of an admirable openness to the bizarreries of the imagination. So, when the whine started up again, I didn't know what to do with it. Such things just don't repeat. If they do, they destroy any sense of complacency. At that moment, I felt anything but sophisticated—anything but comfortable. The whining, now *repeating* itself, pushed all these musings aside and I felt fear—fear of the uncanny and unknown. This thing was crossing over into real life, and I had no way to handle that.

It was two o'clock. I was sitting at my desk, facing my computer. The whining was behind me. I

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swiveled 180 degrees and faced the bookshelf and the now frightening vertical file containing the Rejected Article. The whine was coming from there, as before. I didn't like this. I felt like I was being pushed around, forced to face something I couldn't control or comprehend. Then I remembered: I had said *yes!*

Once again, the room was fading into the background. At the same time, I was being impelled forward, homing in more and more on the vertical file and the whine.

Now the transition from whine to speech was rapid, and I heard, *OK, Calm down. You are not going to die. Nothing bad is going to happen to you.*

There was The Moth perched on the front edge of the vertical file. I wanted to wipe this experience out of my mind. I wanted to blink my eyes and get rid of it—isn't that how it is done?

You said yes, didn't you? Well, pluck up a bit of courage and keep your word! Don't be such a dolt! Why not enjoy a bit of adventure? Why go on living your stultifyingly boring life? As a matter of fact, that is what I am here to lecture you about!

I felt cornered. I had said yes. No doubt about it. But now I wanted out. The Moth was aware of my mental dithering but ignored it.

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Now, before we get down to cases, I have a preliminary chunk of information to give you about what is going on here.

That Rejected Article that my grub devoured is what was in the center of my awareness when I worked my way out of my cocoon and dried off my wings. You must have injected a lot into it. It had to be pretty charged for it to come on so strong for me. I sat there for a while and really couldn't think much about anything else. It was really annoying and agitating. The part of it that had transformed into me seemed to be smoldering. Something was wrong. Something was—I can't say undigested—unresolved. In any case, what I was experiencing was as close as a book moth can come to a stomachache. An existential bodily pain. This is a difficult thing for a book moth to have to deal with.

Remember, a notable part of my very being is made up of stuff coming from you and that Rejected Article. I couldn't get rid of that, any more than I could get rid of myself. So, if I was going to be able to throw off this wretched feeling and move on to my (largely reproductive) duties as a book moth, I would have to find a solution. So I reached out to my fellow book moths and asked for advice.

Every feeling, every bit of meaning that has been incorporated by book moths over the ages, is available in the timeless book moth community. Communication with the book moth community is an instinctual thing. I don't have to figure out what to do. I just do it, and all the information and all the impressions and all the vibrations that correspond to what I want to find out about just appear. I figured that, among all that accumulated wisdom, some kind of effective procedures should be available for just about any imaginable situation. It wasn't likely that I was the first book moth to

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find himself in such a pickle, and I was confident I would get the enlightenment I needed.

I have to tell you that the first thing I felt when I realized my predicament, was anger at you. It was your unsorted baggage that was giving me indigestion, or whatever this misery is best called. That didn't seem fair to me. Why should I be sitting here stewing because of your problems? Why should I suffer from your stupidities, your evasions, your lies? This realization worked me up into a lather, so to speak, I wasn't going to swallow this. You should be on the hook for your own failure. I decided that I wouldn't let you slip out of this. So many writers think they can palm off their half-baked ideas on their readers and get away with it. If there was any justice in the world, all writers should have to justify what they write: not just get it into print and let it go at that, leaving the reader to figure it out—leaving the reader with a stomachache.

As I was thinking these bitter-tasting thoughts, and at the same time reaching out for help, I received a response from the book moth community. As I suspected, book moths had indeed gotten themselves into similar difficulties before, and a solution had been worked out a couple of centuries ago. The solution was for the book moth in question to take on the author in question and straighten them out and help them resolve their problem. Traditionally, this was done through a series of lectures. As material for the lectures, the moth in question would have all the resources of the community available, as well as a compilation of information about the author in question. Given the common sense and skill of the moth fellowship, I figured I should do all right if I followed that advice.

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So, yesterday, when you said yes, I am afraid that, like it or not, you signed on to be lectured at. And we are going to get right to it, because, as I have mentioned, I have an expiration date.

What a load The Moth had dumped on me. In his mind, my *yes* entitled him to do whatever he had to do to get himself over his stomachache. That meant the lectures. We argued. I tried to make the case to him that I should have been better informed before giving consent for this arrangement. But he would have none of it. After a lengthy argument, in which The Moth had the advantage of centuries of digested juridical knowledge, polemical smarts, and philosophical cunning at his fingertips, I finally succumbed. I have to admit, I wasn't all that reluctant, for, as we talked, I realized this experience could turn out to be for my significant benefit, perhaps giving me a sense of direction I was quite lacking at the time.

So that was it. It was a deal.

That night, as I fell asleep, I thought of Nietzsche's aphorism from *Human, All Too Human*:

Man is very well defended against himself, against his own spying and sieges; usually he is able to make out no more of himself than his outer fortifications. The actual stronghold is inaccessible to him, even invisible, unless friends and enemies turn traitor and lead him there by a secret path.

(Nietzsche, "Self-Observation")

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I wondered whether The Moth would turn out to be such a friend to me—or such an enemy.

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SECOND THOUGHTS

After I had said *yes* to *The Moth*, I thought maybe I was crazy. But when I woke up the next day, I knew I was. How could I entertain such a project, or even the possibility of such a project? Why didn't I just toss it off and move on with the real, substantial engagements of my life? Why did I give my final approval? I decided not to just shrug this question off, but take it seriously and try to answer it.

I didn't want to jump to an answer. I wanted to know the real reason—the really real reason, if there can be such a thing. As I paced around the house, I began thinking of Carl Jung. He was a psychologist and psychotherapist I admired, but I also had my reservations about him. Why had I hesitated? As I thought about it, I realized it was because there seemed to be evidence that at times Jung was rather crazy. Probably the most serious evidence was his “breakdown” that occurred when he separated his fortunes from those of his colleague Sigmund Freud. His breakdown included “hallucinations,” as some would call them, in which he would see people who did not really exist, but whom he actually looked to for important insights into the nature of the human spirit.

I noticed that in my ruminations, I was calling him crazy, using the same word I had just been applying to myself. At the same time as I was calling Jung's “experiences” crazy, I also had to acknowledge that they had led to tremendously important insights into

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the psyche, and, perhaps most importantly, to a remarkable inner transformation in him as a person. Now I realized that the reason I had not been able to dismiss The Moth and his weird proposal was that I secretly thought this might be a chance for a significant transformation of my own.

Jung felt the danger as he went through his transformation. Was my present hesitation due to such a fear? Wanting to get rid of my discomfort, I thought how absurd it was that I should have to sit in my own study and take lessons from a cranky insect. However, mocking my situation was not giving me any relief. So, I tried not to think too much about it.

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THE MOTH'S ENTITLEMENT

I decided I needed to clear time for the “lectures.” I let it be known that I was going to Stonewell for a working vacation, so I could “research and write” without any unnecessary telephonic communications. It would be hard, but I was determined to be mum about what was really going on. I was scared and excited. But everything about the situation was adding up to being a depth experience—for me, at least, if not for The Moth.

It was really hard to get a feeling of the “mentality” of The Moth. So far, he had seemed pretty self-centered and pretty unfeeling. I wondered if other attributes would emerge as we went along. I say “we,” because I was more and more seeing this as a joint project. I was certainly likely to learn something—a lot. But I wasn’t sure what was in it for The Moth. Apart from relieving him of his existential indigestion, The Moth’s side of this cooperative effort was almost completely opaque to me. Also, I found it peculiar that I was responding to The Moth in my mind as a “he.” I know nothing about the gender of moths, but I was responding to The Moth with that specific set of psychological responses I ordinarily associate with engagement with a male.

On the first day of my “vacation,” The Moth was raring to go. Before I could say a word, he began his lecture:

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You are forever talking about depth of experience and the dread that blocks the way. Well, let me tell you that when it comes to depth and dread I have a right to speak—and lecture too. When I talk about depth, I have the privilege of having gone through an experience such as humans never have to face. You will admit that genuine personal transformation is a depth experience. It changes how you see and respond to the world. The greater the transformation, the greater the depth.

Jung felt terror as he went through his transformation (yes, I know all about Jung), but I didn't. I couldn't. My consciousness of such things as danger had yet to form. Remember, at the point of full development of my grub, he comes under a powerful compulsion to stop his endless ingestion and turn his attention in a totally new direction. He starts extruding a strong thread-like material and weaves it into a tight and tough net-like pocket, a cocoon, that surrounds him completely and is fastened securely to the fibers around him. When he has finished, he becomes supernaturally quiet, deathly still.

Immediately, a new activity begins. He produces a powerful acidic liquid that in short order dissolves his own flesh, leaving an amorphous protein soup. After some days, the formless mass starts taking on elements of a new form, operating from a powerful inner urge to shape itself in a very specific way—a mothy way. The transformation from soup to moth is so radical that, in the process, the grub's head is dissolved and the new moth head is formed at the end where the grub's tail had been located. The emerging form takes on the features of a moth—a peculiar type of moth. The only formation permitted by its hidden inner guiding map. In my

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case, the moth formed was the tineola bisselliella, exhibiting a marked predilection for books and book bindings.

When I was fully transformed into this kind of moth, for the first time I could sense danger. All my instincts to avoid dangers were suddenly in place. If I sense you are going to smash me to a pulp with your newspaper, you can be sure I am going to get out of the way. But, unlike Jung, I had nothing of that feeling during my transformation. I had not yet reached that point. Nevertheless, I could feel that dread after the fact. When I thought about how my existence could easily have been erased at any moment during that process, I could feel dread retrospectively. I put my present consciousness into that now-past time and I trembled. That is what gives me the right to make pronouncements on depth and dread.

For your education, you should know that I also experience another kind of dread. I am aware that I drink the nectar of flowers to keep mobile, but I will never grow and develop into a new phase of existence. My next phase is death. And for any composite thing, death brings dread. However, though I cannot escape the dread of death, I can feel something of the eternal satisfaction of the Witness.

I am a Witness. Being a Witness doesn't bring with it any fame or admiration, but it carries its own timeless pleasure, a sense of immortality that in some inexplicable way transcends the inevitable death that lies ahead. It engenders the instinctive feeling of fellowship with eternal wisdom, since the Witness knows it is already ensconced in a realm beyond change and dread.

The fact is that every conscious thing is such a Witness, and every conscious thing senses that this is the case. But not

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every conscious thing actually becomes aware of its true nature. For that reason, many conscious things have an exaggerated fear of death, and, in their fear, they mock those who can acknowledge the real situation. They see them as arrogant.

The Witness Moth knows—although without proof—that it cannot be destroyed, for it has no dissoluble parts. It is an archivist for the One and a Witness for the One. The Witness Moth knows this better than most. Knowing itself as a specific locale for the One, it is free of doubt. For this reason, it is a creature that possesses an appropriate sense of arrogance. That kind of confidence can only be viewed as arrogance by those who are ignorant of their true nature. Mine is not a petty arrogance that lords it over others or looks down on them. But its sureness, its absolute confidence, cannot but be envied by those who see only from a limited perspective. The hostility of those who are unaware of that truth can be truly formidable. They envy, but they do not know they do. They envy, not because they don't possess this gift, but because they don't know they possess it. Those who navigate the world of depth—for humans, largely the world of the hypnagogic—are more likely to be aware. The truth is that the Witness Moth is both real and a projection of the unacknowledged glory of the envious. You see, when I see myself truly, as a Witness Moth, I am content. So now, pull yourself together and pay attention. Listen now to a moth's wisdom, for, in the end, it comes from the One.

THE BOOK MOTH LECTURES

The snake that cannot slough its skin, perishes.
Likewise spirits which are prevented from changing
their opinions, cease to be spirits.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*

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FLAWS

These lectures are on depth and dread, and your experience of them. They are about the ways you have not been able to measure up to your own expectations in regard to coming to terms with them, and the resulting profound turmoil arising from that failure.

Your life has been driven by the desire to find out about depth in human experience. You started off your exploration of depth very well. In the Rejected Article, you mentioned in passing your experience with Mandrake the Magician and the Mirror World at age five. It was very clever of you to become devastated by that cartoon—and at such a tender age. This experience shows you were meant to explore depth in a special way. Despite your extreme youth, when you saw those few cartoon panels, you immediately felt a sense of the abyss and it scared the living daylights out of you.

You lived in a practical everyday world, a world so familiar and predictable, a world that your fellow travelers constantly confirmed as the “real” world. Everything in this familiar world has a name, and naming its contents gives you the impression that you know it. It makes you feel safe and secure from all alarm. Even at five, you knew a lot of names, and when you didn’t know what to call something, your inventive mind could come up with a name to use. So, you felt content. Until you saw that Mandrake the Magician cartoon.

The silvered glass mirrors that you saw in everybody’s house reflected that safe, familiar world back to you. Everything you saw there was a confirmation that the world, with its familiar features, is what it seems to be. All the mirrors showed the same thing, and that was good enough for you.

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Also, the features of this pedestrian world were not just mirrored in bits of silvered glass, they were also “reflected” in a million ways in your daily encounter with its physical and social entities. Everything was named, and those names showed that you and everybody else were talking about the same thing. You had a million reassuring mirrors surrounding you and they all made you feel safe and content in the knowledge that you knew reality as it is, that you knew it and could count on it.

But one day in 1944, you read the “funnies” in the newspaper, and along came Mandrake the Magician who shattered that illusion. In the cartoon panels, you saw him take a magical formula that dissolves the surface of silvered glass mirrors in such a way that he could walk through the mirror into a world on the other side. This was an astonishing thing, and a frightening thing. At first glance, the Mirror World that Mandrake walked into seemed to be the same as the familiar world, but that first impression was an illusion. The Mirror World’s objects and people only seem to be the same. But on second glance, they showed themselves to be oddly different, hauntingly strange, spookily alien, and therefore scary. If the other world had been inhabited by monsters, it would not have been as terrifying. They would simply have been other, and you would not have to connect them in any significant way to yourself. But, much to your bewilderment, the Mirror People were not weird monsters, and you did not know what to make of their apparent sameness.

Mirror People looked exactly the same as their normal-world counterparts, but they were smarter, they operated according to different rules than those of their familiar-world counterparts, and they were deceptive; that means that their

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apparent sameness could not be trusted. The Mirror World looked like this oh-so-familiar one. However, its denizens had one foot in the familiar world, and one in a land of mystery.

One peculiarity was that the names of the Mirror World counterparts of the familiar world were pronounced backwards. Thus, Mandrake's mirror person was called Eƙardnam. Mandrake's counterpart in the Mirror World was, in a way, himself, but himself somewhere else, rooted in some sort of unfathomable depth. You felt this strangeness—this you-and-not-you quality—immediately. You recognized the otherness, the alienness of the Mirror World, behind the sameness, and it frightened the life out of you. Everyone, including you, was something much more than you had thought. Your world began spinning; you felt suddenly lost and unsafe. Nothing would ever again be quite the same. The encounter with the Mirror World was totally unexpected. It was terrifying. What is real? What is predictable? What can be trusted? You no longer knew.

The experience of the Mirror World with its Mirror People was an experience of depth in its essential features. At that time, at the age of five, all you knew was that you felt dizzy and disoriented, doubtful about everything, all those rock-bottom realities that up to that moment you had considered completely safe and contained. Once a person has had such an experience of depth, they instinctively scramble to get back some feeling of settledness and look to re-establish some solid ground to stand on. But as a five-year-old, that was not easy to do.

So, yes, you started off your search for depth very well. You had a life-altering experience. It was so momentous that you maintained a vivid continuous memory of it over the decades.

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As a matter of fact, you have never been able to fully shake off that initial experience. Throughout your whole life, when you look in the mirror—really look in the mirror—and see yourself, you feel that ancient shiver go up your spine. That is supposed to be you in the mirror. But is it really? You can almost see a slight knowing grin starting to form on that mouth, though it never actually shows fully. Even your own bathroom mirror can be a threat to you! So, yes, you started off your search for depth very well.

But what have you done since then? Have you been true to that early vision? Have you at least gone back to contemplate it as a possible source of important knowledge? A door had been opened, but, insofar as you could, you have tried not to think about it—to not feel that strangeness and that terror again. You have been both fascinated by the Mirror World and determined not to look at it very closely. That is why, now, at this time of your life, you are aware of certain serious flaws in the conduct of your search. You have glimpses of that fact, but you are not sure what these flaws are. I have come to help you discover them. There is hope for you, because you still have the formula that dissolves the surface of this world's mirrors and opens the door to the Mirror World's depths. You use that formula all the time when you move into your hypnagogic images that entertain you so much. You have the formula, but are hesitant to apply it in ways that really count.

What are those flaws, you ask? First of all, your flaws have to do with your failure to dissolve the surfaces of the mirrors that your culture endeavors to maintain for the sake of social stability: those reflections that try to force you to accept the surface that each person mirrors to the other. You could not be expected to deal with all of these mirrors, of course. They

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are everywhere and beyond the powers of any one person to change. But there were some that were ripe for the picking, some that could be challenged, some that you could cast doubt on. You saw that but did nothing. You were silent, giving yourself various excuses for not speaking up. The truth is that you were afraid of rejection by those who wanted to keep their comforting mirrors intact.

Second, when you did dissolve some of them by applying your magic formula, you did not go the distance required. Your culture has no appetite for the dissolution of the surface. That formula threatens the carefully woven fabric of tranquility which it strives so earnestly to maintain. True, it is willing to be entertained by a touch of the uncanny (just as you are), but not enough to truly shake things up. So, you—you tended to obey your culture's rule: "Thus far and no farther."

Third, in some cases, you dissolved the mirror surface and exposed the other world, but did not go through yourself. You felt safe enough to point to the Mirror World and make statements about it. But, unlike Mandrake, you avoided passing through to the other side. You were too scared of meeting your mirror self on the other side and being cast into the depths—maybe forever. You are afraid, even now, to truly look at yourself in your own bathroom mirror!

Haven't you noticed? Haven't you become aware that you are a naked person? You came that way into the world, just as I did. What do you carry with you? Only what has become part of you. Everything else has slid off and, for all practical purposes, is gone. What you have absorbed from the depths you cannot lose. The rest is just your discardable cocoon.

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Now I am going to give you my first hint about the direction of your salvation. Become like me, The Book Moth. Not like my grub, the Book Worm. Don't just eat words. You must insist to yourself that you move on to the next phase. Transform the eaten source into your very being.

In these lectures, I will be talking to you about all your flawed responses to looking into the face of the beckoning mirrors. Sometimes, I will talk about depth and dread in terms of your Mandrake the Magician Mirror World. I will acknowledge where you may have done well, but do not expect me to hesitate to call attention to the ways you have failed.

At the conclusion of each lecture, I will give you a chance to throw in your two cents, but briefly, because my time is limited. OK, now you can comment if you want to.

End of lecture.

There was a pause, and, after an awkward moment of silence, I became aware that The Moth was waiting for my response. I was a bit stunned by The Moth's criticism and it took me a moment to compose my thoughts. Then I began:

I gather you see your criticism of me as something "for my own good," but I had hoped there would be a good deal more patting me on the back for those things I have done well. After all, a person needs some encouragement, despite their mistakes. However, I will put that aside and talk about what is occurring to me as I think about your lecture.

I just realized, in listening to you, that I have always been driven by one imperative for action: the

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command Discover! This has been with me from the earliest years, and it has never left me. Your words have here made me consciously aware of what has unconsciously driven me all that time: the overriding ideal by which I rate my accomplishments. Discover! is the principle by which my conscience judges my life.

It may seem strange that I have not explicitly recognized this powerful inner sense of mission before. However, when I think about it, I know why. It is because it has taken me this long to rid myself of the corrosive and pestilential morality imposed on me from my youth by the Catholic Church and its spokespersons. One powerful set of beliefs had been forcibly imposed on me by these religious watchbirds: That conscience must be formed from the authority of others, not from the experience of life. That we must do whatever the Church says we must do, no matter what. That any questioning of this is sinful and worthy of eternal damnation. Over the middle decades of my life, I had to work hard to exorcise these corrupted teachings of the institutional Church, with its small-minded sense of “goodness” and “obedience,” and its relentless warnings about the danger of eternal damnation from any disloyalty to the principles of “faith.” It took me quite a while to cast them out and to see that the institutional Catholic Church is an abusive tyrant, imposing a cruel morality on the minds of the faithful from cradle to grave. And it took me a long time to form a conscience of my own.

Be that as it may, I now, today, realize there must still be unseen pockets of that moral oppression: unconscious, fixed ideas still sufficiently active to prevent me from fully recognizing what I truly believe about human life and the depths of human aspiration. I do now realize that the drive to Discover! is the one

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precept I will never forsake. It comes from me and me alone. It expresses the essence of who I am.

Discover! Specifically, to discover ultimates. To find out what this cosmos is in its fundamental structure. To find out what human life is about in its final aspirations.

Discover! is the imperative that urges me along. Not that the search it commands is an easy or even gratifying one. Much of the time I feel like a person trying to find his way through a thicket at night, guided mainly by touch, with little light to see by. Nevertheless, every once in a while there is a discovery. Every once in a while, I, almost accidentally, grab onto something substantial—something I immediately recognize as real. The satisfaction I feel in that experience makes the effort worthwhile.

Discover! is an imperative that affects all my decisions and informs all my relationships. If I am true to it, I will do well. If I am not, I will do ill and must answer for that.

If from these lectures I become aware not only of the ways I have been true to the Discover! principle, but also, and especially, of the ways I have failed it, I welcome them. So, Mr. Moth, lecture on!

With that, the tiny lecturer gave a brief preparatory flutter of his wings and flew off.

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HYPOCRISY

It is a shame you came so late to recognize the hypocrisy and ugliness of the institutional Catholic Church. You are going to have to answer for your repeated delay of acknowledging what you had for so long known in your heart. You had long possessed the ability to get a sense of the true nature of love and its perversion in the institution of the Catholic Church. You long knew that not love, but the anti-life, anti-freedom, anti-sexual core revealed in the Church's practices was the actual teaching that was reaching the community of the faithful. What on the surface presented itself as love and truth was laced with hypocrisy.

In saying this, I am not implying that all the Church's representatives were conscious and fully intentional in their destructive attitudes and prescriptions. Every day, many "good" people, thinking self-righteous, good thoughts, do harm to those they were supposed to love and protect: those they were supposed to inspire; those they were supposed to help come to know the truth about the primacy of love, freedom, and the life force. They themselves were duped by their own duplicity: their own self-deception, their own blindness to their all-too-obvious intention to stifle life in its natural expression.

At this point it is the book moths who rise up to speak the truth, because the Catholic community as a whole is incapable of seriously examining the realities of the human suffering they have produced. Only the book moths could do this, for only they have been immune to the strategy of carrying on with bad actions while speaking the language of good. Only the book moths could see it because they are not tied to the verbal, and therefore to being taken in by lies and

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deceptions put into beautiful words. Only they were able to penetrate the surface meaning of these words and see the truth—the undeniable and obvious truth—making itself felt in the depths. So, in this lecture, I am fulfilling two missions: One, my personal mission to correct your befuddled state. And the other, my mission to speak up for all book moths everywhere who are in full agreement about this abominable situation.

I need to tell you that unless you recognize your complicity with this lying and pretending, you will not be able to enjoy the wonders of the depths of human experience. You will not be able to go beyond the point you have reached at this time of your life. The place where you feel stuck and unclean. Yes, it is a kind of uncleanness. It is a stench in a room that everyone smells, but no one will speak about. Words are surface, but smell is depth.

Yes, I am confronting you, and you alone. For each person must take responsibility for their actions, or lack of action. The present marks a crucial moment on your personal spiritual path, a moment you have come to and cannot avoid. You might say that you cannot take the blame for the pretenses of others, and I completely agree. You might say that, from your experience, you knew only the evil of the Catholic Church and not of other religions or philosophies, and I completely agree. But your knowledge of the Catholic corruption is precisely what you must face up to, specifically because you did know it firsthand. You saw it in its vivid and undeniably destructive power, and you chose to be part of it. For that very reason, there is no excuse for you. Don't run away from it. Face it. Now is the moment for your examination of conscience.

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You have had it soft. You have been respected and admired by many. That might make it difficult for you to admit the truth of your hypocrisy. But do you really have anything to lose? Is the false respect and admiration you receive worth it? Will this cleansing not bring you relief?

End of lecture.

My “examination of conscience”? What does that mean? You are right. I must face my hypocrisy. Where was it operating? When did it begin?

I suppose I can make allowances for the fact that as a five-year-old boy, I could hardly take a stand against what was believed by all whom I loved. In examining my life as an adolescent and young adult, I could perhaps exonerate myself for not doing more to protest the Church’s moral oppression. But there does come a point when you know what you are doing, a point at which a person becomes truly responsible for his or her life and decisions made.

How and when my hypocrisy began is not easy to pin down. When I left home and attended a Catholic university, I was still blindly under the Church’s sway. Then, when halfway through university, I decided to join a Benedictine monastery. I would have to say I was still making decisions for the Catholic way in good conscience.

I believe it was during the following years, which I spent in the monastery, studying theology and preparing for ordination to the priesthood, when something started to feel wrong. In that period, I developed conscious, clearly felt twinges of doubt about my faith. When, after ordination, I was sent to the University of Toronto to get a degree in philosophy, I began to experience torturous thoughts:

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Could all these beliefs actually be true? Are these teachings about sin and punishment false? Or, on the contrary, am I actually a person of weak faith and a transgressor? A deviant from the faith who must confess his sin of doubt?

As the years went on, and I left the monastery and priesthood and became involved in giving and receiving therapy, the doubts grew. But, distracted by the frenetic life I was making for myself, I was able to push them aside and ignore them. Then, as the years passed, I became more painfully aware of the damage produced by the Church in the lives of many.

My awareness of the sinister side of the Church was growing to such a degree that I finally had to admit to myself that I had played a part in creating the framework for which such destruction was occurring. I reached a point where I could no longer say, "I didn't realize." I ask myself now, in retrospective mode, how could I have been so blind? It should have been so obvious, so clear. The question of "how?" is perhaps impossible to answer. The point is that I did not take action, and I did not undertake the kind of reparation that could be performed through, for instance, my professional writing. So today I stand accused by you, Mr. Moth, and I have to say, it is with good reason you do so. It is in that spirit that I now carry out your suggested "examination of conscience."

That term is familiar. When you are a Catholic seven-year-old (the age of "reason" and "responsibility"), you have to prepare for receiving the communion wafer for the first time. But before you can be permitted to take the unleavened host into your mouth and swallow it, you must get your soul cleansed of the disgusting bits of sin you have already accumulated in your short life. This means going to "confession." In

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the confessional box for the first time, kneeling alone in anticipation of you know not what, you see the movable divider between the penitent compartment and that of the priest slowly slide aside to reveal your father confessor, ear bent toward you and elbow resting on the arm support, waiting for you to tell him your sins.

To get to this point, every Catholic seven-year-old had to make an “examination of conscience.” That is, take an inventory of all the actions you have committed which have put your salvation in danger and make a clean breast of all of your transgressions. A list with names of sins was handed out. For the seven-year-old, that list infallibly created feelings of uncertainty and fear. For here, in a few words, was the proclamation of those things you had to avoid to escape eternal damnation in hellfire. For me, becoming seven years old was a miserable entrance to the world of human responsibility. Preparing for confession was my personal initiation into hell—both theological and emotional. From that point on, I would never again feel totally carefree. There would always be the haunting feeling that at any moment I could make a terrible misstep that would seal my eternal doom.

That scrap of paper listed all sins equally. Nothing about their relative gravity was betrayed by the typeface or the use of capitalization. There they were: talking back to your parents, fighting with your siblings, lying, being angry, cheating, stealing, eating meat on Friday, not going to mass on Sunday, doubting the Church’s teachings, and so on. But there, inconspicuously situated among all these grave actions, was a sub list of items relating to “purity.”

As I read this sub list, my emotional antenna began vibrating, and the alertness-level of my nervous

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system jumped several notches. I somehow knew that now I was entering really dangerous territory. What were “impure thoughts”? What were “impure actions”? What were “impure desires”? And what was “alone or with others”? I had no clear idea of the territory that this scrap of paper was mapping out. But my instincts told me that, whatever it was, it signaled the ultimate degree of peril and the greatest danger of destruction.

Not that I received any real help figuring it out. Sure, I had recently attended catechism classes, where the nuns and the priest claimed to be preparing us for the sacrament of confession. And sure, they did mention the word “purity.” But their utterances about it were so vague and elusive, that I couldn’t really get hold of it. The skittishness of these paragons of strength and self-assurance (as I considered them) made me realize that something big was up. You can be sure they did not mention “sex.” Not once! Neither did they allude to any specific parts of the human body. Never! So, we seven-year-olds were all left to try to fill in the blanks with what we gleaned through overhearing discussions between adults and the frightened breathless whispers of our playmates.

In my family, I know for sure there was never any mention of the word “sex,” and even the word “pregnancy” was uttered only in hushed tones and with something bordering on disgust. It would take me some years of confusion about whether, and how, I was sinning against purity to finally get the drift. I finally figured out why, of all the sins on the list that our Catholic teachers were perfectly prepared to talk about *ad nauseam*, it was those on that little sub list that froze them in their tracks and rendered them virtually mute.

They were affected this way with good reason. For the Catholic Church rejected any notion that sex was good or natural or wholesomely enjoyable. It also insisted that it was not only impure actions that were prohibited, but also impure thoughts. It is not possible to overestimate how destructive this state of affairs was, and is, to the Catholic “faithful.” I will say more about that later.

What I have to do right now is confront my cowardice and self-betrayal as an adult. How could I, in my mature intellectual development, have tolerated the willful blindness I saw everywhere concerning the devastating effects of these Church teachings and practices? How could I knowingly choose to ignore the corruption of an institution that I was part of?

Let me put it this way. The anti-life, anti-sexual, anti-human message of Catholic dogma was out there, operating in plain sight, showing itself before my very eyes, and I did nothing to question it. Today, I cannot but agree with Nietzsche who said, “The Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad, has made the world ugly and bad.” I speak about the largest Christian denomination in the world. The one I grew up in and became deeply affiliated with. The one I knew firsthand—the Catholic Church.

Over the years, I have come to the conclusion that the pain and suffering inflicted by the teachings of the Catholic Church on its little children is breathtaking and mind-numbing. It is the pain and suffering that comes from being taught that the enjoyment of the full powers and passions of life is forbidden, and that freedom of thought is an evil. Not that every Catholic young person I knew growing up was as paralyzed sexually as I was, nor as straightjacketed in their thinking. There were certainly some who had escaped

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that torture. But they had escaped not because of the kindness or humanity of the Church. They escaped because of the beneficent, pro-living attitude of uncontaminated adults who, in some capacity or other, were present in their lives. They were the 'nominal Catholics' who, against all odds, adopted an attitude of skepticism, indifference, or rejection in regard to what they had been taught.

The motivation for this ecclesiastical abuse was twofold: to grasp power and to create fear. The power was exercised by the male domination of every part of Church life. It showed itself, on the one hand, in the subjugation of women in every important aspect of Church life and governance. On the other hand, it systematically worked to instill in children a slavish obedience to authority and lack of confidence in their own ideas. At the same time, it implanted in them a fear of their natural bodily energies, while in secret sexually exploiting those energies for gratification of their officials and authorities.

The fear was fear of nature and natural depth. The intention of totalitarian control of such a vast community could not be realized without the severe inhibition of what is natural and free in the human spirit. This meant exerting control over not only human actions, but also, and especially, over the development of ideas and the creative imagination.

The effects of the stifling of natural life forces ensures that, from birth, children are forced to be at war with themselves: with their natural instincts, desires, and loves; with their passion to use their minds without censorship; with their desires to explore life experiences without hindrance; and with their drive to delve into the mysteries of nature within themselves,

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others, and in the world at large. And overall, and, behind all of this, was the denial of the primacy of love.

When I was going through my various stages of education in the 1940s and 1950s, I did not once hear any of my Catholic teachers or advisors say anything significant about love. The aspirations instilled were for good citizenship, respect for the local culture, submission to the rules of the family, and pious fidelity to the Catholic faith. The greatest good was the most perfect conformity to the will of the Church and submission to the authority of those who represented the Church. Blind loyalty was the highest value—not a word about love.

I have had the gratifying experience of discovering in recent years that love plays a central role in understanding the meaning and practice of life in nearly all systems of spirituality. It has struck me forcefully that even philosophical systems have frequently placed love in a privileged position in the exploration of the origins of the cosmos. I hope to say more about this at a later time, Mr. Moth.

Perhaps the most despicable and most dangerous maneuver undertaken by the institutional Church, and the one that is most blatantly anti-life and repressive, is the attempt to control human thought. We already saw this expressed in the sin of “impure thoughts” and “doubting the Church’s teaching” on the seven-year-old’s sin list. It takes its bolder, more devastating form in the Church’s insistence on the acceptance of, and belief in, a massive collection of tenets of faith. It allows no doubts about these things. In fact, the very act of asking doubting questions, even if those questions are internal and not expressed, is a sin. The internal nature of your doubts do not save you from condemnation, for God keeps track of every thought.

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The only way to avoid complete mental paralysis in this situation is to try to not think about these things at all.

This tight supervision of one's inner mental life has not only done serious damage to the mental health of a notable segment of Catholic Church members, it has also crippled the creative imaginations of virtually all the faithful who were inclined to expand their understanding of the nature of things. When I was beginning my scholarly work as a Catholic student of philosophy in the 1960s, I was forbidden to read many of the great books of the world's most brilliant thinkers because they were on the Church's *Index of Forbidden Books*. Anyone who read any of these hundreds of great books, did so under pain of mortal sin. The *Index* was first published in 1559 and eventually included works by such authors as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Immanuel Kant, René Descartes, John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte, Émile Zola, Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, and Anatole France. So dangerous were these authors' ideas considered to be, that their books were locked in secure book cages in my Catholic university's library. When I saw these enclosures, they suggested to me the notion of a book jail. You could see the inmates through the heavy steel mesh of the walls, but you could not touch them, and you could not communicate with them.

Also, at that time, new ideas were considered so problematic, so dangerous, that any Church representative who wrote a book that in any way touched on theology or philosophy had to obtain for it a *nihil obstat* ("contains nothing doctrinally heretical") from a censor appointed by the local bishop and an *imprimatur* ("it may be printed") from the bishop himself. The absurdity of the situation eventually had

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to be acknowledged, and this whole censorship system was abolished in 1966: not because of its intrinsically anti-life intentions, but because it was too unwieldy to enforce. I need say no more about the diabolically audacious spirit of repression exhibited in these practices. I will only note that the attempts to control the sexuality of all Church members, and the related efforts to suppress their creative thinking, deeply violated basic human rights and blocked the road of inquiry into human depth.

I have worked as a therapist for over fifty years. I have come to see that it is very difficult to disentangle and identify in therapy clients the anti-life inputs imposed on them by anti-life cultural forces like the Catholic Church. It is even more difficult to help people find ways to effectively free themselves of their stifling effects. In recent years, when I have spoken with people who have suffered damage from these institutions, I feel a pang of conscience for my previous complicit silence. With this examination of conscience, I am attempting to confront myself with as clear an acknowledgment of that damage as I can formulate. I hold myself accountable.

This, Mr. Moth, is my examination of conscience.

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THE NEW RELIGION

I have to admit, you have acquitted yourself pretty well in showing that you now recognize the anti-life message of the Catholic Church—and other world religions. You have expressed your regrets about your complicity in that dehumanizing message. However belated you were in coming to that view, you have finally gotten there.

Nevertheless, we moths have the impression that you and many of your colleagues have been blind to the greatest single modern secular denier of human depth. I refer to scientism. The place of scientism is special, since, unlike religions, it makes no claim to have special authority-granted access to the deep. On the contrary, it openly denies the possibility of human depth, or depth of any other kind. Scientism is a rot that has infected every corner of Western culture. It silently works to discourage the exploration of depth, and it denies the power of life and evolutionary drive.

We moths did not invent the word scientism. It is a common subject of discussion among human philosophy students. It is discussed as one might discuss any number of problems in thinking. But it is not a problem, it is the problem.

It presents itself openly and garishly. But you responded to it with indifference instead of the horror it deserves. Scientism consists in the out and out assertion that the notion of human depth is an illusion. It insists that human beings are nothing remarkable and that the notion that they have a special place in a grand cosmic order is a childish fantasy. Scientism declares that, actually, there is no cosmic order at all. The cosmos is fundamentally dead, flat, without purpose, and without depth. This view dehumanizes human beings and devalues human life and strivings.

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There is one way in which scientism behaves like the world religions: it claims that its rigidly materialistic form of explanation is the only legitimate one and works to humiliate those who venerate other forms of knowing. It has created its own self-serving moral code, with its own set of punishments for its violation—believe or be banished from sophisticated human society and become the object of merciless derision.

This is why I am shocked that you have been so lukewarm about this issue. As far as I am concerned, you can count yourself among the dolts of the West. You are asleep at the switch—stupidly complacent. Surely, I don't have to remind you what scientism is. Surely, I don't have to point out that it has taken science, a powerful and admirably practical methodology for investigating nature, and turned it into a pseudo-metaphysics that claims to be able to fully explain the nature of reality and the meaning of existence. You, of all people, should have been stunned by its audacious assertion that the only true knowledge is that derived from physical science, and that all explanations of reality must in the end be reduced to descriptions of matter, motion, and action at a distance. You, the promoter of the exploration or depth—how could you of all people have been so lackadaisical about something so undermining of human strivings?

There is now a broad consensus among us book moths that contemporary philosophy is in a sorry state. It's a real mess. It has come to this pass in no small part because philosophers seem to be deeply driven to compete, argue, and fight with each other to the intellectual death—each wanting to kill all the others and be the last system standing. That in itself is enough to reduce it to rubble, and it should be no wonder

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that today a billion eyes glaze over at the mere mention of philosophical investigations.

Who knew that it would all turn out this way? Who knew that, with the failure of religious movements to construct a foundation for a world that could find no fixed center, and the failure of the Enlightenment to lay a new, more enduring foundation—who knew that the little handmaiden of the Enlightenment called science would eventually become mistress of the house? And who knew that your wonderfully hard-nosed physical science—that highly competent mechanical engineer—would be given an academic cap and gown and be emboldened to sell you on its naïve explanation of the secrets of the universe?

How did scientism make it to the top of the heap? It was by a particularly neat maneuver that escaped a lot of trained eyes. There is a very important point at issue here. Scientism became the new, unofficial, state philosophy in the West, and now holds a power comparable to that held by religious institutions in times past, with a considerable booty of war—the purse strings of academic financing—and lots of other purse strings too. The whole of Western civilization has bought into this new religion, and its movers and shakers faithfully attend the designated academic temples and places of worship, feeling satisfied with themselves, as they go through the motions and sleep through the sermons.

And there you are, snoring away with the best of them.

End of lecture.

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In this, I have to plead guilty. I could offer the excuse that I was fascinated and drawn into the scientific worldview when I was a young, impressionable physics and math major in university. But that says nothing about my failure to progress beyond that in the decades that followed.

This scientific pseudo-philosophy is one more example of the many attempts in the West to denature nature: to ignore or explain away the depth aspect of nature in all its manifestations, human and otherwise. I can say now, at this late stage of my life, that the denaturing of nature is the greatest threat that exists to our cultural, if not physical, survival. Disrespect for nature inevitably brings destruction and strife. Although I have previously pointed out the dangers of scientism—in *Trance Zero*, for instance—I consider my overall performance in this matter to be inadequate. In this I can agree with you.

As time goes on, it becomes clearer to me that scientism was able to carry out its sleight of hand because the West was so desperate to find a way out of the despair of Copernicus (that destroyer of myths) that it could not resist the temptation to take a handmaiden and turn her into a goddess. The result is the creation of a multilevel assault on depth ideas. A prime example is the conversion of what should be objective sources of scientific information—top science journals such as *Nature* and *Science*—into propaganda machines, spouting scientism's simplistic ideas concerning the structure and meaning of the cosmos. These pretended sources of scientific sophistication are, in fact, the new board of censors, and they have created their own new cages for the books that do not receive their imprimatur. Now new titles are held captive and stare out from behind the bars.

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The difficulty in identifying the extent of scientism's influence arises from the fact that scientism is so broadly accepted and presumed to be correct, that it is implicitly promoted in most articles written in all fields of science, and on all levels of sophistication. Run-of-the-mill scientists, working in the trenches of research, simply don't have any idea of the extent to which naïve philosophical assumptions dominate in their fields. Their puny capacity for asking the fundamental questions about this matter is, in my opinion, deplorable.

I plan to be more vocal about these things in the future, Mr. Moth.

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DEPTH

It is too bad you live in a world of gravity. Gravity long ago pulled your world into a very large ball, so that no matter where you stand, you have an instinctual sense of what down means. I know, of course, that we book moths live in the same gravitational world as you, and we too know the meaning of down. But we are not as much affected by gravity as you. We can flit around without much effort, and when, in the end, we make our final fall, it is not with a thud, but in a slow twirling, fluttering movement, with barely a sound when we land.

I make this lament because the word depth is one inextricably related to gravity and down. This has its advantages, but also its disadvantages and misunderstandings. You dig down to make a well, and this can be used to spin some very nice analogies about getting in touch with the hidden forces of life, but it can also lead to a distorted understanding of those buried forces. Both aspects are illustrated in this poem from your friend Nietzsche:

Where you're standing, dig, dig out:

Down below's the Well:

Let those who dwell in darkness shout:

"Down below—there's Hell!"

(Nietzsche, "Undismayed, #3")

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Up, down, heaven, hell, abyss, surface, depth,—loaded terms indeed. Loaded with symbolic meaning. Much of that load was imposed by your man Dante, I believe. But you can't get away from it now. You have to use the words you have got.

Depth is especially burdened. The efficient search and sort system of our book moth community produces a bewildering abundance of returns for the word. You have been trying to say something about depth, so you need to stop for a moment and learn precisely what you mean by that word. I am not expecting a full definition of depth—that is really not possible. Rather, I want to know what central images you mean to evoke by the word.

One of the glaring deficiencies inherent in the word depth is that there are two broad meanings of the term that are significantly different from one another. Even your revered Oxford English Dictionary stumbles around with this one. It says there is depth referring to the notion of down, or, by extension, within. But there is also a tradition in which it means “wide,” “broad,” or “extensive.” There is no way to get rid of this meaning, and maybe in the end it is useful. So, we suggest that, in our discussions, you call these two dimensions of “depth” vertical depth and horizontal depth. This will save us some confusion.

The horizontal aspect of depth is something we moths are past masters at. From early in our evolution, we built up and established a wonderful network among us, extended through space and time, since we all communicate with moth communities established in every place where we have existed—not only with the present moth community, but also past ones.

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The vertical is the experience that moves “down” toward the dark hidden realm that lies below the surface of things. In its ultimate sense, “depth” refers to moving toward the very source of existence: the place from which the universe emerges. Not surprisingly, the vertical is the depth experience that spawns the greatest dread. Here, we book moths may not be so far ahead of you. We have our own sense of dread at moving in that “downward” direction. There are situations in which we too do not know what to expect, and we too are not immune to fear of annihilation. However, I will have occasion to lecture you on a deep confidence in vertical depth that, for specific reasons, you have lagged in developing.

End of lecture.

As you might imagine, I have thought a lot about depth vocabulary, and here are some of my reflections. One stream of depth images has to do with water—large bodies of water. We talk about depth in relation to the ocean. We talk about “the depths” of the ocean, and when we use the term the *deep* as a noun (for example, “the briny deep”), we mean something related to the ocean. The ocean has a surface that we can sail ships on or dive into. And it has a below-surface region into which we can submerge ourselves, and which contains all kinds of living creatures, known and unknown. Even in our time, a full catalogue of these creatures does not exist. So, by extension, depth can be associated with encounters with the strange, the alien, the mysterious.

Sailors take pains to measure the depth of the ocean so as to avoid colliding with hidden rocky dangers. The measure of the depth of the ocean is given in terms of “fathoms.” And when we want to talk about something without bottom physically or figuratively,

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we talk about it as “unfathomable.” Depth terms yield other adjectives. *Profound* has the meaning of far below the surface, whether that is the surface of an ocean or of our mental world. So, we can have profound ocean habitats or profound thoughts.

Your suggestion of recognizing vertical and horizontal depth fits in beautifully with this ocean reference, for it naturally leads to recognizing that depth can signify an opening up of space and expansion. This includes the development of profound states in which there is a stretching of the mind, a reaching into more remote areas of exploration, a more comprehensive perspective, a widening of the view or vision, a pushing of the limits, and a longing for the limitless.

Here I must also call attention to a related word: the *abyss*. This word has been used to talk about everything from the formless chaos present at the beginning of time, to a vast pit or chasm in the bottomless gulf of water thought in ancient times to lie beneath the earth. So, *abyss* tends to emphasize immeasurable depth and boundaryless immensity. It is often conceived of as having an upper edge on which you can stand, and, from which, you are in danger of falling. Also, *abyss* frequently has the notion of danger and engulfment closely associated with it. It can be populated by creatures that are terrifying, either because of their sheer alienness or because they may be capable of devouring anyone who gets too close.

While *depth* tends toward thoughts of profundity, mystery, and possibility, *the abyss* is more likely to go in the direction of becoming lost, possibly harmed, or even annihilated. From all this, it is clear that the notion of depth can refer to elements that, at first glance, strike one as contradictory, but are actually

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complementary. All in all, depth points us toward the unexplored *more*.

So, Mr. Moth, these are the images that come to me when I hear the word *depth* and its associated terms, *the deep* and *the abyss*. The images are both vaguely unbounded in their extent, and, at the same time, vividly specific in the kind of feelings they evoke in us. For that reason, writing about depth necessarily has a poetic, rather than scientific, quality.

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THE UNCONSCIOUS

In today's world, the most common code name for human depth is the "unconscious." Supposedly, if you deal with the unconscious, you deal with what is most profound in human experience. But what a weasel word it has become. It says everything and it says nothing. As a result, it has lost the ability to advance the exploration of the truly bewildering abyss that is the human psyche.

You have been a part of the problem. You, of all people, should have been more insistent on the truth: that penetration into the depths of human experience had taken only a few tiny steps and then, puffed up by its accomplishment, stopped stone-cold still. You know the history; how could you have remained so mute?

As you know, the notion of the unconscious has been hijacked by psychodynamic psychology. A ridiculously arrogant confidence has arisen among therapeutic practitioners about their ability to understand the extent and richness of the "unconscious" in its most general meaning—the aspect of human beings that eludes them. They imagine that naming it the "unconscious" gives them some grasp of what it is. You, with your love of naming, has gone right along with it.

Would it not be much more accurate and less presumptuous to simply call the mysterious unknown dimension of people "human depth"? When it comes to human depth, psychotherapists and psychologists know next to nothing and demonstrate the truth of the old adage, that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

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*The situation has grown worse over time. When artificial somnambulism was first discovered (in 1784, as you are so anxious to point out), no one made any great claims to know what lay beyond that newly opened door. The Romantics found the discovery congenial to their purposes, but they dropped the ball when it came to going deeper. The term unconscious became the catchword and catchall for romanticism's most elaborate fantasies, but had little to offer by way of devising effective means for the exploration of depth. They suffered the fate of many who too carelessly wander into that territory. In that regard, a few of my moth colleagues have absorbed a little book called *The Enchanted Boundary*, which contains this fine quote (which I believe you know):*

*And so they set forth toward the region which they had vowed to conquer, a band of gallant knights, all bedight in massy armor and bravely bearing lances and swords, all seated on steeds which were both swift and sure. But as soon as the first had crossed the border of that region, his weapons became like rotten wood, the joints of his armor began to gape widely, and his proud steed altered to a sorry jade, which stumbled at every pebble in the way. And thus fared it with every knight as he crossed, for lo, it was an enchanted boundary. (Walter Franklin Prince, *The Enchanted Boundary*)*

Overconfidence can trip you up. This is what human depth does to you. If you cross into its territory, don't think you can apply the rules of this world to that one; you must recognize its enchanted nature. Surely this writer was

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talking about the boundary of what you call the Land of Hypnagogia.

You are not innocent when it comes to using the word unconscious as a catchall. How could you, who have thoroughly researched the models—those arrogant models—of the psychological thinkers of the past two hundred years? How could you have become so muddleheaded? You knew that these facile systems, each with its own catchy jargon, were inadequate: Janet’s “subconscious,” Myers’s “subliminal self,” Freud’s “unconscious,” Jung’s “personal and collective unconscious.” True, you have favored the models that offered more space for depth, such as those of Myers and Jung. But you have never sized up the whole enterprise and called it to task. You have never clearly pointed out that when you cross that enchanted boundary, all models fall apart, and all theories show themselves to be weak and useless.

I recognize the difficulty you have with this undertaking. I realize you have spent over fifty years in the field of psychotherapy, a profession that claims leadership in dealing with depth, but has, at best, just scratched the surface. I acknowledge that you may feel some “loyalty” to it. I realize you could not, and should not, deny the good that psychotherapy has done for so many, but that is no excuse for you. Surely now, at this stage of your life, you should get down to the basics and let the rest look after itself. You should not be spending time softening the criticism of the hijackers of the “unconscious.” If people think they are going to really understand depth through involvement in psychotherapy projects, conferences, debates, and speculations, they are sorely mistaken, and you should say so. So much time and energy has been invested in so much endless

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talk, analysis, comparison, formulation, distinguishing, theorizing, and model-building. Despite the advertising, this babble has not moved us very far down the road.

You are going to have to end your silence. I know that will result in sacrifices. But I don't see that you have any choice.

End of lecture.

Well, Mr. Moth, the psychodynamic vision of the human psyche was certainly a step into the depths. But only a start. So far it has been both surprisingly successful and maddeningly disappointing. As a therapeutic technique, it has bogged down in its own complexity. It is an approach that is hierarchical through and through, and, as such, places severe limitations on what it can accomplish. It is built essentially on the practical acceptance of a relationship with a built-in power differential. This presumed subjugation of one party to the other produces a dazzling maze of pretense and falseness. The basic unit of subjugation is of client to therapist. But there is also subjugation of disciple to teacher. This is presided over by the subjugation of teachers to the political pressures of competition and the drive toward standardization. In the end, there is almost no incentive to dive deeper into the depths of the psyche, for the whole undertaking has by this time become what is best described as a natural community whose main purpose is self-cultivation and self-preservation. In a word, it has taken on the worst characteristics of institutions. It has become a vehicle for greed.

There is no doubt that creativity has been unleashed through its endeavors. People have been helped and

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potentials have been released. But, over time, its internal fecundity has fragmented into subsystems, each with its own orthodoxy. These subsystems occur on various levels of organization. True, they have made contributions. But in the process, the endemic relationship of subjugation has not been discarded, and, in my opinion, cannot be, if the basic psychodynamic premises are to be maintained.

The subjugation involves, among other things, the domination of a particular set of ideas over the whole enterprise. New ideas are feared, and the exploration of undiscovered depth is felt as terrifying. The security of orthodoxy is fiercely protected.

This situation will inevitably lead to the demise of psychotherapy as we think of it today. There is no doubt that, in the meantime, good will have been accomplished, for there has been real relief from misery and genuine opportunities for growth. But like all unreflective human institutions, the psychodynamic community cannot thrive. I believe it has already seen its best days.

I have been a full partner in the perpetration and promotion of this situation. I still practice as a psychotherapist. Mr. Moth, you may very well reproach me for continuing within a system about which I have so many serious doubts. I cannot blame you for that. But there is no easy way to handle it. There is no clear path to follow. In a way, simply leaving it would be as false as staying. I fear that this aspect of my process of self-scrutiny is unlikely to be resolved through these lectures.

By way of exception, after my response, The Moth had something to say:

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Before I depart, I have an announcement. Time is of the essence, and I want to make use of all I've got of it. So please be back here at 4:00 p.m. I have a little something different in store for you. And bring along a cup of coffee.

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BOOKS

At four o'clock, I picked up my suggested cup of coffee, went into my study, and settled myself into my chair. I looked up at the top shelf. The Moth was already there, and his posture somehow conveyed to me he was primed and ready to go.

Since you are such a book enthusiast and we book moths are the same, I thought it would be good for you to know something of the central philosophy of the book moth community.

The background is this. Our moth community memory only goes back about a thousand years, to the time when paper was coming into its own. Of course we know all about the history of the production of published materials (stone, wax, papyrus, parchment, paper, tablets, scrolls, codices, books, and the like) from the vast literature on the subject, but I am going to limit what I say to our own firsthand experience, and that is mainly with paper-based books. Long ago, we developed our specialization on books made with printed paper. As I mentioned before, we became fond of, and dependent on, the paper, glues, and cloth fibers involved. You should not be surprised that we have developed a carefully considered philosophy about books as a result.

Although the invention of the printing press is important, books had been around for a long time before that happened, and we were already chewing them up as fast as they could be produced. In your world of today, you have gone way beyond the printing press to a vast array of technologies for

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printing words and pictures on paper. But what is important for this story is simply printing and paper.

We have heard the speculations among you that books are on the way out. In a short time, you say, there will be no more bookstores, no more newsstands, and even the libraries will be closing their doors. The idea is that you are entering the “paperless” era. But the rumor of the demise of physical books has been greatly exaggerated (thank you, Samuel Clemens), and we book moths are not worried.

We believe that books have served a very important function and will continue to do so for a very long time. The function that we are focused on is not the one you have in mind. It is a function that might surprise you. It is a winnowing function that tends to allow the most important knowledge you are gathering to be preserved, and the least important to fade away.

As we see it, books are the threshing machines of your culture. I know (from Colin Wilson’s introduction to Trance Zero) that you grew up on a small farm, and I am sure you are old enough to remember threshing machines. There used to be thousands of them spread across small Midwest farms, clanking away in the late summer to help put away the grain harvest. They are no longer in service, but they provide a very useful analogy for us book moths.

Imagine a large field of ripe oats on a Central Minnesota farm. The oats have been cut, tied into bundles, and are out standing in shocks in the field, waiting to be threshed. The neighbors have gathered with their hay wagons, pulled by tractors or teams of horses. They drive out into the field and load the bundles on their wagons. They haul the bundles to the threshing machine and they pitch off the bundles, one by

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one, onto the threshing machine's conveyor belt. The bundles are carried off into the bowels of the mechanism and subjected to unimaginable tortures inside as the machine rumbles away. Next thing you know, beautiful kernels of oats are flowing out a side hopper into waiting grain sacks. At the same time, the threshing machine is blowing out, through a huge vent pipe and with great force, a mixture of chaff and straw that quickly builds up a huge straw pile. The threshing machine has done its job, separating the grains of oats from their straw and chaff.

This is the way we book moths see the process of accumulating knowledge in the human community: a process that has been in place since books became carriers of information. The books contain a treasure of knowledge, represented by the separated grains of oats. The chaff contains the bits and pieces of insubstantial or incomplete knowledge that we find in various places in the world around us. In today's world, it represents, among other things, the massive unconnected and chaotic communications that occur in our everyday digital world. Only a small percentage of that gets into books, and that is just as well. Just like in the case of threshing oats, the sacks of grain contain remnants of chaff and straw, so also in our everyday world do our books contain a measure of nonsense, because publication is no guarantee of worth. But at least there is more substance there than you will find in the cybernetic and social gossip straw pile. A lot of that great mass of straw and chaff and nonsense and confused communication is indeed stored, since a lot of it takes place through the internet and gets chucked away on servers and in clouds. But most of it is never retrieved and never heard of again—even though, strictly speaking, it doesn't absolutely disappear.

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This is the way we book moths see it. Over time, books and libraries become concentrations of higher quality stuff. It is not all great stuff, and has its share of chaff, but books and libraries do better than servers and clouds—which do no filtering, no threshing at all. Looked at that way, we book moths are doing a great service, gaining access to a rich storehouse of worthwhile information, mining it and sorting it and preserving it for the use of our community and communities to come. We are great threshing machines. The next time you open a book and find it worm-eaten, just consider it a straw pile, a heap of husks of ideas, which no longer has much of the knowledge kernels you seek. And realize that, somewhere in that thing we call the “deep,” all that was worthwhile is still available—thanks to the book moth community.

Now I come to the main point of my lecture. I am going to reveal to you the secret of why the book moth community is so incredibly rich in horizontal depth. The reason is that, by chance, at some point in the distant past, we became lovers of books. We owe this predilection in no small part to our grubs. They just got to like the taste of the physical makeup of books, and so, by one of those quirks of evolution, we were drawn to that source of nourishment, and therefore to a particularly powerful concentration of thought and emotion that tended to be condensed in books, and nowhere else. Here is where the grub’s taste buds determine the collective future of a great community of book moths. Because of the enrichment of our intrinsic constitution from books, enabled by the grubs, we moths are repositories of a great cache of depth experiences.

Imagine how it would be if we had never become obsessed with books. Suppose instead, we picked a different part of

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our diet, such as straw mattresses. How would that have affected us? Well, it is true that straw mattresses, like books, carry more than just the materials they are made of. They also carry a great deal about those who slept on the mattresses, for instance. They are reeking with the emotions of those people: their worries, their loves, their fears. But all of that stuff comes through the mattresses in a very diffuse way, without center, without theme, without meaning, without focus. Such a state of affairs would not have been particularly enhancing for us as a group. But books are a different thing.

Focus is contagious. The focused power of so many fairly developed human consciousnesses in books induced focus in us. As I will explain at a later point, our lack of any verbal facility made us immune to that greatest of inhibiting influences concerning the exploration of depth—verbal language. We were completely free of that handicap and rushed forward in our collective development. In a relatively short period of time (in historical terms) we surpassed the horizontal depth ability of human beings and developed the great communication, storage, and retrieval network I have described to you.

Nevertheless, we realize that, while we have surpassed you in many important ways, we are behind you in others—particularly in the direction of vertical source depth. One of the most important developments of vertical source depth is that it carries the power of relationship and the power of love. We are pretty backward in those departments. You may have noticed a certain rigidity or lack of responsiveness in my interactions with you—a certain lack of empathy. We know we have things to learn, and so we are glad to learn from you. We don't think, as so many humans do, that it is

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a humiliation to learn from others, and so I am here to confess I have an ulterior motive for engaging with you. I am here to see if there is something we book moths can learn in particular from you, Adam Crabtree, and in particular about love. So, this is a kind of experiment. And it is a gamble. It might turn out that this part of the excursion, this ulterior purpose, is a waste of time. Be that as it may, I now confess to you I am also here as a secret agent book moth, so to speak, trying to pick up some good intelligence for the community.

End of lecture.

I have to say, I found this recital of The Moth quite odd. It has a certain cogency and inner consistency. It was actually quite an intriguing perspective. But it was hard for me to see that it was as significant as The Moth seemed to think it to be. Maybe, I thought, this is just an example of how radically different the thinking of the variety of intelligent species can be. In a way, I felt as one might feel who had just been given an item that the giver considered to be of great value, but to the receiver looked relatively pedestrian. Also, I found it hard to take seriously this idea of learning about love from me. But was that indicative of my own prejudice? I was not sure.

I looked up and saw The Moth was still there. Was he waiting for me to say something? Nothing occurred to me, and after a few seconds, he flew off.

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MEANING PARASITES

Although I realize it is a ridiculous thing to say, I had the impression when we met the next day that The Moth looked pleased with himself. As I personally was getting more and more perplexed with what I was finding out, he seemed to be more and more free of physical discomfort. He began today's lecture with some gusto.

You see, it's the hidden self-deceptions that give the trouble. And I suspect you have a lot more of them lying in the weeds. I am not talking about unconscious unresolved psychological conflicts, or some nonsense like that. I am talking about bad phenomenology. I don't like jargon, but sometimes it is useful to understand a shorthand or technical term—like phenomenology—to help focus one's thoughts.

Yes, phenomenology. People talk to each other and take it for granted that because they use the same words, they mean the same thing. That is a ridiculous idea. Most words are not simple. They are not reducible to clean definitions. When two people attempt to communicate, much of the time all kinds of parasites cling to the words they use—hidden accretions of meaning that the two communicators are oblivious to. It is the job of phenomenology to make them visible, to remove hidden assumptions and produce clearer communication. Phenomenology intends to identify and remove the meaning parasites that are so ubiquitous—like verbal bacteria. When they remain unidentified, it is a miracle that any communication occurs at all.

Potato farmers know about parasites. You should know this from your farm experience. If you bend down over a potato

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plant and look at it, everything seems OK. But then if you give it a good shake, you see all these camouflaged potato bugs fall on the ground, and you know what you have to do. You have to spray your plants with anti-potato-bug stuff and get rid of those bugs before they eat all the leaves and you get nothing but shriveled little potatoes when you dig them up. Anyway...you have to do the same with language. Words have their parasites, and phenomenology is the process of shaking them off. Once you have done that, you can develop nice big meaning-tubers that are well rooted in what is below ground—in the depths.

What I am getting at here is that most people have no idea about this problem of communication—these sticky but camouflaged meaning parasites. They wonder all the time why other people are so dense about what they are trying to tell them. “My meaning is obvious,” they think to themselves. “What is wrong with them?” Now, if this is a problem in everyday communication, you can multiply that many times over when it comes to talking about depth experiences. If you are going to communicate about what you mean when you describe a depth experience, expect a lot of problems. When you try to put in words what it is like to be in a world that feels alien to this one, a lot of care is required. You have a lot of explaining to do. In fact, that is your main task at this phase of your life. Since most people do not have a clue about meaning parasites, you are going to have to do a lot of the plant-shaking for them.

End of lecture.

Mr. Moth, you don't have to lecture me about phenomenology. I have been writing about it for years,

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as I am sure you know. I understand very well how hard it is to talk about a depth experience when you are not there anymore, or when your listener has never been there at all, to their knowledge. As an example, I find it particularly hard to talk about hypnagogic experiences—what are for me my most frequent type of depth experience. As I have said, the Land of Hypnagogia has become my depth stomping ground.

You know what hypnagogic experiences are, right, Mr. Moth? They are neither sleep nor waking experiences. They are in between the two. Now, following your suggestion, Mr. Moth, what about the phenomenology of hypnagogic experiences? I believe it is difficult to describe these experiences because we tend to use words drawn from the world of dreams, on the one hand, or from the waking world, on the other. If we are going to make strict, phenomenologically sound statements about hypnagogic experiences, we are going to have to fine tune our perceptual judgments and find out a lot more about the Land of Hypnagogia. Most importantly, we will have to shake off the plethora of meaning parasites clinging to them that actually belong to waking or sleep experiences. I am in agreement with you about that, Mr. Moth.

As a starting point, I will use the analogy of depth experiences, describing them as a “perception of the world as askew with itself.” The question will be, then, in precisely what way “askew”? Think of a painting hanging upright on a wall, like that *Potato Eaters* painting over there. Then picture that same painting having lost one of its hooks and hanging at an angle. It is the very same painting as it was before, but the impression of the viewer, when seeing the angled

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painting, the painting askew, is quite different, unfamiliar.

In depth experiences, there is a perception of the world, the one reality, but it is off, askew with itself. The world is askew with itself because I am perceiving it in a state of consciousness different from my ordinary one, which perceives this world in its familiar physicalness. The world still seems physical, but in a strange way. I am not in another world, or even another place, but this place. I can perceive the objects in my environment, the same objects I perceive in my ordinary awareness. But I am in another state, and those objects strike me in ways they never would in my normal state.

Now, if we are going to undertake the process of applying phenomenology specifically to hypnagogic images, we have to be very thorough and very strict with ourselves. It can be very hard to discern the places in which we carry concealed meaning parasites, and they can be very hard to shake off. These take the form of perceived explanations for what is experienced— explanations that are so well hidden, and so strongly adhesive, that we will undoubtedly have to go through the phenomenological process over and over again.

For practically every kind of hypnagogic experience, and every kind of accompanying feeling, we have been subjected to a plethora of naïve, un-thought-through explanations. For example, Mr. Moth, think of me in my bed having a hypnagogic experience. I am in my bedroom. My room still contains me and its usual objects, but now strikes me as strangely altered. My room and its objects present themselves to me, but not in their usual way. And this odd perception of things is not something I can control. I cannot alter it,

no matter how hard I try. My perceptions may use any or all of my senses. The objects around me appear to exist in space, and so could conceivably be measured with instruments. And if there are persons there, they feel very much like persons of my ordinary experience, yet not quite the same. They may perform actions and do things that I can sense, such as touch me, but not in the usual way. Then, when my hypnagogic consciousness ceases, these odd impressions all disappear. The world has returned to the usual one. It is the same old un-skewed world. There before me is my old, upright, ordinary “painting” of reality.

So, to get to a specific example....I am falling asleep and the room around me becomes ill-defined and feels like the wallpaper of my consciousness. Then, with no preparation, I see, toward the foot of my bed, human heads coming toward me, one after the other in a long procession. They seem to start at a distance of six feet or so from my head and move toward me at a brisk pace. And when they get to about three feet from my head, they swerve aside and disappear behind me. These heads are definitely human, and in many ways quite ordinary. And they are animated heads, alive with live expressions. They are very clearly individual, no two heads alike, just like people I might meet in the street—except they are just heads, no bodies. I am fascinated, particularly by the male heads that have moustaches of various kinds. They are alive, but they do not speak and do not seem to take any particular notice of me. They are all highly individualized, but not one of them is familiar to me. This experience goes on for about three minutes (which is a long time for such a thing), and then ends. And there is just my old familiar foot of my bed in my old familiar room.

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Now, Mr. Moth, this is where the discipline comes in. How hard it is to just stay with the experience, and not immediately alter it through the application of a dozen possible explanations! How hard it is, instead, to attempt to get more raw information, for instance, by recalling as much detail as I can about the look and texture of the heads, their location in space, and so forth. How hard it is not to begin giving explanations of what this experience “really” is! I can come up with all kinds of harebrained theories: psychoanalytic, biological, religious, parapsychological, etcetera. And all these speculations are meaning parasites that want to cling to the raw experience. They cover it over, distort it, reject it. Our North American culture itself intrudes, strongly, clamoring to have its say about the experience. And all this while I am still lying in my bed, not yet completely returned to my ordinary everyday state.

When I do, when I have returned to my baseline ordinary consciousness, I might be inclined to continue these speculations about the experience. But the speculations are not compelling, because they do not have the same sense of substance that the experience itself has. The speculations are fantasy constructions that may or may not be true. I am like the amateur natural scientist who goes out and collects more and more species of snails, but who is not yet ready to speculate about what those specimens mean in terms of a general theory of the evolution of snails.

Now, Mr. Moth, I ask you to keep in mind the fact that I am describing a real experience, and, in a way, quite a simple one, involving, as it does, the presence of living heads moving in space in front of me. But what if my experience includes feelings and feeling tones of

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various kinds? Then it gets even more difficult to stick with the raw, unvarnished experience.

For example, for many years I regularly had hypnagogic experiences in which, while lying in my bed, I would begin to see—I don't know where or in what kind of space—small ceramic tiles moving around in my scope of vision. These tiles were of two colors, which I might describe as emerald green and gold. But that description absolutely fails to give the real *feeling* of the colors. The *beauty* of the colors is totally beyond description. It is breathtaking and unlike anything I have ever seen anywhere else. The tiles look very much like mosaic tiles: individual squares arranged, but constantly changing their pattern. They are in motion, slow motion. But there is more. They evoke in me a kind of ecstasy that is also beyond any other experience. I largely lose touch with myself, but I am aware enough that if I had to go on for eternity having this ecstatic experience and never any other, I would be absolutely content. I would accept that fate in a heartbeat.

An integral aspect of this experience are the feelings and emotions that are embedded in it. I can talk about elation, ecstatic bliss, wonder, pleasure, etcetera. But, of course, these words are almost worse than nothing in trying to convey the impression. In that sense, these words are themselves meaning parasites, clinging stickily to the reality of the experience. In any case, if I were to try to say something by way of explanation after the fact, back in baseline daily experience, I would be simply wasting my time, creating even more ridiculous, meaningless parasites.

This is my stumbling attempt to talk about the possibility of developing a phenomenology of hypnagogic experiences, Mr. Moth. As you can see,

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the tools we have for doing so are as primitive as Stone Age axes.

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DEATH

We book moths are quite surprised at what a catastrophe death represents for most of you people. How much sorrow, depression, and fear is unleashed at the mention of the topic! I suppose we are surprised partly because we moths don't have much life-time to live out in comparison to the average human, and we accept that with equanimity. We know what is coming, and we know it is not very far away. This creates a kind of frank realism about death. We cannot, like many humans do, fool ourselves into thinking that death is far off in the future and therefore not worthy of serious consideration—until the knock is heard on the door.

Our time is short. At birth, we are near death. But so are you, though most of you don't realize it. Your lack of this awareness causes you a lot of misery.

I am not going to tell you that this shows that for moths the events of life are somehow magically sped up. Not at all. Our pace is pretty much like your own. But where we have a big advantage is in the almost instantaneous contact we have with our book moth community when we emerge from the cocoon. This gives us immediate access to the vastness of depth and an astonishing enrichment of life. That vastness is both horizontal and vertical; the ocean is both broad and deep. But as I have indicated, it is the horizontal dimension that is most remarkable.

Our ability to live, really live, and live at depth, is due to our powerful community, our associative existence. But do not confuse us with the kind of insect community you so love to study. It would be a mistake to go in that direction. We are not some great anthill. We do not all have our functions that we blindly perform for the common good. Not at all. In fact,

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we do not cooperate much at all on the level of daily survival. In this sense, we are more like you—individuals with our individual destinies. But we have not ended up in the kind of alienation from depth that you have. This is largely due to our lack of verbal language. But I will tell you more about that at a later time.

Yes, we are truly individuals, and we work at our individuation in a way that looks very much like what your beloved Jung described. We sense on the vertical axis of depth that we each have some kind of mysterious individuality at our metaphysical roots. We value that singularity. And we make the most of it. We sense both the vast storehouse of knowledge of our species and the sublime presence of our ultimate unique source in the deep. Together they provide a great compensation for our briefness. We experience an exhilaration in our existence. Though our irreducible individuality may create irritation among us, just as it does for you, we put up with that willingly, for we never feel alone.

For now, I will concentrate on our vastness on the horizontal axis. We plunge into life immediately on emergence from the cocoon. We feel and know our great, ancient community, and we know it thoroughly. We can access it. We can mine it.

The sense of impending nothingness feared by so many humans is quite absent among us. We feel a timelessness on both axes of vastness. We cannot imagine pure vacancy or absolute ceasing-ness. Such a possibility contradicts what we know every second of our limited span in time. We thrive in our intense experience of immersion in the abyss, and we know that our growth continues without break.

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For this reason, we have an attitude toward the coming completion of our here-existence that is very different from that of most humans, who leave all interest in the deep to the very last moment, so to speak. From their beginnings, book moths continually evaluate their lives according to what we have come to believe are the highest criteria for success and self-realization, and we use the coming of the end as an opportunity to make a reckoning about how well we have done. So you see, as a book moth I am very familiar with the reckoning process. And now I am making you, Adam Crabtree, familiar with it.

You have certainly not escaped the influence of the widespread human view of death as a tragedy. Like so many, you have spent a massive amount of energy worrying about death instead of concentrating on living. How many thousands of times have you personally, and so many of your fellow humans, fretted about a physical pain or anomalous sensation, wondering if it might be a sign that the end is near. When you were younger, you may have succeeded in taking them in your stride. But the nearer you get to the final moment, the more likely you are to see them as harbingers of disaster. As a result, your attention unfortunately shifts toward dying itself, and you lose the opportunity to evaluate your living.

It seems that your brain has a built-in mechanism to counter this imbalance. Older people tend to do a lot of reminiscing. Their memories of the past become sharper and more interesting to them. They might even gain vivid access to the earliest years of their existence and feel compelled to bring more and more memories to light. We moths view this as a reflex attempt to do a reckoning. But because you lack

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knowledge of what a true reckoning consists of, this biological tendency may not reach fruition.

So here you are, Adam Crabtree, getting older by the second and wondering what it has all been about. Maybe now you can better make use of what I have to offer. Maybe you can let yourself engage in an interesting and gratifying process of reckoning for yourself.

End of lecture.

Mr. Moth, I recently had a dream that seems to be in agreement with the gist of your message about death. At the risk of boring you with the details, here it is:

I am in a small town called the Town of the Dead, or Town of the Damned. I am standing on the main street of this town, looking up and across the street at a second-floor open window. The room behind the window is well-lit. The window is open and very wide. It is a stage on which people come forward to speak out of the window about themselves. I realize that these people are more or less close to death (although, I also know that all people are more or less close to death).

In the window, I now see a man talking. He is close to death—whatever that means. He is talking about himself. His name is Jimmy. He is a good old boy. He describes his life in good-old-boy terms. His speech is bullshit. (It seems

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his name is also “Shawn,” a boy I knew in high school who had little success with academics.)

I look down the street to my left and see “the black people.” They are shades of the dead. They are dark; their features are hard to make out. I have the feeling they have already died, but they are not totally corpse-like.

Nearer to me, on my left, I see true corpses: rotting bodies, quite repulsive. But that scene passes.

Now I am up on the second floor of the building across the street, inside the well-lit room. I look around. I hope to see Jimmy up here. It is a big room where there are people who, though close to death—or close to reckoning their lives—are hanging around. Some of them, at least, want to speak at the window. I have a feeling Jimmy is still alive and will speak again, and I feel good about that. I want to hear him speak. I have a feeling that the next time he speaks, it will not be bullshit.

Earlier, when I was down in the street, I saw some people who were hard to categorize. They maybe were dead, or maybe not. The striking thing is how they look, their appearance. Their heads seem to be like hawk’s skulls; their noses are like beaks. They seem to have some function in regard to the dying people. They handle them physically, somehow. They are not attractive. They are dark and unfeeling and pessimistic or negative about life. The features on their faces are dark and unpleasant. One of them resembles a psychotherapist colleague I know.

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When I awakened, I had the definite impression that the dream was not about death and corpses and endings. Nor was it a warning about impending death. Rather, it had to do with life and the value of a life, and about struggling with the issues that arise around recognizing what that value is and how it applies to individuals. You don't need a lot of time to deal with that, but you do need awareness and determination to see the truth of your life and everything else.

I realize that someone listening to me tell this dream might become quite disturbed. I am aware that it would be very easy for listeners to project their own fears or fantasies about death on these images. The dream is about people who are dead, dying, or more or less close to dying, but the central meaning of the dream is not about the proximity of death. It is about the meaning and value of a life for the person.

I also immediately thought about what Jung said in his Fordham lectures, about what psychotherapy is *really* about. It isn't what Freud obsessed about: insights about how we are determined by the past, and identifying the signs of that in the present—our constant struggle against the past trying to push through into the present. Although attaining these insights may be a necessary preliminary step, they are only the first phase of living a full life. At some point, endlessly pursuing issues of the past becomes a waste of time and, more importantly, a distraction from the real-life task of the individual: to individually discover and pursue one's life destiny; and to accept that the individual has a life task that must be worked at and given precedence, if all is not to be in vain. According to Jung, the great mistake of psychoanalysis was to encourage therapy clients to involve all their energies in trying to undo the damage of the past and trying to achieve the happiness they

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missed when children. As a result, says Jung, they miss the point of human life and excuse themselves from meeting the challenges of the present. Rather, they feel sorry for themselves, and become hopelessly bogged down, unable to carry out the real task of living: personal individuation. To accomplish that they must look forward, not backward.

After writing down this dream, which took about forty-five minutes, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of sleepiness. I felt I could not keep my eyes open and had to lie down immediately. I could not even make it to my bed, but collapsed on a couch and immediately fell asleep again. Or maybe it was a hypnagogic state that I fell into. In any case, here is what came to me: I see Jung lecturing to students, as he did at Fordham. Someone calls out, "Come away with us to lunch!" Jung replies, "I cannot. I am lecturing to these students." They call out again, "Come out with us to lunch! You will enjoy it. I was then awakened by my alarm watch. It was 8:00 a.m. Fifteen minutes had passed. I now felt fully awake. All sleepiness had vanished.

I take this dream as a useful starting point for telling you, Mr. Moth, my take on death. Notice that the process going on in the dream is a reckoning that takes place in the presence of our death. That reckoning is not about feeling good or bad about what one has done and owning up and taking whatever reward or punishment our life acts deserve. Rather, the reckoning involved is to see how we are doing in moving along our own individual life path to becoming who we can be. In other words, to examine how well we had done in our actual lived life day to day, and where we might have gotten off the path and

neglected our process of individuation. That path and that way forward is the central thing.

As you now know, I believe the examination of one's past in psychotherapy can become obsessive and debilitating. Such an obsession contributes to the neglect of taking up the specific and unique challenges that face a person as they struggle to evolve and move forward. All psychodynamic therapies are shadowed by this danger, but, in my opinion, the most harmful of them is psychoanalysis. I have made no secret of this in my responses to your lectures, Mr. Moth.

Moving forward into the future—that is the central issue to be considered in examining the problem of death. This, I am sure, must sound paradoxical, if not absurd, to many. However, I agree with Carl Jung when he says that the response of the unconscious to the fact that we will die is to ignore that fact and urge us forward, as if our life path continues indefinitely. I believe that this insight into death is profound and important.

When we get in touch with the depth within and listen to what comes to us from that source in regard to creative living, we find that its messages are future oriented, not past oriented. This is confirmed in my experience with hypnagogia: perhaps our most universally accessible depth experiences. I have found it a peculiarity of hypnagogic images that they reveal almost nothing of interest for psychoanalytic analysis. They fail to yield anything useful concerning the complex dynamics of the growing up years and the formation of the personal unconscious—the areas of greatest interest to psychoanalytic speculation. On the other hand, hypnagogia often provide important creative inspirations for present projects and

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information useful for the pursuit of one's future life-path decisions.

Depth experiences and the deep unconscious do not tell us much about the death experience as such. By that I mean the mere experience of ceasing bodily existence. I personally have my doubts about the usefulness of attempts to portray the nature of existence after the body ceases. Spiritualist literature has filled whole libraries with imaginative presentations about the nature of an "afterlife." While I do not claim that these portrayals are false, neither do I have any conviction that they are true. I just don't know, and I am fine with leaving it that way. Knowing the shape of what is to come has long ago ceased to be a matter of crucial interest to me. I am content to be satisfied with what I consider to be powerful depth messages that something of us continues. I look forward to whatever surprise awaits me.

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MORALS

Another thing that puzzles us book moths about you humans is your attitude about what you call morality: making choices to do the “right” thing. You seem to think of it as such a singular thing, as though each of you is a god that needs to ponder long and deep about your momentous decisions. Such solemnness, such heaviness. We book moths are a lot lighter about such matters. Maybe it is because we are closer to our instincts in regard to taking action. Maybe it is because we have such a strong sense of community and the awareness that, in important ways, we are one living unit. The odd thing is that for you too, the community thing intrudes into your moral decisions, but in such a ham-handed and crude way. It takes all the fun out of it.

Because of your general shallowness, you have not learned to trust yourself. So, you are obsessed with finding out what is right and what is wrong from outside yourself. You look to your parents, your family, your teachers, your church, your holy book, your local community, your government, your cultural trendsetters, and so forth. To us book moths this is such an obvious defect, a defect in morality. All those people and groups to whom you give the authority to tell you what to do are not up to the job. As a matter of fact, no one could be. This is how mixed up you are about this. You are asking the impossible.

You actually know, but do not want to admit, that no set of rules can run your life for you. There are two things wrong here. First of all, sets of rules merely give you crude approximations of life. They can never tell you about the specifics in enough detail to be an actual moral guide. Life is too complex, and the forces at work are too subtle for any

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rule book, no matter how fat, to serve the purpose. Second, these rules derive from social and cultural groups that are full of prejudices and pre-set assumptions. They cannot stand in the place of your conscience. You are going to have to figure it out for yourself, and not slough it off on the “big people” or the “wise people” of the world.

You are going to have to look for another way to set up the values by which you will make your moral decisions, and actually apply those values in real life. You are stuck with that job. You and you alone can make the judgment and decide the action. Don't run away from that. If you do, you will simply be fooling yourself, pretending you do not have to be the final decider and final person responsible for your choice.

In your response to my last lecture, you made me think you actually understand something about this—that you are less hopelessly deluded about moral authority than many of your comrades. I would feel pleased, and organically more comfortable, if you could confirm this.

End of lecture.

I can confirm that. Over the past years I have become more and more surprised—actually, more and more astonished—at how unreflective most people are about this issue of moral values and moral judgments. They are so convinced they are operating from some kind of reliable moral instinct, when actually it turns out to be something learned in their original homes, or their places of worship, or their peer groups, or their smattering of ideas gleaned from their reading, media,

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or casual conversations, or some other cleverly hidden influence.

When you stand back from it all, you see that everyone actually believes they can make judgments about the moral decisions of others, for they believe that they possess a universal rule book (available to them as a book or other kind of communication) that can be objectively applied to human acts. I can see how relieved they are to possess the certainty that someone else other than themselves has figured it all out, and all they need to do is follow orders. They live contentedly within the Little People/Big People delusion I talked about in *Trance Zero*.

It is a painful thing to finally realize no one can figure things out for you. That you are going to have to go ahead and do things “according to your own lights,” with no guarantee that you have not missed something. No guarantee you have not created more harm than good.

This stance is a lonely one, because, on the one hand, you cannot justify it to anyone, and, on the other, many people will condemn you for rejecting the possibility that there are objective moral criteria for right action. I discovered that I have many more sleepless nights now that I have learned this for myself. There is no comforting mother or father or partner or friend or god who can spare me the uncertainty.

I suppose this is one reason that recently I have come to appreciate certain elements of Nietzsche’s thinking. I believe he is correct to say, in this sense, we are all beyond good and evil, and I am elated when I read his words, “Whatever is done from love always occurs beyond good and evil.”

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COWARDICE

One of the sources of the existential heebie jeebies you have injected into me has to do with your restlessness about your friend Nietzsche. You can't make up your mind about him. That comes through to me in a hundred ways. You admire his notion of the great man, the man who takes full responsibility for himself and blames no one else. You also admire Nietzsche's moral agnosticism: his belief that values are created and the moral life is beyond good and evil. You see him as much more the moralist than the metaphysician, asserting that his metaphysics peeks out here and there but is not that easy to corral.

You realize that those features you admire have a dark side and that they are in danger of crumbling when too closely examined. You also see that his wonderfully adventurous sense of depth does not help him to discern the personal emotional turmoil and confusion that lies below his own surface self, and how they influence his thinking. You see that he places too much confidence in his snap judgments of people and cultures. You know that he is in danger of projecting his unacknowledged prejudices onto his views of collective forces. You recognize and bemoan the fact that, in the end, his lack of a solid metaphysics weakens his moral cogency.

When you write, you have in front of you Nietzsche's live signature. It is on a fragment of a letter and you can see where he picked up the pen and laid it down again. You feel his direct presence in that signature. The ink and paper span the century and a half that separates you. You feel he is here now. Yet so much of him remains out of reach—you cannot undo time.

After sharing his journey, feeling his repeated cycles of elation followed by despair, you realize you must return to the only solid ground you can ever find in this life: your

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own hard-won, depth-based sense of things. You know you have to let Nietzsche be Nietzsche and Crabtree be Crabtree. You are discovering that to do that requires a surprising amount of courage. You know you have to give up standing on this particular fence and step off into your own personal abyss. Are you up to it? Do you have the courage?

End of lecture.

I am very much like you, Mr. Moth. I have my own book worm: my own grub that eats through the works of the great thinkers and absorbs them in a raw form. They then await the transformative process of my pupa stage, which will allow them to emerge as integrated elements of my mature stage human self. My earlier meals were provided by such people as Frederic Myers, William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Carl Jung. My latest repast is Nietzsche, his works and his essence. In the pupa stage I disappear for a while, becoming little more than a mind-protein soup, and then my head starts to appear where my tail was before. I am upside down and have to reorient myself. I am a new creature, like nothing I have been before. As you yourself have said, it is a retrospectively fearful process, and looking back I feel the dread. I have gone through this process many times, with these thinkers, and more.

Do I have the courage? you ask. Like you, I have no choice but to complete the process or die—or die halfway through it. But I am now emerging a new being. Just as, in your case, my ideas and feelings will always remain a part of you, Nietzsche will always remain a part of me. At this moment I am undergoing the same kind of existential indigestion you have been

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complaining about, and I am not feeling comfortable. But I do not have the option, as you have had, to give Nietzsche a series of salutary lectures and hear his response. My only path is to give those lectures to myself, to divide myself into two and listen to my own merciless wisdom. I do have the courage for that.

My lecture to myself is on the subject of my last book: *Evolutionary Love and the Ravages of Greed*. It is about an unsolved mystery: the question of self-love. I have to admit that the book failed to come to terms with this issue. Mulling over this conundrum will aid my digestion of Nietzsche and advance my transformation.

How has Nietzsche helped me in my quest to understand human moral actions? In his writings, he destroyed the idea that human moral decisions should be made on the basis of a divinely decreed set of moral rules that apply to all people in all situations. His book *Beyond Good and Evil* laid waste to that position and forced us to look elsewhere for the roots of morality. If making moral decisions by rules is impossible, must we then say that the traditional notion of morality is meaningless? No. As long as we have communities, we will need to be able to make decisions on the basis of definable criteria—in other words, we will still have a practical need for rules. But those rules are not universal rules for human conduct based on divinely defined right and wrong. That kind of morality has utterly collapsed. What remains is the need for human communities to define their needs and make rules based on those needs, insisting that community members follow those rules and fulfill those needs. Communities have the right to expect that of their members. So, rule-based morality still exists, but only as a limited, local, community-rooted thing.

Mr. Moth, I like Nietzsche in part because he is a powerful moralist. I have a strong moralistic strain myself, but unlike Nietzsche, I have one foot planted on an identifiable metaphysics. In my view, my metaphysics is solidly based on an empirical experience of the world as it actually exists. So, when I wrote my very moralistic *Evolutionary Love and the Ravages of Greed*, I began with a metaphysical punch. I insist that there are two kinds of love in the world: agape and eros. Agape is benevolent, unselfish love that wishes the best to all and asks for nothing from the loved one. Eros is a love that seeks self-enrichment from the loved one. Agape is not just a human emotion or attitude. It is at the same time a metaphysical enabling condition that drives the whole of cosmic evolution. Eros is the mechanism through which evolution occurs on the practical level and involves reaching out to and uniting with the loved one to promote the lover's evolutionary growth. That's all there is. There ain't no more—except for this overriding moral principle: in all interactions and in all moral decisions, agape must be primary, and eros must never be allowed to override it.

It seems simple, doesn't it? Self-development is a good thing, but it must never be pursued at the expense of the welfare of the loved one. When in conflict, agape trumps eros in all things. Or so I said in the book.

Now, of course real-life moral decisions are always complex, and it is not an easy thing to determine how to practice the primacy of agape. In my book, I have discussed at length this complexity and the moral dilemmas we all have to struggle with in living our real lives.

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Now here, Mr. Moth, is the subject of my lecture to myself. One thing I left unresolved in the book is the very issue that arises when trying to digest Nietzsche. I am talking about the issue of self-love. I find there is among us a palpable fear of talking about the subject of self-love and a positive cowardice about getting to the bottom of it.

Agape says, develop a passionate desire and intention that each existing thing reaches its greatest possible evolutionary development, given the circumstances that surround it. Now, one of those “existing things” is myself. So, I must have a passionate desire for my own evolutionary development. In the actual struggle of real-life decisions, what do I do when my passion for my own development conflicts with my passion for my neighbor’s? Here agape encounters self-love.

As I said in the book, when eros-based desires are in conflict with agape, agape takes primacy. My eros-based desires have to do with my own growth, and my neighbor’s eros-based desires have to do with his or her own growth. Agape must prevail, but how is that to happen here, since we *both* deserve to be agapically supported in our evolutionary development? Do I choose my own growth at the expense of my neighbor?

There is no general rule that can be applied here to solve the question. I am obliged by agape to choose *both*. But that, in the circumstance envisioned, is impossible. Nevertheless, I cannot freeze. In life I must act. Yet, in this case, there is no guidance. Now, if there is no guiding moral principle, there can be no morality. The choosing person seems to be pushed into a territory where rules about good and evil cannot be applied. Since no value can emerge as primary in

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this kind of interaction, the moral agent seems to be in the position of having to create his own values.

It seems that, in this particular kind of situation, the foundational primacy of agape throws me into Nietzsche-land: a land without guiding values and formulatable rules; a land beyond good and evil. It is Nietzsche-land at its most bewildering. It leaves me No Where. I am morally up against a wall.

But am I really No Where? Is there some other kind of principle that must come into operation here? Could that other kind of principle break the impasse? What would such a principle look like? I am going to provisionally name it: Responsibility as a Singularity. It is this that allows me to plant my other foot in Nietzsche-land.

It is important to remember that, although the kind of situation I am describing is special, it is not at all unusual. In fact, we often find ourselves forced to decide between our own growth and that of another. I stated above that when eros-based desires are in conflict with agape, agape takes primacy. So, what about this case? Must my exercise of agape for my neighbor trump agape for myself, which engages my personal eros-driven desire to grow? Whether we realize it or not, this is a question we bump up against every day of our lives.

I say, "I am responsible for myself and my actions, and you are responsible for yours. I am not responsible for yours and vice versa." One life means one person responsible for that life, one owner of the morality of that life. The ultimate responsibility for each life rests with the person who lives it, the person who owns it.

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A person is any entity that is capable of making choices. If I am the only one who can make a choice in regard to my own life, I am also the person who decides the values on the basis of which I will make that choice. No one else can do that for me. My personhood and my responsibility is a singularity. I am the buck and the buck stops with me.

When it comes to deciding which values I am going to use to make my choice, I have no guidance from anyone else. At this point, I stand with one foot in Nietzsche-land, good and evil: there are no rules. But my other foot stands in agape land. I must maintain an attitude of agapic primacy. In this I differ from Nietzsche. He has both feet firmly planted beyond good and evil. In my view, this puts him on shaky ground; his moral edifice is askew and is likely to tumble. With my two-footed stance, can I remain upright?

My agapic self-love urges me to evolve, and, in doing so, demands that I make my own choices and make them on the basis of my own values. That is the way it works in this cosmos. Nothing can override this structure. But what will the deciding value be in this case? The crucial thing is that I have the duty to look after and promote my own development. It is my burden. No one else is going to intervene and do that for me. So, the answer must be that, when my growth is in conflict with that of my neighbor, I am permitted to choose my own development. Were this not the case, no moral agent could evolve. My unique moral position, and the moral position of any entity capable of free decisions, is a singularity in two ways: first, I am the only one in the universe who is in this particular moral position at this particular moment; and second, these specific moral circumstances arise only once in the history of the cosmos. I am *permitted* to make such

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a choice in my favor, although not *required* to do so. I remain free to choose.

At this point, The Moth suddenly said, *Wait! Stop! I see that you are going to go on with your little diatribe, but the time I have today is up. Since, as I believe, you are not yet finished, I have to interrupt you and leave. And I must do it immediately. But to give you a chance to get all this stuff off your chest, I am going to let you, at our next meeting, take up where you left off here.*

With that, The Moth suddenly launched himself, flying up and away to my left. I followed his flight as well as I could, but I lost him. From the direction he had taken, I thought he might have darted over to the staircase and up to the second floor.

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COWARDICE (CONTINUED)

At the appointed time the next day, I saw The Moth sitting on his usual perch. I went over to my own usual position, in front of and below him. As soon as I got there, The Moth intoned one word: “*Continue!*”

I was prepared. I had been ruminating over the past 24 hours about his sudden departure, trying to imagine what had caused it. It occurred to me that The Moth was finding my ramblings and fumbblings about such abstruse matters boring. So, I had worked out a way of putting it that might be more focused.

As I drew breath to begin my little speech, The Moth suddenly stopped me. “*Wait,*” he said. I now felt quite annoyed. But before I could say so, The Moth, mind-reader-like, intoned:

Lest you have the wrong idea, I am going to say something before you begin. Namely, that I ended the last meeting abruptly for a definite reason. It was an instinctive thing, and I could not help myself. Let me just tell you that the reason was the sudden experience of the urge to take action— action having to do with my duty to procreate. It was an urge that arose from a powerful chemical stimulus, and I believe I need say no more. I do not apologize, but I regret you have had to wait.

With that, The Moth became still, and I sensed a mood of expectancy in his silence.

Thank you, Mr. Moth.

Just to remind you, I was grappling with the thorny issue of self-love and the cowardice encountered when talking about it. Naturally, looking at self-love brings up the question of how we make our moral decisions, our decisions to take action. This is an age-old problem, and, in my opinion, no one has arrived at a way of grappling with it that does it justice.

I have to say now precisely what I mean by self-love. Many people believe that self-love is a form of greed. They see self-love as acquisitiveness, a devouring of people and things for the sake of making oneself richer, more influential, more admired, more self-satisfied. If you digest what I said in *Evolutionary Love*, Mr. Moth, you will see that this is not my meaning of the word. By self-love, agapic self-love, I mean the desire that I myself reach the fullest possible realization of my potentials given the circumstances of my life. As is always the case, agapic self-love must be primary and erotic self-love secondary. This rules out greed. I must not let erotic self-love dominate over agapic self-love. Should that happen, my greed would spell my destruction.

“OK,” you might say, Mr. Moth, “but what has this to do with the problem of choosing to promote your evolutionary growth over that of your neighbor? Is this not an issue? Does this not contradict agapic love?” I answer that it does not. The reason, as I started to say yesterday, is that all moral choices are singularities and cannot be made on the basis of rules.

***Rules!* Rules as prescriptions about moral action are a fiction. You cannot say, “This rule compels this**

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particular action.” For every rule you might want to apply, there is at least one opposing rule. For example, there is a rule that says you should not cut your neighbor open with a knife. But there is another rule that says you should do precisely that to save him from appendicitis.

“Well,” you might say, “there are exceptions.”

I say, “What rule do you use in order to know when and how to apply the exceptions? And where would such a rule come from? In fact, this kind of thinking inevitably leads to an infinite regress of rules, a dead end.”

There is no future for such an approach to morality, because the process of sorting out rules and their applications in complex situations cannot yield a necessary outcome. Besides, the choice of preferred rules depends on the upbringing, cultural conditions, religious training, etcetera of the person who is trying to figure out how to act. As soon as you try to apply rules, you see how arbitrary and subjective they are. When it comes to moral actions, there are no universals, no generalities, that can substitute for the rock-bottom fact that the individual involved has to decide, and the circumstances of the decision are unique and unrepeatable. This is what I mean when I say that all moral choices are singularities.

There is little recognition of the self-deception involved in believing that one is making decisions on the basis of moral rules. Those who think that way are performing sleight of hand on themselves. To deceive themselves, they have to distance themselves from their inner depths. That is the place where moral decisions are actually made.

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If it is true, as I said last time, that we as individuals are the only ones who can make decisions about our own growth and fulfillment, and that if we have the responsibility and duty to make them, then we must have the corresponding right to choose what we need for our self-realization, even if it means that someone else is (apparently) deprived of something in the process. We are not acting according to rules. Rather, we are obeying the imperative of agape in regard to ourselves in the place where only we can apply that imperative, where only we have the duty to decide.

Does this destroy any notion of conscience? Not at all. Conscience is not based on good rule keeping. It is based on depth awareness.

All moral decisions come from our depths: not from our reasoning, not from applying rules. How many know this? Because we make our choices in our depths, if we are really going to understand our moral life, we will need to become acquainted with our depths. The fact that our decisions are made in the depths does not mean they are always good or constructive decisions. That is not at all guaranteed. Our depths can be stirred by turmoil; our depths can be misled by illusions. But if we are explorers of our depths, we can discover our sources of distortion. We can free ourselves from false gods. These restless, confused levels of depth are nearer the surface. Deep below we encounter the agapic drive and agapic intention, for there we approach the agapic source of our existence.

Nietzsche knew the depths, the abyss. He knew that there we find freedom from false moralities. He knew that there we are beyond good and evil. But he did not go deep enough. True, the superman—that creator of values not tainted by false gods or by the false God—

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will arise from the depths. Nietzsche did not see the superman as a man or a people. Nietzsche saw the superman as a future condition of acquaintance with the depths that is impossible to envision at our present stage of development. He believed we can prepare by destroying false moralities. I believe that today we can see something Nietzsche could not see. What he could not see, and what I must add, is that the future greatness of the human race will come about by a depth experience that is a return to the ultimate source of our existence and the locus of the agapic enabling condition of the cosmos.

When I finished talking, The Moth was quiet. Then he simply said, “*No comment,*” and fluttered off. I was let down and wondered why the lack of response. Did he find me incoherent? What was going on? I thought about it for a long time and finally came to the conclusion that for book moths, the subject of being in touch with a moral instinct is not a big deal. They are so much closer to their depth-based instincts than we are, and it is probably hard for them to see the need for such an earnest discussion of the issue. That, at least, was my best guess.

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TALKING

You talk so much—you and all your species! And what a mess it has become. It was bad enough when printing was invented, and you tried to put all that talking down on paper. Now that there is an internet, you are in even worse shape. You actually think that talking and words have some infallible, mathematically based intelligibility that allows you to understand each other. But I need to tell you that what is mobilized in communication is magic, not data: intuition, not picture-taking. Magic and intuition make real communication possible. It is because of your foolish belief in the objective power of language and the one-for-one translation of words that you do such a poor job of understanding each other.

Printing and digital communication have cemented you in your false ideas. Look at the admonition I gave you in my first lecture. You and your kind have failed to become wise moths. Instead, you have all become grubs, book worms. You just eat the words and learn very little. You don't absorb the substance of the communication that comes your way. You get lost in the analytic maze of the language. This is why lying has recently become so acceptable to you. Real meaning, the deep meaning of the message, almost totally escapes you and you have lost interest in it. You get bogged down in the analysis of sentences and tweets. You are munching on the paper with words printed on it, and you are starving. You actually think that in this way you can reach a common understanding and remove misconceptions. I can't tell you how absurd this idea is to all of the book moth species.

But let me go on and tell you about something even worse that results. Because you have no effective way of

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communicating on the level of depth, and you feel stranded and unsure of each other, you begin to imagine all kinds of hidden meanings behind the words. You project your own fears and fantasies and expectations on those words and end up in an even more dangerous state. Your false projections make you see each other as enemies and you end up at war with each other. You come to believe that the other is engaged in a conspiracy against you and is constructing a coordinated effort to destroy you.

This is what happens when you never go beyond the superficial munchings of the grub. Language could become an aid to you if you were to actually gain access to depth in your communications. You could then simply use the words (spoken, printed, or digital) as your starting point, collecting them and keeping them in storage as you move on to the crucial next phase: that of transformation in the cocoon. Then, at the end of the process, the real meaning makes itself evident in the eventual formation of the moth. At that point, real communication happens. As the moth, you come to know the substance of the communication in its inexhaustible richness.

Long ago, you in the West became entangled with a system that contradicts this basic view of communication as a depth experience, and to this day you have not freed yourself from its effects. It is a vision that sees reality as flat and dimensionless. One version of that system is called psychoanalysis, but might as well be called pseudo-analysis. Oh, I realize that today there are some promoters of psychoanalysis who are struggling to get closer to the true depths of human interaction, but I am afraid they have put themselves on a very steep path. It is yet to be seen whether an expanded form of this system—one based on a sense of depth—is possible

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within the tight, rigid, and politically stymied perspective of the psychoanalytic subculture.

In the broad culture where you live, there are two seemingly opposed groups battling for allegiance. The first group might call itself the “practical” group. This is the world of politics, where lying has become one of the accepted tools of daily interaction, and where true motivations are seldom spoken (although they are painfully obvious to anyone with a modicum of insight). The motivation of this group is self-promotion and survival. This group displays a brazen arrogance. It recognizes that it is in charge in your Western culture and has no serious rivals for dominance. The theatre of operation of this worldview is by no means limited to governments and political structures. Long ago, it fought for control of business—and won. Today it has penetrated even to the everyday life of the “average” person, and one might be justified to say that tolerance for lying has become one of the pillars of the orthodox philosophy of the culture as a whole.

The other group is the one that claims to seek truth and integrity at all costs. They like to think of themselves as the “noble” group. Unfortunately, this group demonstrates an arrogance that rivals that of their opponents. It is the arrogance of naïveté. It actually believes that, through dialogue, it can convince its opponents of the truth, as though acceptance of the truth and genuine reality could be accomplished by sufficiently clever or brilliant arguments. What this group fails to notice is the powerful depth communication that is happening at every moment, both between the members of each group and between the groups themselves. Or when they do notice it, they project their unresolved distortions onto that depth arena of

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communication, rather than discover what is really there. Needless to say, you have identified with the latter group, the “noble” group, and spent a mammoth amount of mental energy trying to come up with what you believe are irrefutable counterarguments against your opponents. I suppose that should not be surprising, since almost all your friends and professional academic colleagues belong to this group.

End of lecture.

I cannot contradict your main point here. And I certainly will try to let it sink in. But I must say one thing in my defense.

You would not necessarily know this, but in recent years I have felt myself backing away from what you described as the second group, the noble group. I have been backing away from the language and orthodox thinking of psychoanalysis, on the one hand, and the battle mentality of the promoters of the paranormal worldview, on the other. I back away, not because these groups are not doing good things. Without doubt, they are. But I back away for my own sake, for my peace of mind, for the room to know my own thoughts...for my sanity.

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LIES

It is very difficult for book moths to lie. It is very easy for humans to do so.

As a matter of fact, we book moths are quite fascinated with what a large part lying plays in the social life of human beings. It is not that we moths are never deceptive in our social lives. We can commit tomfoolery of all kinds in the way we emit scents and signals. There is a lot of trickery and one-upmanship in mating, for instance, and in this arena, a little clever deception might spell the difference between producing offspring and failing to do so. But for us, most deception is done in specific, almost ritualized, situations, and the boundaries of the arena are pretty well recognized.

When it comes to human beings, it is a very different matter. As I mentioned in my last lecture, among humans, lying seems to be the rule, rather than the exception. Ordinary conversations between ordinary people often involve the assertion of things that are not fact, presenting distorted views of concrete events or avoiding bringing forward relevant vital information. These prevarications are not typically thought of as lies by the speakers, because they are so common and thought to be essential for social amity. Even those assertions that might be called out-and-out bald-faced lies—the kind that will cause the lie detector needle to waver—are certainly not rare. Finally, in human politics, it seems that lying is fully accepted, even approved; here the speaker lies in order to gain power or be elected to office.

As I say, we book moths find this state of affairs around lying in human life a fascinating phenomenon. Why don't you?

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We wonder how you are able to so easily navigate the waters of lying that are to be found everywhere around you. Do you simply accept lying as part of human social existence? Do you eventually not even notice it, like the atmosphere you breathe? Do you notice it, but find it too complicated to explore or do anything about? Do you think that, even though lying is so common, things are going along quite well, and no concern need be felt? Do you think that we book moths should mind our own business?

Taking this into account, we book moths marvel that you have survived as a species. You have been able to achieve cooperation and unanimity, so essential to group success, only on the most superficial level. You fear depth and depth communication; so, the possibility of tapping the energy peculiar to depth connection is denied you. We are not too optimistic about where this is going to take you.

We, the book moths, hesitate to confront you with our views on this matter. We fear you will not even know what we are talking about. And frankly, even if you get the drift of our concern, we are not confident that you will be able to do anything with it.

In my final lecture, I will say more about our view of how your species came to this pass. For now, I await your response to my message.

End of lecture.

I am fairly confident that most people would find your evaluation of the human social situation naïve. They would say your view shows that moths really cannot

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understand humans and the two species are too alien to each other to ever achieve a meeting of minds. They would say social interactions and cultural activities require that much remains hidden between the participants. If the truth were out and the facts were spoken, we would have chaos and war.

Even as I say this, I can't help but think I am just serving up a stock rationalization for something that can be neither explained nor justified. Maybe you are right. Maybe it is too widespread a problem to yield to any conceivable solution. Maybe we don't like to admit that lying has become just a part of living. Maybe we are ashamed to admit it is so. Maybe we would rather not think about it at all.

I must confess that I have had some awareness of the ubiquity of lying that you speak about. As I reflect on my attitude at the moment, I realize I have handled this law of social life in a very simplistic way: I avoid social situations and group activities as much as possible. I'm not proud of that. It is avoidance as a response to helplessness.

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COMMUNITIES

I want to remind you that the biology and psychology of book moths are radically different from yours. This has made it difficult for me to know what will most effectively straighten you out and give me existential relief. Nowhere is this more evident than in our different experiences of community. Later I will tell you why, but we book moths quickly developed a community based on depth communication, to which surface communication is just an auxiliary. We are quite a peaceable collectivity on the whole, and while there is, of course, competition for food and shelter, we don't fight a lot and tend to understand each other quite well.

The way you form communities seems quite different. You begin on the family level, and then build up collectivities of greater and greater complexities, up to the most populous and unwieldy levels. Most importantly, your natural communities are based on getting together the resources for survival and prosperity, and so, to some extent, the more participants in the grouping, the merrier and the stronger.

I am lecturing you about this because almost all of your community experiences have been based on that very primitive search for growth in numbers and resources. This means there has been a lot of bashing of each other—both intra- and inter-community. You take it for granted that the other community is your competition and, therefore, your enemy. You have spent your whole life embedded in this kind of dog-eat-dog atmosphere, and the responses that are

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promoted in this situation are highly colored with emotions. These emotions often blind you to the truth, and you have to learn about reality the hard way.

For you personally, Adam Crabtree, the struggle for survival and resources was dominant in all of your personal community life experiences. For that reason, your family, your farm community, your monastic community, the academic community, the Therafields community, the CIP community, the Esalen community, and so on, may all be safely called natural communities of the acquisition and survival type.

You desire to have new and exciting experiences of depth, but your experience of depth communication is so fit and miss, that your progress is very slow. To make significant progress you must work out the problem of community.

End of lecture.

I agree with your criticism, and realize I am deeply immersed in this community morass. Although it is impossible to fully free myself from its influence, it is nevertheless possible for me to make meaningful criticisms of it. I must be cautious in my words, however, since I am attempting to say true things about human communities while I continue to be deeply rooted in my own culture, subcultures, and group minds of all kinds. To make statements of real value is extremely chancy. (I have written about this in

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Trance Zero and Evolutionary Love.) It is chancy, but not futile. So, I'll give it a try.

Let me say right off that my subject is “natural communities.” Natural communities, by my definition, Mr. Moth, are groupings of people who get together to survive and thrive. There are millions of them. The list includes everything from pairs or families to great cultures. You book moths have your own very vital community, but, although tempted, I will not presume to say anything about an evolutionary product as alien to me as is yours.

The first thing that strikes me about natural communities is that they have no conscience. They are purely out for themselves and they feel perfectly comfortable about that. I am not saying that all their members are psychopathic—not at all. But as a community, as a naturalistic group mind, there is no interior restraining influence—no conscience—and so they are, by definition, psychopathic.

Mr. Moth, people must band together to survive. That is one of the reasons our natural communities are continually pounding each other, especially those with whom they are in competition for some resource, some privilege, some advantage. In other words, natural communities are greedy through and through. This is a source of immense problems for us, Mr. Moth.

The only reason they are not at war day and night is that there will always be some percentage of the community's populace who exercise a beneficent moral influence and are effective at creating an

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environment that reduces mayhem and creates space for work and education. Individuals have the capacity for conscience, but natural communities do not. It is individuals who morally curb natural communities, and they do their work within the moral framework I talked about in my comment on your lecture about cowardice.

If the human race is to have an extended future, it must make more concerted efforts to develop another kind of community: different from a natural community. One whose motivation is human growth and evolutionary progress, not mere survival and dominance. Some thinkers have tried to describe the features of such a community. One of the most successful is the philosopher Robert Corrington.

Corrington tells us that, while natural communities form instinctively and from pressing need, the formation of a community oriented to the advancement of the human race requires a depth perspective on the world of human strivings, along with a deliberate determination to create conditions favorable to the realization of human potentials. He calls these forward-looking collectivities “communities of interpretation” or “interpretive communities.” This name derives from his view that human beings have an instinct to enrich themselves and their environment, and to add value to the world through their interactions with each other and the world at large. In our mutual encounters, we are exposed to signs, and we respond to or “interpret” those signs in a process that transforms and enriches us. We in turn, in our subsequent interactions, enrich

those we meet. In this way, the human community and the world as a whole brings their latent potentials to realization. A community of interpretation recognizes this process and encourages environments and structures that enhance and fortify this process with its members. They look for ways to expand and multiply their opportunities for new and creative interpretations of reality.

Unfortunately, in our history so far, communities of interpretation have sprung up only sporadically, and they exhibit a fragility that tends to limit their life spans. It seems that if this creative way of encouraging human evolutionary advance is going to eventually become a worldwide momentum, a great deal of grassroots preparation will need to be done. I see this preparatory work as a moral task: one that encourages the practice of a true balance of agape and eros. That balance ensures that the movement has conscience and works to stamp out greed—the greatest enemy to evolutionary growth.

Mr. Moth, at this point I cannot refrain from saying a word about the moral catastrophe occurring just to the south, in my beloved native land, the United States of America—a catastrophe that stares us in the face each day in the news media. That catastrophe has everything to do with the dynamics of the natural community. It is not Donald Trump who creates the sorrow I feel about this state of affairs. It is no single man. Trump is only a figurehead, an unwitting fool, and a paragon of shallowness. Trump has come and he will go, and the constitutional structure of the country will probably survive him. But he was elected

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by the people and will continue to stand as a symbol of hypocrisy for as long as he is supported by the people. That should sound the alarm for all thinking persons.

The United States of America as a culture, as a people, is decaying, crumbling before our eyes. The lack of moral fiber and the sheer dearth of depth-thinking exhibited by the majority of its people is shocking. The cultivation of lying—what I talked about last time—is at the heart of this cultural decay. I do not know what America will look like when the dust finally settles, in some fifty years or so. But it will be very different from the one I grew up in. I hope that in the long run it will be proven stronger for the experience.

So, Mr. Moth, you are right to feel dismay about human communities in practice. You and I can describe the distressing situation, but only a genuine advance in human evolution can change it. How to bring that about is, for me, the greatest single unsolved problem that has been laid at the feet of the human community at large.

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NAMES AND NUMBERS

I see from your Rejected Article, as you call it, that you have been positively influenced by Charles Sanders Peirce. From my sources, I see he wrote this:

But in practical affairs, in matters of vital importance, it is very easy to exaggerate the importance of ratiocination. Man is so vain of his power of reason! It seems impossible for him to see himself in this respect.... Those whom we are so fond of referring to as the "lower animals" reason very little. Now I beg you to observe that those beings very rarely commit a mistake, while we.....! We employ twelve good men and true to decide a question, we lay the facts before them with the greatest care, the "perfection of human reason" presides over the presentment, they hear, they go out and deliberate, they come to a unanimous opinion, and it is generally admitted that the parties to the suit might almost as well have tossed up a penny to decide! Such is man's glory!

What a beautifully tidy bit of folk wisdom! Why did you not listen to this person, this man you claim to admire, and take him seriously? You know what he is saying. Without mincing words, he was saying that all this worship or reason and concepts, and all this laborious weaving them together and adding them up is next to worthless. In real life, it gets you nowhere.

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You and your arrogant human being friends think you know about each other, but, in reality, you actually know next to nothing. You even believe that your pitiful “understanding” of each other could be the basis for making important decisions about how you will treat each other—sometimes even decisions about life and death. In other words, you and your arrogant friends think you can penetrate each other to the depths! If you penetrate at all, it is to a miniscule degree.

You tell yourselves that you have solid knowledge of each other on the flimsy basis of the words you exchange. You are operating like a grub. On the basis of mere words, you form ideas about each other; ideas which are mere abstract concepts almost completely devoid of anything substantial, of anything about the person’s depth and complex inner life. This broadly accepted way of conducting yourselves is an abomination in the eyes of the moth community.

I know why you did not listen to Peirce: because you knew he was right, and you didn’t want to admit it. And you didn’t want to admit it because you have built your professional academic life on this false foundation. This is why your academic writings and your personal and clinical life have been in such conflict with each other. Fortunately, you don’t live and interact on the basis of what appears on the surface of people. And thank God you don’t! Peirce knew such stupidity can get you nowhere. He knew that even the instinctive life of animals is far more reliable for real life in this world than all your empty concepts and analyses and theories.

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Why did you not listen to Peirce? Just to rub it in, and just to make sure you don't say that this quote does not represent him, I'm going to pile on another one. He is talking about the failure of reason to provide any real insight into the nature of reality and suggesting that instead we need to look to what he calls "guessing," an instinctive faculty for explaining the nature of things. That faculty utilizes an inner natural "light" that we all have and is available to us, if we seek it. And we can rely on its accuracy. This ability to guess well is based on our existential immersion in the reality we are trying to explain:

Our faculty of guessing corresponds to a bird's musical and aeronautic powers; that is, it is to us, as those are to them, the loftiest of our merely instinctive powers.... One should always trust [guessing, rather than theorizing].... For I should not rate high either the wisdom or the courage of a fledgling bird, if, when the proper time had come, the little agnostic should hesitate long to take his leap from the nest on account of doubts about the theory of aerodynamics.

Put that in your pipe and do whatever it is you do with a pipe! You know, do you not, that when Peirce says "guessing," he is talking about that instinctual communication that happens in the depths between us all and between ourselves and cosmic reality? When he talked about guessing, or what he called "abduction," he touched on

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the crucial issue of depth and knowledge of depth. He calls on us to turn to this instinct as a way to reach that depth.

I will say more about this in my final lecture. For now, this is enough.

End of lecture.

What you say leaves me stunned. You have done a good job. You have ferreted out the core of Peirce's ideas about how we know. Peirce was reason's greatest friend and its most relentless critic. You ask me, personally, why I have not given this the attention it deserves. That is a legitimate question, and I do not have a sufficient answer. I look forward to your promised later discussion of this issue.

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PSYCHOTHERAPY ARTS

I have a question to ask you, Adam Crabtree. I have the sense that this question is central to your coming to terms with yourself, and my getting rid of this stomachache.

WHY IS IT THAT, HAVING PRACTICED PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS, YOU WIND UP FEELING ALIENATED FROM YOUR PROFESSION?

Additionally, I would ask, why have you not long ago sat up and taken notice of this state of affairs? If you did notice it, why have you said nothing, done nothing?

Please understand me. This is not a question of criticism about how you work with clients. Rather, I am talking about your public position on your profession of five decades. I am talking about your attitude and stance in regard to how your profession operates in the world. It's about your secret thoughts concerning the public face of psychotherapy in Western culture.

I'm not going to speculate about what those thoughts may be. I want to get them from the horse's mouth. So, I am going to do this differently today. I am just going to pose the question and give you room to answer.

End of lecture.

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I have to catch my breath here, Mr. Moth. Your question is like a punch in the stomach. The feelings that rush to the surface are so many and so strong! I have to collect myself and try to answer honestly. Here goes!!

You ask a simple one-sentence question. I am going to give you a one-sentence answer. You ask me why, after all these years, I end up feeling alienated from my profession? My answer: BECAUSE I SEE PSYCHOTHERAPY AS ART.

The roots of this answer are in the great discovery about human depth made by the Marquis de Puységur: the discovery of artificial somnambulism and, in its wake, of the dynamic structure of the human unconscious. Psychotherapy arose directly from that beginning. Because of this heritage, psychotherapy must be seen in its essence as a plunge into the depths. Any other view of it is alien to me.

What has this to do with art, you might ask? Well, since psychotherapy involves the exploration and confrontation with our depths, it must use means adequate to the task. It must use an approach that allows depth to fully show itself and evokes depth healing powers—one that grapples with depth without trying to cage it. In my experience, and from my research, I believe this can only be accomplished by a species of art. Other methods do not have the necessary requirements. More of this in a moment.

When Puységur opened the door to human depth through his discovery of artificial somnambulism (I

talk about this in the Summer 2019 issue of *JHBS*), and we started to get glimpses of what was on the other side, first of all, we saw raw power, and then we had a sense that it possessed some kind of as yet not definable structure. Our glimpses of that structure gave us some preliminary tools that we could safely use to explore the depths. Those who thought they could simply grab onto that power and use it for their own purposes were badly and dangerously mistaken.

I must say a little more about this history, Mr. Moth, if you are going to understand what I am getting at. The early methods of exploration of depth were simple techniques that could be used to bring something of the depths into this workaday world. The chief examples of these early tools were techniques that could consistently induce trance states, employ energetic approaches to physical healing, find adequate means of mapping the territory of paranormal manifestations, and invent ways of identifying the presence of an intelligent agency arising from the depths within. These were tools deriving from the practice of artificial somnambulism. These tools had to be refined, however, and over the following decades that is what happened. The most powerful of the refinements was psychodynamic psychotherapy, which evolved from its beginning with Pierre Janet and Frederic Myers, through the psychological sorties of William James and Sigmund Freud, and on to the dynamic vision of Carl Jung—noble developments all!

Where am I going with this Mr. Moth? How does this answer your question? Well, if this was indeed the

overarching goal of that period of discovery and growth, I would probably not have become alienated from the psychotherapy profession. But it was almost immediately dampened by contrary forces.

Soon after Puysegur, there arose a subtle countermovement, an anti-depth movement. It took a lot of courage for Puysegur and subsequent early diggers to pry open the door to the depths and keep it ajar. They had to contend with the fear of depth operating in their culture. They felt the resulting criticism, anger, and persecution. They also felt the wrath of those individuals who were adherents of the false gods of the old religions, and those addicted to the Enlightenment fantasy of salvation through reason who were already banding together to establish a countermovement, and anti-depth movement.

How does all this affect me? The countermovement did not die out in the following decades. The desire to ignore depth manifestation and destroy the reputations of those who pursue depth remains to this day. This state of affairs affects me currently, for the countermovement has become one of the hidden orthodoxies of our North American culture, and has invaded and taken over the community of psychotherapists. I am alienated from my profession because, in practice, it has become a sponsor for the anti-depth countermovement. I have no place in that culture of fear, and as far as I am concerned, psychotherapy, in the near future, may well completely lose touch with its depth mission and finally become simply a mouthpiece for conventional thinking.

“Surely not!” today’s psychotherapists will say. “You can’t mean what you are saying! Everybody knows we practice depth therapy!” These protesting psychotherapists show themselves unable to seriously consider the possible truth in what I am asserting. Remember, their literature is packed with the language of “depth,” and constantly makes reference to the exploration of the “deep” unconscious. They have hijacked the language of depth. Should we be surprised that therapists ardently believe their own advertising? Probably not. They have too much invested in the preservation of what has become the psychodynamic psychotherapy establishment—covert proponents of the anti-depth countermovement. In North America, educational and regulatory institutions are fast coming into being, which support this countermovement and assure practitioners that all is well. The problem is that when you go beyond generalities and get down to cases, the “unconscious” they work with is composed of only what they can fit into their analytical models. What doesn’t fit in is rudely disposed of.

They apply the approach of Procrustes of Greek myth to their clients’ experiences. Procrustes was an innkeeper who took extreme measures to get his guests to fit the one bed he had to offer. If guests were too long for the bed, Procrustes chopped off their legs. If too short, he forcefully stretched them to the proper length. Modern psychodynamic psychotherapy has been unobtrusively constructing its own version of Procrustes’s bed. If the client’s symptoms don’t fit, they are lobbed off or stretched to

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accommodate psychodynamic establishment expectations of what human experiences are supposed to be. Using this procedure creates a great deal of distress. If people fit perfectly, they might be happy in that bed. But many walk away psychically maimed. So, Mr. Moth, can you be surprised that I feel alienated from my profession?

Human depth cannot be made into the image of some mythical average client. Neither does it yield its secrets to rational analysis and speculative modeling. Freud's mentor, Joseph Breuer, did better from the start than his pupil by the end of the initial historical phase of psychoanalysis. At the beginning of their work together, they were honestly asking what that thing called the unconscious might be. Freud gave his response too quickly and freeze-dried the answer for his followers.

Breuer, however, was more careful, evoking a Greek myth to help him get at it. He wrote about how, in the early days of the cosmos, there was a powerful but very unruly race of deities called the Titans. The Titans were at war with the Olympians and lost. The Titans were powerful but destructive, and had to somehow be contained. To accomplish this, they were entombed deep in the bowels of the earth, where, according to the myth, they remain to this day. Because of their great power, they are able to shake the ground under our feet in a frightful way. All we can know of them is what we can glean from these earth tremors. Since they remain forever buried, we will never see them and can only guess about their true

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nature through their powerful earth-shaking vibrations.

The Titans represent the unconscious, said Breuer. We will never see it directly. All we know of it comes from what we can deduce from those vibrations. Here I return to the issue of art. True art feels the rumblings of the Titans: the vibrations of the unconscious of nature. If psychotherapy is to be true to itself, it must be this kind of art. Real human growth only comes when that kind of depth is tapped.

In psychotherapy, we become sensitive to these vibrations and their revelatory patterns and rhythms. But this will occur only when psychotherapists recognize the vibrations and work with their revelations. I believe, Mr. Moth, that only an artistic psychotherapist can find a way to do this. Only through the psychotherapeutic art do we transform the impressions into useful information and healing. The definition of a therapist, Mr. Moth, should be: a skilled artist that applies themselves to depth soul searching.

Creative artists allow themselves to be moved by the unconscious of nature and give expression to what they receive. Anti-depth psychotherapists are so terrified of the deep that they must resort to either deafness, on the one hand, or denial, on the other. Which of these, Mr. Moth, do you imagine will be the greater aid to the progress of the human community?

In our scientifically orthodox Western culture, the notion of psychotherapy as primarily an art stirs up

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waves of fear and repulsion. I have spoken to you about scientism elsewhere, and you know my opinion of it. This should give you further insight into why I feel alienated from my profession.

It follows, from my vision of human depth and psychotherapy, that reverence for, and the development of, intuition in both therapist and client must be central. Among the giants of the psychodynamic discovery, Jung trusted intuition, while Freud trusted analysis. But, again, I have earlier talked about intuition, and will say no more here.

Finally, to sum it up, I will tell you my definition of art. It is the process of giving palpable expression to depth in nature in its myriad forms. Psychotherapy as art gives expression to the depths of nature as manifesting in the client's psyche and helps the client to, in turn, become a successful artist of his or her own life process.

Do I think this view characterizes modern psychodynamic psychotherapy? No, I do not. That is why I feel alienated from my profession.

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AUTHORITY

There are many who read your writings and look upon you as an authority. In my opinion, you should take a look at that. Do you too think of yourself as an authority? Remember, here we are touching on that very sensitive part of the human personality you call vanity. How much is your vanity involved in your work? Do you think you know more than others, or better than others? Do you secretly look down on the opinion of others? Do you revel in your celebrity, as minor though it may be?

Do you give authority to others, as though they have some special access to the real truth of things? Do you take delight in knowing people who are themselves considered authorities, and hope some of the veneration bestowed on them will rub off on you? Are you a name-dropper?

What about the authority of the community? Does a lot of intelligent people agreeing on something give them authority? Isn't it arrogant and foolish to say, "Well, everybody knows that..."? Is an authority someone who naïvely believes he knows what others actually think? Shouldn't a community be seen as a resource of experiences, rather than a repository of truth?

What about the all-too-common practice of calling books or other writings authorities? That notion seems to me the last word in numbskull-ness.

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What is authority, after all? My book moth colleagues and I agree (is this my bit of name dropping?) that there is no authority in smart people or wise moth communities or thick books. The only real authority is reality.

End of lecture.

Can we learn from each other? People from people, book moths from books moths, people from book moths, book moths from people? Of course we can.

I find your reduction of authority to reality to be cogent, but not enlightening. Of course, “authority” has been used in ridiculous ways. But is there perhaps some usefulness in that word? I believe we think of others as authorities all the time, but in a benign, non-authoritarian way. We are all authors; we all produce ideas. We all have gone through, and continue to go through, processes of learning and of growth. And when we encounter each other, we sense what of that other is the result of a real evolution of themselves, a genuine product of growth—and what is not. An authority is an “author” in this sense of the word: a person who has grown and from whose growth we can benefit. If our intuition, our depth perception, is good, we sense when that growth is genuine and allow ourselves to be enriched from it. In this way, we can all be authorities to each other.

Mr. Moth, I consider myself to be an authority only in this sense. I do not consider myself, or want anybody

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else to consider me to be, an authority in the bad sense. The bad, the ridiculous notion of authority, is that we put aside our own depth perception and simply swallow holus-bolus what is presented to us. In this way, we imagine we can let others do our growing and evolving for us. That simply cannot work. For that reason, we all have to be “moths” in this sense: We have to absorb what we take in. We have to make it part of our very being. If that metamorphosis does not happen, we are wasting our time.

Unfortunately, the world is made up mostly of people who desire that others do their growing for them. They have ceased to be authors. They have delivered themselves over to the authoritarians. Our Western culture encourages this. Our religious institutions encourage this. The power politics of life encourages this. Our laziness encourages this. Our cowardice encourages this.

Your arrival on the scene, Mr. Moth, may very well serve as an inspiration to make spiritual metamorphosis a habitual part of life.

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BLINDNESS

I am glad to see that you are shaken up by these lectures. You certainly should be. Don't you think it's about time for you to finally ask the basic question behind all your perplexity? Don't you think it's about time to call out, not only yourself, but the whole human community on its cowardice and its resulting blindness?

I am not talking about some piecemeal problem—some local deficiency. I am talking about a misstep of the whole of humanity. You haven't been able to identify it because it reveals a blindness the whole world suffers from, and there is no way you could have seen it by yourself. It is only through the revelations of the wisdom of book moths that this universal defect could be brought to light, because it could only be revealed through the involvement of an outside intelligence with your written products.

At this point, I experienced a shocking alteration in perception. Suddenly, The Moth seemed to expand in size, and I felt I was looking at a giant creature, much larger than my cottage. At the same time, I felt myself an insignificant onlooker, dwarfed by both The Moth's physical size and its personal immensity. A tiny part of my mind knew that the proportions of things in the ordinary physical world had not changed, but the power of the experience made that fact seem irrelevant. I felt I had stepped onto some gigantic platform, from which I could see the whole universe in one panoramic view, and at the same time penetrate deeply into its hidden

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secrets. I knew something dreadful was about to be revealed.

The Moth continued:

History cannot tell you this, because history does not go back far enough. History cannot tell you, but the book moths can. At some remote point in the past, while human beings were in the process of developing the power of expressing feelings in words, a huge misstep occurred. The misstep was not in developing this new thing called language, but in the concomitant attitude of overvaluing its power. That was such an easy mistake to make. Language seemed to accomplish such wonders that it was natural to think it was the be-all and end-all of human endeavor. Up to that point, there was certainly plenty of communication going on between people. That communication was immediate and potent. It provided a solid basis for all social interactions, and did fairly well on the level of daily life practical needs. Vocal sounds were an important part of the communications, enhancing it by adding intimations of many kinds. The vocal apparatus had evolved to the point that people were able to provide a great variety of vocal impressions. It was a hugely important advancement in communication when vocal sounds started to be used to name things. This ability greatly increased the efficiency of coordinated practical actions, and in that way added a new instrument with great survival value. The practice of naming, once identified, spread like wildfire from community to community, until virtually the human population of the whole world was engaged in the

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project of creating what would eventually be identified as languages.

The irresistible success of language made attempts to improve it of great value. The desirability of its improvement ensured that a vast quantity of human social energy would be expended in that direction. The result was that the evolution of human culture over eons of time displayed a process in which the previous modes of communication were neglected in favor of the verbal. The result was that communication on the depth level, the level of the unconscious, the level of intuition, did not advance. It became frozen at its pre-language level. Investigations into possibilities of improving that type of communication nearly ceased, and progress already made was neglected. Some continued to probe its possibilities, but they became fewer and fewer and eventually they were pushed to the fringes of human communities. Their arena of experimentation became increasingly less familiar to the bulk of the population. This lack of familiarity led to the projection onto depth communication a feeling of alienness and eventually fear. The deep became the frightening abyss of the terrifying unknown. The division between the ordinary and depths solidified. The fear increased. Religion and superstition became the new custodians of the deep. Eventually, philosophy and enlightenment thinking were summoned to do away with them but failed in that task. Science was enlisted to do the same and proved itself to be equally ineffective.

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In the process of losing touch with your roots in the depths, you not only deprived yourself of further vistas of exploration, but you also lost your awareness of the fact that the language you had so come to worship had no power by itself to communicate anything—that verbal communication depends essentially on a substratum of simultaneous unconscious communication. You developed the naïve belief that communication is this wonderful mechanical thing that conveys meaning. You became so isolated from the truth of your own inner being that you imagined you had created yourself a stand-alone god that was worthy of worship—language. What you did not realize was that without you, the living human community—with its vital members, its living nodes, and your language-god—was dead and unresponsive.

Your enthusiasm blinded you to the most fundamental knowledge of what communication really is. You had moved so far along the road to delusion, you believed that language was the only true means of communication: that language formed the very building blocks of communication and the fully adequate means of describing all of reality. At the same time, you were putting the final touches on your inner wall to protect yourselves from your depths. You proclaimed that only the surface exists, and that any other way of looking at it was superstition or simple stupidity.

You began to act as though when you communicate with me through language, a totally mechanical exchange occurs. Here is how you saw it. Communication begins with you

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having a living idea you want to convey to me. (I think of myself as another human.) Your first step is to translate that living experience into words, into language. You now speak that language message to me through audible (or readable, or signable) forms. These forms are available to me through my senses. (I can hear them, read them, or perceive them through signing motions.) I now take in this sensible conveyance in whatever form it takes, and, relying on our common experience of the world and each other, translate that sensible conveyance into the agreed upon definition of that conveyance, and—behold! As if by miracle!—I grasp the living idea you started with. Oh, sure, you will admit that I can make mistakes in my translation. That can occur for any number of imaginable reasons. But don't despair (so the theory goes), because those mistakes can be corrected through still more sensible conveyances, so that eventually, with the aid of our common context of experience, we will attain a true meeting of minds. This way of understanding language and communication reveals a fundamental misstep taken by the whole human community.

This theory of communication had, by this time, become universal, and through it you became forever sealed off from the real nature of communication. The truth about communication through language is that it depends, in an essential way, on communication occurring simultaneously in the depths of the two communicators. That is where the original living idea is exchanged.

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It is easy to see why your erroneous theory of language gained universal acceptance. It was, as all theories are, a system of abstractions. And, as I have insisted to you (as have some insightful members of your thinking community), abstractions are not the same as the realities they point to. They are absolutely not the equivalent of those realities. As your precious William James said, concepts involve a casting out of real matter, and through that, the creation of a husk that you mistake for the depth-rooted things they are supposed to represent. The husks are the abstractions expressed in the words. The result is communication that is flat and lifeless. James put it well: "That is why so few human beings truly care for philosophy," but instead long to "escape gleefully into the teeming and dramatic richness of the concrete world."

Your foolishly naïve acceptance of this way of seeing communication has created an incredibly destructive state of affairs for the human race. Each one wonders, Why are you not understanding me? Why do you not see the truth of my living idea? What I mean is so obvious; you could not possibly miss it! You must be either stupid or trying to manipulate me.

This attitude, so universally operative in human life, has produced a babel world. While it has been the vehicle for one great accomplishment—science—it has nearly destroyed your species, and may yet do so.

In recent times, those who see themselves as the keepers of depth—religion and superstition—have become more and

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more discredited, and, as science displays with increasing force its inability to get below the surface of things, the depths look even more threatening than before. Depth manifestations could not be stopped, but neither do they have any legitimate home or effective sponsor.

Looked at from the broad view of history, it may rightly be said that, in the exaltation of language and the verbal, humanity took a wrong turn and cut itself off from its roots. You are all haunted by a sense of bewilderment. Your people don't see it that way. They look everywhere to explain that universal lost feeling—everywhere but to the real cause.

It has taken us book moths, with our interest in devouring the products of human language, to bring this state of affairs into clear focus. Strangely enough, it was a particular deficiency in our constitution that made the revelation possible: our inability to speak. This prevented the book moth community from deviating from the path of the exploration of depth communication in favor of the surface shortcut offered by language and the verbal. Our community continued to explore and avoided the artificial dread that the preoccupation with language engenders. This has made it possible for us to clearly identify the fork in the road leading to the dead end chosen by the human community.

Although that choice has resulted in a catastrophic neglect of the exploration of depth communication, it has not wholly closed the door to explorations of other kinds of depth experiences. The manifestations of uncanny phenomena in human life could not be totally repressed. The manifestations

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of paranormal experiences are one significant example of a type of depth phenomena impossible to ignore. Another is the cache of phenomena associated with artificial somnambulism, as you have rightly pointed out. I am afraid, however, that universal neglect of depth communication is so deeply entrenched that it will be many centuries, or even millennia, before humans overtake moths in effective attempts to plumb the abyss. Perhaps you will be one of the few who will help to move that great project forward in the coming years.

Now I must bring these lectures to an end. My energy for this undertaking is nearly spent, and my expiration date grows closer. It is time for me to say goodbye.

As I watched, the dimensions of The Moth diminished, and he gradually resumed what I would call his normal size. As I studied him, his appearance altered subtly, and he looked more and more like the creature I had first encountered. I also became aware of the return of the whining sound that had first heralded his attempt to communicate. Then, bit by bit, even that sound faded, and I realized that The Moth was looking more and more like, well, an ordinary moth. I was faced once more with a seemingly rather unremarkable insect.

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At the same time, I was becoming more and more aware of my own state and my physical sensations. As I sat there, I felt stuporous. My mind felt sluggish; my body felt heavy. This impression remained for some time. Then, gradually, I felt the stupor lift, as though I were waking up. I felt the room around me coming into focus, and the chair beneath me growing more comfortably ordinary. I looked around at the shelves of books, and I experienced that feeling of contentment that these old friends infallibly create for me. Then the thought occurred to me, What have I just been doing? I couldn't get a clear sense of what preceded the lifting of the feeling of sluggishness.

I stood up and caught sight of the vertical file with its Rejected Article on the top shelf. I noticed a moth sitting on the front edge of the vertical file. I automatically looked around for a newspaper to swat it. It took me a few seconds to find one, but when I looked up, The Moth had gone—flitted off to who knows where. As I stood there, for some unaccountable reason, I felt sad. My body felt a bit stiff and I became aware of the fact that I was quite hungry. I went to the kitchen and looked for ingredients for a sandwich.

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EPILOGUE

That night, I fell asleep watching a movie on television. The next morning, I woke up from an odd dream. It felt vividly real to me. In my dream I had been listening—all night, it seemed—to a moth talking to me, criticizing me, correcting me, but also teaching me. I sat on the edge of my bed, eyes half open, marveling at the absurdity of the dream. I got up, and as I dressed, the departing lecture from *The Book Moth* started to come to me; it was being delivered in the dream. The lecture struck me as weird but remarkable. I had an odd feeling about the dream. As I recalled it, I experienced a sense of compulsion, as though I had no choice but to somehow get the whole dream back. In fact, it did not seem like a dream at all. I felt I was recalling it as something that had actually happened.

It took me the better part of a month to remember the whole experience. It came back to me in bits and pieces. Nevertheless, the memories, as they came, were extremely vivid and full of detail. After the first few days of remembering, I began writing the bits down, until finally, after some work, the account has taken the form I present to you now.

When I was five years old, I became aware of a motivational urge within me that would define the

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course of my life: Discover! Seventy-five years later, I still feel that same, primordial urge, but I am now able to restate it in terms refined by my life experiences. I can now say that the driving force of my life has been to create a worldview that arises from my personal experience, as I believe it must, and results from the gradual but relentless discarding of artificially constructed values that I have accrued over the course of my life. Clearly that task is not, and can never be, finished. But I must thank The Moth for the important role he has played in this ongoing process.

Adam Crabtree

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LAST WORDS

The hermit does not believe that a philosopher—assuming that a philosopher has always first been a hermit—has ever expressed his real and final opinions in his books.... In fact, he will have doubts whether a philosopher *could* generally have “real and final” opinions, whether in his case behind every cave there does not still lie, and must lie, an even deeper cavern—a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world beyond the surface, an abyss behind every ground, under every “foundation.” Every philosophy is a foreground philosophy—that is the judgment of a hermit: “There is something arbitrary about the fact that *he* remained here, looked back, and looked around, that *at this point* he set his shovel aside and did not dig more deeply—there is also something suspicious about it.” Every philosophy also *hides* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hiding place, every word is also a mask.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

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BOOK THREE

NIETZSCHE AT THE WELL

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PART ONE

LETTER OF ADAM CRABTREE TO A COLLEAGUE

Dear Colleague,

Since you responded appreciatively to reading my manuscript *The Land of Hypnagogia* and *The Book Moth Lectures*, I would like to try to convey to you a further experience that I had only a few weeks ago. I realize that to most, this narration would seem a bizzarity of the first order, but I know you to be a person of open mind, and I would like to put down in writing, in as uninhibited a way as possible, what even to me seems an odd experience. As you see from *The Book Moth* manuscript, I have a certain predilection for the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche. Well, I am afraid my preoccupation with them has gone a bit too far and produced a striking intrusion into my "Land of Hypnagogia." One that I am still trying to puzzle out. Please bear with me as I describe an event that has left me disoriented, but also quite elated.

I have not talked with anyone else about the way I read Nietzsche's writings and respond to his ideas, but here it is in a nutshell. This may clear the way to my subsequent narration of the event I refer to. The first thing to say is that I find Nietzsche easy to read and his ideas lucid. Of course, I see everywhere the influence of cultural and social fads of his day, but,

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for whatever reason, I am able to brush them aside and get to the meat of the feeling or vision he is trying to express. There I find sentiments very much in tune with my own, and I never fail to feel refreshed by them.

I must confess to you that this sense of kinship spawned a desire to have a more direct contact with this remarkable man. This desire was realized when, some time ago, I was able to obtain a letter written by Nietzsche and signed by him. Such an opportunity is extremely rare, but by a stroke of good luck I came across one and immediately took advantage. Specifically, it is one page of a longer letter. It consists of eleven lines of handwriting, with his signature at the bottom. The paper is crinkled, apparently from being stored in dampness, and the text is smudgy and not decipherable to the naked eye. His signature is, however, very clear. I hope one day to submit the page to modern technological aids that can make the words legible, but I don't mind postponing that project. Nietzsche's signature is, for me, at the moment, the crucial thing.

It is important to me to convey to you this personal sense of mental kinship with Nietzsche. I am not talking about a feeling of communicating with Nietzsche in some spiritistic fashion; I have no taste for that and no experience of the kind. Neither do I have any notion that I am the reincarnation of the man. That too is a concept foreign to me. No, it is something else. The closest I can come to it is to say that I feel I am in touch with the same cosmic matrix

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of wisdom that Nietzsche was. I know how strange that way of putting it must seem, but that is the impression I have. I have the conviction that there is an accumulation of knowledge and experience that has taken place and become available to those who have the good fortune to come across it. I have the feeling, my friend, that this way of seeing things might be quite compatible with your ideas about the deep semiotics of the existing world. Be that as it may, I think this confession may be sufficient background for me to begin telling you about my experience. So here it is.

Having read my manuscript, you know about my retreat north of Toronto, which I call Stonewell. That was the scene of my encounter with The Book Moth. As I mention in the text, the cottage is on a forty-acre piece of land, which is quite wooded and cultivated only in the immediate vicinity of the cottage. In the manuscript, I also mentioned that I named the retreat after an abandoned covered well on the property, long unused and surrounded by an overgrowth of bushes and trees. The opening of the well is about eight feet in diameter and surrounded by an old stone wall or enclosure, about three feet high. The opening itself is well planked over, removing the possibility of causing accidental injury. The wild northern boundary of the land, studded with trees and brush, is more or less defined by a very small stream, called Stonewell Creek, which, for some long-forgotten reason, seems to have been named after the well. I relate this description to you

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now because this is the scene of the event I want to tell you about.

I begin my narration with my arrival at Stonewell on September 3. It was the day after Labor Day, but my teaching at the Centre for Training in Psychotherapy in Toronto would not begin for a week. We were enjoying a warm stretch of a particularly warm fall. I wanted to do some reading in preparation for a series of open lectures on Nietzsche I was planning for November. Reading, and contemplating. I was not interested in reading anything much besides Nietzsche himself, and those who actually knew him, such as Lou Andreas-Salomé. I found her especially intriguing, and the movie about her life, *The Audacity to be Free*, had recently been released. I wanted to take some time to myself, not so much to immerse myself in the person Nietzsche, but in the waves of impressions evoked by his writings.

Walking through the cottage door, I felt a wonderful sense of relaxation and well-being. The weather was so warm and dry that the windows could be left open twenty-four hours a day. The kitchen was well stocked, so I only had to bring a few perishable items for the refrigerator. When I opened its door, I was glad to see some bottles of Pinot grigio chilling on the bottom shelf, bringing memories of earlier relaxing times from late summer. I walked out the back door into the yard and sat down on one of the two Muskoka chairs standing in the shade. The breeze was soft, but not particularly cooling. After a while I went back into the kitchen, put some ice in a

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glass and poured a diet coke, then back to my shady chair. I dozed for a bit, although I was not very sleepy. My mind was active; my imagination was stirred. I dozed some more. Images came and went. The early fall smell of the yard and the flapping leafy sounds became a backdrop for a swirl of inner impressions.

Suddenly, I felt an impulse to walk in the woods. I finished the diet coke and set off in a general northerly direction, into the thicket. The afternoon was wearing on and the heat was easing a bit. I walked slowly, seeking the patches of shade as I went. I entered a denser stand of trees and bush, and there the shade took over. My walking was more like a wandering; there was no path. I walked slowly. I had no schedule, no task, no goal. Just walking. In the two years I had been coming here, I had not explored the woods very much. There were so many things that got in the way: too cold, too hot, too rainy. In the winter, the discouraging drifts of snow. In the spring, the muddy ground. But today seemed perfect. I was determined to take the time and wander at will. A little later I noticed I was walking up a gradual incline toward a low ridge. I got to the top and surveyed my surroundings: what I could see of it through the trees and brush. Something down and to my left caught my eye. I could not identify what it was. It was a darker area of a distinctively brown color. I walked toward it, and, as I drew closer, I saw it was neither tree nor brush, but a construction of some kind. As I approached it, I realized it was the stone well. I had not been thinking

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about it and was somewhat startled at stumbling across it in this way.

I had only seen the well four or five times before. I remember the last time I had caught sight of it, I was walking on a cold, wet fall day and had just decided to get back to the cottage to get warm when it appeared out of the drizzle. It did not feel very attractive at the time, and not particularly interesting. I got within twenty feet of it and turned around to retrace my steps to the cottage. Now my impression of the well was quite different. The atmosphere was dry. The sun, now low in the sky, was cheery. The breeze, subdued in the woods, was pleasant.

I noticed a stirring of my curiosity and a desire to get a closer, more detailed look at the well. The circular wall surrounding the well was made of old field stone. True to my memory, it was about three feet high. The diameter of the well was about eight feet on the outside; the inside diameter, about six feet. The inside expanse was topped by a circular cover made of thick planks and held together, I presumed, by cross pieces underneath that were not visible from above. That circular planking floor was weathered, but still seemed to be quite stout. It looked like it was probably made of oak. I realized the cover must rest on some kind of hidden frame fastened into the stone wall, about three feet below the top. All in all, even if the cover was not nailed down to the frame, it would be very difficult to lift. Something of that weight could not be budged without mechanical assistance. The whole structure

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was very well put together, made to last. I am not an expert in these matters, but I estimated it must be at least a hundred years old. It was pleasurable for me to lean over the stone wall of the well and reach down and touch the rough surface of the cover. It gave me a palpable feeling of solidity and security. I walked around the well several times, examining every detail. My years growing up on a farm imbued me with a strong interest in how things are made and a detailed imagination about the planning that must be involved.

The sun was low in the sky now, not far from setting. I did not feel any concern about that. I had nowhere I had to be and no expectations I had to meet. I was feeling calm and comfortable in that secluded area. I did not want to go anywhere at the moment. I just wanted to enjoy the feeling. On the west side of the well, I found a mossy patch of earth up against the wall. I brushed away the twigs lying there and sat down, with my back against the cool wall. The soft moss made my seat very comfortable. With knees bent, leaning back, head against the wall, I closed my eyes. I felt the warm air and heard the leaves of the trees, making their lazy slapping sound in the breeze. So relaxing, so comforting, so safe, so secure. I dozed off as easily as I had in the Muskoka chair at the cottage. I had no sense of time passing. I stirred a bit and opened my eyes. The sun had set and I realized the early stages of evening darkness were creeping in. I still felt deliciously tired and closed my eyes.

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I don't know how long I slept, but when I next opened my eyes, I realized it was quite dark. I still felt comfortable and the retained day's heat in my stone backrest was soothing. Again, I dozed. I seemed to be having a dream, something that was taking me far away, depositing me on a strange landscape.

As I came out of the dream it took me a while to realize where I was. The stone backrest still had a remnant of heat, and, as I slowly opened my eyes, I realized the darkness had deepened further. The night was moonless. I did not feel inclined to move and maintained my comfortable posture, with back and head against the stones. As I did so, I began to develop an odd feeling, a sense that I was not alone. The feeling did not alarm me, but I felt puzzled by it. I didn't recall hearing a sound as of anyone walking on the forest floor, nor did I now sense any movement nearby. I felt a pull to look to my right, and when I did, I was startled to see what in the dark looked like a human figure, sitting in a posture exactly like my own, back and head against the stones, knees somewhat bent. I leaned forward and shifted the way I was sitting so I could better see to my right. The figure did the same, except turned to the left, toward me. Now we were facing each other, sitting cross-legged, knees apart, leaning slightly forward.

Now I was starting to feel uneasy. Who was this person? Where had he come from? What did he want? I felt no threat, but my total inability to make

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sense of what I was seeing, dimly in that dark, was disorienting and a bit scary. I felt suspended. Questions, but no answers. I spoke:

Crabtree: Hello.

There was no answer. My eyes were growing accustomed to the darkness and I could make out more distinctly the figure's features. The face seemed peculiar, and, as I looked closer, I saw that it was a man, one with a huge brush of a moustache. I was stunned. My visual perception was registering the unmistakable features of Friedrich Nietzsche. After getting my breath, I spoke again, with a shaky voice, asking what would have to be considered a ridiculous question.

C: Are you Friedrich Nietzsche?

There was a long pause, and then I heard a voice, firm and clear.

Nietzsche: There is no simple answer to that question.

It was an eerie experience. I knew, of course, that Nietzsche had spoken no English. The figure was, I could tell, speaking in German. My German is, at best, halting and tentative, and I do not easily understand spoken German. Yet as he spoke, I seemed to immediately know what the words meant. If this was indeed Nietzsche, then perhaps he was having the same language transcending experience as I.

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He continued.

N: It would be best to say I *was* Nietzsche, and I am still Nietzsche, in a way. I cannot be more definite about it. And who are you?

C: Adam Crabtree.

N: Well, Adam Crabtree, let me ask you a question. Are you still the Adam Crabtree of a minute ago? Are you not quite different through having this experience?

C: Yes, I am different, but the same in important ways. My body, at least, is the same.

Nietzsche seemed amused.

N: I don't know how you can be so confident about that. It seems to me it too has altered. Yet, that should give you a way of understanding whether or not I am Nietzsche. The bodily structure that was me has ceased. But it seems that other aspects of me remain. That I cannot explain. Anyway, I don't care to get caught up in such useless questions. They are false questions, based on presumptions. I am Nietzsche all the same. You are dealing with Nietzsche, whether you are comfortable with that or not.

There was a silence between us. From out of somewhere, an obscure aphorism Nietzsche had written about music came back to me. I couldn't

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recall it exactly, however. I have since looked it up, and I can see why it returned to me at that moment. Nietzsche wrote:

If Beethoven were suddenly to come to life and hear one of his works performed with that modern animation and nervous refinement that bring glory to our masters of execution, he would probably be silent for a long while, uncertain whether he should raise his hand to curse or bless, but perhaps say at last: “Now! Now! That is neither I nor not-I, but a third thing—it seems to me, too, something right, if not just *the* right thing.”

Anyway, at the time, enough of that passage wafted through my unconscious to create a feeling of calm, a sense of resolution. Sitting across from me was a neither Nietzsche nor not-Nietzsche—and I a neither Crabtree nor not-Crabtree? Were we both some kind of third thing? That had to be good enough.

I must tell you, I felt we were closely locked together on a level of depth that clearly laid out the groundwork on which we were to communicate. We (whatever that meant) were to engage about fundamental questions. No more need or could be said about it.

Suddenly, the thought came to me. Nietzsche and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (the other philosopher of greatest influence on my

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thinking, as you well know) were contemporaries, their life spans overlapping by some decades, with Peirce being born before Nietzsche and dying after him. How very different, both in ideas and temperament, were these two men. Nevertheless, they shared a certain social cantankerousness and, perhaps, a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, as you have suggested. I found myself growing more and more uncomfortable, a most unlikely single repository of seemingly contradictory visions of reality. Yet I harbored a conviction that the differences were, in some mysterious way, only apparent. Peirce traveled extensively in Germany and other parts of Europe, yet there is no reason to believe they ever encountered each other, or that they even knew of each other.

Yet, book moth-like, I felt I was in a state of discomfort at having digested into my mental physiognomy nutrients disagreeable to each other. I felt in need of some philosophical Pepto-Bismol to regain a feeling of spiritual well-being. Maybe this encounter was to be that remedy.

C: In many ways we see eye to eye—at least that is my impression. We both see an understanding of human morality as a key to depth knowledge of the course of human history, and place it at the heart of any constructive hopes for the future.

N: Yes.

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C: I agree with your maxim “God is dead,” and that all claims to a universal and uniform divinely revealed set of compulsory moral principles is out of the question.

N: Yes.

C: I think it fair to say we concur that if morality has any remaining place in human life, it is an enabling condition for human development that entails the imposition of arbitrarily chosen sets of guidelines for proper conduct within human communities.

N: (With amusement) Yes.

I was starting to feel ridiculous, reciting back to Nietzsche ideas he had written about in a thousand places. Apparently reading my mind, Nietzsche continued.

N: No, this is not a waste of time. We are mapping out the territory. Continue!

C: I suppose you realize that I feel a kinship with you. Nevertheless, I find so many things you say obscured with unexamined encrustations from your family, your culture, and skewed conclusions from your personal experiences. The same must be true of how you see me. Surely, you must perceive my blindness and the foolishness of my own prejudices, as I do yours.

N: No doubt. But we must not get into all that, my friend. Fussing about such matters is not time well spent. Let us assume those things, and then put them aside as best we can. Let us identify the elements of true kinship: those we know have deep roots that reach down below the surface into the abyss of human being.

You can imagine, my friend, that I took these words as an invitation. Neither of us were interested in speculating about how it was possible we were talking together, or even who “we” were. We were both interested in going deeper, always deeper, to the bottom of things. Nietzsche was always going on about his nose: about noses in general, sensitive to the smell of duplicity, hypocrisy, and moral decay of all sorts—all words, the nose knows. Pay attention to the nose, he wrote. He himself always trusted it. So here, I thought, was an invitation to follow our noses and toss aside whatever has a rotten smell hanging about it, not giving it a second thought. In the darkness, I could just make out Nietzsche touching his moustache on the right side, thinking who knew what. He was sitting comfortably. I had the impression this not-Nietzsche Nietzsche did not carry those sources of physiological distress that were so much a part of his everyday life in the original.

I had the feeling that Nietzsche was taking me into his confidence. It was an odd feeling—totally unexpected. Now I experienced what could only be described as a shift in reality, or perhaps a shrinking

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of reality, in which I was aware only of Nietzsche and our conversation. It was as though the environment that surrounded us was *composed* of our conversation, and as though our two figures had expanded to fill that reality. It felt, too, that thoughts and feelings were being exchanged in a way that touched only lightly on words. I did not reflect on this feeling at the time. It was only later that this description came to me.

I will try now to give a sense of the communication that occurred.

C: You trusted your nose and did a good job of identifying and tossing out garbage. You identified the rottenness of religion over the ages, particularly Christianity. You identified the moral decay in all forms of top-down, so-called divinely ordained and divinely revealed morality. You proclaimed the death of God and, with that, the death of the ideal good. You preached a world beyond good and evil. In the process, you undermined the very idea of any kind of a usable rule book and showed that those who claimed to be able to make moral decisions from general rules were too cowardly to say what they were really doing: simply interpreting the rules to their own advantage.

Or, in the case of the deeply wise, to the future advantage of the human race. Values were no longer to be determined in the heavens, but worked out on earth. Relative values for day-to-

day decisions remain. We have to put on our “moral masks,” and do the best we can, creating those masks in the image of the millions of ad hoc manufactured sets of rules we encounter in the world, that make every effort to force themselves on us. In this hodgepodge world, we are given or decide on our appropriate masks and make do. So it is that life remains livable. While every living person speaks from behind such masks, very few realize that is what they are doing.

But back to the big question of morality: the issue of ultimate value. You told us about that. The ultimate is the long-term enabling of a world friendly to the creative exercise of the will to power, leading to the eventual evolution and domination of the superman. You insisted that the ultimate value is the superman and whatever promotes his creation. You preached evolution, and that the overriding goal of existence is an evolutionary process that leads to the superman.

Have I got it right?

N: It’s going in the right direction, but you leave out a lot. It will take a great deal more talking to know.

C: I am afraid this will require a fairly lengthy discourse.

N: I have no objection. Get on with it.

C: Well, I can tell you this: what I have just laid out is a view I can agree with for the most part. But to work for me, a very important thing needs to be added. There is a great lacuna that has to be filled in. It has to do with evolution. I know you are no Darwinian. But you certainly do indicate that you hold to some kind of evolution or other. Evolution is the development of the new under the auspices of a goal. Evolution is a process that exists to bring about some desired future state of affairs. As I see it, in your evolution, the desired end product is the superman. Whatever makes that more likely contributes to that evolutionary process. So, all of us who are not supermen but want to do our part for the future, and want to contribute to making that more likely, are participants.

However, Mr. Nietzsche, you do not give us the details, not even the essential details. For you, the key is the will to power, the drive to create the world. That is the energy that drives toward the realization of circumstances conducive to the future you envision. Those who exercise will to power in a moral way work not so much for themselves as for the future—specifically the future superman.

You don't give us much help in envisioning what such a world would look like: how the triumph of will to power would shape it. I can't fault you for that. I believe that is because such a vision is beyond our capabilities. We are too

far away from really espousing will to power and imagining its doings. So, I suppose you feel no obligation to tell us more.

However, there is a big hole in your vision that needs to be filled in. You never clarified your understanding of evolution. Never told us how it can be that in a cosmos that has no God, no guiding intelligence, no overall plan—how such a universe can house an evolution which is essential, or a process of setting and realizing goals? You may say, Mr. Nietzsche, that it has mini-goals, but no overall goal. Fair enough. You may say that, but at the same time you tell us it has a huge overall goal: the development of the superman. There is a lot left hanging here.

You assume the superman is a realistic goal; it is what you pin your hopes on, and the foundation on which you develop your overall vision. You say there is indeed an overall goal, but no goal setter. Is that possible? Well, you may say “yes,” but without some kind of explanation, it is mere assertion. That is the big gap in your vision. And I would like to try to fill it in. But before I do that, I would like to fully acknowledge the importance and powerful outcome of what you did do.

It is a shame that you and Charles Peirce never got to know about each other. Perhaps you could have helped Peirce shed the institutional and societal distortions in his thinking. Perhaps

he could have given you the missing evolutionary key for your vision.

So, we have Nietzsche and we have Peirce. Now, please let me add one more ingredient to what I think will be a tasty cake. That ingredient is Robert Corrington. Corrington is important, because he nicely rounds out Peirce's view of cosmogony—how this existent world comes to be and keeps on coming to be.

Let me try to be succinct. For Corrington, there is only nature, and nothing beyond nature. But it is a nature with two aspects: the cosmos we see around us (*nature natured*) and its unfathomable source (*nature naturing*). Now, the ingenious new element added by Corrington is the notion that for the source to produce this particular cosmos, there have to be certain enabling conditions in place (he calls them forms of “betweenness”).

I believe the most telling formulation of your thoughts about these issues is the writing found in *Beyond Good and Evil*. In the process of pointing out the way the Stoics, naïvely and without self-insight, attempted to impose their view of reality on philosophy, you said most powerfully that this is the move all philosophies make when they start to believe in themselves. You called this a tyrannical drive and a spiritual will to power—to a creation of the world in their own image. In this discussion you talked about

nature, describing what you see as its utter indifference to human concerns, its purposelessness, its extravagance, its being without pity and justice: being fruitful, but desolate and unknowable. I believe this view of nature corresponds quite closely to Corrington's *nature naturing*. When you talk about the human attempt to "create the world," I hear sentiments similar to Corrington's notion of the urge to produce the experienceable, investigable, and knowable world—his *nature natured*. The element lacking in your way of talking about it is, in my view, the betweenness that is the sum total of enabling conditions needed for nature to bring about the world we actually have.

But there is also here a bridge to Corrington's schema. It is my view that your "will to power" can be seen as the very urge of *nature naturing* to produce a world—and, I might say, to produce the enabling conditions for that world. This urge, this primordial will to power, is both an elemental cosmic feature and a tendency shared by all reflective beings who have the ability to contribute to the creation of this existing, evolving world.

I want to mention only one of these enabling conditions—what Peirce called "evolutionary love" and what the Greeks called "agape." Evolutionary love is the desire and intention that the love object will be able to fulfil its potentials

to the greatest extent possible, given the circumstances that surround it. In my view, Peirce's evolutionary love is given not as a human sentiment, but as an enabling condition of nature: a force that is embedded, so to speak, in the cosmos. One that pushes it forward on an evolutionary path. The cosmos cannot not evolve. We can hardly say anything about evolutionary love without using misleading terms that sound personal (such as *desire* and *intention*), so please pardon the weakness of the language. Let me just say that I do not mean it to imply anything like a personal creating being or some divine overseer. It is evolutionary love, thus defined as an enabling condition, that enables a cosmos in which everything—organic, non-organic, and the mental—evolves.

Peirce did not work out the full implications of his idea of evolutionary love. I have tried to do that, at least in regard to the issue of the destruction of good and evil, and the establishment of agape as a metaphysical enabling condition for the world. However, it is clear to me that Peirce was not simply reiterating the tired and fruitless Christian morality you so efficiently demolished. In his little treatise "Evolutionary Love," he makes an important formulation: "Growth comes only from love, from I will not say self-*sacrifice*, but from the ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse." He rejects the central Christian doctrine that morality is founded on

self-sacrifice: grounded in the modeling of Jesus, who sacrificed himself for humanity.

All of this thinking about evolution is very different from Darwinism. The Darwinian is a determinist, enclosed within a straightjacket of necessity that he cannot shed. For that reason, he is incapable of accounting for evolution at all. For the Darwinian, nothing really new can be introduced into the world. And if evolution means anything, it means bringing about the new (that is why we need *nature naturing*). You insisted you were not a Darwinian and not a determinist. You believe in freedom.

Peirce had a much fuller notion of evolution than Darwin. He said that we can have a universe in which a vast multiplicity of purposes operates, but which is not guided by, any overall fixed set of purposes. The overall purpose is as yet undecided (and perhaps never to be decided). But every moment of evolution, every forward movement for any existing thing, has its momentary goal, its mini telos. In each passing moment, the goal, the telos is revised and renewed, altered according to a choice applied to the momentary circumstances. Peirce calls this dynamic “developmental teleology.”

My friend as I now try to convey this engagement, I realize there was more participation from Nietzsche than I have put down. But in fact, it was mostly in terms of encouragement for me to continue

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speaking. This was gratifying for me. For I want to say that I have tried to talk about these things with friends and colleagues, but inevitably, somewhere around this point in the discussion, their eyelids are drooping and they are thinking about taking a coffee break. I had no such feeling with Nietzsche. I could feel his intense concentration. I felt encouraged to go on.

C: Here is how I see it shaping up, Mr. Nietzsche. When you think about evolution, you seem to concentrate on the role of human beings in the process. You know that human beings are, or can be, free spirits that act with a purpose. They perceive the world around them and reach out to shape it, to make something out of it. You seem to believe that only human beings have this power. So, in your mind, the world needs the human spirit to create meaning in it, and you see evolution in terms of how human beings use their power.

You hold that, as a community, people must continually operate through the will to power to take control of nature and give it meaning and direction. Humans must do what formerly God was said to do. They must take up this duty and promote it into the future. Apparently, your sister said you came up with the idea of will to power on a specific occasion in which you saw the force and power of ranks of marching armies as they moved forward, and saw the fire in the eyes of the soldiers striving for their common

goal of conquest. There you saw the will to power enlivening a group, pushing out of the way any individual sentiments those men might have had. The joy of the soldier is only a sign of the feeling that power is attained. For them, there is no other physical force, no other psychological dynamic. You expanded that group of tramping soldiers into an ideal, the noble evolutionary ranks of men, generation after generation, marching forward to create a world fit for the superman.

I am struck by the fact that both you and Peirce use the amoeba as an example of the way life manifests. For you, the amoeba simply functions to suck in more and more and accumulate power from elsewhere. For Peirce, the amoeba sucks not simply to take in power, but to be able to use that power to realize its potentials. This is a huge difference between you two. Peirce's notion of potentials has within it a vision of a creation of possibilities. For you, there is no concern at all about specific outcomes of power. The only aim is the sheer increase of power and the joy that brings. You saw that joy on the face of the soldiers marching as a part of a huge army. You imagine that joy in the faces of the ranks of human beings marching through time.

For Peirce, and for me, it only makes sense if power is used for a purpose. Purposes at work in the cosmos are determined only by the things

that constitute it. Not by God. Not by anything outside. From there arises a tremendous fruitfulness in an evolving nature, whose denizens choose its purposes and its directions.

For you, it seems, the only outcome of the evolution of the will to power can be for the superman or a superman community to become the unconstrained god of the universe—to take power over everything and, in that way, to feel the greatest possible joy. The destiny of man is thus to become an ever more powerful machine for power to control and conquer endlessly, leading to—what?—a transformation into a pantheistic super-god?

For Peirce, human destiny is to, more and more, actualize the potentials of all to the greatest extent in the context provided. This is a destiny to enrich the world, acting alongside all the other enrichers that are operating. Agapic cosmology envisions a world beyond good and evil, in the sense that Nietzsche envisioned it. It is compatible with the understanding of morality as a singularity, not subject to outside rules and duties. But it proposes a world that is full of purpose and driven by purpose. That purpose-saturated vision entails a constructive cosmic morality that urges the promotion of the realization of potentials. This is a worldview in some ways compatible with yours, Mr. Nietzsche, but in some ways transcending it.

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At this moment, I suddenly stopped my recitation, silenced by a thought and a question that seemed to come out of the blue. Who was *this* Nietzsche? This question was not framed in terms of the issue of the spirit versus the embodied spirit referred to earlier, but rather in terms of what particular integration of the Nietzsche personality was I dealing with?

I realized that the Nietzsche sitting here could not be the last Nietzsche: the Nietzsche of 1889 and after, the Nietzsche of the insane asylum. He was a sane Nietzsche. It came to me that Nietzsche's sudden descent into madness in 1889 was not due to the ravages of syphilis, as so many like to speculate. It was because he could not stop himself from going the distance, from seeing the outcome of his philosophy as he had formed it up to that point. He had floundered on the rock of metaphysics, and somewhere he knew it. The only outcome of his line of metaphysical thought was that he was, or some future version of himself would be, a world-encompassing god. And he knew, knew beyond any denial, that he was not and could not be that. He knew he could not make his vision work.

His philosophy of the superman and will to power was bound to implode. And this left him nowhere—nowhere in the world of reality, that is. He was too brilliant not to see that. And so, as I imagined it, he left this world of reality. He retreated inward, to a place of safety from that which he could neither avoid nor refute.

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If so, who was the Nietzsche sitting here? I could only think that he was the Nietzsche of the brilliant nadir of his philosophical powers, the Nietzsche of 1886–1888. Was I speaking to a Nietzsche who had been pushed aside by the desire to escape the inevitable, but had remained in existence in the hidden recesses of his depth? A Nietzsche who was looking for a way forward, a way compatible with the iron bonds of reality? Was this a Nietzsche arisen from the abyss?

Now my focus shifted from my inner thoughts to the apparition in front of me and our enveloping conversation. The intensity of his eyes was riveting.

N: I believe you have it generally right—close enough. You are not the first I have interviewed on this journey of mine—the journey of the twice-born. Yours is neither the worst nor the best of the conversations. Most of my interviewees have no conscious awareness of the exchange, or forget it immediately afterwards. My guess is that you are different. Your familiarity with the hypnagogic might account for that.

C: Is that it? Is that all there is then?

N: Yes. I have it. I have your contribution.

C: But what about me, my journey?

N: It is very different from mine. You will never feel the need for escape into the unreachable.

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Your journey continues, and will profit from this experience, no doubt. And who knows, you may eventually have your own twice-born journey.

C: I see that as possible but, at the moment, I have no interest in it.

N: Of course not.

I now became aware of the beginning of dawn. I looked to the east, where the sun would show itself. When I looked back, I realized I was now in a different sitting position. I once more had my back against the stones of the well enclosure. Startled, I looked to my right for Nietzsche. There was nothing of him to be seen—just the stone wall, grass and twigs. I became aware of the feeling of coming back from a great distance, a sensation so familiar for me at the end of a hypnagogic trance.

I did not move. I did not want to lose awareness of whatever had just happened. It came back to me quickly and vividly—for me, an unusual experience of recall. I had to fight the impulse to dismiss the images forming in my mind that claimed to be memory. I still did not move. I had to exert a powerful mental force to fight the impulse and ignore the counter-chatter. I stayed immobile for some time, until I felt I would not lose what had been given. The sun was now just above the horizon in the east. I felt stiff as I rose from my seat. I stretched, turned, and slowly walked back to the cottage. I was disoriented; I couldn't quite find my life. I entered

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the clearing of the backyard. I sat down on one of the Muskoka chairs, very tired, very heavy. I slept.

That was three weeks ago. The experience remains with me. I have spoken to no one about it. You are the first.

There is one more thing I must add. Only yesterday I unexpectedly stumbled across a description of Goethe's late thoughts that throws light on what Nietzsche said about his present "journey."

Goethe, addressing his feelings about a recently deceased longtime friend that he considered a brilliant soul, said, "Under no circumstances can there ever be talk about the extinction of such great faculties of the soul in nature; nature does not treat its capital so profligately. Weiland's soul is by nature a treasure, a true jewel." Later he would write, "Let us continue to act until—one before or after the other—we are called by the world spirit to return to the ether! May the eternally living one then not refuse to give us new activities analogous to the ones in which we have already proven ourselves here below!" Could that be what Nietzsche meant by his "journey of the twice-born"?

I don't know what you might want to say, my friend. I had the need to finally get it out, into our shared space, and see what happens.

Adam

PART TWO

*SECOND LETTER OF ADAM
CRABTREE TO A COLLEAGUE*

Dear Colleague,

You can imagine my general befuddlement after the encounter I described in my last email. All the usual questions about the nature and status of hypnagogic images naturally rush to the fore for me in the wake of such things. I am glad to say that these questions neither make me doubt them, nor do they impede them, thank God.

As witness to that, I have recently had another significant trip to the Land of Hypnagogia, and, as before, it is taking me some time to reorient myself. There must be something about Stonewell that makes such things possible. You know that, although curious about the history of Spiritualism, I have not been a fan of things spiritualistic, including mediumistic hallucinations and communications. I am slow to accept as deep truth the witnessing of others in matters so personal, and, frankly, I have lost my appetite for reading in the area, whether works of scholarship or popular psychology. So it is, in regard to this, that in my own latest experience, I can only vouch for the authority and weight of their impact on me personally.

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After my first email to you, I felt the Nietzsche apparition and the interchange involved to be worthy of attention—even important for me. This more serene state of mind has brought with it the urge to return to some of Nietzsche's writings, particularly *Beyond Good and Evil*. I have made it a habit to do my concentrated Nietzsche reading at Stonewell.

I had not been able to get myself to return to the well since my encounter with Nietzsche there some weeks ago. When I arrived for my extended time of ponderment, I had not included in my plans another visit to the deep woods. I have to admit, though, that despite the fact that the encounter was neither unpleasant nor scary, the thought of the well sent uncomfortable shivers up my spine.

Nevertheless, the unusual warmth of the air and brightness of the sky softened up my thinking about a hike into the bush. Now, suddenly, I felt myself more and more attracted to the idea. Nevertheless, I could feel, in the back fringes of my mind, thoughts of caution and measures to be taken to avoid a repeat of that earlier experience. The attraction won out, however, and I decided to set out at midday, in order to steer clear of the uncanny possibilities of evening encounters. I entered the bush and realized immediately that, despite all my nervous dilly dallying, I was making my way toward the stone well.

The smell of black haws, thorn apples, and hazelnut bushes was heavy in the air. They awakened pleasant

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wafting memories of many fall meanderings in the woods that bordered the farm of my youth. I considered those fragrances the most pleasant that nature has to offer. They produced a sensual, fall-soaked pleasure rivaled for me only by the smell of burning fall-dried leaves on our farmyard lawn. I began to feel an odd elation, a sense of being on the verge of an adventure.

As I drew near the spot, my imagination was forming images of the well as I had last seen it. Its situation, its dimensions, its color, its structure: the protective plank covering, a disk firmly placed within the stone circle. I realized that this oaken lid would probably have a layer of leaves on it this time of year. I looked forward to drinking in all the details of the well in broad daylight.

I approached the stone wall enclosure and looked down at the planks of the lid. I leaned against the top of the wall and reached over to brush aside the dead leaves. I could just reach the lid below me with my fingertips. As I swept my fingers from side to side, I noticed an odd sensation. The lid felt spongy, like it was giving way beneath my touch. I stared at the planks. What I was seeing and what I was feeling did not agree.

The lid started to feel damp, then wet. I tried to see the natural cracks of the wood, but I could not make them out. All I could see was a dark surface. Now all feeling of resistance from the lid disappeared and it was liquid, water. The whole surface was water, as

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though the lid had disappeared, and I was touching the water beneath it. As I looked into that dark water, I seemed to see an image reflected there, a human face staring up at me. The image clarified and it was not just a face but a whole bodily figure: a man leaning with his elbows on a wall, looking at me with amusement. There was no doubt; it was the reflection of Nietzsche. The water was undulating slightly, and the image showed a corresponding wavy movement. I had been so focused on the water and the image, I had lost track of the environment around me. I raised my eyes and saw, across from me on the other side of the well, the actual solid figure of Nietzsche himself, leaning forward, elbows on the opposite arc of the wall, looking into the water. The sense of his presence, lacking in the watery image, startled me.

N: Yes, look down, my friend. You have discovered the abyss. Are you ready for it?

I looked down and now the watery surface of the well seemed to have expanded indefinitely in all directions. I felt I was perched on the edge of an endless expanse of water and a bottomless depth. I looked up and saw that Nietzsche had somehow remained in the same position, relative to me, leaning over a piece of the well's wall.

C: What do you mean, “ready for it”?

N: Below is reality, about which you know very little and which scares the daylights out of you.

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With that, the wall I had been leaning over disappeared from under me and I found myself drawn below the water's surface. As I descended, I felt disoriented, confused, lacking familiar mental landmarks—and a creeping fear of being swallowed up by some unfathomable threat. Immediately, there came to me an aphorism from Nietzsche's *The Joyful Wisdom*: a warning message for a voyageur into the deep. I had this aphorism displayed on a plaque on the wall of my office and knew it by heart:

No longer path! Abyss and silence chilling!
Thy fault! To leave the path thou wast too willing!
Now comes the test! Keep cool eyes bright and clear
Thou'rt lost for sure, if thou permitest fear.

(Nietzsche, "The Wanderer, #27")

I struggled to apply this advice as I moved deeper into I knew not what.

At first, as I descended, I felt fairly comfortable. The water was a comfortable temperature. Or was it? On second take, it did not seem to have any temperature at all. Or perhaps I had lost the ability to detect temperature. Or perhaps it was not water at all, even though I had the strong impression that I was moving down through a liquid. Although a liquid, it did not, as water would, prevent my breathing. But

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was I breathing at all? It did not occur to me to wonder.

Now I looked in front of me, wondering if I could see Nietzsche. There he was, seemingly sinking at the same rate as I. It was no longer the reflection. It was he himself, substantially present, whatever that may mean.

Then I noticed an extremely uncomfortable sensation, as though there were something or someone behind me. Again, the feeling of chills. Then, along with the feeling of the thing behind me, now certainly a person, I began to have the sensation of a chin resting on my right shoulder. This someone was close to me, far too close for comfort. There was no feeling of being harmed or of imminent danger, but a steadily growing experience of the eerie, the strange, the sinister. Then, from behind, a creature jumped over me and landed right in front of me. It was a loathsome creature, a disheveled man with a dirty brown overcoat. He had landed on his haunches and retained a very low-centered posture. He looked at me. He said or conveyed to me, "You cannot move. I have you where I want you. I can do anything I want to you." This was all said with the greatest malice yet, strangely, I felt no fear. I did not believe he could do anything to me. I simply looked at him; he dissolved into dust and disappeared.

Then on my left, the impression of footsteps, growing louder, like someone coming toward me. The experience seemed to me absurd. There was no

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surface to step on, no way to make that sound. Yet there it was, coming closer and closer. Then, as it were, passing across my path, followed by a diminishing sensation of sound, until it disappeared altogether.

I looked across to Nietzsche, hoping, I suppose, for some comfort, some encouragement, something. What I saw disturbed me even more. I saw him some twenty feet away, so to speak, still moving downward at a speed matching mine. But my impression was very different from any previous one. He seemed to be aware of me, but barely. He was going through his own set of experiences. He looked uneasy, then he looked to be in pain. His right hand was extended in front of his body, as if to ward something off. I had no idea of what he was going through, but it was clear to me that both of us were in extreme discomfort.

If I had been harboring any notion that Nietzsche was an old hand at descending into the deep, and therefore felt some sense of ease with it, that idea disappeared in a flash. If I had been relying on some fantasy that he was anything but human, or, if human, in some important way superior to me or others, that too had evaporated. I maintained the sense that he was some sort of friend, and that the experience I was undergoing could be considered a gift of some type. But it was clear to me now that if you go below the surface of this existential lake, you are on your own.

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Now Nietzsche had completely disappeared from sight. The sense of descent was harder to gauge. There was no movement around me that I could perceive. I felt woozy. There was nothing to pay attention to, nothing to notice, nothing to be curious about. I perceived that I was still descending, but I could not swear to it. In this vacant space, I felt more and more emptied of thought. I was falling asleep—if that would be possible in such a place. Awareness ceased.

I suddenly felt a jarring sensation, as if I had fallen onto a hard surface. It was not the kind of fall that would break bones, if I had any, but it was a shock nonetheless. I looked around me. All feeling of descent had disappeared. I was on a floor of some kind. It smelled damp, earthy. My awareness slowly expanded and I rose to my feet. I could hear a babbling of voices, murmuring, shouts of some kind.

As I looked around, I realized I was standing in a pit. It was about twelve feet in diameter. My back was against one of its walls. No one else was with me there. I could just see over the top edge of the pit. It had been dug into a clay-like soil, its walls vertical. My head was the only part of me higher than the rim of the pit. I had a sense that the pit was inside a dark cavern.

Now I was washed over with a feeling of fear laced with dread. I felt myself as a young man, twenty. I sensed that I was in some horrible predicament. There was peril all around. I was saturated with

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panic, nausea. These feelings rose directly from what I saw next: a throng, a mob of bystanders, standing at ground level, looking down into the pit at me. I looked up at them and terror gripped me.

The sounds I was hearing were coming from the crowd of people, milling around on the cavern floor into which the pit had been dug. I felt small, weak in the knees. I was a kind of curious specimen to them: viewed from their multitude of unique perspectives, each thinking theirs was the only one valid and true. I suddenly realized what was going on. Three people were gathered there to scrutinize me, criticize me, try me, and sentence me. Some of them despised me, some simply considered me as a curiosity, some pitied me. They were loudly shouting expressions of their particular points of view with a rush of words and shouts. The cavern echoed with their voices.

I knew, at the same time, that I had just before been trying to reason with them, give them a view of my situation from my point of view, point out counter arguments to their charges, and show the illogicality of their trains of thought. But I was speaking a language they could not understand. My words were nullified as soon as they tumbled out of my mouth—dead things that could move no one. The sounds I was making were bereft of meaning, drained of force. It was as if I and each of these spectators were speaking different languages. I could not understand their meanings, but, I felt, neither could they understand each other. There were as many languages being spoken there as there were people.

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The one thing they clearly conveyed to each other, with no ambiguity, was the intention, the determination, to demolish my position and get on with the execution. The impotence of mere words was obvious. The only thing that mattered was the underlying drone of feeling.

Among the crowd were a few who had taken charge of outlining the case against me. Now I realized that my hands were handcuffed behind my back with sufficient tightness to force me to bend over forward. My physical position added to my feeling of smallness and helplessness. I was a spectacle for them, a target for their pent-up frustrations. Yes, there were some there who were sympathetic to me and my plight: friends, relatives, acquaintances. They were concerned. They felt badly for me. Yet I felt no consolation from these familiars, bristling with an abundance of charitable sentiments. There were no accompanying vibrations from them that could lift my spirits. Even they were caught up in the shared momentum toward execution. I felt no connection with them, any more than I did with my accusers. I pleaded for someone to shield me—a lawyer to defend me. All fell on deaf ears.

It was now coming back to me. I was there to be tried and condemned for a crime I had committed. There was a unanimous feeling building now, as the proceedings were reaching their conclusion. They all, well-wishers, and haters alike, were convinced that I was guilty and deserved whatever I would get. I would surely be executed. I was finished.

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Now an odd thought came to me. I recalled the song of the British singing group Queen, called “Bohemian Rhapsody.” I could feel with full force the utter despair of the young man in the song. The words came to me: taken literally they are a confession of murder. His utter despair and helplessness is painfully palpable in the musical rendition. Now, as I looked up into that phalanx of disdain, I felt his agony in my own body.

But...I had not killed anybody. What was my crime? I knew of none. My ignorance of any wrongdoing made no difference. The situation was not changed one whit by that fact. All those spectacle-watchers cared little for the facts. They were enthusiastically carried forward by their hunger for blood. At that moment, I realized that indeed there would be blood. I was to be dispatched mercilessly by beheading.

I cried out to be heard. I cried out to be pitied. I cried out to be pardoned. I cried again and again as a dark soot of bitterness coated my brain and its thoughts. My bent body was already exposing the back of my neck, rendered totally available to the blow. At last, the final shred of hope was snuffed out. All feeling of a future was now gone, and I closed my eyes. All was still. I retreated deep inside.

Now I felt the floor of the pit under my feet crumbling, giving way, and I was slipping down the crumbling earth, sliding faster and faster. As I fell, awareness of the pit and its crumbling clods of earth

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quickly faded, and the sense of free falling returned. I was again dropping down deeper into the depths.

A sudden powerful impression of presence drew my attention to an area up and to my left. It was as though there had been a blast of sound from there, or a blast of light—but not light that could be described in terms of any color. It was as though something was announcing itself. Not some *one*, but some *thing*. I could see something coalescing.

It was an immense display of the artificial, the eminently human: a gathering place for all that human evolutionary creativity had so far brought into existence. I sensed this, without knowing how I sensed it. I felt myself drawn to it, drawn into it. But at the same time, I felt a resistance to going there. Such a temptation, so inviting, yet dangerous. It would be so easy to stop there, rest there, stay there forever. Not that it was an illusion. It was real all right. But it could so easily turn into illusion, into a final resting place.

It was a region of breathtaking splendor. A wonderland that one could admire forever. It existed as the eternally present reality of the moment. Yet there was no one there—not one of the multitude of vital human beings who had been its authors. This place was real, but not alive. Tourists were allowed, but anyone who remained there too long would lose all contact with life, forever wandering through a museum, a mausoleum of the once alive but now dead. It would be so easy to wander on through this

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landscape, entranced by its endless richness, fascinated by its complexity, while becoming more and more the observer, and less and less an agent. Now I could sense an innumerable number of such tourists, wandering, enthralled, and trapped by the wonder—entranced. The more they looked, the deeper their trance became. What wonderful inventions, what wonderful works of art, so alluring to human communities, this museum displayed. The tourists drank it in like nectar.

I somehow became aware of what possibilities had been destroyed in the process of giving birth to these wonders: what alternate wonders would never come to be. These were not displayed, of course, for they never existed. They were mere potential, devoid of actuality. Yet, as I thought of them, I became very uneasy. Again, the feeling of indefinable danger. The feeling of simultaneous richness and emptiness. The real was real, but if you looked at it too long, you would yourself become less and less real.

The wandering tourists of this fabulous show were happy with it and entertained by it. Everlasting entertainment—that seemed to be the theme. It was glitter. It was flashing lights that revealed sets of never-ending varieties, leading to...what? More ever-changing, never-repeating displays. Once you were drawn deeply into that world, could you ever pull yourself out?

I was moving toward this majestic mirage. My momentum was strong, and my immersion seemed

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imminent. I could not stop myself, but the nearer I approached, the more I felt the danger. I could not slow down, much less stop, but I felt that perhaps I could yet escape. I put all my effort in trying to veer to the side, the left side, to steer off the course I was on. My efforts had their effect. I was moving now to the left side of the display, to the left corner. I grazed the outer boundary and got close enough to feel the force of its siren-like seduction, but then shot past it.

I noticed that, as I moved away and to the left, I was also moving deeper, and for some time I felt only a dim void. I sensed my downward speed had not diminished, but I had nothing to gauge it by.

My mood gradually lightened. I felt I had narrowly escaped some terrible catastrophe. Suddenly, I became aware of Nietzsche. There he was, still about twenty feet in front of me. But now he seemed more aware of me. I had a vision-like impression that he long ago had encountered that deadly, Venus-flytrap-like museum of human wonders and had escaped, but not unscathed. Now the conundrum of his insanity filled my awareness. I now knew that his descent into madness was his personal encounter with that world of wonder that produces great illusions in its visitors. He had become enamored with his own creations—fascinated and enthralled. His creative accomplishments were truly great, perhaps the greatest of all known history. Yet, for that reason, they were a terrible danger to himself as an evolving individual. For he, better than anyone else, knew their greatness and their beauty. His

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appreciation of them made him tremendously vulnerable. The resulting struggle was the destroyer of his earthly existence.

Now, as I watched Nietzsche, his mood, his expression, his color, changed. I saw on his face an expression of intense concentration. It was as though he suddenly caught a glimpse, ahead of him, of a destination, a goal.

Without warning, Nietzsche disappeared. He was simply gone, and I was now alone. The “light” was dimming. Blackness invaded from every direction. *Now* I felt the fear. Now I was saturated with dread. The blackness was complete, and with it, a deafening silence.

Up to this point, I had experienced myself as an observer, an explorer, a discoverer. Now I felt I was the one being observed, examined. The tables had suddenly and quite definitely been turned. Strangely, the blackness seemed to be a “light”: a means of illuminating a specimen being examined, and the medium through which some kind of observer concealed from sight could perceive me.

The blackness conveyed not a whiff of negativity, no sinisterness. But while enveloped by this probing medium, I could myself see or observe nothing. The only perception that remained for me was the sense of the hidden observer: an intelligence, a gatherer of information.

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Then, in a split second, the blackness was gone, and light, my kind of light, was restored. As I looked around, I immediately felt I was in some wonderfully alien place. I had crossed some kind of boundary and everything had changed.

Until this point, I had felt like an explorer of an unmeasurably deep sea. I felt like an agent of discovery. Now, I felt I was being drawn, pulled down. In this downward movement I had no agency. It was happening through something beyond agency of any kind. I was being transported somewhere, to a place that I can only describe as a feeling: a feeling of *home*.

It came to me this way. I was no longer discovering, but descending into an ancient region where all human knowledge and wisdom had preceded me and was there waiting for me. This was rooted knowledge that maintained its connection with depth. Previously, I had felt I was traveling in the direction of the more and more strange. Now I was moving in the direction of the more and more familiar.

Then a landscape opened before me. I was moving through the air. In front of me were jagged peaks. As I moved forward, I came to a green craggy ridge. Now, as I moved over that ridge, I saw beyond it a wonderful deep valley, breathtakingly beautiful. I descended into it, the mountain ridges behind me and to my left. I felt elated. I noticed to my left the figure of an old man standing on the mountainside. I found I was veering to my left, moving toward an

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area halfway back up the mountain. I saw that I was headed toward a large dwelling or a series of dwellings there. As I settled down into that area, I felt overwhelmed by a feeling.

It was a feeling of belonging, of *home*. This was where I belonged, really belonged. This was the dwelling place of those who knew me most deeply and accepted me most fully. My first reaction was, how could I have forgotten this place, this incredible feeling? Now that I was *home*, I was astonished that I could have lost sight of it. How could I have lived with no recall of this wonderful place? I now realized this was the true reality. Of that there was not the slightest question. I knew without doubt. Later, I realized that what I had thought of as my life was simply an odd kind of exile. It was clear that I could only have such a realization by first experiencing this true resting place, the place I really belonged—*Home*.

I realized that everyone seeks belonging. We seem to have an instinct of what that should be, and we search for it, but never fully find it. That melancholy longing for belonging was based on a vague and distant memory of real belonging, real *Home*. Here, in this place, were those who were my fully realized forms of brother, sister, mother, father, and all intimate companions, all intimate relationships. They knew me, and I knew them. Now I could see it with all the power of the immediacy of perception.

Now I was passing through this wonderful place, moving deeper. I felt the far boundary of Home

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ahead. Now I was rapidly moving toward it. The closer I got, the more I sensed that there loomed beyond that boundary a mystery of a totally alien kind. I was moving toward a source—ultimate Origin. I was being invited to cross, if I chose, a boundary that was most significant of all. *Home* seemed to me to be the culmination, the summing up of everything on this side of the boundary. On the other side was *Source*. On this side was activity that seemed individual yet communal. An interactive, united effort: a kinship of intention working together in a million creative actions, bringing the future into being, moving the existing universe forward. Discover! eventually yielded the integration of the whole.

However, the other side of that boundary was something to be taken very seriously. I realized that to call it a boundary was a lie. It was a divide. Boundaries are common to the regions on both sides. A divide signifies no commonality, no contact, between the two sides. In my sense of it, on the other side of that divide, distinctions and separations were falling away and being replaced by something ungraspable—toward the ultimate Source that made the very existence and evolution of the universe possible. I had the distinct feeling that once I crossed this boundary, there was no return.

I thought of the siren call to be drawn into that display of human accomplishment I felt was so dangerous. I realized it that return from there might be impossible. But what I was feeling now was very

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different. Here was no sense of danger of being trapped and of losing oneself. Here there was a sense of transcending oneself and gaining access to an ineffable mystery.

I started to recall an experience I used to have quite frequently when falling to sleep at night. It was a vision that would develop spontaneously. I would see before my eyes a set of what looked like mosaic tiles, perhaps an inch on each side and a thickness of one eighth of an inch. Some were a deep emerald color, some were shimmering gold. Together, they formed a pattern and moved around while maintaining that same pattern. As I looked at them, I felt drawn into them and completely swallowed up with a feeling of ecstasy that I have never experienced anywhere else. In that state, I had absolutely no sense of myself or my individuality. Only the experience was real. I was not. These experiences would only last a short time and then quickly fade away. As they were fading, I would think to myself, if I were given the chance to have this experience for eternity and give up everything else, I would not hesitate a heartbeat to acquiesce. Over time I would look forward to these experiences, but never knew when they were coming. I had no ability to make them happen. After a while I ceased to have them, and it has been many years now.

Now, contemplating the Divide to Source ahead of me, I felt a decision was required: do I cross it or not? I felt that what was on the other side had something to do with my mosaic tiles, but I did not

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know what. In any case, no danger was involved. If I chose to cross, there would be no return. But that would be no loss, if what lay over there was somehow related to those tiles.

Now, suddenly, unexpectedly, Nietzsche was back. There he was, still twenty feet ahead of me. But now everything about him seemed clearer, more defined, more brilliant. He was looking at me, but I had the impression that, at the same time, he was looking at much more. His face suggested he was having a vision, an illumination.

At that moment, my mind was flooded with impressions of his final writing, *Ecce Homo*, written in 1888 at the height of his powers, just before his descent into madness. I knew it well. I thought it to be his greatest, most powerful, and most radical statement of how he saw his life's work. It was a vision he saw as beginning with his most astonishing statement about his inner life made exactly twenty years earlier in *Human, All Too Human*. I could recite it from memory:

I invented, when I needed them, the “free spirits” too, to whom this heavyhearted-stouthearted book with the title “Human, All Too Human” is dedicated. There are no such “free spirits,” were none—but, as I said, I needed their company at the time, to be of good cheer in the midst of bad things (illness, isolation, foreignness, sloth, inactivity); as brave fellows and specters to chat and laugh

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with, when one feels like chatting and laughing, and whom one sends to hell when they get boring—as reparation for lacking friends. That there *could* someday be such free spirits...and not merely, as in my case, phantoms and a hermit's shadow play: I am the last person to want to doubt that. I already see them *coming*, slowly, slowly; and perhaps I am doing something to hasten their coming when I describe before the fact the fateful conditions that I *see* giving rise to them, the paths on which I *see* them coming?

I somehow knew it was this vision of free spirits that he was now experiencing in this transfixed state. They were coming, they were approaching, walking toward him.

As I watched him, this transfigured Nietzsche, he started to fade. I wanted him to stay, but he was fading, disappearing, like those ecstasy-saturated tiles that appeared to me from somewhere and, despite my desire to watch them forever, slipped away from me.

As I returned to myself, I felt frozen. Then I realized I had been frozen in the midst of considering my decision. I had been deciding whether to leave this place and return to the world of partials, of incompletes, of loss, of frustration, but to an existence characterized by my life's motto—Discover!—and the mystery that such a life holds, and the secrets it gradually reveals.

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I needed to decide, but I felt in a state of suspension, not able to make a choice.

The blackness returned with its peculiar sense of calm and strength. After a few seconds, the blackness suddenly transformed into whiteness, with its own sense of comfort. Then the blackness again, then the whiteness, then the blackness. In my stupor, these two states alternately washed over me, each with their distinct feelings of comfort. I would have to choose one or the other.

Then there was nothing. A total loss of any kind of consciousness. I rested, thoughtless, in that nothingness. Then I seemed to be aware of my body. That seemed an odd feeling after all that had been going on. As I increasingly sensed my body, I became aware that my eyes were closed. Then I had the feeling that I was lying down, on my right side. With some effort, I began to open my eyes. I could see in front of them a pattern of some kind, one that showed a variety of dark subdued colors. Closest to my eyes, at what appeared to be a distance of two feet, was an irregular somewhat square shape with various shades of rose or dark red. I could not make sense of it.

As I continued to stare, I slowly realized I was looking at a vertical wall of rough granite stones. As awareness strengthened, it dawned on me that I was looking at the inner wall of the well. At that very same moment, I felt a hand on my left shoulder, gently shaking me, as if to wake me. I looked up and

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saw the face and figure of Nietzsche. My senses now told me that I was lying on the oak plank lid of the well. There were a few fall leaves lying there, vibrating slightly in the breeze. I moved to get up. When I was standing, I felt shaky. I looked around for Nietzsche, but he was nowhere to be found. At that moment, I was captured by an image of his handwritten letter, the one I had framed and hung above my writing desk. What struck me now was his clearly written signature at the bottom, penned over a century before.

Now I realized I was uneasy about standing on the lid of the well, fearing that it might once more give way into bottomless waters. I hurriedly climbed over the top of the stone wall enclosure onto the familiar firm floor of the forest. I did not look back. I was not going to take any chances.

Adam

AFTERWORD

PEERING INTO THE ABYSS

When you look for a long time into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

What do you see when peering into the abyss?

When we look at the world and ourselves from our practical everyday perspective, and if we have not been severely injured from the experiences of life or have recovered from that injury, we see opportunity. We see opportunities for relationships and community involvements. We see opportunity for creative expansion. We see opportunities for learning and intellectual and emotional growth. We see opportunities to conceptualize our experiences, give objects and ideas boundaries, and thereby “make sense” of the world. We see opportunities to measure and, to a certain extent, control what is around us. We see opportunities for enrichment of all kinds, particularly relational, cultural, and financial enrichment. And all these opportunities call us to

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action, to take hold of ourselves and the world, altering it, leaving traces of ourselves behind.

When we look at the world from the perspective of the hypnagogic, it is very different. We cannot use the tools of the everyday world here. We cannot measure and contain. We cannot reach definitive clarity. We do not find a predictability that is anything like we are accustomed to in the everyday world. Here images, rather than concepts, dominate. Here concrete experience, rather than rational analysis, has the power. Here we cannot confidently set limits to the world; it extends in every direction from us, including, and especially, down. Here we always are, and always will remain, explorers.

In trying to understand these things, I very much prefer the concept of the abyss to all others. So did Nietzsche, I believe. It suggests boundarylessness and boundlessness. I personally thrive and relax when I let that word serve as my starting point. To me, it suggests, better than any other, creatively branching out, and recalls to mind the imperative I have felt from my childhood: Discover!

So, what do I see when I peer into the abyss? I have no answer, for it is both inexpressible in language and ever-changing in character.

These thoughts have become comfortable thoughts for me. But as the years go by, I realize more and more acutely that they are not so for many. I have come to realize, with Nietzsche, that history teaches

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us that all of our institutions and intellectual and religious frameworks have been fashioned to protect us from the abyss—from even knowing there is such a thing as the abyss. Not that these elements of human community are not necessary and productive. They certainly have been. Their socially constructive moralities, even the most vicious and cruel, have had a purpose to serve. But history shows that they have all failed to give us the gift they promised: protection from harm, serenity of mind, a durable and meaningful sense of direction, and purpose. Their promise was founded on the fiction that they were, in some fashion or other, the embodiment of an eternal truth. They arbitrarily sanctified their leaders as the reliable representatives of that truth, and attributed to their written laws and holy books that same authority.

Authority. That is the key word. To make it all work, there has to be a way to set up an authority: a center of power whose entitlement is constantly reiterated through cold intellectual or physical force. And, always in the background and usually unacknowledged, this principle rules: the group is more important than the individual. All of these authorities will say that the real authority is truth, or God, or some other unknowable and unassailable transcendent entity, and that they are merely representatives. But what is constantly on the verge of being discovered is that there is no such entity, and that these authorities are all foolish wizards of Oz lurking behind their curtains.

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Authority. Authority as a sufficient motive for action is deemed necessary. We cannot expect every person to arrive at fact-based, compelling evidence for decisions. Now more than ever, we live in a time of specialization. Even scientists are saying they must rely on the authority of scientific colleagues for a cogent view of the nature of things, since they cannot do the experiments themselves. So, authority will continue to dominate human moral and intellectual deliberations into the unknown future. So preachers, monks, priests, theologians, philosophers, scientists of reputation, political theoreticians, heads of political parties, political leaders, presidents of universities, leaders of intellectual movements, heads of corporations, etc.—these people have no trouble making the case for authority in general and then, themselves in particular. This is something that has to be accepted as a fact of life.

Unfortunately, we also have to face the possibility that the granting of arbitrary authority to others is largely due not to necessity, but to a widespread inertia that seems to have been adopted by people at large. We may not have yet evolved to the point at which enough of our number are willing to make the effort to inquire sufficiently thoroughly to make informed moral judgments. This mental inertia amounts to a kind of laziness, or, perhaps better, a lack of moral courage.

Many years ago, I wrote a book with a chapter called “The Little-People/Big-People Delusion.” This

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delusion is a way of looking at the world that is a powerful carryover from childhood. Children must, out of necessity, look to authorities to guide them in their actions because they do not yet have sufficient experience with life to make adequate decisions about their safety and prosperity. Here, the parent or adult is indeed a necessary authority. But for far too many, this attitude carries over into adulthood where the habit of looking to others to tell them how to think and act is simply an attitude of laziness, or a subjugation to fear. For these people, the world is divided into Little People and Big People. The fearful identify themselves as Little People and look to those whom they identify as Big People to take over their moral and intellectual lives, just as their parents did. The strength of the desire to have all-knowing Big People in charge of them and their institutions is, at this stage of our evolution, too great to allow anything else. That is why, for example, we hungrily seek out religions and philosophies that are happy to take on the mantle of the Big Person.

We see the robustness of this tendency in the world today when we witness the demise of democracy as a workable form of government. Even what has been considered by many the most reliable democratic structure in the world today, that of that of the United States, is collapsing under the weight of the determination not to have to make the effort to learn about how things are and how things work. That is delegated to the politicians, who, unfortunately, are quite happy to be falsely thought of as Big People: as sources of wisdom and honesty,

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authorities who should be trusted. The laziness or cowardice of soul among us, and the desire to conduct ourselves as Little People, child citizens who should not be expected to strive and toil to really understand things for ourselves and from our own effort to learn—that laziness, shared with the world at large, spells the end of the American experiment and all similar approaches to governing. The truth is, of course, that there are no Little People and Big People in the conduct of adult life. There are only people—people whose only salvation as moral entities is to accept that they must strive through their whole lives to discover things and grow in wisdom.

If the need to discover and grow is valued, we will also value those who have made particularly successful efforts in that direction. In our cultural environment, we do need to make a case for the encouragement and support of those who truly break new ground and explore where no one has gone before. We will not find these people in any of the conventional structures of our institutions. We will not find them among the priests and preachers, the professors and academics, the scientists and opinion makers, among media personalities and publishers, among new age promoters and fad enthusiasts, among psychoanalysts and mindfulness teachers and cognitive-behavioral salespersons—and we will certainly not find them among politicians. We are more likely to find them in the ranks of our artists, poets, musicians, and their ilk.

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Unfortunately, those who do qualify are very few indeed. They are those very rare persons who are not paralyzed in fear when looking into the abyss, and who are willing to descend to the great unknown of human depth. However, even these exceptional persons have to struggle to hold their stance when the abyss, as Nietzsche wrote, looks back into them, for there is no more searing and chastening experience possible than the scathing introspective reflection required in the face of the return stare of the terrible abyss. However, the abyss does not do us harm; we do that to ourselves.

In my opinion, Nietzsche was the first great philosopher to recognize the central role in human history of the all-pervasive fear of human depth. It may also be possible that, since his death in 1900, there has not been another like him in this. If so, that is a tremendous loss for the future of humanity.

Some might mistakenly believe that having this kind of awareness and determination to explore the hypnagogic is due to pure chance, and that there is nothing we can do to step onto that path. The truth is that we can prepare for the experience. For me, the preparation has been quite simple: a relentless practice of becoming aware of my hypnagogic experiences, paying attention to them, and respecting them. I know for certain we all have such experiences, and lots of them. The problem is that we do not recognize them as such, and even when we do, it is easy to dismiss them as meaningless. This disregard and disrespect for the hypnagogic in our

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lives is a terrible misfortune for all of us as individuals and for human evolution as a whole.

One more thing. There is a tremendous temptation to make a genuine sortie into the depths and produce truly beneficial results for humanity, but then the courage to continue is lost. I say something about this in *The Book Moth Lectures*. Let me simply note here that in these cases it is always fear that causes the explorer to draw back from further descent. That is what happens when this fear is coupled with the temptation of the reward of fame and appreciation that comes to the discoverer of a new blessing for the human community. That is why we see so many instances of great men, such as Sigmund Freud, who, after their initial brilliance, simply go on repeating their message over and over again, all the while building up a group of disciples. Unfortunately, some take it further and even work to discourage any who would feel inspired to carry on deeper. These fearful pioneers are like divers who have gone out some small distance on the great lake of the abyss and, by chance, have captured an exotic fish. They dropped anchor, netted it, hauled it in, and examined it—much to their delight and, eventually, to that of others. But they did not then haul anchor and go out further, into areas of greater depth, and try their luck there. They were blocked from that adventure by an unconscious fear, worried that their anchor might not touch bottom. They and their devoted disciples gained the pleasure of basking in the temporary glory of soporific praise, but forewent even greater triumphs. It is understandable to want to come up

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from the depths to get your breath, but to never reenter is a tragedy. That is why I am adding this...

POSTSCRIPT

**HUMAN DEPTH:
A DECLARATION**

Nietzsche's Poem (again):

Where you're standing, dig, dig out:
Down below's the Well:
Let those who dwell in darkness shout:
"Down below there's Hell!"

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*

Few who know of Nietzsche would say his life was joyful. But some of us would not hesitate to say that his wisdom certainly was.

His words reveal a confidence in human possibility shared by very few. His preferred way to speak of

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that possibility was in terms of *depth*. For me, this poem reverberates with his depth of vision—one that I share with him.

Language is important, and the language of human aspiration has a strong influence over our thinking about human potentials. To express human potential, the language of *Depth* is powerful and evokes a feeling of expansion. To express that potential in the language of the *Unconscious*, as it turns out, is powerful in the opposite direction: it evokes constriction and limitation.

Much that I have said in this book is aimed at reclaiming a true vision of the depth and power of human beings—for myself first, and for anyone else who is interested. I would say that Nietzsche was trying to do the same thing.

The starting point is not somewhere else or some other time. It is here. Right here is where to dig to discover your depth. When you dig here, you discover the Well, the source of all your power and creativity.

Dig boldly. Do not fear to penetrate the depths. Do not be ruled by the foolish dread felt by those who walk in darkness. There is no hell. There is only the unknown.

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Do not become confused and misled by those who use the language of the unconscious. There is no expansion there. Rather, every door says “Do not enter! Go no deeper! Be afraid!”

This is the time for a change. Develop the language of depth. Shun the language of the unconscious, the language of fear.

If you follow the way of depth, you may feel lost and bewildered at times; that is the nature of discovery. It will not kill you. In the end, it rewards you. If you follow the way of the unconscious, however, you will eventually die of suffocation.

Use the language of depth, immerse yourself in life, and—Discover!