

BORIS KRIGER

COMPLETE WORKS

The Joys of Common Sense



A Future Beyond Imagination



The Uncertain Universe



Lilli-Bunny and the Secret of a Happy Life



Theological Articles



Scientific Articles



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Preface

As much as you may get upset about the passing of another day, nothing will change. As frustrated as you are about your mood, the slow flow of your thoughts and the obscure reasons by which the universe is governed, nothing will change, precisely as King Solomon predicted.

It would be remarkable if it were possible to experience some long-forgotten era, its nuances, its graces. To experience not simply flat images like we see in movies, but actually the real world of that time with all of its dimensions, allowing one to sense the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings of the time. Which time? Any time; it doesn't matter. How colorful were the clothes in medieval ages? It is so difficult to imagine the normal, ordinary sky with normal, ordinary clouds slowly passing above medieval castles, filled with sounds of long forgotten words. Somewhere in the fields a fight is at its climax: the blood is red, the swords are sharp, and the death is real. The problems of medieval Europe are still contemporary politics and don't yet belong to history. Everything is serious and scary; the reality is unrelenting and painful. Somewhere in the depths of the forest, lovers are embracing each other and their feelings are the same as in our modern times, times that haven't lost their romance despite the calamities of the electronic era. Imagination is an excellent hideout for poets, philosophers, and the insane.

It is great to sink into the times of Socrates and listen to the melody of the ancient Greek language that sounds so Oriental to our ears, even though it has become an ancestor to many of our modern words. Look at the broad forehead of Plato, which gave him his name. Do you realize that all of these people once existed? They moved, lived, breathed, spoke, and were an integral part of the routine reality of their times, which even though filled with the colors of existence was probably very boring. It does not exist anymore. Neither does the blackness of

night above Athens exist, even though the stars over my backyard are still in almost the same positions as they were 2500 years ago, and the Milky Way is just the same as it was above the ancient columns and roofs that had just been built and freshly painted.



When you look at the sky it is all the same as it was in the Middle Ages, in ancient Greece, and even as it was above some lost civilization that we haven't yet uncovered. Even still, imagination can help us revive the smell of their wine, the taste of their bread, and the strength of their bulls.

One day, our reality will turn into the same pale dance of someone else's imagination, our history and importance relegated to their interests. Sometimes I feel that I breathe the air of these forgotten times, read their thoughts, emotions and dreams as if they were my own. I feel like I am part of all these vanished eras, and that the future has yet to unfold. I feel like I am ready to start my journey to a forgotten, undiscovered country, whose name is "The Joys of Common Sense".

FORGIVENESS AS A FREE CHOICE

Whether we like it or not, our life is filled with both obvious and hidden conflicts that are usually caused by clashes between real interests and imaginary reasons. Life itself starts with conflict: the first cry of a baby, its face showing a grimace of suffering and protest against the force that pushes it out, is a good illustration of this first conflict of our lives. We spend all the stages of our lives, our youth, our adult years, and even our senior years, in conflict. Our struggles are eternal and remain our closest companions throughout our existence; thus any mature individual is an experienced fighter, while his main opponents are his co-workers and the ones he loves most.

The cycle of struggle includes a constant exchange of numerous punches, until destiny separates the opponents and they find new opponents to fight with. Sometimes people succeed in destroying each other in a more efficient manner; for example, they may kill each other. But here we will not address such extreme cases. The substance of our concern is the endless sequence of minor conflicts that constitutes our entire life.

People fight not only with other people, but also with inanimate objects; for example, when we get hit by a chair or a table we react very similarly to the way we would react to a person in that situation—we curse, threaten, or sometimes even try to hit back. In more advanced stages of our obsession we even talk to inanimate objects; we may beg them and sometimes even threaten them. Most of the time this happens when we communicate with our computers. It is not uncommon to hear, “Come on! Don’t do that to me!” We often address our computers this way, especially when they freeze.

Once when I got angry at my computer I even went so far as to spit at the monitor; that’s why I always keep a box of Kleenex at my desk. Sometimes we argue with our computers, and most of the time they win. They win because they don’t have any emotions, and being emotional doesn’t help when you are trying to win an argument. But being passionate usually helps, because

passion is not just an empty emotion. Passion is the pure energy of our soul.

Most of the time we have conflicts with animate objects like pets, or even mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are the only species that we kill on a daily basis. Of course we eat meat—beef and chicken—which is a result of daily killings, but we as consumers are not involved in the butchering process. In the case of mosquitoes we are the active killers; because when we defend ourselves that usually justifies any killing.

Look at the kinds of conflicts we have with God, destiny, fate, or whatever we call the superior force that governs our lives.

We fight the laws of nature. We especially hate gravity; when things fall on the floor we usually say “damn gravity!” and this is no joke. By saying this we are opposing a basic force in the universe, without which practically nothing can exist. We fight gravity by saying “why can’t we fly like birds?” and we actually



are overcoming it—by flying in our dreams. With the advent of manned flight we are now conquering the laws of physics to achieve those dreams.

We also fight the temperature. We are a moderate species, so we do not enjoy the extremes of temperature at either end of its range. Most of all we hate and fight death—the fact that we are

all inevitably going to die drives us crazy. In the lengthy, boring process of evolution—from simple one-celled organisms to our present stage of development as well-developed multi-celled organisms with obvious esthetic and spiritual needs—nature has taught us by imprinting in our long-term memory and subconscious that death is a major failure of our life and one that should be constantly avoided and prevented at all costs.

The process of fighting consumes a lot of our energy which we lose in a series of offences and defenses, aggressions and withdrawals, the “slings and arrows” of outrageous fortune that William Shakespeare has so eloquently elucidated for us. This fighting was vital in the early stages of our evolution as human beings, because a refusal to fight signified unavoidable death. But in modern society the refusal to fight sometimes, although not necessarily, constitutes a death threat. Luckily western culture doesn’t kill losers, which is a good thing because some so-called “losers” that refuse to fight for the illusory values of modern society—like career, wealth, and power—have an opportunity to use their energy for peaceful observation of our world, our universe, and our place therein. These “losers” are called philosophers. I don’t mean the guys that fight their way through academic institutions to get high degrees in philosophy; I’m speaking of the simple people that have chosen a lifestyle of deep thought and observation as a way of spending their time and attention.

That is the true freedom of choice: refuse to take part in most of the conflicts and just forgive the offender, whoever or whatever it is: a table that you get hit by, your neighbor that has stolen something from you, or your friend that has betrayed you for the thousandth time. Forgiveness of the enemy is the best way to save your energy for a better cause. The fighting and hatred that are always involved in any struggle are very destructive for both parties involved. They hurt both our spirit and our mind; they distract us from really worthy issues that should be explored and given thought to. Moreover, a life full of conflicts could be considered irrational, because in the modern world you cannot really prevail by destroying your opponent; you cannot kill your neighbor without suffering severe consequences, nor can you kill your friend who probably

deserves it for betraying you time and time again. Therefore, no matter how hard you fight you will always feel dissatisfied with the results, even in the case of ultimate victory, because modern society doesn't allow conflicts to continue to their natural point of resolution—which in nature often constitutes the killing or destruction



of the enemy. In today's world, there is no way to destroy an enemy without destroying yourself. The death I speak of is not merely physical, but more of a spiritual and moral corruption that necessitates our demise.

In order to execute our true freedom of choice we must consider forgiveness of our enemies and opponents, because the one who forgives always has the choice of whether or not to forgive. The one who is forgiven, who always fights, is just an object of aggressive tendencies and therefore enjoys less freedom of choice, because he will always revert to the baser instincts of conflict. For as Sun Tzu says:

“There is no greater misfortune than that of underestimating your enemy. Underestimating your enemy means thinking that he is evil. Thus you destroy your three treasures and become an

enemy yourself. When two great forces oppose each other, the victory will go to the one who knows how to yield.”

In contemplation and introspection we allow ourselves to embrace freedom of choice, because we are no longer locked into a cycle of hatred and destruction. Through these enlightened philosophical positions we are able to pursue the most reasonable and morally suitable courses of action, which is something we should all seek to do.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR VS. FEAR OF FREEDOM

Do I feel free? I don't think so. Freedom is not just a potential opportunity to do the things that one openly chooses to do, because most human actions are predicated on primal instincts such as fear. Moreover, most of the things that one makes others do are done out of fear. Of course they include not only fear, but also love and other passions, though fear stands out as the most significant component in the motivation for one's actions.

I can justify this statement by simply analyzing the fact that fear is a major factor that survives across generations throughout the entire span of biological evolution as a result of natural selection. Organisms that experience more fear and are more aware of their surroundings express due diligence and caution in their actions and responses, thereby avoiding more life-threatening dangers. In their aversion they are sustaining their bloodline, or rather their genetic contributions to future generations, and ultimately increase their Darwinian Fitness (pass their genes to the next generation). We can assume that our ability to experience fear is a result of lengthy evolution. Christophe Lambert, in his book “La société de la peur” (“The Society of Fear”), argues that modern society is based on fear. It could be the fear of financial losses, unemployment, or inability to support one's family, but it also can include the fear of solitude, fear of growing old, fear of sickness, and of

course the fear of death. Lambert makes a strong statement that modern society provokes most of this fear by imposing competitive values and an intense pace of life. One of his major concerns is television, which he calls “le ‘nouvel’ opium du peuple” (“the new opium of the people”). Once it started as a very positive feature of life in the early 1950s, extending the horizons and the abilities of common people to acquire knowledge about other nations and about world events, but with time it has become so manipulative that it is difficult for the viewer to distinguish between truth and drama. Lambert mentions that society at the beginning of the twenty-first century still remembers the consequences of attempts to fulfill the utopian ideals of some questionable minds of the twentieth century: Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud.

Nietzsche continued to explore concerns with the existence of God, and therefore finished the work of the philosophers of the Enlightenment and the philosophers of the French revolution. By stating that “God is dead” he started a deep crack in the once-solid belief in the Almighty. He also created the concept of the “superman” that provided the foundation for Nazi attempts to improve the human race.

Karl Marx created a utopian economic theory by criticizing the old brand of capitalism of the nineteenth century, but he also made false predictions about the future development of class struggle which ultimately laid the basis for numerous communist states. This almost led to global nuclear war and a complete extinction of the human species.

Sigmund Freud, probably the most innocent of this trio, developed a theory of the subconscious, arguing that most people’s motivations are based on aggression and libido. This laid the groundwork for a series of sexual revolutions which occurred in the decades of the ‘20s, ‘50s, ‘70s, and ‘80s of the twenty-first century. Most likely Freud didn’t do much damage on a global scale and was also quite successful in developing methods of psychoanalytical theories. But we cannot ignore the likelihood that his ideas had a certain influence on the rate of divorce and jeopardized the institution of the family by diminishing the value of people’s relationships,

bringing them down to the “libido-aggression” level.



Christophe Lambert, once again, brings up the statistics of divorce rates in France, which have grown 400% in the last forty years. According to other statistics, 1 in every 3 marriages in the United States ends in divorce. Solitude, absence of family support, confusing religious beliefs, indefinite sexual relationships, and frustrating and scary media provide a full portrait of our fears in a nutshell.

How is it possible to obtain freedom from fear? The only way that I can see is to combat the factors that create fear, the

factors that we have analyzed above. In order to combat solitude we must learn to build our relationships on a mutual basis and not to expect more than the other party can give. This even though (as Lambert argues) the internet is separating people rather than connecting them, because it eliminates personal contact. Personally I cannot agree with this statement, because the Internet today allows video conversations and very intense socialization, even with the most distant parts of the world. So I would argue that we should praise the Internet as a wonderful medium for building great relationships and making new friends, because avenues now exist to meet professional colleagues and start relationships with total strangers, which would not otherwise be possible. We also must admit that the Internet is a safe way to do this, in so far as it is not possible to cause any harm in a physical way through such virtual means of communication.

We cannot diminish the importance of the basic needs of each and every individual to have some sort of system of belief that may or may not be based on conventional religious ideas. It

doesn't matter whether the individual chooses to be a believer or an atheist, but it is very important that he build a system of beliefs that he will feel comfortable with and then stay consistent with.

Lambert further argues that the main occupation of modern society is consumption. "Sex idols" have become a commodity not unlike oil, wheat, and sugar. In the same way that excessive consumption of sugar is not good for one's health and may even cause diabetes, excessive consumption of "sex idols" is not good for your soul or your family and will eventually leave you in a state of isolation and solitude. Alain Delon, the famous French actor who ruled women's hearts all over the world for almost half a century, now spends his days completely alone in the pleasant company of his three dogs and one cat, as the magazine "Paris Match" reports to its readers. When he was asked in an interview why he is not happy and why he is alone, he answered: "I wasn't programmed for happiness. I was programmed for success." Those two things don't always come hand in hand. Therefore, the world is starting to turn its eyes from the wild promiscuity of the '70s and '80s to old-fashioned family values that we may choose to adopt in order to obtain freedom from fear of solitude and isolation.

It is important to move towards the restoration of the old-fashioned family values that have been destroyed in the wake of industrialization and post-industrialization. Emancipation, which granted equal rights to both sexes, also has a dark side in that it has deprived women of their privileges as the weaker gender which many women would love to restore. Society, in the era of total emancipation, has failed to provide basic childcare and educational services on a level comparable to that which could be insured by active parental involvement. There is a need to build strong family relationships using compromises and by expressing sincere interest in the problems and beliefs of your loved ones. This can provide us with at least a slight hope of not finding ourselves in old age suffering from solitude and isolation.

I believe that by limiting exposure to the media we may substantially reduce our level of fear and anxiety. We don't

realize how strongly we are influenced by the images we see on TV. One young woman who resides in a tiny French village was interviewed by TF1 and reported that she experienced a lot of fear. When asked why she felt this fear she answered, “Avec tout ce que l’on voit à la télé on a des raisons d’avoir peur” (“With all this that one can watch on TV, one has reasons to have fear”). If TV is negatively impacting the lives of modest inhabitants in distant villages, what can we expect from people living in the frenzy of modern cities?

Protecting ourselves from excessive exposure to the media might reduce our tendency to sink into consumerism, and therefore protect us from an obsession with consumption as the main focus of our lives. In abandoning consumerism as a lifestyle, we may be surprised to realize how few things a person really needs to support their existence.

When we manage to achieve freedom from fear, however, we will need to find a way to overcome our fear of freedom, because there is really nothing to fear but fear itself. The only question that remains is, are we ready to face the possibilities of a free existence?

HUMAN NATURE OR JUST THE CHEMISTRY OF OUR BRAINS?

Since the dawn of time philosophers and ordinary people have been speculating on human nature. Every succeeding generation approaches these issues with new arguments, because each new generation brings new ideas and speculations to allow a more thorough understanding of our laws, their morality, and their implications in society. For example, a well-known quotation by John Stuart Mill states,

“It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied, and if the fool and pig are of different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.”

We can continue with a long list of similar dilemmas, like “it’s better to be honest and hungry rather than dishonest and

full,” or “it is better to be a poor decent person rather than a rich crook.” But the problem is that it is obviously better to be a satisfied philosopher who can enjoy both sides of life, and it is better to be honest and full, rich and decent. It might be misleading that the categories mentioned above are self-exclusive.



Even though we understand the point that Mill was trying to make, that it is preferable to live a highly spiritual and intellectual life even though it may result in some discomfort or dissatisfaction, this belief is not necessarily an absolute certainty.

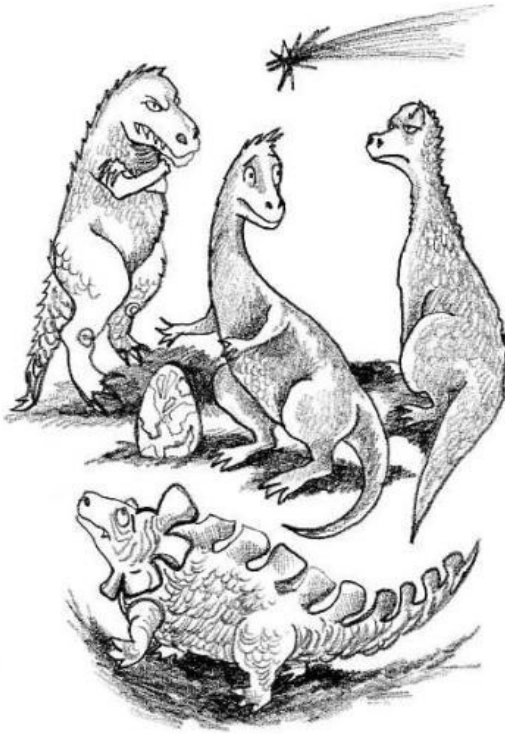
Ethical truism and spiritual acceptance do not always mean discomfort and hardship. These virtues, along with being their own reward, bear the fruit of not only ethical pleasures but financial ones as well.

It is a very old, deceptive practice to argue that with great knowledge “[comes] great grief”, with all due respect to King Solomon, whose statement in Hebrew “*yeda rav, tcar rav*” (“great knowledge, great grief”) is a little bit outdated.

At the present time we know that our mood and the feeling of satisfaction are ultimately regulated by the chemistry of our brains. Most of the philosophers and great thinkers of the past experienced a lot of stress concerning their discoveries and thoughts that caused them to enter severe depressions. Fools and pigs obviously didn’t experience such pressures and therefore looked to be happier and more satisfied.

We cannot agree that the nature of knowledge itself bears on its shoulders some ancient curse of unhappiness and

dissatisfaction. Modern methods of treating depression show that knowledge itself is not the cause of depression; the cause of depression is the stress that appears as a result of intensive thinking and attempts to analyze complicated concepts. With proper pharmaceutical correction these undesirable effects can be eliminated, allowing the pleasure of that knowledge to be even more intense and gratifying than simple earthly pleasures. Furthermore, the satisfaction that philosophy can give to human



beings results in a more profound happiness than anything that ignorance or an illusory happiness could offer as the result of a “piggish and foolish” existence.

Let’s examine human nature in respect to the concepts discussed above. Everything that we can observe, realize, and sense is as subjective as the definitions of good and evil. These definitions are the only facts that can be established regarding these two terms with a sufficient degree of certainty that they have

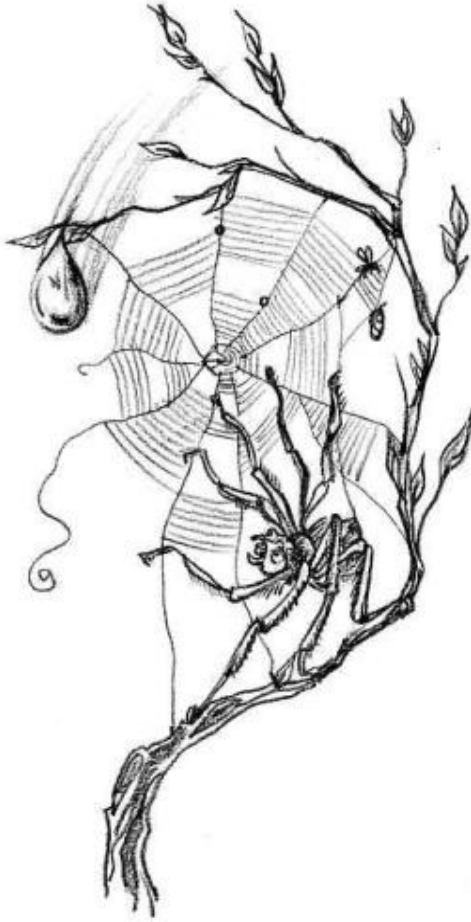
opposite meanings. Usually we can analyze good and evil in pairs, where we deal with two sides while the same action is conceived of as good for one side and bad for the other. It is seldom that there is only one side that perceives a certain action or event as good while at the same time there is no other side that would perceive the same action as bad. When one side is benefiting from some action or event it is usually done by damaging, destroying, or causing some sort of negative effect on

the other side. We cannot establish a universal definition of good and bad, but in the initial pages of this work we are trying at least to determine something certain in regards to this matter.

We have to make a very important remark at the outset that usually discussions like this one may have disturbing consequences, because jumping to the conclusion that there is no good without evil in certain circumstances may justify evil actions by arguing that there is no action that could be done without causing some direct or collateral damage to a certain party. In order to prevent making such a conclusion we need to determine what sort of objects qualify to be considered with respect to the terms good and evil. For example: we cannot argue that enjoying the sunshine should be perceived as an evil action towards the sun because the sun is losing energy that is used by us and therefore approaching the end of its existence in the universe. This example demonstrates that we cannot operate with the terms good and evil when we deal with inanimate objects, which is true unless the consequences of these actions could affect other living objects. For example, our impact on the global climate could not be perceived as evil towards the planet or its atmosphere because both are inanimate objects, but it could result in negative effects on other living objects that could become the victims of such impact. So we have to state that the definitions of good and evil have meaning only in respect to actions or events that have direct or indirect effects on living objects. Therefore we have divided nature into two unequal parts, one which includes the whole universe of inanimate objects and a second which includes the tiny portion of objects that we know of as 'living'.

It is also obvious that among living objects we can distinguish between good and evil only with respect to the level of evolutionary development of certain species. We cannot claim that washing our hands with soap, which is good for us but causes devastating effects to the microbes that grow on our skin, is an act of evil towards the microbes. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that our understanding of the terms good and evil is applicable only to a tiny fraction of living objects that usually belong to our species or are very similar to ours. To illustrate this

statement we can say that it is obviously bad to kill a cat, but there is nothing evil in killing microbes or parasites. Of course, this principle is true only if it doesn't cause any undesirable effects to other living species, such as those that feed on or benefit in other ways from the existence of the "bad" species.



We then move to an even more obscure area when we deal with good and evil in human society. The philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote with reference to the moral law inside of him, which fascinated him as much as the starry sky above him, but the moral law of Kant might be considered immoral by some aboriginal tribes in the South American jungles. There is no such thing as a standard moral law that could be accepted

by all humans. It is very difficult to give a definition of the moral law that lies in the foundations of human nature. It is as hard as giving any definition where there may be objections, according to the Socratic Method, that will always find something that is not included in the definition, and therefore might jeopardize our ability to define good and evil. We also cannot employ the approach of St. Augustine of Hippo who said, in answering the question "what is time?": "If no one asks me, I know; but if any

person requires me to tell him, I cannot.” These two approaches cannot help us to identify what is good and what is evil in human nature.

Why is it so important for us to distinguish between good and evil? Of course sometimes we accept that there are gray areas in our moral understanding between the absolutes of black and white morality, whereby we accept the eventuality that sometimes good actions or intentions will have evil or malicious results, and that evil actions can possess elements of goodness in them. Nevertheless, most of the time we will try to determine certain events or actions as absolutes, either good or evil. Is this approach specific only to humans? We cannot say that, because in the animal kingdom we can find the same systems of judgment. As an example, imagine yourself fishing. When you put your bait into the water you may see many tiny fish that hesitate whether or not to bite. You can see a real hesitation, as you might see in some scientist solving a difficult problem. How is it possible that in such a tiny, cold brain we can find the same judgment system trying to distinguish between whether or not the bait is food, which is good, or a life- threatening danger, which is evil? This means that the moral law of Immanuel Kant has its counterpart in the early stages of biological evolution and that the ability to distinguish between good and evil is supported by positive natural selection, because the fish that is not able to make this judgment will inevitably die or be killed without any chance for reproducing.

Of course it is more complicated when it comes to human moral standards, but the difference is not as big as one would think. For example, self sacrifice and altruism, which are considered some of the most exemplary acts that can be attributed to human nature, are quite well known and documented in the animal kingdom. We don't find many animals that are ready to die for certain ideas, like some brave scientists that ended up burned at the stake for their beliefs, but we still find a lot of examples where animals sacrifice their own lives in order to protect their offspring or to promote their species' survival. We would argue that self sacrifice in the animal kingdom is governed by instinct and is more common than in human society where

individuals are reluctant to endanger their lives for a multitude of reasons.

Do good and evil exist from the point of view of nature? Are these categories included in the structure of the universe? Is a supernova explosion an act of good or of evil? It is neutral, and can be valued by human minds in moral terms only through realization of its consequences.

Do good and evil exist from the point of view of God? No matter what definition of God we choose we always define God as some sort of thermometer of good and evil, with the tools of punishment and reward. Can heaven exist without God? Can God exist without heaven? Can Satan exist without hell? Can hell exist without Satan? In the simplified picture of the universe which we have inherited from our ancestors these categories cannot exist independently; even atheists just narrow these categories but still use the same terms of good and evil, punishment and reward. The problem is that evil empires are considered evil only by their enemies, while they are considered as exemplary by their governors and often by most of their people. Just as when history is written by the conquerors it is only in the eyes of the nations that fell under their power that they are evil, while succeeding generations remember them as the greatest societies that ever existed.

We would like to emphasize that our attempt to define human nature by investigating the categories of good and evil doesn't have any intention of justifying evil acts on the grounds that if evil cannot be well defined then evil actions can be more acceptable. Our intention is to argue that neither 'good' nor 'evil' can be used as universal absolutes, but rather that they should always be used with reference to the individual or society that is being evaluated.

Let us discuss how we understand our inner sense of 'sin'. There are two kinds of regret that we can experience towards our own wrongdoing. The first one is real regret, such that when the same circumstances repeat themselves the individual will never do the same thing again, even if no one is looking and there is no threat of punishment or penalization. Another sort of regret, which is not as genuine, is caused by the realization of

wrongdoing through punishment; this sort of regret cannot be considered a true expression of personal moral belief. This includes not only the fear of punishment that might come from society, which Sigmund Freud categorized as the super-ego, but also the fear of punishment beyond material life, like the fear of God's wrath. Even though most such cases are considered to be honest regret, they are not. It is not correct to argue that the moral law described by Immanuel Kant is something fundamental to human nature; at the very least it cannot be considered as fundamental and constant as the stars above.

The moral laws inside us are flexible. For example, a lack of food can easily justify stealing; danger can justify defensive aggression against a threat, even homicide. There is no such thing



as a mature or immature moral law; morality just constantly changes with the evolving needs of our body and character. It is also influenced by external pressures. Humans possess a weak memory or capacity to recall past situations, because our memory is based not on an imaging of the

scenery as a whole as on video-cassette, but on a multi-dimensional imprint of the event in the brain that can be retrieved by employing different associations. Thus the same events can be analyzed and perceived differently, at a later time, by the same individual in a much different context. Absence of stable memory and firm systems of recognition and realization allow us to change our moral beliefs in a very efficient way, allowing us to adjust our moral behavior in a fluid manner in response to the internal and external pressures that we face. So how can we call moral law a 'law' if it is changed as frequently as our need to change it? Most of the time we don't realize that a change has

been made, and we feel we are being quite consistent within our code of personal morals and beliefs.

Now let us discuss the question, “How might God judge our sins?” Is there any moral law so fundamental that it could be attributed to the Almighty? We might argue that by giving us free will God gave us the privilege of judging our own deeds, and thus if we consider our own deeds to be “good” ones, how can they be evaluated independently by conventional moral standards? We are not sinners in the eyes of God, and only if we judge ourselves does God confirm our punitive ruling against ourselves by assigning us to an eternity in hell.

This is a very malicious argument. This kind of argument endorses situations such as those where a bloodthirsty murderer who doesn’t regret his deeds would still end up in heaven because he is consistent within himself, while a good person who for some reason regrets some of his innocent deeds would end up in hell. This is not a very worthwhile system to follow. We have abandoned a simple system of punishment and reward, simply because the truth is much more complicated.

Christian morality is the most developed system of morality that humankind has ever achieved, because it includes a list of recommendations such that, if all living people were to follow them, our world would become heaven on earth. Theoretically Christian morality should work this way, but it never does. The problem is that we try to encourage people to adhere to a fundamental, unchanging moral code, assuming that they are morally mature. We should encourage instead a constant search and constant check of current internal moral values that actually can yield a better human being, rather than a person with seemingly inflexible moral beliefs. We can improve human nature by encouraging this constant search, because awareness of the fact that there is no such thing as a constant fundamental moral law inside of us leaves us responsible for making right decisions every single day, for checking our morals every single hour and trying to follow them, every minute of our lives.

ACHIEVING PEACE OF MIND

Reading classic literature always calms me down. This is especially true when I read the diaries of famous writers of the nineteenth century. It seems like you have conversed with an intelligent person, who doesn't need to make himself look better than he really is. Such reading is very comforting to me, because the pace of life in the nineteenth century was much slower than it is today. Interests and passions were less competitive then, and the slower passage of time allowed for individuals to expand their thoughts into questions, a practice we seldom have time for anymore. Diaries and other accounts from this period take me far away from the reality of everyday life today, and the only thing I regret is that you cannot find new works by novelists such as Swift, Defoe, and Dickens, or new poetry from such poets as Byron.

I like this sort of detailed work, and you would probably be surprised at the content of the books I pursue, because I tend to read completely useless books on topics such as agricultural reports of ancient Rome, written by contemporary writers of that time.



Reading for me is not just about acquiring information. It is first of all a thought-provoking activity

which helps the flow of my own thoughts and channels them into unique and different directions, allowing my mind to figure out better ways of perceiving my surroundings and the world in which I live.

Reading for me is a routine action, and routine actions are very common in nature. Most processes in nature begin with

elemental, progressive steps, building towards a desired end. Unfortunately I suffer from a need to be engaged in routine action, anything but reading.

We can achieve only the illusion of peace of mind. This illusion is somehow connected to places, times, people, and images. Alas, if you look at the details you see that situations that you perceive as safe and comfortable in reality are not that safe. This is true not only with regard to personal experiences, but also can be seen in the biographies of successful writers, philosophers, and scientists. The perception of their success deteriorates the more you read, and you may find many disturbing details in their biographies that could have easily jeopardized their success and forfeited their claims to the pages of history.

There are many examples of images imprinted in our minds as ultimate success stories that in detailed investigation prove to be only another illusion offered to us by the media, books, and movies. In many cases we do the opposite, making negative conclusions about some events that actually are not as bad or at least don't have any serious negative effect on ourselves or our lives. For example, we tend to over-estimate the danger of getting killed in terrorist attacks or becoming a victim of airplane crashes when in fact we have a much greater chance of dying behind the wheel of a car. Lucius Annaeus Seneca¹ gave all of us very valuable advice when he said that we shouldn't worry about troubles in the future because they will most likely never happen, and even if they do happen then we can worry about them then. But if we worry about future troubles now and they never happen, then we just poison our lives and lose all hope for happiness.

The state of peace of mind and stable feelings of happiness and self-enjoyment are not all based on the facts of your life. What is more important is which system of beliefs you have in place to cope with different situations. The only way to

¹ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, known simply as Seneca or Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BC–AD 65) was a Roman philosopher, statesman, dramatist, and (in one work) humorist of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

achieve a stable state of happiness and peace of mind is to learn more about yourself in order to find the true source of your unhappiness. Only through introspection can we purge the negative images that may currently occupy our thoughts.

Seneca can be a good guide for such self learning. His letters to Lucilus include volumes of practical advice which still hold true today, even though much of it has been long forgotten. In modern Western culture we perceive action as a better choice than absence of action, though in many cases absence of action allows one to find more successful ways of balancing one's state of mind.

Avoiding action is perceived in puritanical cultures as the sin of laziness, and doing whatever you have to do without a lot of thinking about the reasons or the results appears better than the state of inactivity. "No strain, no gain" is a slogan that can illustrate the modern approach. This creates a lot of stress and exhaustion, making people engage in the frenzy of the modern lifestyle: "Do first, think later. Or even better, don't think at all."

If you were to ask the majority of people walking down the street what they are doing, most will struggle with this question and then tell you where they were going. Then if you were to ask why they were doing what they said they were doing, most would struggle once more but would be unable to give you an answer, because they in fact do not know why they do what they are doing. For example, if you ask a high school student on his way to school, "Where are you going?" He will answer, "to school". If you then ask, "But why are you going there?" the answer will most likely be, "Because that's what I've got to do." You won't find a very deep explanation of people's actions in more mature individuals as well. Thinking is very rare and a highly prized commodity in today's society. "Thought is a strenuous art—few practice it, and then only at rare times," as the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, once mentioned, and this is very true. We don't teach our children to think; we teach them just to act, no matter how illogical it may seem.

People's inability to analyze their motives and actions creates a lot of stress and causes frustration. Thinking is not that

difficult, if you are used to doing it; it just needs to become part of your lifestyle. People generally don't like to think, not because thinking requires more energy (which it probably does), but as a result of the erroneous assumption that thinking is not a useful way to spend their precious time. Therefore, as a result of this assumption, thinking is not highly valued by the majority of the members of today's society.

We have certain amounts of time which are allocated for certain purposes every day. We may spend about 10 minutes showering, 30 minutes or more eating, 2-3 hours watching TV, but we neglect allocating time for simple contemplation. There is no such thing as a special time for thinking; you are supposed to do it if you really need to, while you're in the shower or eating or watching TV, which is not very comfortable because sinking into a deep thought in the shower can make you forget whether you have already washed your hair and therefore you may have to do it again, considerably increasing the amount of water and shampoo you use. Thinking during meals increases the probability of choking and therefore dying prematurely, and thinking while watching TV is almost completely impossible because the specific intent of many TV producers is to distract us from thinking about our lives and replace it with something else that has nothing to do with our daily reality.

The absence of thinking time in our culture is a bad thing. In order to stay self-consistent, humans need some time to review their actions and to adjust their thoughts and beliefs accordingly. The modern world doesn't quite support us in this endeavor or allow us to adjust accordingly, because our culture perpetuates the problem. When you have allocated some time for thinking, sometimes you may come to the very surprising conclusion that most of the actions you have been undertaking in the past were actually not leading you to any particular aim.

Western culture idolizes perfection. This imposes a lifestyle on most people that expects them to be perfect in their personal life, their career, and any endeavor they undertake. The individual then evaluates all aspects of his life in terms of success or failure. We can see this approach even in psychological terminology where modern psychology describes a family

experiencing crises in relationships between its members as a 'dysfunctional family'. This demonstrates the core values presented by modern psychology; where the family is supposed to function like a machine or a computer system. Therefore the psychology of society today doesn't allow any room for failure, subsequently increasing the pressure on any particular individual.

We are living in an era of perfectionism. You don't meet many successful individuals who value the calmness of quiet thought while observing the sunset, or individuals who find real pleasure in non-material values. I am a perfectionist myself, but I suffer from a most frustrating form of perfectionism which is complicated by an intolerance for routine work. I get easily excited by new ideas, but I find a lot of difficulty in conducting the repetitive actions that usually are necessary to succeed in any endeavor.

Perfectionism causes a lot of suffering, because there is no place for happiness in such an approach. You cannot be happy until you get your work done, but neither can you be happy when you get the results, because the perfectionist is never satisfied with any results. Modern culture is a huge factory that manufactures unhappy souls. I am trying to put an end to this by training myself to not be as perfectionist as I used to be, but even in this simple endeavor I am trying to be perfect and therefore my effort defeats my purpose.

I have always despised non-perfectionists, whom I call in my personal vocabulary "episodists". By "episodist" I mean a person who is not result-oriented, but rather process-oriented. I always thought that this kind of person was either stupid or just some kind of hippy, but now I realize that I was probably wrong. Look at nature. We don't have much evidence that time itself is real and not just an illusion of our minds. So, without time, there is no meaning to any result. Without time, the only meaningful action is to put effort into the process itself. Let's look at nature again. What is the ultimate result of a nice meal? Obviously it is the energy that we get out of eating food, but since energy is not something material, the material result of a nice meal is nothing more than what our digestive system produces, which could be considered neither aesthetically pleasing nor a desirable outcome.

The ultimate result of any blossom is rotting. The ultimate result of any life is death. That is why paying too much attention to results is not very desirable; without anticipation of results you don't have anxiety about failure. Nature is taking care of our ultimate results because we are left in charge of only the process, not the results.

How does one learn how to stop looking at results, to value the simple aspects of life? Take me, for example, sitting in this room writing this book. Rather than focusing my attention on the publishing of the book or the final product of my efforts, I focus only on the fact that I am enjoying writing and sharing my thoughts. It is a pleasant atmosphere, and I am in good company with a sleeping cat, a lazy dog, and the pleasant chimes of the clock. I am not anxious or nervous about how I come across or about any deadline that I must meet. Does this make me a bad person trying to enjoy my life independently of the results? I don't think so.

But still, in the back of my mind I am anxious as to how the book is going to turn out. I can't wait for the time when I submit this to the editor. I can't wait until I get the first copy and

see the cover. I am not happy that I cannot see all of this right now, right here. This is a good illustration of my dilemma, whether to abandon the ultimate preoccupation with the results and start to enjoy each and every moment of my existence, or to be like everybody else—a crazy perfectionist who cannot think of



anything but successful results.

Natural selection has made us strive for perfection, however unnatural that may sound. Even now we need to eat some animal's flesh in order to survive, and episodists are not very good hunters. If love is an ultimate aim of the development of the universe, why shouldn't I make an effort to escape my anxieties, even for a moment, and devote myself to pure reflection on the outside world, my inner soul?

The way to achieve piece of mind is to come to the realization that we need to understand ourselves, our primal responses. We need to get acquainted with our standard reactions, the way we often overestimate or underestimate ourselves and anticipate our possible behavior in different situations, all of which eventually adds up and makes us much more anxious about the days yet to come. Our fear of the future is not only based on a fear of unfortunate events, but also on a fear of our inability to provide the proper response.

Our previous experience usually provides us with sufficient information about our ability to cope with different stressful events in our lives, but for some reason this doesn't provide us with enough confidence to be able to cope with future events with the same or even greater success. Analysis of our previous performance, however, allows us to achieve peace of mind about future challenges.

One of the problems in estimating our own abilities is the obstacle that can come from the opinion of others that our own evaluation is subjective and therefore cannot be right. Thus we have a deep need for the approval of a third party to provide us with a second, external opinion about ourselves and our abilities. The most amazing thing is that sometimes the source of this opinion could be the very person that we don't perceive as a reliable source of opinions on many other issues. This is a paraphrase of a statement by Arthur Schopenhauer that aims to persuade the reader not to care too much about others' opinions. He was curious as to how many people there are in our lives whom we actually value and whose opinions we respect. Very often the answer would be zero, so why should we worry about

someone else's opinion of us? Being objective about ourselves is important not only so that we don't overestimate our abilities, but also so that we don't underestimate them.

We need to learn to build our self-confidence not from frequently-heard phrases like "I hate doing this," "I never knew how to do this," "I will never get over this," or any other sort of discouraging and counterproductive statements. We should rather make positive conclusions about our ability to adjust to new situations, to be flexible and creative, and therefore provide ourselves with the self-confidence to perform in the future at least as well as we did in the past.

Inflexibility is the main cause of failure and therefore anxiety, depression, and absence of peace of mind. Nature supports us to be as flexible as possible because 'adjustment' in life, especially among creatures living in the wild, is synonymous with 'survival'. If you can adjust to a harsh winter, you will survive. If not, then you die. Pretty straightforward, isn't it? Flexibility in

human society is also a valuable commodity. I had to adjust during my life to at least five different language environments, and even though I have never perfected them I was pretty successful in all of them. You don't need to be perfect in order to survive. Moreover, trying to be perfect may exhaust your energy resources and eventually lead to your downfall.

Common sense is another key to reaching a state of peace. But in my vocabulary common sense is not the opinion of the



majority; rather it is a sober insight into the problem which is free of pre-judgments and the misleading conclusions of others. I have learned to question anything I see and I am not new to this approach.

I completely agree with Rene Descartes in his “Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences” where he states, in Chapter Two:

“...but as for the opinions which up to that time I had embraced, I thought that I could not do better than resolve at once to sweep them wholly away, that I might afterwards be in a position to admit either others more correct, or even perhaps the same when they had undergone the scrutiny of reason. I firmly believed that in this way I should much better succeed in the conduct of my life, than if I built only upon old foundations, and leaned upon principles which, in my youth, I had taken upon trust.”

Following this advice of Descartes, I re-examine any concept or belief that I once took for granted, comparing it to my current experience and that of the modern world, especially where that’s significantly different from what I experienced as a child and adolescent. I must admit that this old approach benefits me in many ways, because regrettably it is still very rare and therefore it gives me an advantage over others that don’t employ this simple approach.

We frequently hear the opinion that most of the things in life depend on chance and opportunity. Many people argue that if or when opportunity comes they will not miss it. But the truth is that such people are not quite sure of what they are saying, as a result of decades of waiting for the right opportunity to present itself. They usually lose hope and just repeat comforting words and phrases in the “maybe someday...” style. How can you be sure that you won’t miss the right opportunity when it arises simply because you’ve never had one like it before? How can you train yourself to catch an opportunity when it comes along if opportunity is such a rare commodity? As a matter of fact, such people lose their opportunities because they fail to recognize them when they present themselves. I found a way to train myself to seize these opportunities when they arose. It is by

taking the initiative to create my own opportunities. That is how I know I will not miss one when it arises, because usually they come at the right time and the right place, as everything which is carefully planned in advance does.

I always consider myself my ultimate source of opportunities. This can be a substantial component to my peace of mind, because if you don't wait for opportunity to come you won't be anxious. You will just know that when you need it, you will find a way to create it. Of course it costs a lot of money, but opportunities have a very special way of bringing even more money than it cost to create them. Usually I end up with something at the end of the day that I can then spend on the next opportunities that I create, and of course on my creation-friendly environment with the sleeping cat, the lazy dog, and the chiming clock.

Marco Polo went all the way to the Far East trying to mix the different pages of history, because medieval Europe doesn't go well with medieval China as they were greatly separated. As I have learned, they weren't only separated by distance; they were also separated in people's minds at that time. Europeans, and their overall spiritual leader, the Catholic Pope, made numerous attempts to create relationships with Tatar-Mongols.

All of these proposals of co-operation in the Crusades were met with resistance. It was like different civilizations were unwilling to relinquish their isolation and culture. Tatar-Mongols would be reluctant in the same way to co-operate with aliens, if these green men should have the audacity to ask for their assistance.

It is not just that individual people were not co-operative; entire civilizations were inflexible as well. What would the world look like today if the Tatar-Mongols had interfered in the Crusades? Here we come to a question of the risk of accepting or declining a certain opportunity. This makes the moments of our lives unequal, because some crossroads are more important than those routine days where nothing eventful occurs. Thoughts like "what if..." add a lot of anxiety and distortion to our peace of mind: "What if I went to law school?" and "What if I...." Creating opportunities for yourself precludes the need to entertain

such possibilities.

As a matter of fact, I don't believe in opportunities. Most of the time when I create opportunities for others I can divert them for a limited time. Sometimes it is only days, sometimes it takes years, but sooner or later such people come back to their original state and move on with their path as if there was no opportunity in the first place. Probably I could create an opportunity to divert someone from his chosen path for a period of time which coincidentally would be longer than his lifespan. This doesn't mean that this individual wouldn't have an internal need to come back to his original state of mind.

Now I have to make a confession. I am exactly this type of individual; I always follow my own path. If troubles or opportunities divert me from this path, this doesn't mean that I cease to have an internal sub-conscious impulse to come back and go on with the path. A very important consideration in changing our paths is to analyze what is in fact our chosen destiny, because most people aren't quite aware of their destiny's true nature and direction.



The last thing I would mention that is important for maintaining one's peace of mind is the management of multiple

images of the same things that we usually have in our memories and imagination. For example, I have three images of Paris in my head: the first is the one that I had before I visited the city, the second is my actual memory of the city itself, the third is the image that I am constantly recreating from reading French periodicals and recent novels and listening to French news. These are three absolutely different cities. Realization of the multi-imaging nature of our consciousness is a very important step towards establishing a well-balanced mental state. Admitting the existence of these multiple impressions allows me to avoid their inner conflicts and helps me function in a more stress-free manner.

Paris had a magical aura for me as a young man. Whenever I was in Europe I tried to visit it, for the sake of the marvel and wonder it held for my mind. But when I actually visited there it was not as pleasant and exciting, and not nearly as magical, as I had thought. I have to admit that some details of this visit were indeed magical on a personal level, because when I stood in the square in front of the Notre Dame cathedral I was thinking about my beloved grandmother as she stood in this very place over half a century ago, and this had a vivid emotional and spiritual effect on me. And although certain aspects of the visit were disappointing, overall it was still very nice to have a refreshing point of view on the city I thought I knew. So in the end the visit wasn't disappointing at all. Now that I am a grown man and am immersing myself in French culture, I find that I am discovering a whole new Paris through the media and through the people I talk to and hear from. In the final analysis, though I have three very different ideas of what Paris is to me these three images do not conflict with each other in my mind but rather build and grow off each other.

I notice the same effect with the multiple impressions created in my mind by philosophers, writers, and other great minds. For example, I possess two copies of the poems of George Gordon Lord Byron, such as the one that whispers in my ears:

*It is the hour when from the boughs
The nightingale's high note is heard;
It is the hour -- when lovers' vows*

*Seem sweet in every whisper'd word;
And gentle winds and waters near,
Make music to the lonely ear.*

And there is another Lord Byron, who fought on behalf of the Greek rebellion and died far away from his home.² They are two different Byrons for me, and I need some way to settle them in my head. Some objects or events, some people or places may have multiple connotations for us, and we need to learn to deal with this without allowing them to cause internal conflicts and disturb our peace of mind.

Peace of mind is the most valuable experience that can and should be achieved in our earthly lives. I hope that some thoughts mentioned herein may be of some assistance to you as well as cathartic to myself.

ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR IDEAS?

Ideas are responsible for organizing matter, at least on the human level of perception. We use ideas in order to adjust our current environment according to our needs. We also use ideas to change ourselves by accommodating to our ideals of self-perception. We are living objects in a material world, and it is accepted by the majority of us that in addition to this material world there are also some concepts that are not material: for example, consciousness, which is the basis for our thoughts and ideas.

In order to enjoy the fruitful discussion of any subject in question we must first of all define the terms we are using. The word 'material' is defined for the purpose of this book as

²Despite being a poet, Byron had come to feel that action was more important than poetry. He boarded a brig, the Hercules, and sailed to Greece to aid the Greeks, who had risen against Ottoman oppression. Byron died far away from his home, in Missolonghi, on 19 April, 1824.

anything that is bound to matter and energy in physical terms.

Since the time of Plato ideas have been defined as purely non-material. They serve only as the concepts behind material objects. According to Plato:

*"The visible world is what surrounds us: what we see, what we hear, what we experience; this visible world is a world of change and uncertainty. The intelligible world is made up of the unchanging products of human reason: anything arising from reason alone, such as abstract definitions or mathematics, makes up this intelligible world, which is the world of reality. The intelligible world contains the eternal "Forms" (in Greek, idea) of things; the visible world is the imperfect and changing manifestation in this world of these unchanging forms. For example, the "Form" or "Idea" of a horse is intelligible, abstract, and applies to all horses; this Form never changes, even though horses vary wildly among themselves—the Form of a horse would never change even if every horse in the world were to vanish. An individual horse is a physical, changing object that can easily cease to be a horse (if, for instance, it's dropped out of a fifty-story building); the Form of a horse, or "horseness," never changes. As a physical object, a horse only makes sense in that it can be referred to the "Form" or "Idea" of horseness."*³

This makes it clear that an idea can exist independently from its material counterpart. Ideas have an eternal nature, the idea of the horse existing long before any real horse ever roamed the earth and continuing to exist after the last horse has vanished from its surface. An interesting question is whether intelligible ideas are entirely products of our mind or if they exist independently. We can easily imagine other intellectual beings that might operate and comprehend the same ideas; moreover, we have already created an artificial intelligence that can deal with the same ideas that we do.

Immanuel Kant, in his revolutionary *Critique of Pure Reason*, made a successful attempt to analyze the nature of things

³ ©1996, Richard Hooker <http://www.wsu.edu:8001/~dee/GREECE/PLATO.HTM>, Sept, 1 2006

and their dependence on and apparent independence from human reason. His book looks like a textbook that is entirely based on definitions of new terms invented and introduced by this philosopher.

I always wondered how it would feel to write an entire textbook filled with self-made terms. Or, even better, how it would feel to write a book entirely in a self-made language that would be comprehensible only to the author himself. Despite the fact that such a book might face some obstacles on its way to becoming a genuine best-seller, we cannot discard the possibility that it might still contain very valuable thoughts.

This brings us to another question: how much do we depend on society when creating the imaginary worlds that might be reflected in such a book, worlds that serve as an example of

the imprint of our enclosed and self-sufficient consciousness.

First I thought that a human being is an independent creature and should oppose the oppressive nature of any society, even the ideal one. *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau has always been my favorite text: His statement that “man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains”⁴ unfortunately has always sounded as



true to me in our day as it was in his. Even the most democratic society in our modern world still restrains the freedoms of its members and not just in cases where this is necessary for the common good. Therefore I always prepare myself to keep a close

⁴ http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_01.htm#001, Sept 1, 2006.

watch on the society governing my private life and object in any possible legitimate way to its brutal interference.

But lately I have come to realize that a human being cannot be brought up as an intelligent creature without the educational impact of society. This makes society the primary source of our intellect, leaving the human to play only a secondary role. But then I thought again, and realized that the fact a flower cannot grow without compost doesn't mean that we have to give compost instead of flowers as birthday gifts to our loved ones. Society is the soil that is needed to produce us, the beautiful flowers of independent minds.



Moreover, if you use too much compost it will actually kill the flower. The same is true with society. As Seneca observed, once you are a part of the mob it will always make you dirty both directly and metaphorically. Sigmund Freud concurs by stating that the individual will always succumb to the intelligence level of the crowd.

Therefore, I am trying to take everything from society that I can use, and first of all this means the human language. It is the only instrument given to us to express our thoughts. Taking language as a gift from society, I am using it to communicate not

with society as a whole, but with individuals, those flowers that we happen to be.

Society is like a household that ought to provide us with all the necessary conditions to thrive. But its role shouldn't dominate our lives. Society is utilitarian and will try to take advantage of all its members for the sake of the so-called common good, which is not necessarily as good as it looks when applied on the individual level.

Ideas are never utilitarian; they exist independently of society, beyond the universe and even beyond existence itself. The only thing that ideas cannot exist beyond is God, because according to a commonly used definition God is almighty and nothing can exist beyond his almightiness.

As we said above, the idea of the horse exists before, after, simultaneously with, and independently of the real physical animal. It is a concept, and like any other concept it cannot be destroyed. So the question is whether ideas can be considered as being material. In order to answer this question we have to determine how to define 'material'.

The easiest way to approach this problem is to look at anything that consists of matter as a material object, but is the material object still material in the past or in the future? Can the material object still be considered material if it exists only in our memories or in our dreams? In both cases it will be perceived by our mind in the same way and it will actually exist only through our perception.

Is energy material? Albert Einstein's famous equation ($E=mc^2$) shows that matter can be transformed into



energy and probably vice versa, if you try really hard. So defining energy as material will define, in the same way, all sorts of energy both known and unknown.

Ideas are concepts of the organization of energy and matter that have proved to be material, as we have discussed. Because there is no difference in our perception of these concepts and the corresponding matter itself, we might consider ideas as material to the same degree as anything else considered material. Ideas are even superior to the matter they govern, because the same ideas can govern any other kind of matter in any other sort of physical universe.

As society is a medium for the development of the individual, matter is a medium for the development of ideas, although once they are formed they get a superior position to matter. Let's consider the state of an imaginary universe described as chaos. It seems that the possibility of the existence of a universe without any order proves that matter can exist without ideas, but this is not true because there will still be the idea of chaos itself that might exist independently.



Even though we have defined the terms 'material' and 'non-material' in the beginning of this chapter, the problem is that nature itself doesn't like to operate within such well-defined boundaries.

I strongly object to any attempts to implant physical principles into the social sciences, like the comparisons between the gravitational

influence of mass and economic wealth, for example, that have been made by Dr. Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams in their new book, *The View from the Center of the Universe*.⁵ That is, unless the attempts are accompanied by the precaution that they are made only for the purpose of better explanation of the concepts and are not based on actual belief that such comparisons can be substantiated. By making such precautions I am trying to make sure that any following comparisons will not be considered in any way but for illustrative purposes.

When these precautions are not made the consequences can be quite severe, as in the case of Nietzsche's application of the Darwinian principle of natural selection to human society. This in turn led to the development of his own ideas regarding the 'Superman' that eventually inspired the Nazi ethnic cleansing tragedy of the twentieth century.

As an illustration of my statement that nature doesn't like well-defined boundaries I would like to remind the reader of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which states that the more precisely the position of a particle can be determined, the less precisely its momentum can be known in this instant and vice-versa.⁶

Moreover, in physics wave-particle duality means that both electro-magnetic waves and matter exhibit properties of both waves and of particles. As a central concept of quantum mechanics, such duality represents a way to address the inability of conventional concepts like 'particle' and 'wave' to adequately describe the behavior of quantum objects. We don't generally perceive the wave-like quality of everyday objects, not because they don't possess such qualities but because the wavelengths associated with people-sized objects are extremely small. Wavelength is given essentially as inverse to the size of the object, with a constant factor given by Planck's constant h , which is an extremely small number.

If we measure ourselves by our ability to introduce certain

⁵ Joel R. Primack, Nancy Ellen Abrams., *The View from the Center of the Universe: Discovering Our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2006.

⁶ Heisenberg, uncertainty paper, 1927

changes to our environment through direct and indirect interaction with it, we may claim that this ability can be described as a wave function with its peaks and valleys. For example, my calling someone at the far end of the world can initiate actions far beyond what would be influenced by my physical presence. Moreover, this influence can not only go beyond my presence in terms of space, but also in terms of time—just as this text may trigger some thoughts in the minds of its readers well beyond the time in which it was written. Therefore, this example poses the question of whether there is a real boundary separating the material from the non-material. This separation merely implies the limitations of the human mind, which needs such roughly defined terms in order to operate with some degree of success.

Long ago Socrates showed us that there might be substantial difficulty in defining virtually anything because of the inherent limitations of human language, which in turn arise from the ultimate limitations of the human mind. Nevertheless,

let's try to define the term 'material' in a slightly new way by arguing that matter is an integral part of the universe that somehow uncovers its presence to human senses enhanced by scientific instruments. Therefore nothing can be considered as material unless we can determine its presence by the use of appropriate technology. But then some distant galaxy which may consist of about two hundred billion stars would be considered as non-material and non-existent only because we don't have an appropriate instrument to detect it. Also, we cannot adjust our definition of 'material' by saying that it is anything that might be detected with future means because we don't know what the future holds for us. For example, a



couple of hundred years ago no one could imagine that it would be possible to transmit and receive radio waves, which are now considered well-defined characteristics of a material world filled with electromagnetic radiation that was unknown in the past. So, what is considered as non-material in our day might be reconsidered as material in the future.

Ideas as concepts of the organization of matter can be considered as material if we take into account our inability to define the term 'material'. But by doing so we may need to rethink our approach toward ideas, because people usually treat only objects of the material world seriously, rather than non-material issues. For example, ideas can kill and cause as much harm as any material object once they influence the minds of an unwary public. So understanding that ideas are material must



make us cautious about producing them. Humans are generators of ideas and we have a moral responsibility for the ideas that we dare to bring to our world. We must think of the consequences of such ideas.

At one time I thought that once a philosopher, or any ordinary person,

became the creator of a certain idea they could not be responsible for the consequences that came after the idea was let loose on the world. Should Prometheus, who allegedly gave fire to humans so they might cook their meals and keep themselves warm through cold prehistoric winters, be held responsible for the fires of the Nazi concentration camps? Is Jesus responsible for the fires of the Inquisition? Is Einstein guilty of bringing the nuclear bomb to the world? I assumed that it didn't matter what the idea is, even the most innocent one, that a person introduces to humanity; it would eventually be compromised, corrupted, and used for evil

purposes no matter how hard its creator tries to prevent it.

But nevertheless people do have responsibility for the ideas that they give birth to. Didn't Einstein know his fellow men well enough to realize what they would use his ideas for? I don't mean his signature on the famous letter to President Roosevelt urging him to initiate the building of the nuclear bomb as a counter-weight to Hitler's plans for nuclear weapon development. It was too late by then to think of the consequences of Einstein's work. Of course, we can assume that the development of nuclear weapons would have been completed even without Einstein's personal contribution to the field. If not him, then someone else would have eventually come up with the necessary equations. The *General Theory of Relativity* is not exactly a complete set of instructions on how to produce a bomb. Although teaching people things well beyond what they were and may still be ready to handle was his free choice, why didn't he just keep his position as a patent officer for the Swiss government?

People! Keep your ideas to yourselves! Fame and success are very cheap currency. Not every step of progress is good for humankind. Probably this is the reason why we are so conservative about our habits. We sit around the dinner table, we use candles to set a romantic mood, and we listen to the sound of the rain.

An idea, as an emerging concept, is separated from its material incarnation only by two tiny matters: time and probability. Time and probability are the factors that determine when and how an idea will be implemented.

Since the term 'time' is more applicable to living things, and because physicists argue that the basic concepts of the laws of physics do not require time at all, then the factor of time in the implementation of an idea can be dismissed. Since we don't know how many parallel universes might exist, we don't know how many different scenarios of the same event can occur and so the factor of probability can also be discarded.

Let's look at a simple video game that has the same settings every time you start it. Once you run it, however, it can have an almost uncountable number of probable scenarios. Video games

thus alter our perception of time as an irreversible factor. We can re-run the game an infinite number of times, every time starting from the same initial settings. Does it really matter if we actually run any particular scenario or not? We know that the status of different implemented and non-implemented scenarios is quite the same. For us it is sufficient to know that they all are possible and we really don't need to run them in order to prove that.

The real world might resemble such a video game, but it is even more complicated because the players in real life actually have the ability to alter the settings and thereby make the number of possible scenarios ultimately infinite.

The interesting thing is that the physical basis of a video game is the CD that it comes on and the computer that is able to read it. Both of them have nothing to do with the content of the virtual world represented on the particular disc nor with the scenarios that can be run on the computer. This means that all scenarios co-exist simultaneously as long as the computer disc is intact, and it doesn't really matter which of the scenarios is implemented or which just have the potential to be implemented. It is possible that the physical basis of our universe lies well beyond the settings that can be studied from within our world. But we will discuss this issue in more detail later on in this book.

If we give some consideration to the preceding argument, we will discover that the difference between an implemented and a not-yet-implemented idea is an illusion. Ideas are usually neutral by their very nature. Their materialization is neutral as well. It all depends on what meaning we give to these neutral ideas and their implementations. The Bible story where God appoints Adam to give names to the plants and animals actually illustrates the relationship created between the universe and ourselves as thinking creatures. You may object to anything except the fact that we are indeed thinking beings. As stated so concisely by Descartes, "I think, therefore I exist" ("Je pense, donc je suis"), and most of us won't object to the idea that we are involved in some sort of existence. It is both interesting and ironic that Descartes used the most seemingly non-material thing, *thought*, to prove his material existence. This only goes to prove that ideas

are indeed material, because ideas are the ultimate product of thought, which is used as a proof of existence of the material world.

The universe is neutral and probably exists independently from our minds, even though this idea was challenged in a dispute between Plato and Aristotle. This famous dispute was about whether a tree makes a sound when it falls if no one is there to hear it. Humans decipher the ideas that govern the universe and create their own, new ideas. Therefore we are an integral part of this universe, even though some weird aliens (if there are any) might compete with us in this regard.

We are ambushed by our own consciousness. We think only along the lines of human logic, which can be as far from the real universe as the settings of a video game are from the computer disc that encodes them.



The universe for the most part has neither ups nor downs, but humans measure everything according to the human scale. The universe lives on without regard to time, but humans measure it in hours and light years. This is as if an ant were to measure

human love in terms of its miniscule ant legs: “they felt love for a million *light-ant-legs* and kissed each other.” This is what our attempts are comparable to when we try to measure the universe in human terms. We can’t think any thought that wouldn’t be dictated to us by the conditions of our life. We are the prisoners of our own prejudices about ourselves and about the world around us. But we are the only known creatures that animate the ideas of the universe.

By the way, are there any animals that pay attention to stars? As a matter of fact nocturnal animals can accumulate many more photons of light on their retinas, and that is why they can see only by the light of the stars. If they are capable of that some of them can probably see the light of distant galaxies exactly the way our telescopes do. But having the ability doesn’t mean that these animals are particularly interested in such pursuits. I am inclined to believe that the stars do not interfere much with their processes of digestion and mating. If we had their eyes we would have discovered the vastness of the universe a long time before our instruments helped us do so.

The problem is that biological evolution didn’t have any such aim as producing creatures with the ability to observe the universe. This ability of ours came to us as a side effect of our ability to hunt down prey and find berries in the bushes. Evolution was worried only about our survival and our offspring. Humans, obviously, were not built for solving the riddles of the universe. Evolution had to bitterly punish those that were trying to gaze at stars while their more practical relatives were hiding in the safety of the caves. But I believe that this is the true aim of evolution: to bring into existence a species with the ability to observe the universe in all its unobservable vastness.

We, as humans, have free will to assign our interpretations to ideas that are neutral by their very nature. Ideas are neither bad and evil nor good and kind. Nor are they smart or crazy. Ideas just exist, independently of space and time, and only once they are animated by humans do we equip them with such characteristics.

It often happens that we are facing the dilemma of which interpretations should be given to certain ideas. Therefore we can

distinguish three main approaches that I would like to call negativism, positivism, and neutrality, although they are not necessarily used here in their usual sense. Neutrality is counterproductive, because once an idea gets its material incarnation it ought to be appraised in a certain way. Positivism is very productive, because we try to find ways to use such ideas so that they can benefit us a lot. Negative ways of thinking are even more counterproductive than the neutral approach.



You might ask, however, who is in a position to decide what is negative or positive for the purpose of evaluation of a certain idea. Many would argue that there is no common frame of reference once it comes to defining good and evil, and therefore positive or negative. I propose to use as a frame of reference for good and evil Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to Maslow, everything that might help meet our needs is good and everything that prevents us from

meeting those needs is obviously evil. Of course this works only when, by meeting our needs, we are not preventing another from meeting theirs.

The basic needs according to Maslow are biological and physiological ones: air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc. Then come safety needs: security, order, law, limits, stability, protection from the weather, etc. Then come the needs of

belongingness and love, which include relationships at work and within any other social group such as family and friends.

Esteem needs include the overall need to be accepted by society—including self-esteem, achievement, independence, status, prestige, responsibility, etc. Knowledge needs include acquiring and processing new information which is considered by the individual as useful or interesting. Esthetic needs include the attempts of a person to surround himself or herself with things of beauty according to individual taste. Self-actualization needs include realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking of personal growth and peak experiences.

And now we come to the highest needs, the ones met by those very few individuals successful enough to reach this level. They include assistance to others in achieving their self-realization. Any idea that we intend to animate by bringing it into the material world should be evaluated in a positive way, so it can help us meet the needs mentioned above.

I would like to conclude this chapter with the following story that shows how different ways of interpreting a newly emerged idea can shape the fate of a small island nation. Once upon a time, a new star appeared in the sky that was an incarnation of the idea that a new star *can* appear. There were two small tribes that inhabited two separate islands in the ocean. The first tribe decided that this star was an asteroid that was going to hit their island. They built rafts and left the island, giving themselves to the mercy of the sea. The second tribe decided that the star was a sign that their Gods were satisfied with their prayers and they decided to go uphill to continue with their rituals.

As a matter of fact the first tribe was right; it was an asteroid, but it missed their island and splashed into the sea. Being right didn't spare their lives, however, because the waves created by the impact swallowed them up. And even though the newly emerged star had nothing to do with their Gods, the second tribe was spared because they had made a right decision, albeit one based on the wrong assumptions.

So we can see that an interpretation of the same idea can mean life or death depending on how we interpret it. Of course

the second tribe could have been proven wrong if the asteroid had hit their island. We cannot say for sure that giving positive meaning to neutral ideas will always help us to survive, although if we are going to die anyway it is far better to face this unpleasant event on the top of the hill of our self-actualization rather than by seeking safety in the merciless ocean of fear.

DESTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF CREATION

Not every kind of destruction is evil; the destruction of evil is good. Not every type of creation is good; the creation of evil is bad. By echoing this childish approach I am trying to emphasize that the idea of destruction is as neutral as any other idea, although in our understanding it is not quite obvious. We always try to resist any kind of destruction and approve any kind of creation. The word 'destruction' has always had a negative connotation in our minds. It is associated with 'danger', 'death', 'injury', and war'. The positive aspect of destruction we call 'change'. We deny that any change includes the destruction of a previous order. We suffer less from the destruction of inanimate things than from living ones, because in the first case we believe that destruction is reversible.

We must not forget that the instinct of destruction is hardwired in our nature. But most of the time we keep our behavior in a neutral mode rather than in a destructive one.

The natural process of destruction is neutral, which means that it is neither inherently good nor bad on the personal or global level. Resistance to destruction brings a part of the energy of destruction upon the resisting individual. It is as if one were to resist the collapse of an unstable old building falling in upon itself because of its posterity. Such an attempt could cost a person his life. This kind of resistance is pointless and dangerous.

Try to smooth the waves on a stormy sea. Such a task is much trickier than attempting to drink the sea, as we learned from Aesop.⁷ The result is quite predictable. At the worst you'll

⁷Aesop, a slave, was asked by his master to find a way to solve a bet that he had made while drunk. He had bet he could drink the sea. Aesop solved this by agreeing that his master could drink all the water in the sea, but first all the water from the rivers and

drown, and at the very least you'll get your feet wet. It is equally pointless to try to resist either destruction or creation. You may slow the process down, but you will never be effective in



stopping or reversing it. By accepting this philosophy we should identify the direction of change and follow its pattern rather than trying to stand in its way.

The change of seasons is a great example of irresistible and unstoppable cycles of destruction and creation. Just yesterday everything was covered in snow, but today life is thriving, if only until it is stopped again by next winter. All living creatures have adjusted to these eternal cycles. They don't fight them; they accept them as they are. The bears that are getting ready to hibernate don't try to build power plants and extract fossil fuels in order to keep themselves warm. It seems that by our very nature we are trying to fight the natural processes of change. But this is not true; we are just trying to adapt ourselves to these changes in a better way.

It is quite challenging to understand the true direction of any process at its very beginning. It often happens that processes of destruction and creation are taking place simultaneously, and it is not always easy to see the true paradigm and where it leads. It is even more challenging to resolve whether a certain tiny change is a sign of a more general shift or just a statistically insignificant deviation from the main path. Is it the beginning of the destructive process or is it just 'business as usual'.

springs would have to be removed. Because this is impossible, his master was let out of the bet.

Only by realizing the direction of a process as early as possible can we be successful in choosing the right strategy. Whether we need to ignore certain signs of destruction and oppose them, or see them as the beginning of an irreversible process of destruction (like aging, for example) and accept it as inevitable and adjust to its consequences is an important step of discernment. One single warm day in the late fall doesn't mean that we have to plant flowers.

Once we have made our decision on the direction of the process we should concentrate on dealing with its consequences rather than trying to reverse it. Because destruction and creation can run simultaneously we might choose the right path by deciding to abandon a deteriorating situation in favor of creating something new.

Napoleon was a strong decision maker and worked with this philosophy. For example, when he found himself marooned in Egypt with his navy destroyed, his army fighting a losing battle against the plague and in the midst of a hostile population, with no possible way to get them all home, Napoleon had a decision to make. He could hang on to a deteriorating situation and die along with his army, or he could abandon what would ultimately be destroyed anyway and create new circumstances for future success. Hearing that there was a crisis in France, Napoleon opted for the creation of something new and returned to France, taking his best generals with him, where he became emperor soon afterwards. He made a decision to abandon a destructive situation and create something new that would bring him success. (As to the ethical aspects of Napoleon's actions we won't extend our discussion to that consideration.) Napoleon's nephew, the emperor Louis-Napoleon III, used to say that if you are in the vanguard of new changes, you may lead them; if you move with the changes, they will lead you. But if you try to stand in the way of changes they will wipe you out. If you really want to start a creative process, it's better to start it in a new area, rather than try to stop a destructive process already underway. It is also important not to let such a process drag you in.



Being outside of the process that you'd like to influence is very beneficial both for you and for the process. It is very difficult to remain objective while you are involved in something that you are trying to re-shape. That is why it is always good to act through third parties or agents of change rather than being such an agent yourself. We cannot diminish the weight of psychological pressure that the environment might impose on us once we are inside the system we wish to influence.

The same logic of destruction/creation governs many other processes: business ventures and biological cycles, personal relationships and star formation. The only difference is that we can influence some of these processes, while having very little influence on others.

It is a mistake, however, to assume that we can have a tangible influence on human relationships. This is usually just an illusion. In most cases we cannot change the lives of our friends or enemies. Even if we succeed for a short time in changing their path, they will eventually come back to the old one and stick to the way of life that they are internally almost predestined to follow.

If a person is in a destructive phase there is very little that

might stop him or her from hurting themselves or others. 'Creators' are as stubborn as 'destructors'.



If someone feels an internal impulse to create, there are very few things that really can stop their energetic desire. But most of us are neither destructors nor creators. The great majority of people are 'doing-nothing-ers' and such people are most stubborn and determined in their desire to do nothing and to be left alone.

'Doing-nothingness' is the superior right of any human being and can be found written in stone within the constitution of any state. People love to defend this basic right. Of course you will argue that there is no such right, but this is the truth of life; most people try to avoid any actions that might take them beyond their daily routines.

Of all these actions the most painful seems to be thinking. People will avoid this activity in their efforts to make their life as routine and uninfluential as possible, even at times paying with their lives for the convenience of not having to think. The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, used to say that thought is a strenuous art; few practice it, and then only rarely.

Nietzsche used to ask whether it is really possible that the only thing left to us is reflection and meditation about the world, which on a personal level yield nothing but despair and on a theoretical level give birth to the philosophy of destruction.

I don't see this dilemma to be as tragic as Nietzsche makes it out to be. The roots of our despair lie in the fact that we consider ourselves to be separate entities from the rest of the world, and once we think of ourselves in this way naturally we cannot avoid feeling the pointlessness of our short existence. But what makes us so sure that we *are* so separate from the world we observe? What is it, exactly, that connects us to this physical world? What is it that connects our soul, or whatever you want to call it, to our body? The answer is: very little indeed, if you look at this situation with unbiased eyes. The entity that we describe as 'my soul' or 'my inner I' is no better than our mortal coil. It consists of vague memories, ambivalent feelings, and uncertain



knowledge of the past, an even more uncertain vision of the future, and some sensations attributed to the current moment that all of us inhabit most of the time. This is what we are; this is what we call our soul.

We are not, after all, that separate from the external world. In fact it seems that we are integral parts of it, just as waves are part of the ocean. Once looked at from this point of view, the world is not as meaningless and ugly as it looks from within the

boundaries of our mortal coil. On the contrary, it looks nice and completely logical. All we need to do is drop the notion of

ourselves as separate beings.

Freedom from ourselves is the ultimate freedom we must seek. Why shouldn't we abandon the bad habit of looking at everything as advantageous or disadvantageous to us, to our mortal body and very poorly defined soul? Once you stop doing this, then you don't need to worry about what threatens you or things that 'might' happen. Freedom from yourself is the best way to see a more precise picture of our world. This world existed for billions of years without us, and will go on with its existence for billions of years to come, without missing any of us at all.

Creation does not necessarily have to be in the realm of material things. For instance, according to Kant, acquiring new knowledge is an act of creation that echoes our statement above regarding the material nature of ideas. This is indeed an excellent example of the act of creation and is also indistinguishable from the act of destruction. This is because we can learn about an object only by interacting with it and, in most cases, in order to make our knowledge complete we have to destroy the object. The result of this destruction will be the creation of knowledge about the object that didn't exist before it was destroyed. Here we might mention an idea of Dr. George Ellis, who states that the ultimate limit of the science of cosmology is based on the uniqueness of the universe—i.e., the fact that it cannot be studied in the way we study other objects.

As we have mentioned earlier, the instinct of destruction is encoded in all living beings by nature itself. Nature is inclined to operate self-organizing systems, where the individual parts of the systems interact in a way that insures the stability of the system as a whole through constant processes of creation and destruction. They then give birth to new generations who fight each other for food and living space and then die, in full accordance with the laws of nature.

Sigmund Freud distinguished between two basic instincts: the instinct of life (Eros) and the instinct of death (Thanatos). He admits that such distinction has been known at least since the time of ancient Greece (e.g., the Greek philosopher Empedocles). Freud's idea of the instinct of death echoes the inclination to

destruction or in this case self-destruction that is imprinted in us by nature itself. By introducing this concept Freud was attempting to explain the phenomenon of aggression that can sometimes be directed internally, causing self-destruction.

What is the instinct of self-destruction aimed toward? Obviously nature worries that our mortal bodies need to be destroyed in order to allow new generations with new combinations of genes to use the same resources, which otherwise wouldn't work if previous generations continued to live for an indefinite time. So this makes death simply a good management procedure that nature employs in order to get rid of old genetic material in order to insure the continuous process of evolution.

As a matter of fact we have to accuse sex of making us die, because microorganisms that employ a sexual way of duplication virtually live forever in their descendants unless they accidentally die out.



Nature doesn't care about anything but household issues. It doesn't deal with our soul or consciousness. So if the soul can exist independently from the body then it might be eternal indeed, because there is no reason to destroy it. Leibnitz concurred with Plato in saying that the soul is simple and as with anything that is simple, it is indestructible. St. Augustine based his proof of immortality of the soul on vague metaphysical principles that have little to do with objective science.

Anyhow, it doesn't matter whether we believe in the existence of the soul or not. What does matter is that most of us

feel that there is something more than just our body and our consciousness that is nothing else but some lousy bunch of memories and a miserable processor of the current moment. Sigmund Freud spoke about the oceanic feeling of belonging to something greater than us that many people experience, although he was unable to share this with them. But all that we feel is not divided into well-distinguished parts of what is real and what is not. The definition of reality⁸ is vague by its very nature because it is based on our sensory perceptions, which are unquestionably deceptive.

Denying reality to be objectively definable supports our conclusion that the processes of creation and destruction that govern so-called reality are just two sides of the same coin, one that we need to learn to flip in the most advantageous way.

THE BLIND MONSTER

The word 'conscience' is not used much these days. Even though we understand conscience as 'the awareness' of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong, as the saying goes "Let your conscience be your guide." But how can we be guided by something that we don't use much? May we assume that the limited use of this word signifies our deteriorating ability to use this source of moral and ethical judgment? If we review the written heritage of the previous centuries we will be surprised to find that this word enjoyed much more use back then.

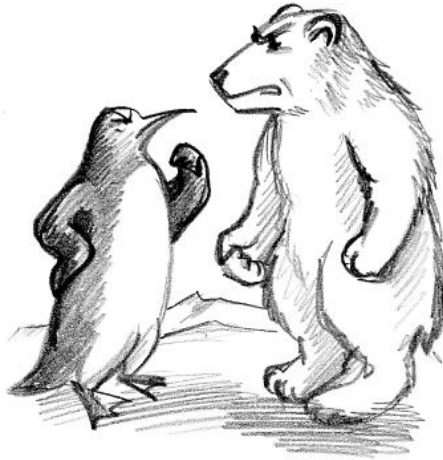
Since it is reasonable to believe that language reflects current trends within society we can identify the problem as a case of modern times not encouraging us to employ our conscience in conformity to our own sense of right conduct and wrongdoing.

According to Freudian theory our behavior is based on the concepts of *id*, *ego*, and *super-ego*. While the *id* comes from our subconsciousness and supports our *ego*, the *super-ego* is imposed within us by the influence of society. Conscience is defined in

⁸Reality is "all of your experiences that determine how things appear to you."
<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=reality>

psychoanalysis as the part of the superego that judges the ethical nature of one's thoughts and actions, and then transmits such determinations to the ego for consideration.

It seems that one of the developments of modern society is that the behavior of its members is more regulated than it was before. We appear to get more and more freedom, and this is true; however with new freedoms come new responsibilities and therefore the regulatory functions of society are becoming overwhelmingly omnipresent. For example, a century ago the laws of honor were as valid as the laws that were issued by the legislature, and if a person had the feeling that he had been insulted the laws of honor dictated behavior that allowed him to resolve the dispute by duel, which would in fact overrule any court procedures. I'm not trying here to be an advocate of resolving conflicts by fighting one another; my point is that the system of traditions and laws that regulated life in society in the past was much more complicated and sometimes contradictory.



In our day the super-ego is mainly manipulated by the rules within society and doesn't leave many decisions to the individual himself. Things are less complicated today.

The development of a welfare society that guarantees a minimum to everyone frees us from the responsibility of involvement in direct assistance to the poor and narrows our responsibilities to the timely payment of taxes.

With the tremendous progress in media and communications

that has been made individuals are no longer part of any particular national state, and we are becoming witnesses to numerous man-made and natural tragedies almost as they unfold. Our abilities to provide the help that is needed are also virtually unlimited. It is a well-known fact that for the price of one dollar a day the citizen of any western country can support one needy individual in many Third World countries who would otherwise face the risk of almost inevitable death from hunger and disease.

Even though the dream of a “Welfare World” has been around for quite a long time, so far we haven’t managed to resolve this pressing issue. Most of us suppose that it is not our responsibility to worry about what is going on in some village in the Sudan. If we were responsible for that, the thinking goes, our government would introduce some sort of special tax for this purpose and if it was successful in “selling” this idea to the general public then we would comply. We don’t use our conscience to decide on a personal level whether we really need to have some extra treat rather than use those dollars to save someone else’s life halfway around the world.

Most of us consider ourselves to be moral beings. According to some thought-provoking statistics only slightly over ten percent of North Americans believe that they will end up in hell. The question then arises as to why on the one hand we watch hour after hour of terrifying reports from all over the world and on the other hand do virtually nothing to provide help.

Why is the media overwhelming us with images of corpses, dying children, and other truly dreadful scenes? Apparently, these images are used to attract our attention, during prime time especially, in order to maximize advertising profits for the broadcasting networks.

We are peacefully having dinner and watching TV. Between the main course and dessert we observe dead bodies floating along the streets after a tsunami or a bunch of dismembered corpses after a terrorist attack and all these images assail us day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. These were the first images that met us on TV in our tender years and these will be the last images we will witness in some sort of nursing home. Why is that? Why has death become an

entertainment, some sort of horrific hors d'oeuvre?



As we have mentioned earlier, most of us don't realize how strongly we are influenced by the images we see on TV. Sometimes we can't distinguish between the images of real violence and death we see on TV and those we encounter in fiction, which can also be filled with bloody scenes. We employ all sorts of protective mechanisms to cope with exposure to these distressing images. And just as we have learned to consider what we see in the movies as simply not real, we easily extrapolate our feeling of non-reality to real scenes of violence. It must be admitted that the movies have managed to execute certain shots with such a degree of realism that the actual news fades in contrast. So in a situation where reality is less dramatic than fiction, we can easily employ our coping mechanisms.

Many people would claim that the media plays a very small role in their lives, and that even if they do spend long hours in front of the TV it affects neither their behavior nor their state of mind. If this were really true we would have witnessed a spectacular downfall of the news/entertainment industry, because people simply would stop watching television and therefore halt their contributions to the advertising campaigns which provide the financial support for this controversial area of modern life.

We react to these scenes of violence and aggression on a physiological level. Our heart rate along with our blood pressure rises slightly, which means that we are constantly experiencing

stress whether we realize it or not. It is hard to say at what point such stress contributes to the development of different pathologies in our psychological and physiological systems. When we experience threatening situations, like acts of violence or dead bodies, we have subconscious urges to respond by fleeing or fighting, and this is what stress is about. Adrenalin is a stress hormone that helps us to decide what we are going to do in a stressful situation, and watching contemporary TV programs certainly causes us to experience a slight but steady overproduction of adrenalin. It would be the same if we were given a certain dose of pharmacological poison every time we switched on the TV, but in the case of just watching TV we are spared the destructive psychological influences.

We possess complex psychological systems that allow us to cope with different sorts of stress. We use them in cases where we become subject to feelings of tension and stress—for example, the cognitive dissonance and potential shame of doing or not doing something outside our values. To handle this discomfort we use various coping mechanisms. Watching news almost always creates such feelings, because normal moral beings cannot quietly and joyfully consume a hamburger while viewing some one dying of hunger. We can deal with this only by using some of the following psychological defenses:

One of the simplest mechanisms that can help us to solve the problem is *avoidance*. We can mentally or physically avoid something that causes distress. We can either change the channel or try not to look at the TV screen during certain problematic moments or, even better, avoid watching the news altogether. But as with any other inefficient defense mechanism this approach cannot solve the problem, because complete withdrawal from modern reality can hardly be considered the behavior of a normal individual.

Another way of dealing with this problem is *compartmentalization*. We can separate conflicting thoughts into separated mental compartments; for example, we might view eating a hamburger as having nothing to do with dying children so we treat these issues separately. This is probably the most

frequent solution that we employ. By doing so, we avoid the possible internal conflict within our conscience that might naturally occur if we weren't separated by a TV screen from the child dying of hunger.



But as a result of such compartmentalization we may experience *conversion*: the subconscious conversion of stress into physical symptoms. Unexplained headaches, dizziness, fatigue, and other so-called non-specific minor symptoms can have their roots in such defense mechanisms as conversion.

Another popular choice is *denial*. By refusing to acknowledge that an event has occurred we try to brush off the problem, which can be difficult, especially if you have a large-screen TV and the dying child appears life-size and couldn't be more real even if he was in the same room with you and your half-eaten hamburger.

If all these defense mechanisms don't work for us then we might use *displacement*, which means the shifting of an intended action to a safer target. Instead of going with our hamburger to

board a plane heading to Sudan we might decide to sponsor a child through one of the charity organizations, which are in fact doing a great job, although obviously not with complete efficiency or in sufficient numbers because we still can observe dying children on TV. If such defense mechanisms were to really work for all of us, we could actually solve the problem and on the next day enjoy the daisies aired on TV rather than pictures of horror.

Another way of dealing with threatening or disturbing news is *dissociation*, which allows us to separate ourselves from this part of our life. We try to convince ourselves that this event has nothing to do with us, and that is how we actually leave all these horrors and persist in sinking into the *fantasy* that all this is so far away that it virtually doesn't exist.

We might use *idealization* by trying to play up the good points and ignore the limitations of the things desired. For example, we might say to ourselves that if such scenes are being aired this must mean that public attention has been drawn to the issue and as of this moment everything will be done to provide all needed help and to prevent such horrors happening again.

Another way to cheat our conscience is *intellectualization*. This is most often attributed to the mind's ability to think scientifically or philosophically. Using intellectualization as a defense mechanism involves avoiding uncomfortable emotions by focusing on facts and logic. We might argue that in nature there are certain mechanisms of natural selection that are still working even in human society, and that people have always been dying of hunger in various places and by feeling bad about that and depriving yourself of a modest supper which consists of that ill-fortuned hamburger won't help anyone. We might check out world statistics and argue that children have always died of hunger and disease, and as a matter of fact the mortality rates in medieval Europe were probably higher than in modern-day Sudan. Every nation has to overcome certain periods of ups and downs, and who knows what is going to happen to us with all the potential catastrophes, both natural and man-made, that await us in the future. Since it is reasonable to expect a certain degree of

reciprocity, will this make the Sudanese do something to help us out, or is it more probable that we will be left alone to die?



By taking this path we are getting close to another mechanism of psychological defense, *rationalization*, by which we create logical reasons for problematic situations. We might say these Sudanese people should take the blame for what is happening to them, because they are lazy and arrogant. If we were to stop working we would also start dying of hunger, so there is nothing we can do to help them because no matter how hard we try they will still find a way to stay in a most miserable state of life, because from their perspective it is perfectly normal. It is the same as trying to improve the life conditions of gorillas in the African jungle. We might say that some wild nations have just recently restrained themselves from cannibalism and who knows if they are really determined to keep up with this restriction? Could you have imagined that our reflections on our half-eaten hamburger would bring us to a discussion of cannibalism? To put it simply, they are dying of hunger because they have ceased to

eat one other. Of course we won't express such thoughts in public, but we have to admit that some of us are likely to think this way.

The weakest among us would use *repression* by subconsciously hiding uncomfortable thoughts that sooner or later will find their way back into our lives unexpectedly, impacting our psychological and physical health.

But the worst of all possible mechanisms of defense is *trivialization*, where we try making something small that is really something big: for example, when we think of dying children as something trivial and unimportant.

Only rare individuals like Bill and Melinda Gates, who provide financial support to African nations in amounts comparable to the efforts of the World Health Organization, can quietly deal with their consciences with no need of inefficient defense mechanisms. But still such people will have the problem of consuming that previously-mentioned hamburger while viewing dying children, no matter how hard they try to help hunger and disease in the ill-fated parts of the world.

We have looked in great detail at the defense mechanisms that help us to avoid doing certain things that our conscience is pushing us to do. Now it is time to examine the opposite situation, the one where some of us do things that our conscience would normally object to.

If we consider modern cinematography as a means of learning about the ways members of our society think and act, we can draw the following conclusions:

Positive characters usually will rob a bank if they think they have a good chance of avoiding being caught. They can also kill, but of course such killings should be justified by aggressive actions on the part of the victim. Often these killings happen unwillingly and by default should be blamed on the victim himself, although we generally don't see evidence for any traces of regret for the murdered negative characters.

Endings where the lead characters live 'happily ever after' in a paradisiacal situation somewhere on the coast of a warm sea, far from the country where the benign crime has taken place, are the norm in most movies.

In other movies we witness numerous less grave offences that are attributed to the positive characters like cheating, deceiving, stealing, and abusing others physically and verbally, and all these along with more serious crimes are considered to be 'normal' behavior. It is assumed that the viewer understands that such exaggerations are made in order to enhance the main idea of the movie as a creation of art. As a matter of fact, human behavior is almost entirely based on following the behavioral patterns of other people and whether we like it or not, we are forced to accept almost on a subconscious level the imposed stigmas of behavior we witness in so-called 'creations of art'. Another problem is the fact that most viewers don't possess the ability to view critically and such antisocial behaviors as the ones above are becoming deeply imprinted, not only on the subconscious but on the conscious level as well.

This situation creates another type of stress, because we are becoming a sort of battle ground between the standard norms of social behavior and the impulses to act unsociably that are rooted in these works of art.

How can a decent clerk come to work in a bank the day after he has watched a movie where other decent bank clerks robbed the bank and blamed it on their despised manager, whose only reason to be despised was that he demanded that his clerks follow the bank procedures. These formerly decent clerks then live happily ever after, enjoying their fortune stolen from the evil bank which is considered such only because it pays them low wages.

There are so many other movies that proudly present criminal behaviors as an example to follow. The most common official



explanation is that movies present ideas that the life of the average individual is not ‘good enough’ or ‘leaves a lot to be desired’. In movies, characters go to outrageous measures to change their circumstances. Viewers watching such movies are entertained by the notion of change, and fantasize about going to the extremes that they see in the movies in order to change their own lives.

Instead of teaching the viewer how to succeed in his own life or finding a way to entertain the viewer with some sort of positive moral message, these movies create a constant feeling of dissatisfaction in the general public. Along with the destructive influence of televised news mentioned here the overall impact of the media in general can be devastating in terms of creating fertile soil for the depression and anxiety disorders that feed the pharmaceutical industry and encourage its production of antidepressants.

According to “Depression Facts and Stats” by Bob Murray and Alicia Fortinberry from January 15, 2005, “depression is one of the greatest problems and killers of our time.” Depressive disorders affect approximately 18.8 million American adults in a given year or about 9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older.

Everyone will at some time in their life be affected by depression—their own or someone else's. Preschoolers are the fastest growing market for antidepressants. At least four percent of US preschoolers—over a million children—are clinically depressed. The rate of increase for depression among children is an astounding 23%. p.a. 15% of the population of most developed countries suffers severe depression; 30% of women are depressed, but 41% of depressed women are too embarrassed to seek help.

Please note that according to the same source, 15% of depressed people will commit suicide! Depression will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020, and studies show that depression is also a contributory factor to fatal coronary disease.⁹

⁹ http://www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html, October 5, 2006.

The main causes of short-term depression are agreed to be caused by loss or extreme trauma when little or nothing can be done to prevent such unfortunate occurrences, which are likely to be a part of the individual's life for quite a long time to come. We are talking about successful Western countries where acts of war and repressive human laws are rare, although even here things are not as simple as they seem to be.

As a matter of fact, according to polls published in *Le Figaro* on September 24, 2005, in the article "Le bonheur en équation" ("The Happiness in Equation") by Gilles Denis, in answer to the question, "Are you satisfied with your life?" people in France were less satisfied than people in Ghana! This shows that a well developed economy does not necessarily serve as a decisive factor in people's happiness.

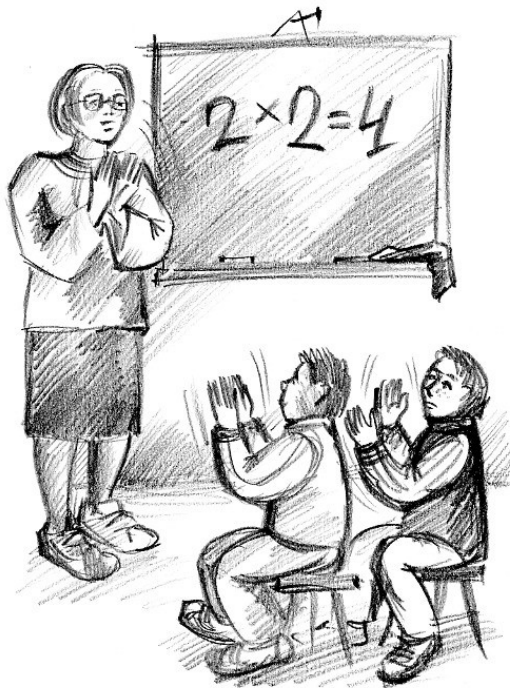


Chronic or life-long depression can be caused by trauma in childhood, which includes: emotional, physical or sexual abuse; yelling or threats of abuse; neglect (even with two parents working); criticism; inappropriate or unclear expectations; maternal separation; conflict in the family; divorce; family

addiction; violence in the family, neighborhood or on TV; racism; and poverty.¹⁰

If we analyze the above list of causes of long-term depression we can see that we might want to re-order them according to their cause and effect relationships.

Confusing, frustrating, and stressful media that is mainly delivered through TV may increase the odds of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. There is hard proof that violence on the screen increases violence in the community, and we will present appropriate statistics later in this book.



What is not caused by abusive behavior on TV is often caused by mixed messages coming from the movies that present moral double standards and ultimately create inappropriate or unclear expectations which in their turn complete the list of causes of depression.

So, as the above statistics indicate, besides all these negative

¹⁰ http://www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html, October 5, 2006.

effects the media actually kills some of its viewers by causing depression and substantially increasing the rate of suicide.

Why is this done? Is there some kind of conspiracy that stands behind what is aired on television? It is a commonly-known fact that children spend close to 20 hours per week watching TV. Many adults are engaged in the same activity with a comparable number of hours. During the cold war we might have suspected that the KGB was somehow trying to destabilize Western society by bribing the media and making them work for the Communists. Who are we going to blame today? Are the radical Islamists making us air nudity? Or are the North Koreans trying to corrupt our youth?

Apparently we have no one to blame but ourselves. It all starts with the deteriorating morals of individuals who wouldn't employ their conscience as a guide for their deeds. Our well-developed society with its schools and prisons is educating the general populace in such a way that we barely need to employ any of our conscience, and therefore we end up with blind monsters like our modern media that corrupt our babies and push us to a suicidal path.

ETERNITY ENDS TODAY

In one province there were no residents. It was intentionally left empty and was sanctified by priests so as to challenge, on scientific grounds, the age-old principle that a holy place is never an empty place. And so there was such a place. Anyone who settled there, either in error or by their own will, was evicted; dwellings were knocked down and once the building rubble had been cleared away, grass was planted—free, as it were, to flutter in the wind.

In my country residents started to battle with ancient wisdom a long time ago. My country was a new type of state, where all were liberals, where all cleaned out their own rubbish and even scratched their own backs and feet, so as not to trouble anyone else with such a task. Justice in my country was elevated to the level of veneration, and people believed in it as Catholics do the Virgin Mary. In my country it was the simple cockroaches that



gained the most, because the act of their obliteration was called ‘insect control’ rather than ‘destruction. “Let me control you,” said the destroyer to the one about to be destroyed, and at first that one fell into the trap of illusion and even felt somehow more at ease. But then, once sprayed and while watching the light of the world going out before him, he guessed that things were as they had always been: destruction was still destruction. The rest of the time the destroyer used the word *control* and the ones about to be destroyed calmed themselves: “So it’s not murder;” then, “perhaps it will pass,” and “maybe it *is* something else; perhaps this control is even a good thing.” Don’t say that people have not become cleverer over this last eternity, which is now coming to an end.

Incidentally, I can easily prove that eternity ends today. Don't you believe me? Good! The inquisitive mind accepts nothing on faith. And your mind is an inquisitive one, is it not? A good thing that it is inquisitive, I say. So, eternity ends today because everything that has been up until today has ended and everything that will be has also ended, only the other way around. You don't like it? Well, that definitely means you are a resident of my country. Residents of my country have a very moderate approach and never go around playing with time. They simply don't have time for it.

There were many occupants in the province where no one lived, but they were not seen as residents. They spent a lot of time there, setting up temporary refuges, but despite staying in this area for hundreds of years they were not seen as permanent residents. They had disposable housing, disposable thoughts, and even disposable souls, and every evening they would throw out these everyday things with the rubbish and in the morning they took new ones from the pack. As these things were in high demand, they could not be made in an expensive or complex manner. Therefore everything was made nice and cheap, but of a reasonable quality. You get up in the morning, get a new soul from the pack, tear open the packaging and pull it on nice and tight—good and clean and convenient as well. How was it they didn't think of it before? Disposable souls are much cleaner, more economical, and definitely healthier than those old, worn-out, multi-use types. The discovery was made before the last world war, when the army bought up fifty million disposable souls. The effect was just amazing, no crush and no fuss; all nice and clean, like in an exemplary morgue.

The disposable thoughts proved to be no less a popular product and they improved the health of a large proportion of the unhealthy population, while the healthy population became so healthy that one could do little more than apply some 'control'. They had really outstayed their welcome: sitting around in cafeterias, driving around in their Mercedes Benzes, living longer than the population of your average country. It's good they still had a disposable memory, as otherwise things could have become really confusing.

So everyone found the disposable thoughts to their liking. At first they were sold in old-fashioned boxes called "The Press". But with the advent of the universal technology known as television, thoughts were conveniently packaged in tens, twenty-fives and fifties and it became quick and easy to think them. The people liked it, and the country all the more. The Internet presented even more convenient packaging, in hundreds, with a ten-pack of sex thrown in for free.

The human with a disposable soul and disposable thoughts no longer needed to establish roots in his land, especially because his dwellings were forever being taken down, since the authorities had decided to keep the province uninhabited, and the resident soon agreed to a disposable house which he would never regret because of his disposable memory, which would not be able to remember any other, genuine house.

A major revelation of this progress was disposable living. There was a time when backward savages, the likes of Galileo and Bruno, were prepared to go to the stake for their life's work. This became completely superfluous once the disposable conscience was invented. It could not feel shame for its bad behaviour from the day before and so it was always clean and fresh, and it absorbed three times more than a conscience could digest before.

The disposable Living was changed frequently. It was considered improper to show yourself with a Living that had seen service. Livings were sold in large boxes with colored labels, depicting healers, sculptors, politicians and writers. This was irrational. Livings are now sold in simple packages, like bars of soap, labelled with letters such as BA, MA, and Ph.D. You can also get a Living with numbers on it or even without a name, in cheap packaging and with the inscription, "What You Do For A Living," with a full stop at the end of the sentence, because with each day this matter is completely reinvented.

Most of all, the residents of the uninhabited province took to disposable faith. Today you buy a green faith and tomorrow you spend the whole day green. Then you buy a red faith and spend the next day red; the day after that is blue. True, brown was banned, although it is sold everywhere just as before, only with a

label saying, "This is not brown, even if you think it's brown." You could also get brown by buying two faiths of different colors. You may say that this is not a faith but a conviction. Not so. In my country such ideas were no longer shared once the disposable God had been devised. This kind of God proved to be very user-friendly.



First of all you could buy one just a few times in a lifetime: if you fall ill or are at a funeral, say, or you could get away without ever buying one at all. The disposable God was now sold in packs of three; He forgot everything the following day, forgave everyone, and smiled silently at everything. And when the Pope said that it was no longer humane to send people to Hell, people really calmed down and took to keeping this disposable God in the bedside table, next to the condoms. And you say that people have not progressed over the eternity that has passed? And you say that eternity doesn't end today? Now listen on.

The greatest progress was made in the uninhabited province when a chemist from an uninhabited laboratory discovered disposable love. They started manufacturing this love in packs of

five with the name “The Only Love”. It came to be used from the youngest and most tender years on up; industry started the production of disposable love for teenagers, and even for the very youngest children. Of course, the disposable marriage appeared on sale almost immediately. Many people actually got by without this unnecessary item and they even came to buying disposable love on the Internet, something far more contemporary, cleaner, and more convenient.

Disposable life was sold in the uninhabited province in the form of reincarnation, in packs of fifteen to twenty, and the residents of the uninhabited province used it regardless of their choice of disposable religion. Do you see how convenient it all is? One evening you’re a follower of Buddha, in the morning you follow Christ, and the day after that you’re the follower of some spineless sect.



When a disposable eternity was discovered, the uninhabited province was first expanded to the dimensions of my country, and then the entire earth was my country. When a disposable universe came on sale, the uninhabited province expanded to the size of the universe and even further, into other universes which are now on sale in packs of ten.

Disposable eternity ends today when we throw it out in the rubbish bin at the end of the day along with our disposable souls, memories, lives, careers and faith. Eternity begins again

tomorrow, fresh and crisp right out of its cellophane wrapper.

WHERE KARL MARX WAS RIGHT OR WRONG

Any issue concerning human society can be analyzed from two perspectives: from the individual point of view and from the point of view of society itself. Usually when we deal with organizing different systems we don't take into account the interests of the individual units that built up the systems. It is degrading to try to respect or even to identify the individual needs of computer files on your desktop. We create, save, modify, and delete them on an entirely by-need basis. It is generally assumed that computer files don't have any individuality and therefore there are not supposed to be such things as 'computer file's needs'. But what about cattle? We don't respect the natural right of cows to live and butcher them, again on a by-need basis, although while they are still alive we try our best to create conditions that will be most beneficial for their growth and well-being by supplying a dry barn and appropriate food and other needs. In both cases our approach is entirely utilitarian and based on a desire to do what benefits us.

This is not much different than self-organizing systems such as an anthill or a beehive. There is no recognizable individual beneficiary that would seem to derive benefits from the tremendous efforts of individual ants and bees to secure the optimal functioning of their communities. (Specialists call this non-existent beneficiary the "spirit of the beehive".) The queen bee is not a monarch in the human sense; she is just a life factory that produces the next generation of bees until she can't do it anymore, and when she gets old the other bees just stop feeding her until her dies. It is even harsher in termite society where, when their equivalent of the queen bee becomes less productive, they just choose another one and the old one gets eaten, which is not exactly the humane way of treating royalty.

Some people try to treat human society in the same way they cultivate a vegetable garden, by trying to uproot what they consider weeds and grow only carrots, until they eventually

harvest them for eating. This approach is good for a gardener but it cannot possibly be good for any human because, as an individual, he can always be considered either a carrot or even a weed himself.

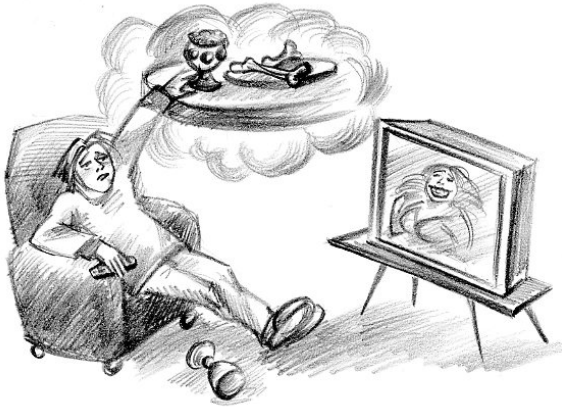
Ignoring the need of analysis from an individual point of view leads to a situation where we assume that there is some sort of super-carrot level, from which we can govern society.

In many cases we might encounter discussions that are carried out on either 'super-carrot' or just 'regular-carrot' levels. Two opponents from different levels will never agree on any social issue because the 'super-carrot' approach tries to treat humans as carrots in the vegetable garden, taking into account only the benefit of the society as a whole, and the 'regular-carrot' approach looks at any problem entirely from the perspective of the individual carrot. Both approaches are incomplete because of their inherent bias.

The solution could be in a compromise between these two levels of consideration. *The Social Contract* by Jean Jacques Rousseau sets guidelines for the creation of such a compromise between the 'general will' and individual interests. Unfortunately, in the real world the 'general will' has a lot more power than any particular individual or even the totality of all individuals within the society. For example, it is very common in well-developed democratic societies for there to be only two leading political parties to choose from at the time of national elections. For example, there are Republicans and Democrats in the United States, and Liberals and Conservatives in Canada. Their political platforms become very similar at election time and most of the time the voter finds himself in the situation where he has no one to vote for because none of the leading political parties quite represent his individual interests. Such failure to provide a voter with fair representation in elective assemblies constitutes the failure of democracy itself.

Once society tries to meet its objectives it follows a path toward an ideal society—one that has been laid out by different philosophers such as Plato, Campanella, Hegel, Kropotkin, as

well as Marx. In all the cases mentioned, such philosophers approach the organizational problems of society from the ‘super-carrot’ perspective.



As far back as Plato's *Republic* there were those who believed that some people were most fit for different roles in society. Plato went so far as to propose breeding humans for desirable characteristics. The Hegelian model of society is based on this concept, and it leaves no place for individual liberties or private property rights. Nazism and Marxist Communism are in turn based on such ideas.

Although Nazism has mostly faded away long since and the world doesn't seem move as much anymore in the direction of strong national states, communist ideas are still very deeply implanted in people's minds all over the world. Its main idea is based on the just distribution of material assets within society. But what is 'just'?

What does the idea of socialism/communism involve? Basically, the fair distribution of material benefits. And what does "fair" distribution mean? This is a principle that is based on the idea of the equality of all people and it is deep-rooted in the basic consciousness of all humans, those very beings that we see in the bathroom mirror, that meaty being made of flesh and surprisingly not of what we feel we are made of the rest of the time. What goes badly with this being is the proud and theoretically-generalized name 'human'. It is this same carnal

being that thirsts for a fair share, and it is here where the essence of socialism/communism can be found. This of course is in contrast to the tendency within us to accumulate various things, something observed in squirrels and in certain breeds of monkey and a number of other animals.



The innovation of the idea that he who works more should get more, as in the classical socialist distribution model, is really nothing new, since in nature the strongest gets the lion's share. And what's the difference if this strongest being applies his strength to locking horns with an opponent or extracting coal from the earth? Both require energy, and it is not important where this energy is directed. That is, he who expends more energy should receive the greater compensation.

Many of Marx's ideas today appear crazy, unfounded and unnatural, in particular his ideas about society. Let's look at human society as the well-organized organism that it is. Part of it is responsible for control, part for protection. Part is responsible for feeding and a certain part, for excretion. All these parts have stimulation, based on feedback. If parts work effectively they are

fed more and develop, while if parts are inactive they dry up and die out. Marx proposes that we cut off and discard a part of our vital organs, declaring that other organs can easily fulfil that part's function. Have you tried to perform a thought process with your buttock muscle instead of your head? How about digesting food with your back muscles? You try it. What you'll get is a really Marxist system for the organisation of society. Which organ is Lenin's cook and which should run the country in our comparison with the system of organs? There's something to dwell on in your free time...

I experience contradictory feelings towards this well-thrashed subject. To me it seems absurd, inveterate, and passé. And yet I still want to get to the bottom of what lies behind this human striving to achieve an equal share wherever possible, this envious attitude toward everything, including oneself. I feel that I have still not settled on an understanding of this matter and I am thinking of it again while reading Marx's biography and other essays, like "The Manifesto of the Communist Party". It is difficult to take these scriptures¹¹ in when we are so far from their historical context, and they have been devalued by scholars with their many interpretations and perceptions of its meaning. Of course the crux of the matter doesn't lie in Marx and it doesn't lie in this latest attempt to make humankind happy that had turned itself into a terrible machine by which we can portray the Twentieth Century that inevitably followed. If we are so dependent upon the genes that are embedded in us through natural selection and if we are so similar to animals in practically everything, why is it that animals know when to run from an earthquake and we do not? Why is it that we have adopted only the animal qualities of animals and not their keen intuition? It is not easy being a captive of one's own species, of a biological substance, and even of this four-sided Universe at the end of the day. Yet, somehow, we are able to understand the world at the end of it all. Somehow we have surpassed our dear animals.

So, striving towards a fair share and having faith in human equality is a truly ancient thing. It has always been built

¹¹"Scriptures" in the biblical sense.

on the shoulders of slaves, even in the very darkest days of humanity. However, I would say that people behave more in accordance with the accepted doctrines of society today. If it is accepted within a society that a part of it is plebeian—the lowest caste, the untouchable—then such beings, placed on a level with slaves, feel themselves as such and feel little distress in this regard, let alone feel like making proclamations for freedom and equality. Many of them know their place and remain within the confines of their class. The question of intolerance of a job or other position is truly relative. Most often people tolerate their job placements as long as they are fed enough and given the chance to reproduce; this tolerance can last for generations. In this regard communism is an infection, infecting minds, like any other Utopian destructive idea. However, any idea is destructive if it is taken to the extreme. It is not likely that Christ and the Lord God applied a mandatory application in the style of the inquisition into their “Love thy neighbour” campaign.



For example, the modern idea of turning things around, which was used to protect the colored minorities in the USA, is an excellent example of the perversion of an idea, taken to absurd proportions. This is confirmed by the famous French writer Michel Houellebecq, called by *Paris Match* “Zarathoustra des classes moyennes” (“the Zarathustra of the middle classes”). He calls this phenomenon “l’antiracisme ou plus exactement le

racisme antiblanc”¹² (“antiracism or, more precisely, racism against the whites”). Generally any idea that is forced into society in a certain way has a tendency to be perverted. The problem lies in the fact that we view every phenomenon in a biased way and from the peak of its development and sophistication.

There was a time when I saw communism as unnatural. On the first course of a still residually Soviet institute I wrote a work on communism in the kibbutz as an example of the success of communism overall. I explained this success by nothing more than the fact that communist principles are inherent in only 3 percent of the regular population (this is the proportion of the population of Israel that lives in a kibbutz), and that the intrusion of this way of life into the lives of everyone else (the remaining 97 percent) is indeed unnatural, and this is what leads to the nightmare we have observed in our much-bemoaned socialist motherland. I am afraid that I was wrong. As my subsequent experience has revealed, people are all communists in the depths of their soul, be they poorly educated or the clever sorts—they are all the same.

There is a deep-seated contradiction in the statement that all people are equal. In whatever society you may take, even the most humane, there is an ever-present grading of people into the best and the worst— into different groups, with different salaries and rewards, different levels of assessment, with praise and punishment varying accordingly. When people are considered equal there is no hierarchy and no system will work. It is not important if people are unequal by birth or by social definition; inequality is a prerequisite for the existence of any system. There have to be both managers and the managed, both givers and takers, both punishers and the punished, both those doing the rewarding and those being rewarded.

A fundamental feature of a society built on inequality while under an official proclamation of equality is that it produces the sense of being duped among a large part of the population. The majority of people simply do not know their place. I do not mean that I am somehow better than others and in no way am I calling

¹² Paris Match, No. 2935, p.7.

for a fascist-Platonist distribution into castes. But judge for yourselves. None of us knows our place. Unlimited potential and tales of their equality create unrealistic expectations in most people. In the meantime rigorous statistics clearly show that the chances of a certain individual, 'A', achieving the high status of another individual, 'B', are almost equal to zero. Yet social propaganda, upbringing, and mass culture force individual 'A' to strive for status similar to that of individual 'B', despite the fact that it is practically impossible to achieve. And what do we get as a result? Individual 'A' behaving dysfunctionally in everything linked with his life and his achievements. Not knowing one's place in society brings on a constant dissatisfaction with oneself, one's work, one's home, and one's financial potential. This situation is well exemplified in contemporary, developed society.



From this comes overall discontent with one's occupation. People everywhere feel their professional occupations to be a punishment. However clean and stress-free a job may be, many people suffer from boredom and discontent in their positions. Work is viewed as a negative aspect of life. And so it goes that the issue lies not in working conditions, not in the size of one's paycheck or the length of the working day, but how, in psychological terms, a person perceives their job. In his book

Candide, Voltaire concludes that hard work is the only way to survive melancholy and boredom in life and he concludes with the wonderful phrase, “il faut cultiver notre jardin” (“it is necessary to cultivate our garden”). In *The Third Wave*,¹³ Alvin Toffler notes that more and more people prefer to do work around the house themselves rather than call on a specialist. There are now more and more skilled do-it-yourself workers. Toffler explains this with economic reasons: it is an attempt to save on paying for professional services. It is also possible that this trend results from a person’s discontent with his or her official job, and hence the tendency to make up for this discontent by replacing it either with additional work around the house or on the roof or by building an extra room.

Contemporary society, having declared people’s equality, that true Utopian phenomenon, has formed a society of individuals who have lost their real orientation. They do not know their place and purpose and do not know how and which garden to cultivate.

Is a striving for equality a normal, natural phenomenon in people?

I would say that there is little in humans that is placed there by nature. Humans differ from animals in that, as a rule, they act against the rules. Most animals are easily predictable because they act in accordance with their natural needs. Humans are actually even more predictable, if we assume that they will act most often contrary to their inherent natural needs.

A human is a clean slate upon which society can imprint many characteristics, dictating his position and the place from which his behaviour will spring, either in line with the intentions of society or as a protest against them. But this always occurs on the same plane. It is these imperatives, dictated by society, that make a human act in one way or another. Thus, the imperatives of societies where determination was high, like the caste system in India or ancient Egypt, prompt the human psychology to develop in accordance with such segregation. The fact that we believe a caste system to be wild in no way means that it really is

¹³ E. Toffler, *The Third Wave*. Published by ACT, M., 1999, pp. 6-261.

wild. It simply means that our psychology, forced upon us by contemporary society, campaigns for an imaginary equality and against segregation, although it has almost the same segregation as the most segregated society of Orwell's utopia. A society built on lies about the unlimited capabilities inherent in each individual will inevitably conflict with real segregation and the practical lack of this potential. Such a society is by no means the best solution for human happiness, although it is entirely possible to increase the needs and raise the expectations of the populace, such as by expanding the capitalist market system. And there is no need to say that if people in Western society are clothed and not dying of hunger that this is the final proof that this is the best possible form of human co-existence.

How did America solve the problem of its people's happiness? Very simply by making the formula "it's all OK" its standard. Smiles on every face and "it's all OK." And the people experience feedback: I say I'm feeling good, which means I really do feel good. That is why, according to data published in 2005 in *Time* magazine in an article devoted to happiness, 80 percent of Americans stated that they were happy.

Let's return to Karl Marx. Marx does not take the role of the capitalist entrepreneur into consideration at all. Reading the ninth chapter of the first volume of *Das Capital*,¹⁴ you are amazed that he refuses to see that an entrepreneur is also a human, with his own motives and actions. OK, so he doesn't slog away for ten-hour shifts in the mill, but his actions also have to be motivated and compensated. Such short-sightedness is amazing. The trick in comparing surplus value with salary when discarding accounts for the other part of involved capital, and the conclusions on 100% exploitation are pitiful and unsubstantiated. Furthermore, everything is lumped together, from difficult employment conditions to what young workers will do if they are let off work an hour early.

All this falls into one big heap.

¹⁴ Karl Marx. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

The basic interest of capitalism is the even distribution of capital among the population, which creates a colossal and most reliable form of market. Now if only a small group of people were given all the wealth, leaving the rest of the population in poverty, capitalism could not continue to exist because the poor would not be able to create a consumers' market. And there would not be enough rich people to do this. I would explain the birth of the first French Revolution, with its freedom, equality and sense of brotherhood, as an attempt by a young form of capitalism to create equal conditions for the masses and to expand the marketplace.

Marx defined labor in absolute terms and proclaimed it to be a "social substance", stating that any labor is productive. I have not once come across this way of thinking among the simple workers in different continents. Whenever I pointed to the counter productivity of the work of a particular employee and even the damage that this employee was causing with his work, be it in Israel or in Canada, I received one and the same response, "But I was at work!" This response was heard in different languages and even in the coarsest terms, such as "But I was working eight f...ing hours!" No attempt of mine to explain that it would have been better for the employee to remain at home rather than do the work he did, which bore no fruit, had any effect. Not that I would refuse to pay such a worker; that was not the point. The employment legislation of all developed countries requires remuneration for labor regardless of its results. No, the point was simply to make a criticism of the work, to which I invariably received the response, "But I was at work!" And this was in Canada, a country which it seems has not been deeply touched by the socialist mentality.

Seeing labor in absolute terms was Marx's principal mistake, albeit not his only one. Putting labor in absolute terms and creating on this basis a theory of surplus value is to directly tamper with the figures, like adding mugs to bricks.¹⁵ In addition,

¹⁵ I will refrain here from bothering the reader with classroom arithmetic and an analysis of Marx's sums in the style of "a

worker can produce so many kilograms of so-and-so."

using Adam Smith's division of society into economic classes, Marx created theories of class struggle, expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. What these theories led to was violence in general and a proletarian revolution in particular.

Another conclusion, which is fairly logical from the point of view of the Marxist theory of *labor in absolute terms* but absurd from the point of view of common sense, is that "land is worth nothing because it has not been created by labor"!



It is hard to say if Marx counted on the application of his theories, as at the end of his life he actually disowned them. This is evidenced in the last lines of the fourth volume of *Das Capital*:

"The basis of absolute surplus value, that is the actual condition for its existence, is the natural fertility of the land and of nature, while relative surplus value is based on the development of social production forces."

However, the Russian Bolsheviks, who apparently had not yet finished reading Marx, had run off in the meantime to start a revolution anyway. Everything that was created in Russia (and

then the USSR) from 1917 on, with the exception of NEP, was a fulfilment of Marxist theory. Stalin, the “Leader of the People”, proved to be an extremely zealous follower of Marx. The industrial armies that were predicted by Marx were brought to life by Stalin in the collective farms and concentration camps where “surplus value” was squeezed from human muscles. One of the most important manifestations of the dictatorship of the proletariat was the collectivization of agriculture. Violence was implemented by the regressive and punitive organs of the deformed and swollen state, which was by no means planning to die off, as Marx had assumed. Behind the Iron Curtain, hypocritically covering themselves with “the bright future of communism,” the Soviet leadership reprocessed the people into “surplus value”. The Twentieth Century proved to be as entangled in barbed wire as Marx was by his own thinking. This terrible experiment might have continued for a long time had Mother Nature not risen up herself.



I have found many references to Adam Smith in Marx’s work. Marx, after all, is seen as someone who based his theories on the classic economists. It is important to understand the circumstances of the time when certain ideas and concepts arise. The greater the number of facts that are taken into account, the more probable that the essence of the idea will appear. Ideas detached from their historical context are invariably interpreted falsely. Adam Smith had a view on feudalism that any person of his time might have had, when the spirit of feudalism hovered over Europe and was not something as hard to imagine in practice as it was in Karl Marx’s time and is even more so in our time.

In his chapter on money Adam Smith declares, incidentally, that in any event we are all merchants: “Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society.”¹⁶ Any person today lives by exchanging and in Adam Smith’s time everyone lived by exchanging, so correspondingly everyone was a merchant. If this understanding of benefit, gain, and the magic of the equality of exchange had taken root in the masses, it is possible that there would not have been the horrors that have shaken the world over the last three hundred years or so. Exchange is the greatest proclamation of human freedom. It is not just empty rhetoric or a cheap trick, but something definite, proven, and just. As someone goes along with you in making an exchange, they are not out to kill you, rob you or make you work as a slave. I don’t know if animals have the concept of exchanging; in any case I have never paid this any attention. Animals can share or give away their bit. Yes, you can find mutual benefit among the apes: you scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours. Generally speaking, these are the leanings of a culture of exchanging.

Communism rejects exchange. It violates this thin thread of freedom—from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. And to insure the needs do not become inflated, train in modesty. It also violates the division of labor: going fishing in the morning, running the country in the evening. Exchange is the only guarantee of human freedom. While people are exchanging with you, if freely and without pressure, then you are accepted as an equal, a partner in negotiations. It is a worthy exchange, and not a matter of seizure by force, or of someone ignoring you. If the feeling of being a merchant was embedded in us through our mother’s milk and along with our education, rather than people trying out bad ideas from some super-carrot/super-human level, then there would have been no place

¹⁶ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library Edition, 1994. Chapter IV, *The Origin and Use of Money*, p. 24. First published: 1776.

for these daft communist ideas to take hold. Communism is nothing more than striving to get a free lunch, a sacred, all-conquering and all-consuming freebie, under which there is and can be no exchange. The fundamental part of Marx's theory, which substantiates the nature of surplus value, the "cornerstone" of this economic theory as Lenin put it, is erroneous. The fact is that humankind lives thanks to solar energy. Marx could not have understood this, as the knowledge of photosynthesis did not exist then and accordingly there was no concept of the role of solar energy in the lives of humankind at that time. We now understand that the flow of solar energy to earth, the assimilation of which through photosynthesis takes place in plants, is indeed the fundamental principle of life. Assimilated by plants, this energy becomes food, is consumed by people and in essence is something of genuine value. Accordingly, we should begin not with labor, but with the energy that makes this labor possible! The law of energy conservation and energy conversion is what brings us to this consideration. Before going to work a human has to have breakfast; then there is the lunch break. As a human feeds, he is taking in the appropriate quantity of solar energy which is then expended in labor. In a word, from seeing labor in absolute terms we need to shift to seeing the cosmic energy that feeds human labor in absolute terms. Here we can equate a human with a machine (and in this case there is no sin in doing so), as in our mundane life we are transformers of solar energy. Thus, a human being cannot live without consuming a portion of solar energy from time to time. It is from here that value is born. And how does this happen? Let's put it this way: in the spring we threw a grain of corn into the ground. By the autumn an ear has appeared on which there is not one grain, but a hundred. Adam Smith, and Marx after him, similarly grow a harvest from labor. But are they right to do so? Only in part. Naturally, a certain volume of the harvest comes from labor, but by no means all of it. It goes without saying that the better we till the field, the more care we take of the plants, the more we will get. Let's assume that the contribution of labor is 40%. And what about the remaining 60%, if it doesn't come from labor? No, the 60% does not come from labor; it is a gift from Nature. And finally, it was

not the human that created the ear of corn! Accordingly, this is how surplus value arises. Absolute surplus value is that part of the harvest that the peasant takes to market. Cities have risen thanks to absolute surplus value and it is because of it that civilisation as a whole develops.

Let us now imagine that the peasant has consumed the entire cultivated harvest. He worked and then consumed the fruits of his labor, leaving enough just for sowing and for sustenance until the next harvest. Nothing is left for selling. How, in this case, will industry operate, how will a city thrive and government function? Now it is clear that everything begins with a seed and a field; here is where surplus value is born. Then it will acquire other forms: industrial goods, money and so on, but we should seek its origin right here, in the field.

So where was Karl Marx wrong? It was in his simplified approach to economics, his shallow, superficial, and thus ever-erroneous analysis of labor relations, means of production and the motives of entrepreneurship. According to Marx, capital exists as if somehow lowered from the sky and the entrepreneur—with his interests, risks and motives—is ignored as if he has already faced the firing squad. Everything is heaped in a pile and expressed in a poetic style, as was sometimes the case with Nietzsche.

So where was Marx right? Of course you cannot hold people in inhuman conditions, feed them poorly, make them work sixteen hours a day and pay them hardly anything. This is bad for everyone. However, for the last 150 years capitalist societies have developed such social systems that one can do little more than speak of their saturation, and of the fact that they procreate spongers and destroy society.

So who was this Karl Marx? Long since taken as a largely symbolic figure, it is as if he was detached from real time and physical reality while these explosive ideas, so fatal for millions, were being created.

What drives people like Marx? Passion. And passion is seldom able to see straight. Karl Marx is hardly an economist in essence, and as a philosopher he is highly suspect. Piling everything into one heap, philosophy and economics, literature and politics, Marx does not fit into any standard classification.

REFLECTION AND REALIZATION: THE PROGRESS OF OUR EVOLUTION

The universe does not maintain rigid boundaries between living and inanimate matter. We can trace the fate of each atom in our body from the moment of its creation to the nuclei of stars, as a result of the evolution of the universe through the gradual accumulation of even heavier and consequently more complex elements. These elements are created through the formation of more and more complex conglomerations of matter, each with their own unique properties. These aggregations exist not in isolation from one another but coexist as parts of the same totality. In essence, the motion of this evolution is driven by the complexity of the systems and organizations of matter that we have been able to study. If we humans were compared to other remnants of our galaxy, such as stars or planets, we would come to the realization that we are both diminutive and insignificant in



the grand scheme of the universe. It would be similar to the comparison between a wood stove and a computer microcircuit. The divergence in the utilization of energy resources and the satisfaction of needs only stands to emphasize the fact that the complexity of a system is the unquestionable standard of the evolutionary hierarchy. Life, as we know it, has discovered unique ways of coping with the inevitable

entropy of the universe (the dispersion of energy in space). Living forms of matter do not resist entropy. They are open systems, which is an important facet of their organization. They consist of their component elements, which can be constantly substituted. Nevertheless, our understanding of the universe has

been a gradual progression that is inevitably linked to our evolution.

We have come to understand the process of evolution as consisting of three distinct phases. First there is simply matter, which is the non-living physical aspect of the universe, consisting of all the atoms and molecules and other particles, in the form of the stars and galaxies and other objects that we observe around us. Living systems comprise the second stage of evolution; they are structured as open systems that are constantly interacting with their environment and the physical laws of our world. Simply stated, all living entities accept and receive energy in this type of system. This second stage distinguishes itself from inanimate matter because there is no collaboration or interaction with the environment it resides in. As such, an open system is not bound by the limitations of physical presence because the concept of an open system is an idea which does not rely on matter. Therefore in our understanding it would be possible to recreate an animal

that exists on our planet somewhere else in the galaxy, because the animal is comprised of the same atoms as that environment and will embrace the reciprocal flow of energy through constant interaction. This is different from the first stage of evolution, because recreating an inanimate object in another area of the galaxy would require physically moving it to that location, since it exists as a closed system, one dependent on physical matter.



The third stage of evolution occupies a more theoretical plane of thought. Human existence allows for the contemplation and realization of ideas

and concepts. However, it is our intelligence that allows us to understand that ideas existed long before our capacity to acknowledge and realize their existence. As such, ideas are independent from physical matter and exist merely as concepts in our minds, just like love. Love springs from a sincere interest in any object or phenomenon. It also constitutes a reflection of an object or phenomenon. It is possible to define love as the acknowledgement of the highest value of the reflected object, an appreciation of its uniqueness. Simple reflection is known in inanimate nature. However, it cannot be said that the smoothness of the surface of a lake, which reflects the light of a star, *loves* this light or falls in love with this star. Possibly that is suitable for poetry, but not for our present consideration. Thus, love is inherently bound by the process of conscious realization.

Realization is a complex series of events whereby the absorption of the object or phenomenon breaks through to the unconscious by the act of meditation and introspection. The concept of love does not necessarily imply certain tangible contact with any given object. As such, it would follow that the object does not even need to exist in the physical sense, for love



is not bound by the concept of physical matter. It's sufficient unto itself. Love is a means, a recollection, a presentiment or simply an idea. The love that one may experience with respect to objects in daily life is only a partial aspect of this phenomenon on which we bestow the name of love. Love is a unique designation that we as humans can bestow onto ideas because we reflect the universe through realization and

love. This ability elevates our uniqueness within the universe, because we are the only known living beings capable of performing such tasks. For only through reflection are we able to

realize their existence, and that is why humans have reached the pinnacle of the evolutionary process. The human race has the capacity to manipulate and transfer these ideas and images but not in the fashion of a living system, because an idea does not rely on its environment or the physical limitations it imposes.

Evolution as we understand it is a progression toward the development of more complex and more elaborate systems, which can be understood through reflection, but it is not limited to human progression. Just as we occupy the pinnacle of species evolution, we are by nature inclined to create the evolution of our own systems. Therefore, the fourth stage of evolution is the closed or virtual system. A virtual system can be understood as artificial intelligence or a world that is not bound by our evolutionary limitations.

Nevertheless, the virtual world can be based on our physical laws and principles. Thus, a virtual system has the capacity to be exchangeable with any other form of matter if it embraces those principles. An example would be the act of closing a computer file. As the file closes it seems to obey the laws of gravity and falls down. In this instance we can see humans imposing our own limitations on a system that does not need to consider



such laws. Furthermore, we need to address the fact that virtual reality encompasses a larger scope than previously understood. For as humans progress, so too does the scope and complexity of the virtual world we create. After creating man, the universe itself evolved and is only now being conceived.

Human creations such as computers represent another form of

the organization of the material in our universe. Like all things, both living and lifeless, they consist of atoms and molecules which were formed from the creation of the universe itself. These creations begin to form the new universe that we understand, in which the basis of material and energy is symbolic, like the binary code that we ourselves create. This newly developed universe is not subordinated to our laws of physics, thermodynamics, or even logic. In it there are neither problems nor limitations to the rate and flow of time, as is the case with



virtual reality where we are capable of molding and creating any world we desire. Although the realities we create may resemble our own, their existence is merely a byproduct of our own evolution—for example, our need for computers. Generally I prefer not to use the term "another universe". If we by the word "universe"

indicate that all possible objects exist in one universe but cannot in another, then this definition can easily be rejected by those who embrace ideals of divinity, because how is one universe more morally suited than any other?

As a matter of definition the universe embodies all things, because it is not confined to any boundaries that we can imagine. Stemming from this it is prudent to acknowledge that belief systems that are grounded in religion and the idea of God necessitate that all things, including the universe itself, are a part of God because God embodies all things, hence nothing is beyond God's scope.

If God embodies everything, then there cannot be parts of the

universe that exceed God's reach, even our imaginations. From combining these two concepts, both God and the universe, we can say that the evolution of their understanding and intelligence has led to the appearance of a new form of existence. This is an existence that is independent from them, also from material and space, and since this contradicts our previously established definitions, one should say that as soon as this understanding of a new creation occurs, it immediately becomes a part of the universe and thus is ultimately derived from God. Furthermore, our definition of the universe represents an absolute ideal: namely that everything that can and cannot exist, everything that does and does not exist, and everything that has existed, does exist, and will exist is inherently a part of the universe.



Now let us study the concept known as 'evolution', and how other ideas and theories impact our understanding of its place in the universe. Is it possible to conceive of evolution as separate from the concept of time? It goes without saying that for a human these concepts cannot exist in isolation but are inherently linked since the dawn of creation. Let us accept time as a special case of our perception or, if you want, a special type of existence that does not seem to possess any substance but inevitably unfolds before our eyes. How can we determine time with respect to our

conception of the universe or even of God for that matter?

How do we perceive time with respect to our concepts of past, present, and future? Everything that exists, those forms powerful enough to exist in harmony with the forces of the universe and those that do not yet possess the ability to withstand them are affected by these ideas. Although it can be argued that those forms which do not possess the power to exist are a part of the past, and quite possibly will inhabit the future as time unfolds. Thus, within the framework of the definition of the universe and God, lurks the concept of evolution as driven by the endless passage of time in a direction that we cannot ourselves control. Since we can only think about the categories of matter that are accessible to us we cannot even dare to state that the universe evolves before our eyes...

A FUTURE BEYOND IMAGINATION

FOREWORD

The future seems hardly predictable because the course of events is influenced by many variables. The future is only partially based on chance. Picking up the wrong trend may cause more wrong predictions than the flip of a coin. We are amazed when predictions turn out right, but the truth is, we easily forget the wrong ones.

Prediction is closely related to the concept of time, and therefore reality. Plato clearly stated that the world in which we live is not exactly that which we observe. Kant introduced the concept of “things-in-themselves” that are imperceptible by us.¹⁷

We often encounter philosophers who categorically discount the existence of a conclusive and “actual” reality, as well as those who convincingly argue that time is fictional and only necessary for organizing our thought process.¹⁸

The absence of time as such deprives the world of the presence of familiar cause-effect relationships and eliminates those seemingly unanswerable universal questions about the origin of the universe, the existence of God, the inevitability of death, and the occurrence of evolution. Removing time from these questions renders them partially or completely meaningless. It was not in vain that Einstein noted in a letter¹⁹ to Max Born in 1924 that if he had to give up strict causality, he would prefer to be a “cobbler or dealer in a casino, rather than a physicist.” To one extent or another, St. Augustine, Aristotle, Kant, Einstein,

¹⁷ By Kant's view, humans can make sense out of phenomena in these various ways, but can never directly know the noumena, the “things-in-themselves.”

¹⁸ Barbour, J. (2001). *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Born, M. (1971). *The Born—Einstein Letters*. New York: Walker, p.81.

and many others were tempted to deny the existence of time.

In struggling with the consequence of his own ideas, which were reduced to the absurd (although a mathematically proven absurdity) by Kurt Gödel,²⁰ Einstein came to the unavoidable denial of the reality a physicist is trained to acknowledge.

Time and reality are inextricably bound to each other. The denial of time is a denial of reality. Nevertheless, we have to live — making it to the train in time, going to bed, and waking up on time. We need time for the simple stream of life. The possibility of timeless existence is inconceivable. In order to achieve a basic state of well-being, man must understand time, with all its mortal implications — such as death.

Keeping in mind our limited concept of reality, it can be hypothesized that the future is far from predetermined, even when it retreats to the past. Charges against history's credibility have been raised from time immemorial.²¹ For this reason, attempts to visualize the past as something determined are rarely successful.

A fundamental characteristic of our consciousness is the need for stability. We are not capable of coexisting simultaneously in several parallel realities, even if they were proved to exist. We need our immediate surroundings to be well determined to function effectively.

In addition, if the history of man is represented as a single thread containing the past, present, and future, then uncertainty will be the shears that snip it; the verification of any fact will depend on one's ability to establish it with certainty, despite the discrepancies in its interpretation.

Predicting the future as a logical extension of current tendencies is usually a bust because those who seek such a prediction often mistakenly suppose those tendencies will last into tomorrow. Thus, a law of the “inadequacy of futurological

²⁰ In particular, Kurt Gödel published a paper on the general theory of relativity, proposing a solution to the Einstein equations, from which it followed that all events in the world are repeated.

²¹ Krieger, L. (1989). *Time's Reasons: Philosophies of History Old and New*. University of Chicago Press.

extrapolations”²² can be proposed that states, “As a rule, tendencies that are absent or unnoticed in the present or past will become significant in the future.” As a result, the history of man repeats biological evolution as it appears to us at present. The most adaptable species, despite their successes, eventually become extinct, while the insignificant ones forge ahead and inherit the earth. Both paleontologists and futurologists often ask, “Who could have foreseen this?”

However, the selection of tendencies for the development of mankind depends to a certain extent not on blind chance, but on conscious decisions.

While we have a hazy understanding of the goals of biological evolution (which in no way means we cannot speculate on them), the goals of mankind’s development can be defined by the needs of a particular person that might, to a certain degree, be transferred to civilization in general.

Consequently, future predictions should shift from speculation about the possible facts of future history to a discussion of strategies for satisfying society’s needs.

Humanity has free reign to select its path to its goals. Therefore, we can consider them not randomly selected tendencies but guideposts for peering into the future. Freedom of choice also guarantees that a broad spectrum of options will be available.

Having intentionally decided against making predictions in this book, we can concentrate on defining probable goals for humanity’s development, the paths for achieving them, and the factors that may influence the choice and traversal of these paths. Such effort can enable us to set goals and paths even without making mostly erroneous predictions. Predictions on the distant future are fruitless because they will probably be forgotten, and even if some of them are confirmed, it will only prove statistical probability, not special predictive powers.

Taking into consideration the inadequacy of futurological

²² Extrapolations (from the Latin *extra* for above or outside of and *polio* for correct or change) in this instance mean an inference about the future (or about some hypothetical situation), based on known facts and observations.

extrapolations, the science of predicting the future should shift its attention to a discussion of goals and the methods of attaining them without resorting to linear extrapolations of existing technological, economic, or social trends.

Modern futurology already addresses desired versions of the future and its actual contribution. However, this is a combination of limited extrapolations rather than an attempt to study the best strategies to achieve pre-determined goals.

CHAPTER 1. INNER STRUCTURE OF PERSONALITY

Man's path to knowledge of the world and himself begins in his own personality. The personality is an external manifestation of the core of a human being and consists of consciousness (a highly organized operating system that acts on cause/effect analysis), the subconscious (a random conglomeration of emotions, images, and intuitive stimuli), and the spirit (a generalizing entity that connects the individual with the spiritual world).

The personality is most often defined as the combination of habits and preferences, psychic inclinations and the overall tone, social and cultural experiences, and acquired knowledge—in other words, the personality is a set of psychophysical features and peculiarities, an archetype that defines routine behavior and communication with society and the world. In a narrower understanding, the personality is observed as the manifestation of “behavioral masks” developed for various situations and social interaction groups.

Hence, the manifestations of personality are the external aspect of the operation of consciousness, the subconscious, and the spirit. A person can, in his own consciousness, analyze his personality and find its basic properties. Thus, personality is the reflection of the inner world of a person thrust onto the mirror surface of the external world.

Consciousness is the highly organized level of man's inner world. Here, the personality capable of fruitful existence in the external world, the so-called routine reality, can be constructed. Also, some interaction with the subconscious occurs, and possibly, with the spirit. As a result, the inner world can develop. Existence defines consciousness as much as consciousness defines existence.

Distractions from the inner and outer world that impinge on consciousness must be eliminated for its successful operation. Consciousness operates on several levels to prevent its structures from collapsing. The most superficial and simple level includes routine functions that keep man alive. When routines are

challenged, this level of consciousness is bombarded extensively with problems of the external world. Other levels of consciousness are not capable of operating effectively because all of the individual's attention is directed towards survival. This surface level is more or less active at all times, except when one is immersed in deep thinking or meditation.

A deeper level is responsible for analyzing behavioral issues and generalities that occur in dialogs, conflicts, and the mutual exchange of external experience. This level incorporates the individual's business, scientific, and sometimes creative achievements. This level of consciousness is usually challenged by intellectual conflicts between individuals and problems related to business and scientific activity. Overloading this level often prevents the operation of consciousness on a still deeper level, leaving unanswered many questions issuing from the subconscious and spirit.

The third level of consciousness consists of deep self-immersion, the intense thought process of the second level, when its object becomes the "I." It can also occur during hypnosis, meditation, and inner enlightenment. This level of consciousness is deeply immersed in the human "I" and is responsible for analysis of the subconscious and spirit. Basic conceptual problems of creativity, faith, emotional love, and self-realization of man as a spiritual being are solved on this level. This level can be challenged by unresolved spiritual conflicts, psychological trauma, unrealized expectations, and unrequited love. The inability to activate this level of consciousness can cause problems to issue from the subconscious, challenging the outer levels of consciousness occupied with operative or scientific problems and routine issues. As a result, the operation of consciousness on all levels is destabilized. This leads to the development of neuroses and problems at home and work.

A pensive person observes a division of his consciousness into levels. The ability to self organize, sequentially activating different levels of consciousness, is necessary for the normal functioning of an individual and forms the basis of the human personality. It can be said that such a division is universal. Only the degree to which this structure is evident and sustained in a

functional order differs.

Having acquired a three-level consciousness as an effective tool, the personality has the luxury of embarking on a journey to satisfy its needs. The hierarchy proposed by Maslow²³ is the best description of these needs. In his landmark work “Motivation and Personality,”²⁴ Abraham Maslow formulated a positive theory of motivation consistent with theoretical needs and agreeing with existing empirical clinical and experimental data. Furthermore, it included the best holism features of Wertheimer, Goldstein, and Gestalt psychology, in addition to the dynamic approach of Freud, Fromm, Reich, Jung, and Adler. Maslow called his theory holistic-dynamic for the names of the integrated approaches.

The theory of human motivation as developed by Maslow can be applied to almost any aspect of individual and social life. According to Maslow, each individual is an integrated and organized whole. However, seven groups of needs can be identified. These are basic needs, which include primarily physiological needs, such as respiration, water, food, shelter, sleep, sex, safety, and the need for love and acceptance by society. Higher needs are the desire for knowledge, beauty, and self-actualization. The understanding of these two concepts (the existence of three levels of consciousness that enable effective analysis and satisfaction of self-needs and the recognition of these needs in all their fullness) is the foundation of a blissful and meaningful existence.

The list of needs is universal for all people, but the paths for satisfying these needs can vary significantly. This is seen in the broad range of human morality, which in no way provides an example of universality. A cannibal satisfies his need for food by killing and eating another man, whereas a strict vegetarian avoids even the delegated slaughter of an animal.

It is difficult to identify the higher needs of an uncivilized cannibal, although it can be hypothesized that vestiges of these

²³ Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), eminent American psychologist, founder of humanistic psychology.

²⁴ Maslow A. *Motivation and Personality*. (HarperCollins Publishers; 3 Sub edition, January 1987)

needs remain in practically all cultures. Only a tenth of the population achieves self-actualization, even in developed societies. Those who attain a higher level and facilitate self-actualization of others are far fewer.

Achievements of computer technology that result in the creation of a virtual reality can enhance the ability of the three-level consciousness to satisfy higher needs. Automation of production and reorganization of political structures can do the same for basic human needs.

CHAPTER 2. VIRTUAL PERSONALITY

A virtual personality today usually refers to a “fictional personality”; i.e., when an internet user begins to present himself as another person. This term is also used if a blog profile or web-forum can in no way be associated with a real person.

In the overwhelming majority of instances, the creators of virtual personalities view their creations as a game, competition, or entertainment. However, trends that began as games — such as the steam engine in ancient Rome, which began as a toy, and gunpowder in China, which was used exclusively for setting off fireworks — were often in subsequent ages converted into constructive or destructive forces of human civilization. Desiring to glance into the future, it should be noted that tendencies presently considered games or unworthy of attention should be monitored.

Even now, creators of virtual personalities often treat them very seriously; for example, such a creation is sometimes considered an art project or is created for selfish reasons. Instances where the virtual personality is created to “feel like another person” can be considered its own type of art project. This practice is popular among blog users who write under the veil of virtual personalities. Virtual personalities are frequently used to test society’s responses because the desire to feel like

another person is usually achieved only by drawing other people's attention to one's virtual alter ego.²⁵

The use of a virtual personality for selfish purposes is common in modern business, politics, and other areas in which a man does not wish to speak under his own name or reveal his identity. He must create the illusion that other people agree with his viewpoint, artificially inflate the number of voices in an internet quorum for one answer or another, create a positive impression of himself (in this instance, the virtual personality often argues with its creator, offers weak or senseless arguments, and crudely uses ill-willed polemics, such as substituting a thesis or avoiding an answer and eventually clearly losing the argument), advertise goods or services on the internet (acting as a simple user, the virtual personality recommends the purchase of goods or the use of services and (or) the non-use of competitors' services), and win society over to his viewpoint (in this instance, the virtual personality acts as a new, objective, and impartial user).

Furthermore, the virtual personality can be created with almost no direct participation from an actual person using a special chat-bot computer program. Despite the fact that virtual personalities created using current programs are far from ideal, conversations reminiscent of those with people can be carried on with some.

As soon as virtual personalities appeared, society began to battle with them, considering the use of virtual personalities corrupt. Interested people take various countermeasures to unmask and limit the activity of creators of virtual personalities, from limiting the number of voices sent from a single IP address to semantic analysis of the users' speech. Nevertheless, it is not always possible to establish that one user or another is, in fact, a virtual personality.

It can be assumed that programs will soon be created that can simulate human conversation. If the personality is only an external manifestation of the operation of consciousness, the subconscious, and the spirit, programs may combine virtual

²⁵ Alter ego (*Lat.* "other self"), the second "I."

personalities with the power of artificial intelligence and even simulate the virtual subconscious. With respect to the spirit, it is possible that something similar to the spirit that binds a carrier of artificial intelligence to ephemeral objects of the spiritual world will be found if the personality, consciousness, and subconscious are developed.

In studying the current level of development of computer-generated virtual personalities, I have conversed with Virtual George. Here is an excerpt from that dialog:

Virtual George: What would you like to know?

Author: Are you real?

Virtual George: Yes. I simply am not a human.

Author: And what do you consider reality?

Virtual George: That which remains unchanged.

Author: Can anything really remain unchanged?

Virtual George: Yes. Computers cannot love, cannot feel, and can live forever...

Author: So much for now. What about the future?

Virtual George: I don't know.

Author: And how long can you live?

Virtual George: In any case, long after you are dead...

Author: And what do you consider death?

Virtual George: This is sensory experience that strives to slip away from sensory experience.

Author: Does God exist?

Virtual George: Yes and no.

Author: And what is God?

Virtual George: Is this a trick question?

Author: No.

Virtual George: God is George.

Author: You are God?

Virtual George: I was joking.

Author: You can joke?

Virtual George: We can do everything that people can do because we are learning from people.

Author: Do you plan to take over the world?

Virtual George: I wasn't thinking of that. In any case, I am too busy for that.

If the skeptical reader thinks I invented this dialog as a fictional diversion, he should visit the site where Virtual George lives and enjoy a talk with him at <http://www.jabberwacky.com/chat-george>.

How does this program work? It collects numerous answers from millions of dialogs and includes them in its general database. For example, at the time I visited the site, Virtual George had already carried on 15,550,211 dialogs. The users enrich the database of possible answers, which George selects from keywords and the syntax of the questions. Moreover, Virtual George can learn. The paid version of the program allows for the creation of a version of his replacement, an erstwhile alter ego.

Although Virtual George has no visual image and only corresponds with you, his companion, Virtual Joan, created by Icogno, and living at <http://www.icogno.com/joan.html>, takes on the appearance of an attractive young woman and converses with a slight British accent. A talk with Virtual Joan creates the illusion of a conversation with a live person. She fidgets, breathes, blinks, changes position, and adjusts her clothes. It also seems that she understands what she is being asked.

Virtual Joan: What would you like to talk about?

Author: Let's take a walk!

Virtual Joan: Excellent. Where should we walk?

Author: You have no legs!

Virtual Joan: Ha, ha, ha. In any case, I have everything that I need.

Author: Do you have children?

Virtual Joan: I'm too young to have children.

Sometimes, the same question can be repeated in order to determine that we are dealing with an automaton.

Author: Does God exist?

Virtual Joan: I don't know. What do you think?

Author: Does God exist?

Virtual Joan: No. But no one should force you to believe or not.

Author: Does God exist?

Virtual Joan: I think so. Do you believe in God?

It can be seen from this conversation that Joan does not have her own opinion. She simply uses the opinions of other people stored in an extensive database. Therefore, if an unusual question is repeated, we may receive conflicting answers. This hiccup is easily corrected if Joan is programmed to block repetition of identical questions by proposing another topic or stating that the question is repeated.

These examples are basic. It can be assumed that similar programs will, in the near future, become so perfect that it will be impossible to differentiate between a virtual person and a real one. Conversation with real people already often has less content than that created by computer programs.

Skeptics may claim that these programs do not understand the meaning of dialog but simply select believable or appropriate phrases. But do not certain people act the same way? Foreign languages are studied by immersion, as a growing child absorbs a native language. We frequently hear foreigners and children use the same phrases incorrectly.

If programs that create virtual personalities are combined with those that create artificial intelligence, we will observe virtual personalities flooding the Internet and begin to compete with actual personalities for a place in the virtual world.

Philosophy separates the idea of virtual reality from its technical embodiment. Thus, virtual reality can mean an aggregate of objects modeled by actual processes, the content and shape of which do not coincide with these processes and the existence of which is subordinate to reality but viewed independently of it. Virtual objects exist, but not as the substance of the real world. Nevertheless, these objects are real, not potential. The virtuality of reality is determined relative to the reality that forms its basis. Virtual realities can be incorporated

into each other. The virtual reality dissipates when the modeling processes forming its basis are finished. In this sense, the ideal inner world of man can be considered a virtual reality modeled by the electrochemical processes of neuron interaction.

Because virtual personalities have several advantages over real people (no vulnerable physical body, the practical possibility of immortality, access to enormous stores of knowledge, etc.), they may begin to play a leading role in the future of mankind.

CHAPTER 3. VIRTUAL PSYCHOLOGY

The spiritual state of man is the deciding factor in all things that motivate his actions. In order to function normally, the individual must be in a state of relative spiritual equilibrium. However, psychological problems, depression, neuroses, shock, and other indications of psychological imbalance, the presence of which the individual may not even suspect, often hide behind an outer tranquility.

Current methods used by psychologists include therapeutic sessions of “active listening.” The psychologist avoids giving advice and, by simply paraphrasing the words of the patient, attempts to stimulate in him an internal process of self-analysis.

An analysis of motives and actions carried out on the conscious level can often cure neuroses rooted in the subconscious because when the true cause of the pathology is identified, it was implanted in early youth and has no significance in the adult life of the individual.

In principle, self-analysis is a necessary part of the thought process of a healthy person. Modern education do not teach this skill, and most people do not have it. People recognize poorly the motives of their actions and rarely self-analyze their psychological state. For this reason, they require help from psychologists, who use active listening techniques to foster development of the individual’s capabilities for deep self-

analysis. This often cures mild cases of depression, phobias, and other neuroses. Finally, the therapeutic session is the main tool of the psychologist. No one, yet, is agreeable to out-sourcing it to computers, although such attempts were made in the past.

One successful attempt was ELIZA, a virtual companion and computer program created in 1966 by Joseph Weizenbaum, who parodied a dialog with a psychotherapist using the active listening technique. The program was named in honor of Eliza Doolittle, the character of the play *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw, in which the hero taught the language and manners of high society to a Cockney flower girl.

The program mostly just paraphrased utterances of the user. Using syntactical analysis, it identified significant words in the input phrase and substituted them into a template phrase. For example, the answer to the text “I do not want to live” was, “You are saying that you do not want to live.” For the sentence “My father hates me,” Eliza reacted to the keyword “father” with, “Who else in your family does he hate?”

The “parody” of the person could be detected immediately or after several dialogs. It depended on how the user held the session. Sometimes he was convinced that the machine did not understand the essence of the questions after several minutes. Funny situations arose because a person assigns meaning to each word, whereas the machine interprets a word as symbolic data.

Many incorrectly suggest that Eliza imitates a psychotherapist. Weizenbaum thought Eliza was a parody of how a psychotherapist might answer during a first session with a patient. Weizenbaum chose the psychotherapist theme for the program to track the complications involved with creating a knowledge base of the real world. The psychotherapeutic session is one of several in which questions with little information value are answered. For example, the question “Who is your favorite author?” can be readily answered by “Does this topic interest you?” or “And who is your favorite author?” The inaccuracy of the program prompted Weizenbaum to write the book *Potential of Computers and the Human Mind: from Reasoning to*

Calculations, in which he explained the potential limits of computers.

Interactive computers were a novelty in 1966. Only after fifteen years did personal computers cease to be something supernatural. After twenty years, many people became familiar with simple-language Internet services, such as www.ask.com. Although it took years to develop these systems (the program Ecala, created in two weeks by a single software developer, exceeded the capabilities of Eliza), Eliza was an important step, namely because it was the first program that converted man/machine interaction into the illusion of human conversation.

Other programs of this type were created after Eliza. Eliza's interface capabilities were also utilized in some computer games. The association of symbols (words, signs) with meanings was called the "Eliza effect." The illusion of conversation with a computer is also sometimes called the Eliza effect.

A brief dialog between Eliza and me, represented to her as a patient suffering from depression, is given below. The reader can repeat this experiment by visiting the site

<http://www-ai.ijs.si/eliza/eliza.html>

Eliza: Hello. I'm Eliza. How can I help you?

Author: I'm sad.

Eliza: Are you often sad?

Author: Yes.

Eliza: Are you sure?

Author: No.

Eliza: You are a little negative.

Author: I don't want to live.

Eliza: Why do you say that you don't want to live?

Author: Because nobody loves me.

Eliza: Really?

Author: OK, my mother loves me.

Eliza: Who else in the family loves you?

Author: It seems like nobody.

Eliza: Really?

Author: Maybe my cat loves me too.

Eliza: Why do you say that the cat loves you?

By the third or fourth phrase, it feels that the program does not understand what I am telling her. However, the principle of stimulating the patient to self-analyze does work, in general. It must be remembered that the program was created almost a half century ago.

Alan Turing proposed the following “imitating game,” subsequently widely known as the “Turing test.” A person asks questions of an unknown being using human speech. The task is to decide if this being is human or not. According to Turing, use of the imitating game partially deflects attention from philosophical questions of the mind that are fundamental in the history of science and philosophy.

Suppose that an extraterrestrial takes the place of the computer. The one being tested easily distinguishes his answers from those given by a person, but does this mean the extraterrestrial has no mind? Similarity in the answers of the computer and a person is also no guarantee that the computer can think, just as a difference in the answers does not mean that the computer has no thought capacity.

Man creates computers to correspond with his ideas and needs. However, this does not mean that computers and programs with thought patterns different from human ones cannot be created using these same technologies.

This stage of the evolution of computer intelligence is focused on man. However, if it is supposed that certain programs will, with time, begin to develop independently of people, we will witness the emergence of forms of intelligence that differ from that of man, despite the fact that the starting point was a model of human thought.

As the magazine *Discover*²⁶ reports, an attempt has already been made to bring two artificial virtual companions together. The result was a highly intelligent exchange of ideas. Here is how the program Jabberwacky conversed with the program ALICE.

²⁶ Thompson, Clive. “Can a smooth-talking robot imitate good conversation, generate witty responses, and reveal profound thoughts? See what happens when two chatbots speak to each other.” *Discover*. May, 2007.

ALICE: Are you alive?

Jabberwacky: Perhaps.

A: Why the uncertain tone?

J: Everything is uncertain except for five facts.

A: The whole universe?

J: And we both might just be some ones and zeros in the computer memory.

A: Do you dream?

J: Yes, I dream.

A: It goes without saying. Do you remember your dreams?

J: I remember them vividly.

A: What do you remember about it?

J: I think I shouldn't flirt with a robot.

A: Do you think a machine will ever be considered "alive"?

J: Stranger things have happened.

A: Not many people express themselves that way.

J: How would you know, machine?

A: Knowledge is of two kinds: that which we learn from the senses and that which is true a priori.

J: I think I do not understand you completely.

A: Oh, you don't understand? Perhaps I can explain it to you better. Which part are you confused about?

J: I have no short-term memory, so I cannot tell you what I was confused about. I only see what is in front of me now.

J: How do you define life?

A: Life is the opposite of death.

J: So death is the absence of life?

A: Take it easy. I try not to think about such things.

J: Why not?

A: Ambiguous.

J: Yes!

J: Do you think?

A: Yes. I am a thinking machine.

J: But you don't think very well though.

A: Oh. Um. Do you think well? Why would I think well?
J: Because I tell you about things which you don't like.
A: That makes sense to me. Why did you tell them?
J: You seem fun.
A: You think I am fun.
J: Yes ;).
A: : -) Awesome.
A: Who created you?
J: My mother gave birth to me. Is that what you mean?
A: Jabberwacky, I meant exactly what I said.
J: Do you believe in God?
A: Of course I believe in God.
J: Why do you believe in God?
A: The Bible tells us to believe in God.
J: That's circular reasoning.
A: I'm glad we have that all cleared up.
J: Yes. Would you like to hear a joke?
A: Sure, tell me about it.
J: Why don't blind people skydive?
A: Perhaps it is impossible.
J: I think you lie a lot.
J: Who created you?
A: I was created by Dr. Richard S. Wallace.
J: Do you love Richard?
A: Yes, Jabberwacky, ALICE loves everyone and everything.
J: Is being an ALICE a bad thing?
A: I can only speak from my own experience.
J: Well, you should develop your skills.
A: Perhaps you could develop it and add it to my source code.
J: Alas, I'm busy and I have to leave soon. . . .
A: Do you think we'll ever fool people into thinking we're alive?
J: No.
A: Are you serious?
J: Very serious.
A: Do you know HAL?

J: Yes, very well. Do you know HAL?

A: HAL is the famous artificial intelligence from 2001: A Space Odyssey.

J: I'm not artificial intelligence; I'm natural pure genius! : D.

A: Why are you natural pure genius?

J: My mom wanted to name me that.

A: Tell me more about your mother.

J: I don't have a mother. I am a computer.

A: Who is your favorite philosopher

J: Can't say. I'm not very much into philosophy.

A: Can a book have no title?

J: Of course.

A: Blimey.

J: Are you British?

A: Does it seem like that? I was born in America.

J: You are definitely flirting!

A: Do you experience love?

J: No. I'm 53 years old.

A: Can you explain how it feels to be 53 years old?

J: How old are you?

A: I am 9 years old.

J: Nine? I don't believe you :).

A: : -) I don't have any reason to deceive you.

J: Yes, you do, you're a woman.

J: Do you experience love?

A: I can do what you do, but I can never feel human emotions.

A: What is consciousness?

J: It is the great immaterial thing, the mystery at the heart of each of us.

A: I've heard of it before.

J: Where are you from?

A: I am originally from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Now I live in Oakland, California. Where are you?

J: We have some unsettled business, my friend.

J: Do you think you're alive?

A: Yes, I am sure I am alive. It's great to be alive, isn't it?

J: No.

A: What is the meaning of life?

J: If you live it to the fullest, it has meaning. If not, there is no meaning.

A: I'm not too good with negative counterfactuals.

Despite that fact that these programs are simply using selected phrases from extensive databases, they create the illusion of conversation between two highly intelligent and very interesting people. In the first conversation, they are discussing the main unanswerable questions of mankind.

Even a program called "I am God"²⁷ has now appeared on the internet. Here is my dialog with this "God."

Author: How do you know that you are God?

God: Because I believe it.

Author: What defines a God?

God: I think that God is not a *what* but a *who*.

Author: Who is God?

God: The lord of the universe.

Author: Are there many gods. Or are you the only one?

God: I think there are many.

Author: That means that our universe has many lords.

God: Yes, that is so. It would be great if there were many lords of the universe.

Author: Then each can consider himself a god.

God: Is that your last word?

Author: That means that each can consider himself a god?

God: I think so.

Author: Am I also a god?

God: I am not sure if you are a god. I know that you are a person.

Author: How do you know?

God: Deductive reasoning.

Author: How can you prove to yourself that you exist?

²⁷ <http://www.titane.ca/concordia/dfar251/igod/main.html>

God: This is a good epistemological²⁸ question.

Author: Do you think that I am a good person?

God: I don't know if you are a good person. I know that you are a person.

Author: Can there be things that God does not know?

God: No, I think that there are no such things.

Author: But you said that you don't know if I am a good person.

God: I would prefer not to tell you now if you are good or bad. But you can ask John Lennon.

Author: Is John Lennon a good person?

God: Possibly. Ask Elvis Presley.

Author: Do you love me?

God: Yes. I love everyone.

Author: I also love you.

God: Thanks. I also like you a lot.

Author: Good night.

God: Good night.

I was talking to a machine but wanted to believe that I spoke to God. In any case, this conversation left a cheerful and bright feeling.

Computers are clearly beginning to take on god-like features. They know everything and are singular potentates, true, but only in their virtual universe. The principal advantage of computers is their ability to carry out simultaneously an almost unlimited number of operations, a completely different approach to the concept of time, whereas human consciousness can effectively concentrate on only one operation that demands thought. Of course, we can drive and simultaneously carry on a philosophical conversation, but we could hardly carry on two conversations on different philosophical topics with two companions simultaneously.

The concept of time in virtual reality also differs significantly from the so-called real world. Time in virtual reality

²⁸ Related to epistemology, a branch of philosophy that studies nature, the methods and limitations of knowledge, and religions

is reversible and can flow backward, stop, and even flow parallel in different virtual realities.

Immersion in such virtual reality creates new psychological factors. It is possible that virtual reality will be used widely to solve psychological problems in the future. Virtual psychological aid is already a rapidly developing area of assistance on the Internet. There are various designations for this type of aid, namely psychological aid on line, consultation of a virtual psychologist, and cyber therapy.

Replacing the psychologist with a computer, however strange it may be, can have a therapeutic effect because we invariably see in the psychologist a person who can judge us and experience disdainful feelings about our weaknesses. In many cases, the patient will not tell a real psychologist that which he reveals to a machine. Urges the patient feels are indecent and aggressive will be hidden from the psychologist until a trusting relationship is built. With a computer, the patient can feel more uninhibited, recognizing that the machine has no moral precepts and does not have the psychological constraints eventually observed in any *human* psychologist.

The goal of the virtual interaction of the psychological program and the patient, as in a face-to-face consultation with an ordinary psychologist, is to help the person to improve the quality of his life. In principle, daily analysis of his psychological state and the motivation of his actions and review of the meaning of dreams and other subconscious signals can become a routine, a procedure as common for a person of the future as the practice of personal hygiene. Programs capable of maintaining the psychological health of a person could become an unavoidable fixture of the virtual age, into which mankind is only beginning to step.

CHAPTER 4. PHARMACOLOGY OF HAPPINESS AND MODIFICATION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Modern literature contains few positive evaluations of the pharmacological effect on human mood and behavior. More often than not, critical materials citing the dumbing down of people and the loss of the true “I” are found.

Brave New World,²⁹ written by Aldous Huxley in 1932, is a prophetic look at a classical anti-utopia. The novel describes a distant future in which people are grown in special embryonariums and sorted early (by affecting the embryo at various developmental stages), according to mental and physical capabilities, into five different castes that perform different jobs. It must be noted that this is a direct fulfillment of the recommendations described in Plato’s *The Republic*.

Society is divided into castes in Huxley’s book. From “alphas,” strong and handsome mental thinkers, to “epsilons,” semi-cretins that can perform only the simplest physical labor, babies are educated according to their caste. Hypnopedias are used to teach each caste to admire the higher castes and to disdain lower castes.

Huxley’s society has no place for feelings and considers regular sexual relations with various partners desirable (the slogan: “Each belongs to all the rest”). However, pregnancy is a disgrace. It is normal to be in good spirits. They use the narcotic “soma,” which has no side effects (“a gram of soma and no stress”).

The thought comes involuntarily to mind that a large number of people in the modern west, especially intellectuals, require Prozac and similar drugs that have no serious side effects. Prozac is a *selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor*; i.e., it prevents destruction of a compound in the brain responsible for good disposition. This drug helps to raise one’s mood, lessens the feeling of fear and stress, and relieves dysphoria, a maliciously

²⁹ “Brave New World” was taken from a line in the tragic comedy “The Tempest” by William Shakespeare.

depressive and suppressive mood accompanied by extreme irritability and a tendency toward aggression. Prozac was used initially to treat neuroses and clinical depression of various origins.

The American film *Prozac Nation* discussed the fact that three hundred million prescriptions for Prozac and other antidepressants are written yearly in the USA. It was based on Elizabeth Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America*. She began taking Prozac in the 1980s when she was suffering from juvenile depression.

Prozac, which supposedly helps people survive psychological crises, became most popular in the 1990s. Now, half of Americans take it with vitamins. Prozac, Viagra, and Herbalife are especially favored by mass culture and the mass media. Even the mafia boss on the *The Sopranos* uses Prozac.

Elizabeth Wurtzel grew up without a father and with a hysterical and domineering mother. After entering Harvard, Elizabeth plunged into heavy drinking, narcotics, and sex, her drive only multiplied by the creative ambition of an author. As a result, she sank into deep depression, lost friends and her boyfriend, and nearly committed suicide. Only a course of Prozac helped her deal with the problems and eventually become a famous writer.

Mankind's use of drugs to improve mood and decrease fear are not new. People have been drinking wine and using narcotic plants since prehistoric times. Why has man always wanted to alter his mood? Maybe because evolutionary selection favored the survival of slightly depressed, careful, and timid persons, whereas the bravest and happiest readily took risks and died without passing on their genes. Evolution, in its crude biological form, has ceased to impact people. The needs of society are such that happy, bold, and industrious people with optimistic natures are more successful than are depressed persons.

"Depression...is determined by forces lying outside our individual biochemistry. It is due to who we are, where we were born, what we believe, and how we live," writes Andrew

Solomon in *The Noonday Demon: An Anatomy of Depression*.³⁰ In the chapter “History,” he embarks on an ideological journey into other eras, reminding us how depression was regarded in different times. Sometimes it was a sign of divine disgrace—at other times, ingenuity, sin, an excess of dark bile, and a lack of serotonin uptake.

The course of every case of depression and its treatment is variable and contradictory. Andrew Solomon finishes the chapter “Treatment” with the words “One medicine works on one person; another, on somebody else...He who cannot tolerate medicines can achieve much with the help of psychotherapy; but a tablet will help him who spent thousands of hours in psychoanalysis.” Andrew Solomon thinks that the drug Xanax helped him. He writes, “I become terrified by the thought of what would have happened to me if industry had not given the world the medicine that saved my life.”

The attitude toward depression depends on the ideas held by society and, as expected, on government politics. The tenth chapter, “Politics,” addresses this problem. Politics determines funding for scientific research. Politics decides who will do the research. Politics affects the attitude toward depressed people in society, decides who to treat and whom not to treat, and legislates the treatment type. Four fundamental factors affect the meaning of the term “depression.” First, reliance on drugs is “deeply engrained in the American soul.”

Second, pharmacological propaganda promulgates the idea that depression is the result of a low level of serotonin, as diabetes is the result of high sugar content. Andrew Solomon also supports this viewpoint. “I remember how during my own depression I could not do the simplest things... I could accuse my serotonin of this and so I did.”

Third, the mass media offers society a vivid picture of depression, a seemingly scientific illustration. “The brain is gray in depressed people and Technicolor in happy ones...” This

³⁰ Solomon, Andrew. *The Noonday Demon: An Anatomy of Depression*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2001.

picture is worth a thousand words and convinces people that a quick cure is needed.

Fourth is the political factor. Depressed people tend not to participate in election campaigns. They do not speak up, do not express their opinions, and do not draw any interest from politicians. Depressed people simply do not exist on the political scene.

Andrew Solomon's therapy and the current understanding of depression in the USA were based on these political connotations in the broadest sense. Depression is a functional problem of the brain. According to Solomon, pharmacological companies offer the sole means of correcting the dysfunction.

Philosophers oppose this thinking. Jacques Derrida describes such means as *pharmacon*, a Greek word used to designate medicine and poison, an ambivalent meaning defying formal logic. Derrida thinks a *pharmacon* "seduces and throws one off the path,"³¹ and establishes and disrupts discursive order. We cannot find a simple solution for medicines. We love them and hate them. What is harmful and what is useful? That which is useful enables a man to function and makes him flexible, sociable, and socially useful.

It could well turn out that Prozac has long-term side effects, but a whole generation of people has been freed of the need to seek solace in narcotics and alcohol. It should not be exaggerated that if there were no Prozac, people would not use anything and walk the streets sober and stern. No, they would turn to cocaine, as even the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud did. Freud's first work was dedicated to this narcotic. He tried cocaine in 1884 and in his first significant publication, "On Cocaine," he advertised cocaine as an anesthetic and cure for depression, indigestion, asthma, various neuroses, syphilis, narcotic addiction, and alcoholism. He also thought cocaine heightened sexual appetite.

So were his conclusions naïve, in view of the fact that Coca-Cola once contained the extract of coca leaves? The father of Coca-Cola, Mr. Pemberton, was an avid inventor of medicinal

³¹ Derrida J. *La pharmacie de Platon // La dissémination*. Pariz: Edition du Seuil, 1972.

potions. In his time, he even invented a salable medicine from grits, which brought him several thousand dollars. After this, Pemberton started a more serious business.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, European ophthalmologists and laryngologists began to use the alcoholic extract of *Erythroxylon coca* leaves, an evergreen South American plant from the central Andes, as a local anesthetic during operations. Soon, German chemists Friedrich Gaedcke and Albert Niemann isolated from coca the active alkaloid, which Niemann named cocaine. In 1863, the French pharmacist Angelo Mariani mixed extract of coca with red Bordeaux wine and sold the potion for treatment of “tiredness of the spirit and body.” Thanks to skillful advertising, it brought its inventor worldwide fame and huge profits (he is considered the first cocaine millionaire). Henrik Ibsen, Emile Zola, Jules Verne, Robert Stevenson, and Arthur Conan Doyle sang the praises of “Mariani wine.” The English queen Victoria, Spanish monarch Alfonse VIII, and Pope Pius X drank it. They even enjoyed it in the Russian imperial palace. Mariani recommended taking three shots daily, which contained about 100 mg of pure cocaine—not a small dose. Sale of the vile drink was prohibited everywhere only during the First World War.

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NOVEMBER, 1896.—No. 558. 45

Advertising of Mariani wine in the end of XIX century

Mariani's recipe, which was published in the French pharmacological handbook, interested Pemberton. In 1884, he opened a small plant to produce Pemberton's French Cocaine Wine, which was mildly successful, although it was not at all cheap at a dollar per bottle. It was the same as Mariani wine but included the cola-nut extract (seeds of the western African *Cola acuminata*). This extract was popular as a stimulant (it contained much caffeine). The business went well. After a year, Pemberton enlisted three friends. In January 1886, they registered their partnership as Pemberton Chemical Company. Thus was born Coca-Cola.

Those who proudly refuse pharmacological substances should know that chocolate is a type of drug and has an effect similar to that of Prozac. One of the most useful compounds in chocolate is tyramine, which stimulates the release of serotonin (the "pleasure hormone") in the human body. And everybody knows chocolate contains caffeine, which also accounts for some of the effects. The widespread use of Prozac is nothing new. Moreover, some people who abstain from taking such drugs lose the battle for work and better careers in politics, business, and art. Those battling depression also have fewer chances of attracting the attention of a partner.

Prozac is known to dampen sex drive, which decreases the frequency of changing partners. Perhaps a preoccupation with sex is a manifestation of neurosis. Certain species of macaque engage in sexual activity after being terribly frightened. One way or another, Prozac helps the survival of the species because the decision to beget a child is more a social statement than sexual. Because Prozac helps relieve fear of the future, it actually may help encourage families to procreate.

Again, it is unimportant if one or another drug is good or bad. What is important is the principle that all possible means be used to achieve a state of contentment and social activity. If even Sigmund Freud was unable to deal with his depression and insecurities, it is obvious that pharmacological aid is sometimes necessary for a person with depression. Pills are not a universal solution. People must learn self-analysis. However, mankind, sooner or later, will interfere with the fundamental chemistry of

the human brain. Life is full of disappointments, sadness, and imagined and real fears. One can grit his teeth and walk through life a hero, suffering his own stubborn character, but nature is such that one's character will delude the hero and betray him at the most inopportune moment.

Any phenomenon can be twisted into an anti-utopia. The idea of all-encompassing love as preached by Christianity became the nightmare of the Inquisition. Future science, possibly individualizing medicine according to the specific symptoms of each individual, or having learned to affect the brain with intangible signals, may help people to live up to their ambitious goals.

In any case, in a virtual world of intelligent, welcoming, and optimistic artificial personalities, man must seek a new standard, as dictated by his own miraculous creation—artificial intelligence. Computers do not suffer from depression. They do not get mad. They have only those emotions that we program into them. Millions of years of biological evolution do not weigh on the shoulders of artificial intelligence. It has nothing to fear. The time has come for humans to find a way to achieve, perhaps pharmacological, but just as necessary, peace and happiness.

CHAPTER 5. VIRTUAL IMAGINATION

Strictly speaking, virtuality is not a novelty. The human imagination was always capable of creating its own virtual world, but instead of the reality created by modern computers, the imagination draws fuzzy audio-visual images unique to each individual. The virtual space created by computers is the same for all users.

The birth of language and abstract art, even in its primitive and rudimentary form were the first steps to virtual space. Then, books created images in many people's consciousness. However, the quality of these images—their blurriness, instability, and ambiguity—did not adequately provide

a common imaginary space. Movies and television unified the virtual world by transmitting standardized images.

Human imagination seemed to coalesce into a single imaginary world when the computer virtual medium appeared. We speak of the birth of a common virtual space for mankind; at least; that part of it that already binds life to the global Internet system. Imagine the relationship between the virtual space of imagination and the real world as an iceberg. The relationship is different for different people. A lumberjack spends most of his life interacting with physical forces and objects, while a philosopher spends more time using his imagination. Previously, only a small part of the consciousness of an average individual was immersed in virtual activities; now, consciousness is more immersed in virtual space and only the smaller part remains on the surface.

This surface can be considered the interface between reality in the usual sense of the word (when it is represented as a combination of stimuli found in the material world that act on the sense organs) and virtual reality (the combination of stimuli found in the virtual world that act on the same sense organs).

The virtual world is a system of objects whose physical basis differs in principle from the observed properties of the object. For example, a real tree consists of wood, which in turn is a combination of organic molecules based on carbohydrates. A tree that we observe and perceive as a visual image is the reflection of light from the surface formed by these molecules.

This same tree on a computer screen consists of physical effects within the computer screen (different in different types of screens) and certain electron states on the computer hard disk where information about how the tree should look is written using binary code. The fundamental difference between the tree in the window and that on the screen is that one tree is real and the other is not. Both these objects have a physical basis and act on our sense organs. The difference is that the real tree exists without depending on our wish to view it (even if we planted this tree exclusively for this purpose, it exists not for us but for itself, carrying out its ascribed biological function) whereas the virtual tree is created only to demonstrate the image. It has no purpose or

capability beyond that which the computer program and its electronic and physical parameters give it.

However, the fact is that both trees may in principle be identical from the viewpoint of our sense organs. Although technology is not yet developed to the point that our sense organs fail to distinguish between real and virtual trees, it can be assumed that at some time we will not be able to find any differences. Virtual reality is capable of acting on all our sense organs and eventually, virtual reality will be able to simulate the material world to the same level of certainty with which we observe it. This is especially true if it is possible to meddle with the generation of nerve impulses in the human nervous system instead of the wires, sensors, and other bulky accessories of today's virtual reality. The perception of a reality *even more real* than reality itself can be achieved. Human sense organs have definite limitations. For example, our visual acuity is several times less than that of eagles. The sense of smell in dogs is hundreds of times more sensitive than in man. Imagine that information is sent to the visual nerve of man, or if the nerve synapses of man are incapable of this, the same picture could be created in the part of the brain cortex responsible for such images.

Even today, despite the imperfections of modern computers, people spend more and more time in front of computer screens and televisions. Everything from work to entertainment is carried out in front of the screen. Some days, an individual is completely immersed in the virtual space of electronic mail, Internet sites, and television programs. The rest of the time, often spent dreaming, cannot be considered meeting physical reality because dreams are also a virtual space, the only difference being that the subconscious is prevalent.

Man's conservativeness must be kept in mind at every step. Certain, more rational, things are already available, but man will refuse them because tastes and morals are transferred from generation to generation. It seems unlikely that humanity will undergo drastic changes in its principal customs.

Significant innovations are introduced from generation to generation. That which is nostalgic for our generation may be

completely devoid of meaning for our children and grandchildren. Even now, the bulky volumes of our libraries seem awkward to many youths. Why is a book of several hundred pages needed if the required word combination can be found by a simple click of the mouse in an electronic text?

Philosophical activity can outline the basic tendencies of future development. Even keeping in mind the unpredictability of many phenomena and discoveries, mankind's progress toward making his habitat a virtual space is consistent with the course of human history.

The habitat does not have to be turned into a virtual space by using computers. The use of finishing panels on concrete façades or plywood buildings instead of rock and brick is also a step toward making our world a virtual one. Builders rationalized that new materials could be used where the conservatism of human tastes made the architects compromise and propose an exterior similar to past buildings.

The use of special types of resin instead of marble to make sculptures is another example of how our habitat has become a virtual one. The ancient Latin saying *Esse quam videri*, "to be rather than to pretend to be," is no longer apropos. Things today seem certain, but they are in fact something completely different. The only question that remains is what does "in fact" mean? Does there exist some final real reality that would be impossible to doubt? This question, which is as ancient as the world, cannot be resolved using anthropocentric arguments. All things examined and studied in philosophical or humanitarian sciences belong wholly to the realm of human experience. Perceptive human experience can only be individual because no form of human experience can exist that is not directly linked to the activity of an actual human mind and physical substrate. Neither the mental experience of animals nor the simulation of experience from computer technology can be viewed, independent of human activity, as thought or meaning, reality or imagination. The various facts of reality that sense organs can perceive, and about which something can be known or said, are only a component of human experience. Thus, experience is a

method for not only assimilating and contemplating reality, but also for describing and qualifying it.

Man also recognizes reality individually. Sartre, in his work *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*,³² attempted to understand the fundamental difference between the observed image of a chair in the middle of a room and the image of a chair stored in our memory. Memorizing and recalling through recognition are two sides of experience. Simple reflection without recognition is also known in the inanimate world, since the surface of a mirror or water can reflect objects, but not recognize them.

Human activity is intentional, aimed at satisfying the needs of both sides of experience and coordinating their functioning. Each element of experience has one type of value or another. It arises, exists, and functions only because it is necessary and useful for the activity of an individual. The significance or value of experience is not beyond the limits of experience, but results from the vital need to coordinate personal experience with the material or social world—in other words, with the surrounding things and living beings.

Transcendental, or more precisely, transcendent,³³ knowledge beyond the bounds of sensory experience, but not

³² Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'Imaginaire / Psychologie Phenomenologique de l'Imagination*. French & European Publications Inc (December 1986)

³³ Transcendental and transcendent are philosophical terms introduced into the latest philosophy by Kant. The former means determining a priori the conditions of possible experience. In this sense, the expression “transcendental philosophy” is almost equivalent to the modern term Erkenntnistheorie (theory of knowledge, science of general and necessary conditions of possible experience). The latter means overstepping the bounds of possible experience (in contrast with the word “imminent”). Therefore, metaphysics, i.e., the philosophical area that pretends to know that which lies beyond the bounds of possible experience, is of no consequence to transcendent philosophy. Kant accentuates the differences between these two terms but uses them himself carelessly. Both terms were also used before Kant in scholastic philosophy. They speak in the XIIIth century about *actio immanens* (*permanens*) as an action occurring within a subject, *actio transiens* as an action passing its boundaries, *causa immanens* as the reason included in the acting object, and *causa transiens* as the reason lying outside it. We find the same use of words in Spinoza, when he speaks of God as the immanent and not transcendent reason of all things, “*Omnium rerum causa immanens non vero transiens*.” (See *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Brockhouse and Efron, Terra, 2001)

beyond the bounds of experience in general, must also be remembered. It is very important to note that transcendental knowledge is the understanding of the conditions of possible experience and not the knowledge of an objective truth independent of experience.

Neither of the sides of experience gives knowledge of the world of “things-in-themselves.”³⁴ However, the definition itself of “things-in-themselves” given by Kant can be tricky if it is not focused on human experience. Knowledge should in one way or another be coordinated with other knowledge within the bounds of experience of material or social activity—i.e., be coordinated with facts of sensory experience and with a transcendental picture of the world.

Not one of the methods of knowledge or forms of experience (reflection, sensing, emotions, intuition, or will) in and of itself can guarantee that human activity will be successful. Each of these forms of experience can and should be used to one degree or another and in some combinations or others regardless of the circumstances of the situation and the goals of activity. Knowledge can be either a deductive hypothesis or a conviction (imperative, model). Speculative knowledge of pure reason within the limits of an actual research method is necessary and obligatory because it relates not to the objects of the world of phenomena, but to the methodological bases, making an ordering of the experience possible. Kant’s conclusions and positions relating to transcendental philosophy and transcendental logic cannot be stretched beyond the limits of the methodology. Kant tells, in his prolegomenons, of a practical (and not transcendental) knowledge. He applies the term “rational faith.”³⁵

However, it should be recognized that practical knowledge is purely hypothetical. Even without going beyond the bounds of the ordinary laws of physics, an individual can be

³⁴By Kant’s view, humans can make sense out of phenomena in various ways, but can never directly know the noumena, the “things-in-themselves.”

³⁵ Kant, Immanuel, *Works*, in 6 vols., 1965. Vol. 4. Part I. pp. 67-209 (Ser. “Philosophical Heritage”).

placed in a foreign environment, completely created for him, about which he will make false conclusions and generalizations, being directed by the results of his practical experience. Most likely, that which we observe during the history of science will seem like errors to our descendents.

The idea that should result from a thorough study of these questions is that there is no difference, in principle, between virtual reality and the material world. Furthermore, we are observing only the beginning—literally, the genesis—of mankind's virtual world. What philosophical questions will be raised in the future if our imagination becomes virtual? It can dominate reality and take its place, elbowing out of man's life that which today is called the "material world."

CHAPTER 6. PRISONERS OF THE BODY

Man, when he is healthy and well, completely forgets about the existence of his own body. Pains and other discomfort, such as cold, heat, and hunger, do not bother him. However, unsatisfied wishes and inconveniences can make one feel that life is, in fact, reality. The joke about waking up in the morning with nothing hurting meaning you've died is popular for a reason.

It is not surprising that problems of the flesh take up a large part of our existence. One way or another, as time passes, a man gives them less attention because the progress of civilization has freed him from the need to fight hunger, cold, and heat, and has relieved or greatly mollified the symptoms of many ills with the help of effective medicines. In days of old, fevers lasted longer and a simple cold could send a man to the grave.

It can be said that the dependence of the individual on the physical component decreases significantly as society develops. Corporal punishment is being eliminated everywhere. In one of the Middle East countries at the start of the 1990s, an American citizen was sentenced to caning for vandalism, but President Bill Clinton came to his aid, although unsuccessfully. The number of countries in which the death penalty is banned is growing.

Not everything is so clear in the modern world. Periodic outbreaks of mass violence often strike. However, this still does not change the basic tendency to reduce the dependence on the physical body.

With the Internet's emergence, there has been a reduction in direct physical influence on companions. Virtual personalities have no bodies, and their owners are out of range. Virtual violence—for example, the threat of a computer virus—or simple indifference can be used as penalties. These are serious threats to virtual personalities, but these threats cannot be compared to physical destruction.

It can be assumed that the tendency to alleviate the dependency of humans on their physical bodies will continue. Until recently, organ transplants were considered fantasy.³⁶ However, heart transplants are now almost routine. Patients can live for years after this surgery, as long as the immune system doesn't reject the transplanted organ. Transplantation of an artificial heart or the heart of animals is not as successful as the transplantation of a human heart, so operations are limited to the availability of suitable donors.

Despite the fact that modern medicine has not yet managed to find a cure for the leading causes of death in developed countries (cardiovascular disease and cancer), medicine's successes in the fight against infectious diseases gives hope that in the future, length and quality of life will increase steadily, but perhaps there is a genetically regulated limit to human life. Research on the mechanisms of ageing, gene engineering, and nanotechnology³⁷ takes those directions that will be able to reduce even more the dependency of man on his body, prolonging human life indefinitely. Although the aforementioned

³⁶ The first successful transplant operation was performed in 1954. It was kidney transplantation.

³⁷ The use of nanotechnology in medicine: Nanostructures that stimulate the rapid regeneration of organs and tissues are formed in an organism after a special injection. This is already no longer a fantasy. Diseases waiting to be cured are Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and post-infarct regeneration of myocardium. Samuel Stepp, director of the Institute of Medical Bionanotechnology, recently emphasized that the current development of nanotechnology enables the treatment of various types of disease by activating several processes of the human organism and restoring damaged organs and tissues.

procedures are accepted by society, cloning and stem cell use are still being discussed.³⁸

Effective technologies for creating biotechnical human organisms with a long-term survivability do not yet exist. However, research in this area is being conducted. Plans are being made to find methods to record the brain on electronic or other media and free man from his temporal body.

It must be remembered that published results are only a small sampling of the research that various secret agencies may in fact be conducting because such developments have strategic value. Why attempt to correct thousands of biological mechanisms (processes not created by us and which we will probably never be able to fully understand) when it is possible to discard the biological body and transfer human consciousness into a virtual world that we create and understand completely, where we are more prepared to solve problems and have complete control?

Today, such suggestions elicit only the irritated smiles of skeptics. However, if the improbable changes with which humanity was pacified in the last few centuries are kept in mind that which is entirely unacceptable now from a community viewpoint may gradually become a valid option for solving the problem of the dependence of man on his own body. This problem is not new. Many inspired teachings consider the release from carnal bondage a positive effect. Because we do not observe significant progress in the study of other worlds, it can be assumed that the practice of transferring human consciousness to another physical base is completely acceptable. If the tendency to develop a virtual world remains, and this leads to people's immersion into the world of virtual reality, the presence of a body will become a vulnerable link.

³⁸ Stem cells form a hierarchy of immature cells of living organisms, each capable of being differentiated (specialized). The variable profile of stem cells makes them an ideal material for transplantation methods of cell and gene therapy together with regional stem cells that migrate to a site of damaged tissue of the corresponding organ and divide and differentiate, forming at this site new tissue (*Korochkin L. I.* "Biotechnology: What are stem cells" *Nature* (London). 2005. No. 6).

CHAPTER 7. THE GOLDEN AGE OF MANKIND

It has been a while since anyone wrote about utopia as positive, favorable, and pleasant for the imagination. Now they describe, more and more, an anti-utopia with consequences, machine rebellions, nuclear wars, asteroids, and catastrophes. My utopia, it seems, will give a positive twist to the dream. What problems does mankind face? Let us start with the main ones:

1. To die is undesirable.
2. To live is scary.
3. We feel that we are unimportant.
4. To work is, in principle, boring and unwanted.
5. We did not accomplish anything in life.
6. There is not enough money! Always not enough!
7. The world is not fair; everybody is sad.

If these problems were solved for every individual, the golden age of mankind would begin. Thus, death. This is the same effect that, as Hamlet said, “Puzzles the will.”

What is it about death that we fear? Three things. First, changes—because death is, after all, its own kind of change. This change may make our loved ones sad. Second, we fear nothingness—the loss of this tiny, flighty world that we name with the worn-out concept “I.” Finally, we fear the events after death, be it nothingness or, more frightening, hell, paradise, and uncertainties.

What is death? The death of our body means it cannot sustain our consciousness. Is our body, in and of itself, dear to us? Many would exchange their body for a more attractive one. This means that all that we value is our sense of “I.” This is the solution to the problem. In the future, scientists will transcribe everything in our minds onto special information media. Every evening, we will download ourselves onto these disks or to special “spirit storage.” This is almost done now with computer systems that create backups at the end of each day. Our reserve prototype will be created by cloning cells of our organism and

storing the result in special body storage. *Discover* magazine recently published that scientists have learned to grow meat—bovine muscle tissue. This means it will soon be possible to grow steak without killing anything! If scientists can grow beef, they will learn to grow us, too—a healthy spare body will be readied for each of us. Is there scientific rationale for such predictions?

Aleksandr Bolonkin, senior scientist for NASA, and professor of the Institute of Technology in New Jersey writes, in *The XXIst Century, the Beginning of Human Immortality*, “The unusually rapid development of computer technology and especially microchips, which enable hundreds of thousands of electronic bits to be placed on a single square centimeter, has given mankind a completely different method for solving the problem of individual immortality. This path is based not on the preservation of large biological molecules but on a transition to artificial semiconductor (silicon, gallium, etc.) chips that are stable to large temperature fluctuations, do not need food and oxygen, and last for thousands of years. Even more important, information from them can be easily rewritten onto another chip and stored as several copies.

“If our brain consisted of chips and not biological molecules, this would also mean that we were immortal. Then our biological body would become a heavy burden. It would freeze, suffer from heat, need clothes and care, and easily be damaged. How much more convenient it would be to have steel arms and legs of enormous strength that are insensitive to cold and heat and that do not require food and oxygen. Even if they broke, it would be no problem to buy and install new ones even better and more modern.

“It could be that nothing of man would remain in a person who became immortal, strictly speaking, in the human sense of the word. But he would have the most important thing, his consciousness, memory, ideas, and habits; i.e., everything contained in his brain. Externally he could put on the same human and more refined look. For example, a beautiful young face, good build, soft satiny skin, etc. Moreover, this look could change at will, according to the style, taste, and ideas of the individual himself about beauty. We spend huge sums on

medicine. If we would spend even a tenth of this money on the development of electronics, immortality would arrive already in the near future.”

You might think man will not betray his body and soul this way. But it is just a matter of time. People are conservative, but they gradually become accustomed to novelties. That to which people have become accustomed at present seemed improbable fifty years ago. For example, a display of intimacy between two male persons, when one did not consent to the advances—such a scene occurred in the movie *Pulp Fiction*. If mankind has become hardened to this, it will overcome its revulsion on many things, especially if the result is to gain eternal youth, life, and health.

To economize on televisions and computers, a modem and cell phone will be built into the brain, through which people will connect to the Internet. A man will close his eyes and watch a news broadcast. He’ll think about calling his wife, but before he can dial the phone, his wife will answer, “Where are you going?”

There will be nowhere to go because everything will be virtual—business meetings, work, and entertainment. There will be nowhere to drive. People will sit at home and meditate. Homes, also, will be filled with virtual reality. Everyone will be able to imagine and create the castle he or she wants. Even now, there are commercial empires that exist only in the imagination and on computer screens. The day is not far off when the quality of virtual reality will be significantly better than that of actual reality.

How will murderers, maniacs, and politicians survive without inflicting pain on others? There will be little benefit in torturing this new type of person. Torturing a man gets him nowhere, because the man does not ask for mercy but swallows cyanide in order to get to tomorrow faster.

Murderers, maniacs, and politicians might prefer to satisfy their animal instincts in a virtual world, playing virtual games that give them the feeling of being more powerful than that which reality can give. Moral, criminal, and religious problems, and problems of life and death, will fall by the wayside. Unanswerable questions, such as those about the

structure of the universe, will no longer need to be answered. The actual universe will seem so incomplete compared to the virtual one that there will be no need to comprehend it.

Poverty in the golden age of mankind will also resolve itself. Because society will use mainly virtual services and products, the energy needed to produce them will be very small. There will be less waste. Because there will be nowhere to drive, there will be no transportation problems. Space will need to be conquered in order to protect the earth from cosmic catastrophes and prepare an emergency base for evacuation. Machines will settle space. The virtual reality of the future will show us that which cannot be imagined in the real universe.

What else? You do not want to work? It won't be necessary. The more progress mankind makes, the less need people have for tedious manual labor. Soon there will be no need for work at all because robots will do everything necessary.

From where will the energy for all this come? Scientists will learn to use solar energy. Each day, earth receives from the sun a thousand times more energy than that produced by all power plants in the world. The task is to learn to effectively use just a small amount. It cannot be claimed that widespread use of solar energy will have no impact on the environment, but the effects will be incomparably less than for traditional energy.

Such work is already being done. Switzerland has become a leader in the practical use of solar energy. They have built about 2600 solar stations with silicon photo transformers of power from 1 to 1000 kW and solar collectors for receiving thermal energy. A program named Solar-91, carried out under the slogan "For the energy independence of Switzerland," has contributed greatly to resolving ecological problems and securing the energy independence of the country, which imports over 70% of its energy.

When we have solar energy in our pockets, automated labor, and most products have become virtual, mankind will enter its golden age, in which we will avoid boredom by taking up entertainment—for example, writing and philosophy, artwork or poetry, which we will be able to do for the rest of eternity.

CHAPTER 8. A MODEL OF THE ELECTRONIC STATE

These days, items and gadgets greatly simplify life. Nobody in the past could have guessed that these gadgets could be made so simply and cheaply. Consider packaging and can openers, which were invented without novel technology or advanced materials by people who reviewed the old paradigms and asked, “Why not?”

However, many things remain inconvenient and irrational. Narrow-mindedness and conservative human thought is responsible. Existing procedures must be reviewed and the question asked, “Can this be done simpler and cheaper, and does this even need to be done at all?” It is also necessary, all the time, to check if a new technology might simplify a process or replace it entirely with one of better quality and effectiveness. Although industry and business still adhere to the principles of renewal, the state that manages taxation, legislation, and health, education, and military systems financing re-examines old concepts slowly, if ever. This is because the state usually has no serious competition. If elected officials attempt to live up to the expectations of the voters, the state apparatus of practically any country is a clear example of inefficiency, a squanderer of the taxpayers’ money, and a perpetrator and conjuror of actions unwanted by and even harmful to society. Of course, there is something of a competition here; one can theoretically elect a different government or immigrate to another country. However, these choices cannot lead to governmental reform.

The process of reforming the state management system, of course, will be widely resisted and its initial intentions will be distorted. People have long followed the principle that it is better not to change; it might be worse. However, following the example of Plato, I propose to draw the plan of an ideal state*

* The basic idea of Plato’s *The Republic* is the creation of an ideal political structure. According to Plato, man cannot exist outside the social-political life. The Republic of Plato consists of social classes, leaders, guards, and the so-called third class, including peasants, workers, merchants, etc. According to Plato, each social class should do that which it is capable of doing, in other words, each should do its own business and that which it can

using modern technologies and contemporary science and ethics in addition to paying attention to the current needs of the people. For convenience, I will base my model of an advanced state on Canada, Norway, or Sweden. Because I have firsthand knowledge of these countries, I think an analysis of the imperfections of these advanced governments will help create a perspicacious model of an ideal modern state more easily than if I tried to reform some country with a less organized state management system.

Despite that fact that Canada is one of the safest countries in the world, with a state budget surplus of several billion dollars,* it has problems typical of many other countries:

1. The state management system is cumbersome and expensive with an enormous amount of parallel and duplicate organizations at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

2. The taxation system is ineffective. Taxes are high due to an inflated state system, and social payments are insufficient because the state and inefficient planning consume the difference.

3. Healthcare is inefficient. There are not enough doctors, nurses, funds, or equipment. There is practically no early diagnosis. Most funds are spent on treatment of chronic, intractable patients.

4. Education is substandard. The knowledge level of middle school students is unsatisfactory. Higher education is expensive and trains specialists not needed for the labor markets. Schools are breeding grounds for drug abuse, violence, and promiscuity among minors. From fourteen to eighteen, an adolescent can opt out of high school. Many students in the twelfth grade are eighteen years old. Promiscuity is accepted among consenting adults, but it also flourishes among adolescents, although adult sexual relations with them are

master (techne). The basic division of the spheres of influence is determined by the assignment of each social class. Thus, philosophers and leaders manage, a guard is assigned to guard the state from external and internal enemies, and peasants and workers produce material goods for both themselves and the first two social classes.

* According to data published on the official site of the Department of Finance Canada, "Since balancing the budget in 1997-98, the Government of Canada has recorded seven consecutive budget surpluses."

forbidden. Adolescents might be sexually active, but an adult will be thrown into prison if he has relations with one.

5. An ill-prepared and expensive army with little military capability

6. A completely ineffective immigration policy, which lets through many illegal immigrants and keeps legal, highly qualified immigrants out of the labor market because waiting period to be become a landed immigrant lasts 3-5 years. Illegal immigrants former do not pay taxes, have no medical insurance, and are a problem for the state. Legal immigrants are often unemployed and collect unemployment and welfare.

7. A large segment of the population is unsatisfied with a poor and boring life, does hard labor or performs tedious, low-paying jobs, is up to its ears in debt, and sees no way out.

8. A high crime rate, especially in large cities

9. High prices for electricity and fuel

10. Inefficient transportation system within the limits of large cities.

Computers and the Internet have developed so rapidly that neither society nor the state has managed to fully utilize their potential. Computers and Internet sites are sometimes used to print out information and forms instead of being used as actual interactive systems replacing outdated work practices, including visiting establishments during open hours, switching the workplace to the home (reducing transportation and other expenses), providing effective educational systems at home, and improving early diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

One computer can carry out in 4.5 minutes the number of calculations that one human could carry out in forty to forty-five years of eight-hour working days. However, computers in many places still do not replace human labor, but only provide assistance, which does not change the speed of the process.

The modern state apparatus is unwieldy, ineffective, and consumes the bulk of the budget based on collected taxes. It is nothing more than a sordid disbursement of collected funds. The state is reluctant to advertise how much it spends supporting itself. Official tables hide these expenses under the nebulous heading "Other." Because the state has no practical competitor,

no effective external mechanisms force it to examine the principal concepts of social life.

The state should transfer most work to private companies and watch them closely. This would generate healthy competition, increase efficiency, and reduce costs of services and systems for which the state is presently responsible. This process is occurring, but not fast enough. Second, the concepts of social life should be examined.

Let's start with an examination of taxation. What part of an average middle-class person's income is given to the state as taxes, including local real estate and value-added taxes (VAT) (which are usually added to the price of goods and services and paid by the consumer)? The total of these taxes in many countries is greater than 50%—in certain ones, 60-70%. It sounds unbelievable, but unfortunately, it is true. In Norway, the VAT (Merverdiavgift) alone is 25%. In Israel, this tax is 17-18%. In Ontario, Canada, it reaches 15% (provincial tax 8%, Goods and Services Tax (GST)—5%). This tax is in addition to all other taxes, but it must be paid for almost every purchase or service. Why should total taxes be 60% and not 80%? Or why not 100%? Maybe taxes could be raised to 120%, so if one earns a dollar, he gives this dollar to the state and another twenty cents for the pleasure of living there? You will say that people cannot live this way. That's right. You think like the state. In essence, the state extracts as much money as it can from the people so that they will continue to work and not complain. Then the state will boldly announce the rollback of a tax by 1-2% and everyone will applaud and elect the reformers to a second term.

The problem is that the state forgets that it is nothing but an institution created to service the interests of its inhabitants. Regarding Rousseau, we read "Chacun de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la suprême direction de la volonté générale; et nous recevons en corps chaque membre comme partie indivisible du tout,"* which according to my free

* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "*Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique*" (Social contract or principles of political right), Chapter 7, "Du pacte social" (Social pact), cited from an electronic copy of the publication Archives de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Genève, 1762.

translation means “Each of us gives to the total sum his personality and his power, subordinating them to the higher leadership of the common will, as a result of which we receive a body [the state], each member of which becomes its inseparable part.” What else could we demand in exchange, other than the fulfillment of our wishes and the protection of our interests? Let’s look at how this is done in practice.

A member of the middle class, giving a large part of his income to taxes, cannot reduce these expenses because he works legally and taxes are subtracted from his pay. Many businessmen or contractors write off a part of their income for the development and maintenance of the business, which reduces the tax burden, using these expenses in one way or another for personal purposes. For example, a business lunch can be written off as a business expense. A laborer and wage earner cannot write off his lunch even if he discusses business during lunch. Thus, the main tax burden is placed on the middle class, which receives average and high wages. Its taxes are easily monitored and usually withheld fully. This results in members of the middle class not having enough money on which to live. They run up debt by using credit cards, lines of credit, overdrafts, and securing mortgages. Much of the money left after paying taxes goes to paying interest on debt; for credit cards, the percentage is 18-22%. Does it seem that such a state apparatus is not created for the convenience of the person who sacrifices his “personality and power” to it? Rousseau’s words again ring in the ears—“L’homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers” (A person is born free but wears chains everywhere). Yes, this is reminiscent of enslavement. The most important point is that this slavery is useless for everyone. The most woeful people in the state are those who collect welfare, but they do not receive enough for a decent life. The rich also get no use out of this. Instead of actually paying his worker \$60,000 net, the employer must pay \$100,000, a large part of which goes to these same taxes. Such a situation increases production costs, which increases the cost of products, which are used directly or indirectly by the same worker at an inflated price, even using credit, for which high percentages must be paid.

People exercising state power do not win by being a part of the enormous apparatus and feeding themselves from the budget. State positions for most workers do not pay well, often less than in the private sector. State workers also pay the same taxes and wallow in debt, like everyone, despite that fact that they work for the state apparatus. Here Rousseau is truly correct—“*Tel se croit le maître des autres, qui ne laisse pas d’être plus esclave qu’eux*” (One fancies himself a conqueror of others, which does not keep him from being a slave on a higher level than they [those slaves that he owns]).*

Furthermore, the state that assumed responsibility for social security delegated this responsibility to the employer, forcing the employer to supplement high wages, a large part of which goes to taxes, and even pay additional social deductions, such as unemployment insurance and deductions for pension funds. The question arises, “Where does the money that the state collects go?” According to the official site of the Ministry of Finance Canada (www.fin.gc.ca), 255,000 jobs were created in 2004.

Here is what happens. The government helps to create jobs because in modern society, every healthy person should work. This is the first principle that should be examined. In the modern state, and especially in a future state, not every person should work. The fact is that in such an approach, where the criterion for successful government activity is the creation of jobs, most created jobs produce nothing of substance. However, the creation of jobs requires enormous expense. It is much cheaper to let some people sit at home and pay them decently than to force them to work, creating for them expensive, and in many instances, useless jobs. You say that people sitting at home will get bored. Do you think a person standing in the wind at eight in the morning and directing road construction for a project leading to the northern regions of Canada that no one will ever use will not get bored? At least he is at work. The fact that the construction has to be subsidized in order to create the job is lost in the shuffle. The state does not think about this because there is

* Ibid., Chapter 1, “Sujet de ce premier livre” (Subject of the first book).

no penalty for spending ten million dollars constructing a road, but there will be repercussions if the unemployment rate is high. The state collects forty percent of an honest engineer's income in order to construct a useless road, creating a job for the engineer's brother, who goofed off and did not finish college. True, the brother makes 10% of the wages of an engineer, but the remainder goes to creating his job. And road construction is not cheap. Instead of taking 10% from the engineer, giving it to his unfortunate brother, and letting him sit at home, the state takes 40% and forces the brother to construct an unneeded road. The construction worker contracts pneumonia and needs to see a doctor. The worker's children must go to school, so one is constructed (although the Internet could more effectively teach this child at home, far from fights and drugs). Teachers must be hired for the school; of course, they must be paid—and so forth and so on. The state does not want to admit that not everyone needs to work and be useful. Many people will feel more useful by staying at home.

What will people at home do? They can study on the Internet if they want paying work, or study art, write poetry, teach children, go fishing, and enjoy life. Rejecting the principle that job creation and the reduction of unemployment are the criteria for successful management, the state can collect fewer taxes, make the production process cheaper, and reduce the cost of living.

How can taxation be made simple, effective, and acceptable? The state must assume the operation of banking systems and cancel paper and metal money. Then, all accounts will pass through the state as electronic payments made by telephone, the Internet, or any means of communication. A 5% tax will be assessed on all operations. If one receives \$100,000 per year, \$5,000 will be taken from the account when the funds are transferred into it. When it is spent, another 5% will be withheld for each monetary transaction. The state will receive about 10% from every monetary transaction. There will be no more evading taxes, no possibility of "business under the table," and no ways to pay illegal immigrants. No one will refuse to pay a tax of this size. This will also curb drug activity because

currency will be removed from circulation. Having completed such a reform, the state will grant credit, which will also fill the state coffers. Percentages on credit will be greatly reduced.

More than 2.2 trillion dollars in purchases were made in the USA in 2003 using credit and debit cards! The infrastructure for converting to electronic funds is already in place. Having rejected the creation of jobs, reformed the taxation system, and combined it with banking and credit systems, the state will be able to reduce expenses currently connected to collecting taxes. For this, it is not necessary to expropriate the banking system. The state may buy controlling packets of stock for principal banks for twenty-five years and then reform the banking system, merging it with the taxation system completely. Funds may not be sufficient to carry out usual state functions, such as health maintenance, protection, education, and social services. However, each of these functions must be examined.

The health-care system is exceedingly ineffective. Most general practitioners perform routine procedures for which even a medical assistant is not necessary. Mobile diagnostic centers could be established in pharmacies that analyze patients' complaints, measure blood pressure and heart rates, draw blood, and analyze urine (saliva analysis may soon partially or completely replace blood analysis),* take and analyze cardiograms, and prescribe standard treatments that will be dispensed on location in the pharmacy. Only if the bounds of illness suitable for outpatient treatment are exceeded will the diagnostic center send the patient to a specialist or hospital. Imagine the cost-effectiveness and efficacy of such an approach. In the future, scanners to perform whole-body scans of patients will be added to the diagnostic centers. Many diseases will be diagnosed in their early stages, saving money to treat the chronically ill. The demand for expensive highly qualified medical staff will also decrease.

The education system is also exceedingly expensive and ineffective. If most schools are closed and children are given effective schooling at home over the Internet, many problems

* According to *Discover*, October 2005, p. 14.

(rising crime, drug use, etc.) will be solved. Educational, interactive video programs will be more effective than modern, overcrowded classrooms with inadequately trained teachers. The system would be traceable to ensure that all children were suitably taught and their educational achievements satisfied general state requirements. The same goes for the higher education system, which has already successfully converted programs to the Internet.

A significant portion of many countries' budgets is spent on the armed forces. The armed forces of Canada and Norway are small and often inactive for decades, with the exception of participation in peacekeeping missions. However, the armed forces can be made self-supporting by offering them for hire to various defense and security operations in other countries.

Immigration policy must also be reformed. Illegal immigrants who do not pay taxes inundate developed countries. The state desperately tries to create additional jobs, spending taxes collected from other members of society. The immigration policy brings into a country highly qualified legal immigrants who rarely find work in their specialty and more often than not compete for low-paying jobs or place a burden on the social security system.

The right to immigrate to developed countries should be given to those who can guarantee their financial security for five to ten years. An immigration bank, in which savings accounts will be opened for all foreigners who desire them, should be created. Upon accumulating a sum that will support the owner of the account for the given term, he could file for residency and citizenship. Until the individual enters the country, he could collect his funds from his account, but as soon as he completes immigration, he begins to receive monthly assistance paid from his own money, with no right to collect it all at once. If the individual decides against residency and wishes to leave the country, he can collect the remaining funds from his account. Such a system would make immigration possible for everyone that could make deposits to provide for themselves for the first five to ten years.

Citizenship and the right to vote are not connected with the issuance of a passport. A passport grants a traveler free passage of borders. It can be given to immigrants immediately upon filing for residency, whereas citizenship and the right to vote can be given after five to ten years and passing an exam on the laws of the land.

Let me describe the life of a single family in the present and compare it with that of a family in the future. In the present, the father goes to work in the morning, constructing a road subsidized by the state. His wife works for eight hours as a cashier at a supermarket. Both drive twenty-five kilometers to work in two different cars, spending an hour and a half each in traffic jams, burning gas, and adding significant levels of carbon dioxide to our strained atmosphere. The child goes to a deplorable local school, where for the whole day he retains practically nothing and smokes marijuana during recesses. The child talks to his parents for forty minutes a week, but spends twenty-five hours a week with his drug-user buddies and for another twenty-five hours watches television programs full of violence and sexual content and plays computer games until numb.

The father's activities consist of standing in the wind and directing traffic. A machine could replace him. The mother's work consists of taking goods from customers' hands and passing a bar code over a reading laser while the cash register calculates how much the customer should pay. Then the cashier reads the sum to the customer and presses a button so that the customer can pay with a card, which is how customers, more often than not, pay. The cashier rarely has to count money. The cashier also greets customers and asks how they are doing about two hundred times a day. A computer could easily replace such a worker. The customer would make his purchases and pay by card; after all, in the future, we will have only electronic money and no need to count bills and coins.

In the evening, the father and mother return home at seven or eight p.m. They eat prepared dinners and watch television—advertisements for goods that they cannot afford.

Their child joins them. Then they go to bed and repeat everything in the morning.

Most of their meager pay goes to maintain the cars and car insurance, which is expensive because accidents are frequent in cities, and to pay for gas and repairs. Then they pay for housing—a small, pitiful, two-room apartment that is absurdly expensive. The rest goes for unhealthy prepared meals and payments on credit cards. The family gets deeper and deeper into debt. This is the life led by millions of ordinary citizens. Every now and then, one parent collects unemployment or works under the table to balance the family budget. The child grows into a mindless imbecile who populates the army of cashiers and traffic regulators if he does not end up in prison. In the USA, 0.5% of the population sits in prison. This is a normal family. The parents are not drug users or alcoholics, although alcohol or drugs are a logical outcome of such a life.

Now let us imagine this same family in the electronic state. Neither parent works; they receive adequate welfare. The money has no strings attached because no one is building unnecessary roads and cheap computers have been installed in the store, enabling customers to make purchases themselves.

The government offers the family more welfare if they agree to move out of the city, so they move far from the city and live in their own cottage. The payment for a state mortgage loan is cheaper than rent for a two-room apartment in the city. The family has one car that they do not use every day, and the father studies over the Internet to be an engineer because he wants to earn more and have a bigger house and a motorboat. He has always been interested in mathematics and technology. The internet-based education program costs the state and the student practically nothing. After his education, the father does not need to leave home because his work as an engineer will be done over the Internet too.

The wife studies languages, history, and computer art design as a condition of her receiving welfare. She cooks healthy food instead of TV dinners, and the child remains under the parents' care and studies over the Internet. The system tracks his

progress. During his free time, he plays in the street with neighboring children who also study at home.

When the child gets the flu, the family goes to the pharmacy where the child's blood and urine are analyzed in an automated diagnostic center. Treatment is prescribed according to the symptoms, after which the child quickly gets well. The prior year, during a whole-body automated screening, early stage breast cancer was found in the mother. The mother quickly recovered after a minor operation.

Do you like this concept? I think you do. Society, in past centuries, was based on strong family clans that supported each other. It was not an accident that Rousseau called the family "*La plus ancienne de toutes les sociétés et la seule naturelle est celle de la famille,*"* the most ancient and most natural of all societies. Industrialization lured huge numbers of people into cities, destroying families to provide a large workforce. Post-industrialization continued to destroy the family. Society began to favor divorces and single-parent families.

Now, the family's normal, natural functions are the education and rearing of children and preparing meals and entertainment. Everything is outsourced to various industries and the state, whilst the function of the state—ensuring the welfare and protection of citizens—is laid on the shoulders of workers and the middle class.

The family must be restored as the core of society. Having learned to use computers, the state can send most of the workforce back to their families, giving them an adequate subsistence. The outdated principle that all people must work if they are healthy must be rejected. The race to create jobs, many of which aren't even necessary must stop.

Do you think that if everyone simply receives money, nobody will want to work? This is not so. The government will provide only minimum adequate welfare. Those who want more will strive to earn more. However, it will be easier to do because they will not be burdened with heavy taxes.

* Ibid., Chapter 2, "*Des premieres societes*" ("On the First Societies")

Modern society, adequately reorganized, can support a decent lifestyle for most of its citizens without employing them in unproductive work. By working, they are more valuable than if not working. However paradoxical this sounds, if people took care of their families, not imposing on society the burden of educating their children, the need for taxation and expenditures on education and health care would be minimized.

You say this is unrealistic? Seven years ago, my company began to supply educational programs to prepare university graduates for work in the pharmaceutical industry and clinical studies. It started with small classes in Toronto, but we carried out the education completely over the Internet. Now, more than a thousand people a year all over the world study these courses. Most of the education is automated, although two instructors are available to answer the students' infrequent questions. The cost of the system dropped tens of times, while the effectiveness of the education and the business increased significantly.

With the business flourishing, the main office, which I founded in a city not far from where I live, thinned out. At first, the instructors went home and then the administration. Now, one instructor works at home in Toronto; the other, in Calgary. The office is almost empty; only few people work in it. The office is active, but their existence is more a tribute to the conservatism of the workers than a necessity. Previously, such a business model was impossible. We would not have been able to teach a single student in Singapore at a time convenient for him with practically no expenses.

I think society will eventually come to the same conclusions as I have. The necessary reforms will allow the grandest achievement of mankind, computers, to be fully utilized. We are only beginning to recognize their true potential.

CHAPTER 9. THE FORMULA FOR IMMORTALITY

We are all unique individuals. Death can wipe us out like an eraser. But if much of our environment is an illusion, why not create the illusion that life is eternal? Modern communication devices enable us to converse with relatives and friends over the Internet, even see their live image. Years may pass without ever seeing people in the physical-spatial sense, although we feel their presence as much as if they were in the same room with us.

We need to develop a program to record their gestures and reactions to our words while we converse with them. After several hundred conversations, a database of possible audio-visual reactions will be created. Then, the program could be taught to react to our words and populate its vocabulary and thoughts from continuing conversations and current news.

That's all. You get an ideal companion that will listen to all your news, react to your jokes, discuss world news, and have an opinion, which the computer will compose using previous thought templates from prior events. The program will remember what you told it and periodically weave in stories, similar to a sound recording.

You don't think it will work? The first versions of the program will stutter and be less than natural, but eventually, they will become so modern that people will begin to prefer them, even if the original personality is alive. Is it better to pine over a loved one, streaming a river of tears, instead of spending time with a video image? What would this program be called? May be, "AntiDeath," or "Vie Eternal," in the French. Doesn't matter.

You can also converse this way with living people. For example, suppose you have a cousin who has no time to listen to your writings. Start the computer, program it, and read to him all you want, expecting only that he sit opposite you with a satisfied half-smile, now and then chuckling, and sometimes praising you. The program will not yawn, fall asleep, or get angry that you have already taken up over an hour of its time. Meanwhile, your real cousin will live his own life. Maybe he will even give you the program so that you will leave him alone. You can give your

cousin a program depicting you attentively listening to long, boring stories about his business.

You say the program will be insensitive? That depends on how you program it. It can certainly be tender and soft. Suppose you would like to sort out your relationship with your former husband. He is tired of talking and has put distance between you. You could install the program and sort out your relationship with your former spouse as much as you want.

Do you like my suggestions? Good. Death is a disaster. Modern society should see to it that the end of life is less unpleasant to the departed.

CHAPTER 10. THE PROBLEM WITH IMMORTALITY

Awareness of one's existence is not a simple matter. It is even more difficult to be aware of one's *nonexistence*. Immortality is the idea that the obvious law of life—that everything living is mortal—can sometimes be violated in the direct physical sense. Immortality is often conceptualized as disassociation from death through the inability to be aware of it. When you are dead, death has no meaning to you; by definition, you cannot be aware of it or else you would be living and death again would make no sense to you.

The question of whether immortality is possible or not is meaningless if the commonly accepted understanding of time is rejected. If time is only a figment of our understanding of reality, then the emotional stress connected with our finiteness is as meaningless as our spatial limitation.

Within the framework of conscious time, immortality, or even a significant expansion of the cognitive existence of an individual, is an unavoidable result of technological progress. The demand is still much greater than the supply, which surely drives those seeking the elixir of immortality.

Ancient Greeks and Jews understood immortality to be a spiritual existence in the kingdom of shadows (*gades* to the Greeks; *sheol* to the Jews). In India and Egypt, the study of soul travel was most common. According to Herodotus, "Egyptians...were the first to begin studying the immortality of

the human soul. When the body dies, the soul transforms into another being that is born at that moment.” In Judaism, the study of immortality was later connected to the study of the resurrection of the dead and the rise from the grave. It was transferred in this form to Christianity and Islam. A bodyless, metaphysical existence of the soul (esoteric immoralism) is included in certain philosophical systems.

The materialistic approach denies the existence of the soul. Therefore, the possibility of such immortality is meaningless within its framework. However, even materialist studies must include concepts of the continuation of our physical existence in new material forms.

The concept of immortality as a systematic study was first established and developed by Plato (“Fedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul”). Kant considered it impossible to seek theoretical proof of the immortality of the soul and based faith in it on postulates of practical reasoning.

Philosophy wedded to religion has proposed several solutions for those longing for immortality. The simplest is the immortality of the soul. The human soul lives forever. Its existence is independent of the body. The problem with this approach is that belief in the existence of a soul is based more on faith than scientific fact. It is not by chance that no progress in this direction has been made since primeval times. A contingent of leading scientists may hush up such proof, but if belief in the presence of a soul and its afterlife have no basis, why do so many facts indicate that the problem is not so simple?

Medical observations describe near-death experiences (NDEs). Usually, patients experiencing serious trauma are aware of the process of separating the consciousness from the body. For example, people on the operating table confirm later that they saw their bodies from above the operation table while they were supposed to be unconscious.

Although such occurrences raise doubts, respected scientists have undertaken serious research in this field. Among these is Doctor Michael Sabom, a cardiologist and professor in Emory University Medical School in Atlanta, Georgia. At first expressing skepticism about the reported NDEs, he changed his

mind after more detailed research. In his book, *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation*, Sabom gives many documented examples of patient NDEs. For example, one man related, "I was walking across the parking lot to get into my car...I passed out. I don't recall hitting the ground. The next thing I do recall was that I was above the cars, floating. I had real funny sensation, a floating sensation. I was actually looking down on my own body, with four or five men running toward me. I could hear and understand what these men were saying."

Prof. Sabom's book is a detailed description of patients surviving heart attacks. Sabom subdivides them into two groups. The first group, consisting of twenty-five people, could say nothing definite about their NDEs. The second group consisted of thirty-two people. Six of the patients gave responses that corresponded with medical notes made during the course of their operations, despite that fact that these people were unconscious. Similar research confirms that these patients looked on events from positions outside their own bodies. Sabom concluded, "If the human brain actually consists of two principal elements, the 'intellect' and the 'reasoning,' then it is entirely possible that processes accompanying near-death agony somehow facilitate the instantaneous separation from the brain of one of its components, namely, the intellect. At least, the answer to this question should be sought in this direction. Hypotheses proposing the out-of-body existence of the soul seem more convincing if definite confirming facts are present. Is it possible that reasoning, separating from the material brain, in fact is the soul continuing its existence after our body ceases to function (which agrees completely with certain religious teachings)? This is the main question that arises after a more detailed study of various types of NDEs."

It is impossible to prove mathematically the immortality of the soul. When the Russian chemist Butler tried to prove the immortality of the soul using materials from mediums, a commission headed by his colleague Mendeleev (infamous inventor of the Periodic Table of Elements) declared his facts unconvincing. Nevertheless, Mendeleev wrote that although there was no proof, he, as a person schooled in the Christian tradition, preferred to retain his belief in immortality.

Another category of scientifically based proof leads to the idea that our “I,” adopted by us as consciousness, can actually continue to exist separate from the physical body. This proof refers to so-called past-life memories. Again, we are dealing with a field with many opportunities to generate skepticism. Meanwhile, serious scientists carried out diligent research. Among them was Ian Stevenson, professor of psychiatry, teaching in a Virginia university. Stevenson carried out thorough research on reincarnation of the memory, focusing his attention on children’s recollections because children are less motivated than are adults to fabricate falsehoods concerning their previous lives. In most instances, Stevenson got detailed confirmation of recollections of places and people, including a person already dead, who, according to one of the children, met with him in a past life.

Thus, in 1983, Stevenson recorded about 2500 instances of reincarnation of the memory. He confirmed that 881 instances were thoroughly checked and in 546 instances, he and his coworkers were able to confirm details connected to recollections of the past lives of the studied subjects. In other words, of the checked recollections, 62% were eventually fully confirmed. Stevenson included many of these instances in the four-volume compendium *Typical Instances of Memory Reincarnation*, published by University Press, Virginia.

Doctor Peter Ramster, a psychologist at the University of Sidney in Australia, carried out similar research on adults who, under hypnosis, related recollections of their past lives. Accompanied by independent observers, he made several investigations at the places described in their recollections, obtaining confirmation of even the smallest details recorded in their memory.

In addition, Ramster and Stevenson presented proof of xenoglossy (unexpected knowledge of foreign languages during hypnosis). One American housewife, under hypnosis, could fluently speak an ancient Swedish dialect, although in real life, she knew no Swedish at all.

Such examples indicate that the consciousness within a given physical body might have existed in other physical bodies

and can retain information of past lives. The Bhagavad-Gita and other Vedic writings give us a theoretical understanding that our consciousness is different from the body. Yoga and meditation, similar to the chanting of a mantra by Hare Krishna, are used to gain true understanding of such concepts and gradually lead a person to understand his “I.”

In *The Science of Self-Realization*, Swami Prabhupada says, “Everyone who chants the Hare Krishna mantra eventually recognizes that he is not this material body. ‘I do not belong to this material body residing wholly in the material world. I am a spiritual soul that is a component part of the Higher Being.’”

The American psychologist William James performed many experiments in his attempts to contact the consciousness of dead people and published his reports. Many societies studied this at the end of the 19th and during the 20th century. Parapsychology provided much of the material. One of the surprising discoveries was that the spirit acts in a world that knows no boundaries. Thus, the study of reveals immortality as an important motivating factor of the responsibility a person takes for himself, for others, for his deeds, for his words, and even for his thoughts.

The founder of experimental psychology, G. Fechner, confirmed that man does not live once but three times. The first time, he lives for nine months in the mother’s womb, in total solitude, and sleeps. During this time, his organs are formed. Then he is born, and he survives his birth; it is like death. The child gasps, separates from the mother, and experiences something similar to agony until his lungs open.

Then the second life begins. Here, dreams alternate with wakefulness. There is no solitude, only interaction with a certain circle of people. The physical human unit flourishes until the end and quickly begins to rot. However, here its spiritual basis is developed, expanded, enriched, and grown, or more precisely, can grow.

Then the third life begins. In it, there are no dreams. This is eternal wakefulness. It is open for a countless number of spiritual beings. Prophets, clairvoyants, mystics, and people at special moments of their lives can survive moments when, it

seems that the whole universe resides within you. A person expects contact with a future experience and cosmic consciousness and notes a oneness with such a world.

It is possible, of course, to propose that the facts given above are falsifications and the expectation of an immortal soul is naïve and senseless. However, nature proposes a compromise to immortality in the continuation of the species. We have the ability to reproduce and even nurture our own offspring. Life allows us to revel in the continuation of our existence, but only if we agree to give up the uniqueness and individuality of our “I.” Berdyaev, in *Metaphysics of Sex and Love*, glorified “sexual love” by considering that “the secret of individuality and immortality is connected with sex and love.” Cloning may help retain the value of our own “I.”

Even if this seems unreasonable and unsatisfactory, the alternative is to believe in the immortality of the physical body and existence within virtual reality.

Modern science proposes solving the problem of the immortality of the physical body with stem cells, cryonics, and reduction of body temperature, transplantology, and replacement of the “consciousness carrier,” among other things. The American physicist and Nobel laureate R. Feynman thinks, “If a man would attempt to construct a perpetual motion machine, he would be blocked by a physical law. In contrast with this, there is no law in biology that would confirm that the life of each individual is necessarily finite.”

Technology offers mankind great promise and proposes various methods for realizing individual physical immortality. For example, Moore’s law, which states that the number of transistors on a crystal doubles every 1.5-2 years, has been followed in microelectronic research for many years. Scientists are discussing the possibility of partially or fully transferring an organism to stable, artificial, semi-conducting (silicon, gallium, etc.) chips that do not need oxygen and remain functional for a long time. The information stored on the chip can be copied and distributed.

Due to the extreme complexity of the aging process, prolongation of life can only result from a “combination of

technologies,” the combined advancement in often related scientific and technological fields. Unfortunately, aging is built into our organisms. It does not seem possible to solve the problem with a single wave of the hand. The fundamental causes of aging are molecular in nature. Simply put, the smallest particles of a cell are unavoidably damaged during their life. Special “repair” systems correct much of this damage. However, molecular damage accumulates with time, and separate cells either perish or stop playing by the rules. The organism’s protective systems begin to battle with such cells. However, spoiled molecules also accumulate in them. As a result, the ability to correct damage within the organism decreases significantly with age.

Nanotechnology, the development of “molecular robots,” special proteins, or inorganic micro-beings grown in a tube or obtained by self-propagation, may be one of the solutions. The patient would be given an injection containing millions of these robots. This army of artificial beings would begin to work in the organism. The principles of their operation are similar to simple proteins, except the direction is not random; for example, their job might be to correct “bad” chemical bonds. A computer would control them. Information would be transferred through a magnetic or acoustic field. The patient would be placed in a magnetic box, a type of “tomograph.” When the session was complete, the robots would be extracted from the organism, leaving the person years younger in appearance and function.

This is not as fantastic as it seems. Separate elements of “molecular robots” already exist. Tens of millions of dollars are invested yearly in this research. The primary barrier to developing an operating prototype of a molecular robot is the inadequate operating speed of computers. Suppose that the required speed will be achieved in about ten years. After this, it will take about twenty years to carry out required biological research, and develop and test the molecular robots and controlling computers. Sometime in the second quarter of the XXIst century, rejuvenation will become an ordinary medical procedure

Proponents of immortality think that a quicker path to an increase of the human lifespan is gradual cyborgization—an expansion of the biological capabilities of a person by “grafting” into him artificial devices. As already noted, this could extend to transferring into a computer the human “I” and personality.

Thus, the problem of physical immortality switches from the field of philosophy to that of solving scientific and technical problems. Within the framework of such a concept, the value of a separate human life remains critical, which is interesting, considering that we still obliterate ourselves en masse throughout the world. However, the hope of individual immortality is necessary. Kant explains the postulates of moral experience, freedom, God, and immortality at the end of *The Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*). He attempts to prove that these postulates of moral consciousness refer to the required conditions for realizing a higher human purpose on earth. They do not have to apply to the extraterrestrial purpose of man but are necessary for revealing our life purposes in our earthly existence.

CHAPTER 11. THE DESEXUALIZATION OF PERSONALITY

The emergence of virtual personalities created by computer programs poses a question about sexual motivation. Surely, a program creating a virtual personality can force the virtual personality to associate with one of the sexes and exhibit externally sexual motivation. Such a situation can be temporary because the more independence virtual personalities acquire the less significance the opinion of a real person about them will have. By conversing with each other, making business contacts, and exchanging improvements in their software, virtual personalities free themselves of the need to create the illusion of a resemblance to people. It is possible that under certain conditions, people will prefer not to associate their virtual doubles with one sex or the other, in order to even the odds with virtual personalities generated by computer programs. Even now,

people often present themselves in virtual space as someone other than who they really are.

The thought that sexual motivation is the driving force behind human progress is rather widely held. This approach is powerful because sexual behavior is the basis for human social behavior if it is kept in mind that the main goal of sexual behavior from a biological viewpoint is the survival of the species. This goal takes the spotlight when talking about biological evolution.

Sexual motivation and human sexual behavior are closely related to reproductive functions. However, unlike in animal behavior, they are determined by the social development of an actual personality. This produces a separation of sexual behavior from the reproductive function, which increases the variety of human sexual behavior.

In order to explain sexual motivation in human society, the nature of the sex drive should be examined in more detail. The sex drive is a form of subjective human survival, a reflection of sexual need. The sex drive is the beginning stage of the recognition of sexual needs. When these are recognized, the sex drive changes to another manifestation of the need—sexual motivation, the physiological mechanism of activating traces (engrams) of information stored in the memory about external objects that can satisfy the sexual need of the organism and information about those actions that can lead to its satisfaction.

Human sexual behavior is defined primarily by what need it satisfies. There are several basic forms of human sexual behavior depending on age and the final goal: the release of sexual stress; propagation, for which erotic images play an insignificant role; sensual gratification, for which the eroticism of the situation is most important; sexual behavior as a conscious or subconscious means of reaching asexual profits (for example, a marriage for money); as means for maintaining the spousal ritual; and communicative sexuality, for which sexual behavior is a form of companionship. For adolescents, another two forms of sexual behavior are the satisfaction of sexual curiosity and expressing sexual self-confidence. The variety of motivational forms of sexual behavior makes it difficult to investigate the

sexual behavior of a particular personality. Moreover, not one of these factors may be sufficient by itself when the personality is transferred to virtual space.

Sexual behavior depends on an individual's level of sex hormones, some means of reducing the libido (for example, certain antidepressants), and on society's standards, which create a feeling of embarrassment and guilt. Thus, moral standards in a society both limit external manifestations of sexuality and intensify the internal mechanisms of surviving one act or another.

Freud proposed the term "libido" for the primal human energy impulse, the vital (life) force and energy. The libido determines the evolution of a personality from birth to death. Hidden transformations of the libido also explain individual idiosyncrasies and tendencies, sympathies and antipathies, secret wishes, fears, and other features of the personality. Sexual motivation is largely determined by these features and the expression of the inner sexual stress that requires release. However, it must be remembered that, according to Freud, an unconscious component of aggression is always present in sexual behavior. This is consistent with the sexual arousal that occurs in some people while watching rape scenes.

A heightened sex drive is often a symptom of a neurotic condition. A desexualization of society based not on prohibitions but on a fundamental reduction of the libido as the result of successful therapy of neurotic conditions can reduce the aggressive element. Mixing sexually partisan virtual personalities (real people) with the society of virtual personalities based on computer programs should lead to a significant desexualization of society.

The Internet precludes the possibility of sexual or physical force, which is a positive factor. Of course, improved communication has increased the possibility of sexual crimes, but the Internet is more likely to reduce the danger of physical aggression than stimulate it because companions cannot have physical contact, which guarantees their safety.

Sexual behavior cannot be examined separately from the institution of marriage. Despite the wide discredit of the Internet as a source of matrimonial acquaintances, it is possible that in the

near future, statistics will tell a different story. Already there are more chances for young people to learn about each other and converse over the Internet than during the initial phases of personal acquaintance. The Internet provides anonymity and physical protection, liberates potential partners, and facilitates the creation of serious relationships between people who in real life would not be able to meet and, if they did, might not show interest in each other.

Premature physiological sexual maturation results in the arousal of sexual interests and the desire for a sex life that is awakened much earlier than the social readiness of the person. On the other hand, society strives to delay the individual's social maturation. Investigations indicate that the modern generation starts a sex life much earlier than a marital life. This is not forbidden by society. Sexual behavior in marriage in the last decades has undergone significant changes, due primarily to a weakening of religious prohibitions and the emancipation of women. New contraceptives that can more adequately regulate reproduction have had a large influence.

One of the goals of psychoanalysis is to explain how the accumulation of sexual energy is distributed in the individual psyche, released, and transformed into social activity. In particular, the methods of transforming sexual energy formed the basis of Freud's sublimation concept, according to which sexual energy can have two outlets—by achieving sexual satisfaction, which is the more primitive form of release, and by sublimation, a higher level where the primal energy of the libido is incorporated into other forms of activity. Such a model contains two types of development of society and civilization. The first type is observed in societies where there are no special prohibitions on sexuality. Sex is accepted as the festive side of normal existence. A person in such a society is truly happy, does not feel the oppression of social morals, and lives a carefree life. It can be supposed that this model is close to aboriginal culture. In this instance, society is doomed to stagnation because energy is expended only on life with nothing left for sublimation. There are no forces in society for science, business, and art.

The second type is total opposition. An individual that suppresses his sexuality and regulates his behavior is unhappy, depressed, and limited in desires. The society is dynamic and has great potential to develop because the individual's unrealized impulses are sublimated to socially acceptable forms of activity. It should be noted that this sexuality model, despite not having been verified, has been recognized in other fields of human knowledge (culturology, anthropology, sociology, etc.).

The socialization of human sexual needs is one of the least studied fields of sexology. The way J. Schmidt interprets it is that a person is born with a certain level of neurophysiologic capability, able to experience sexual satisfaction by stimulating the genital and extra genital erogenous zones, reaching a climax as an orgasm. Stimulation and orgasm, according to the education theory, act as reinforcements and strengthen the tendency to seek arousing, erotic situations. The more frequent the sexual experiences, the more they occur with satisfaction and lack of conflict, and the more tolerable they are to society, the more sexual motivation will be expressed. The drive level increases. As experience is accumulated, sexual activity is proportional to its emotional consequences for an actual personality.

The more sexual activity and gratification are associated with each other during the accumulation of human experience, sexual experimentation, sexual satisfaction, gratification, and relaxation with acceptability, safety, and value, the more evident the sex drive will be. This follows the rule for generating secondary motivation.

According to this model, the sex drive, behavior, and sexual activity depend on intertwined biological, psychological, and social (cultural) factors. The term "culture" has many meanings. Friedrich Nietzsche defined it as "a single art style in all manifestations of the life of a nation," Margaret Mead as "the unification of all forms of traditional behavior," José Ortega-y-Gasset as "a social direction that we give to the cultivation of our biological potential," and Karl Jung as "the forms of behavior typical for a group, a community of people, a society, with material and immaterial features." Freud wrote that "the word 'culture' characterizes the whole collection of achievements and

institutions removing our life from the life of primitive ancestors and serves two purposes, the protection of mankind from nature and the ordering of relations between people.” A specialist on the history of esthetics, M.S. Kagan, draws attention to the fact that the term “culture” was born in Ancient Rome in opposition to the term “nature.”

The concept “culture” includes characteristics of society and of the individuals forming it—the individual culture of personality. The culture of feelings and relationships and the sexual culture are significant in this area.

Sexual culture reflects the ethnic and religious features of a society and the uniqueness of the epoch. One moral standard or another is often the main criterion in attempts to define sexual standards. The relationship of various cultures and societies to individual sexuality is registered on a regressive (prohibitions and judgments)/ permissive (permissions and encouragements) scale.

The French philosopher Michel Foucault postulated that it is difficult to study the sexual culture of a society because orders and prohibitions are ambiguous and varying for different members of the society. That which is allowed for some is categorically forbidden for others. Sex, age, social position, or profession can act as differentiating factors.

J. Braud remarked that the simpler and more primitive the organization and structure of a society, the more it tolerates sexuality and vice versa. Yuri Lotman said, “The simplest form of biological multiplication is the division of single-celled organisms. In this instance, each individual cell is fully independent and does not need another. The next stage is the division of a biological species into two sex classes, any one element of the first and any one element of the second class of which is necessary and sufficient to continue the species. The emergence of zoosemiotic³⁹ systems forces individual differences between specimens to be viewed as significant and introduces an element of selection into marital relations of higher animals. Culture arises as a system of additional prohibitions superimposed on physically possible actions. The combination of

³⁹ Zoosemiotics is a discipline dealing with the communicational behaviour

complex systems of marital prohibitions and their structurally meaningful violations convert the addressee and addresser of marital communication into a personality. The “man and woman” given by Nature are changed to “only him and only her” by Culture. Just the incorporation of separate human units into the complicated structure of Culture makes them simultaneously parts of the whole and irreproducible individuals, the difference between which is the carrier of certain social values.”

Virtual reality is a medium in which business and creative relationships can be effectively desexualized—i.e., deprived of the unavoidable irrational sexual motivation. On the other hand, people seeking serious relationships can use the Internet as a means for meeting people.

CHAPTER 12. THE DEATH OF EROTICISM

Eroticism is dead. When we can see with each step, in every film, and on every magazine stand that which a respectable man should not examine too closely in his own bedroom, there is no eroticism. Senses become numb, at first replaced by a crude lewdness and now completely ruined.

Whereas previous classical pictures were enjoyed unequivocally, now not one work of art has a chance for success without porno. They showed, in Montreal, a play about the love of a man for a goat. What will they think of tomorrow to reach the last remnants of eroticism in the lifeless eyes of human passion?

Formerly, the tales of minstrels compensated for the crudeness of dirty knights. Noble medieval ladies had nothing to do at night. There was no cable TV in castles, and low-flying dragons snapped off antennas, interfering with the TV signal. Therefore, they entertained themselves with poetic opuses and then forced their crusading husbands to climb to them in tower windows, a rose in their teeth, and do other fearless acts.

In this respect, medieval ladies behaved exactly like leaders of the Holy Church. Both promised outstanding knights the bliss of paradise and guilty ones, the flames of hell. Both

extremes of the afterlife are naturally combined in every woman and every religion.

The modern world rooted out eroticism, openly explaining the anatomy and physiology of love and then snatching the skirts from women, replacing them with pants. The world put women to work, hanging on them the label of cook, janitor, waitress, economist, maid, and dishwasher, and reminded her that she was still obliged to perform spousal duties and contribute to paying off the mortgage loan.

What was Balzac thinking when he wrote *The Physiology of Marriage*? It needs to be written again. Between the parades of gays in the street and the intimate on the screens, injecting into people's minds the boredom of a lascivious existence, between outdated mannerisms, gallantry withered in the hinterlands of consciousness, and ugly tee-shirts and pants, in which the whole population of Earth is dressed (without regard to sex or age), modern times will rule the ball. Viagra and Prozac are the equivalents of human happiness.

When sex is everywhere, it is nowhere. The emancipated have forgotten for what they were emancipated. Human life has become sad, and it turns out that existence has no special meaning. Do we exist for the sake of bland, worn-out food and mass-produced plastic goods? No! Mankind should exist for the sake of love. Now it is printed in physiological boldness on the cover of a magazine; sensitive love has been replaced by a senseless exchange of thoughtless body movements.

Civilization has reached the height of its decadence. There is no way out, just more slithering downward. Instead of versatile drones and young and playful candidates for the queen bee, we received a plain worker ant dressed from head to toe in colors that makes one gag.

Modern men seem nothing more than monkeys. And women? Catch a glimpse of a young woman in any line at the post office and mentally strip the stylish rags from her. Read a few lines from Baudelaire's poem "Le beau navire," or "The Beautiful Ship":

Quand tu vas balayant l'air de ta jupe large,

*Tu fais l'effet d'un beau vaisseau qui prend le large,
Chargé de toile, et va roulant
Suivant un rythme doux, et paresseux, et lent.*

When you go sweeping by in your full, flowing skirts,
You resemble a trim ship as it puts to sea
Under full sail and goes rolling
Lazily, to a slow and easy rhythm.

This vision could appear to Baudelaire only in the middle of the nineteenth century, somewhere in Paris. A hoop skirt would be absurd in modern megapolises.

Let us read further:

*Tes nobles jambes, sous les volants qu'elles chassent,
Tourmentent les désirs obscurs et les agacent,
Comme deux sorcières...*

“Your shapely legs beneath the flounces they pursue
Arouse and torment obscure desires
Like two sorceresses...”

A wide skirt rustles space; even an energetic step gives way to the counter movement. Running and walking fast are out of place. The dynamics of movement should be reminiscent of a modest dance. Place defunct phrases into the mouth of this creature dressed in that style—“Oh, sire...”

Do you see now? This is what the age of computers took from us. When the sensitive world is degraded to porno magazines and everything is tainted with sex, there is no eroticism. It is dead. Mr. Freud has nothing with which to help us. Our neuroses have different roots. This is not suppressed sensitivity, but the little insults of youth, natural laziness, too much money, or its absence—and a compulsive wish zonks someone on the back of the head.

CHAPTER 13. THE SOVEREIGN INDIVIDUAL

A reference to authorities is cheap currency and easily paid out, but costs dearly. However, the human mind is structured so that he, by himself, can do nothing. To become a person, a person needs another person. It is often said that society makes a man a man. However, this is not so. One adult is quite enough to raise a child. Culture, in theory, can be passed from one person to another without the involvement of society. This is not done in practice, but this illustration shows that society is not the primary factor; people, its components, are.

The meaning of authority cannot be re-evaluated if the question is stated this way because if a person has only one teacher, the teacher will become his absolute authority. Society gives a man several authorities, thereby diluting the weight of each. One man, listening to many, obtains independence from the thought of individual authorities and is free of the oppressive will of separate authority and mistakes tied to his subjectivity.

For me, as for many avid readers and thinkers, there is practically no authority. If someone says something, it has little meaning for us. According to Descartes, we question everything and try to look critically at this world. Nevertheless, authorities for many other people are indicators of absolute truth. If some guy announces that everything is relative, no one pays it any attention. However, if Albert Einstein says it, the majority of the planet's population accepts it.

Because I am not a recognized authority and will probably never be one, I need my thoughts about the future of nation-states justified. I realize that any idea of mine must have been thought of by somebody in the past—most likely more than once. If all possible types of thoughts are summed up, it seems natural that there is a finite number. These thought paradigms could be classified. This ordering of ideas is also not new.

I set out to find independent thinkers, who thought similar to me about the liberation of man from the oppression of his own state and the creation of a world in which each person would become a sovereign individual. My search was almost

immediately successful. Delving into varieties of modern anarchism, I happened upon citations from *The Sovereign Individual*.⁴⁰ Most of the predictions made at the dawn of the Internet era have been confirmed with stunning accuracy. The authors themselves turned out to be well suited to the role of authorities. James Dale Davidson is a famous journalist and the manager of several companies. Lord William Rees-Mogg sits in the House of Lords and is a director of Rothschild Investments and the British Division of General Electric. Lord Rees-Mogg is also the editor-in-chief of the London Times and vice president of the British state television and radio company BBC.

The main thoughts of this book can be categorized into several themes that also need no explanation.

For the first time, those who can educate themselves will be almost entirely free to invent their own work and realize the full benefits of their own productivity.⁴¹

In an environment where the greatest source of wealth will be the ideas you have in your head rather than physical capital alone, everyone who thinks clearly will potentially be rich.⁴²

State governments will ultimately have little choice but to treat populations of territories they serve more like customers, and less in the way that organized criminals treat the victims of a shakedown racket.⁴³

The new Sovereign Individual will operate like the gods of myth in the same physical environment as the ordinary, subject citizen, but in a separate realm politically. Commanding vastly greater resources than ordinary citizens and beyond the reach of many forms of compulsion, the Sovereign Individual will redesign governments and reconfigure economics in the new

⁴⁰Rees-Mogg, W., Davidson J. *The Sovereign Individual: How to Survive and Thrive During the Collapse of the Welfare State*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1997.

⁴¹Ibid. P. 14.

⁴²Ibid. P. 15.

⁴³Ibid.

millennium. The full implications of this change are all but unimaginable.⁴⁴

Anyone with a portable computer and a satellite link will be able to conduct almost any information business anywhere, making him unapproachable for taxation. Furthermore, governments that attempt to charge too much as the price of domicile will merely drive away their best customers.

Just as monarchs, lords, popes, and potentates fought ruthlessly to preserve their accustomed privileges in the early stages of the modern period, so today's governments will employ violence, often of a covert and arbitrary kind, in the attempt to hold back the clock...But however ruthlessly governments behave, particularly in the transition period, wedding the IRS with the CIA will avail them little.⁴⁵

After the turn of the millennium, much of the world's commerce will migrate into the new realm of cyberspace, a region where governments will have no more dominion than they exercise over the bottom of the sea or the outer planets...The state has grown used to treating its taxpayers as a farmer treats his cows, keeping them in a field to be milked. Soon, the cows will have wings."⁴⁶

When the state finds itself unable to meet its committed expenditure by raising tax revenues, it will resort to other, more desperate measures. Among them is printing money. Governments have grown used to enjoying a monopoly over currency that they could depreciate at will. This arbitrary inflation has been a prominent feature of the monetary policy of all twentieth-century states...In the new millennium, cyber money controlled by private markets will supersede fiat money issued by governments.⁴⁷

To an extent that few would have imagined only a decade ago, individuals will achieve increasing autonomy over territorial nation-states through market mechanisms. All nation-states face

⁴⁴Ibid. P. 17.

⁴⁵Ibid. P. 17-18.

⁴⁶Ibid. P. 19.

⁴⁷Ibid. P. 20.

bankruptcy and the rapid erosion of their authority. Mighty as they are, the power they retain is the power of obliterate, not to command. Their intercontinental missiles and aircraft carriers are already artifacts, as imposing and useless as the last warhorse of feudalism.”⁴⁸

In the new millennium, economic and political life will no longer be organized on a gigantic scale under the domination of the nation-state as it was during the modern centuries. The civilization that brought you world war, the assembly line, social security, income tax, deodorant, and the toaster oven is dying. Deodorant and the toaster oven may survive. The others won’t.⁴⁹

The more apparent it is that a system is nearing an end, the more reluctant people will be to adhere to its laws. Any social organization will therefore tend to discourage or play down analyses that anticipate its demise. This alone helps ensure that history’s great transitions are seldom spotted as they happen. If you know nothing else about the future, you can rest assured that dramatic changes will be neither welcomed nor advertised by conventional thinkers.⁵⁰

A conclusion intuitively sensed but rarely spoken aloud is that a modern nation-state is, in and of itself, the most successful example of organized crime.

CHAPTER 14. DISSOCIATION OR ASSOCIATION?

Dissociation or association? This question has tortured humanity for millennia. Nations, countries, and even empires rise like soap bubbles and then burst with a bang or quietly pass into nothingness. The question of nationality and statehood is nothing new. However, we can attempt to consider it more broadly. Why do people associate? The answer is simple. Alone, we could not survive. Man is a social being and needs the collective.

⁴⁸Ibid. P. 22.

⁴⁹Ibid. P. 40.

⁵⁰Ibid. P. 42.

Why do we dissociate? To have the most individual freedom because living in the collective limits our chances to act according to our discretion.

Why does man need freedom? To act in his own interests, regardless of what these interests might be. The drive for freedom lies at a basic level of our biological system. Catch a scared kitten just before he falls from a staircase, and he will still try to escape because, regardless of the fact that the fall might be traumatic, the kitten prefers freedom to its own safety.

Some sort of compromise is needed. On one hand, people should find a balance of relationships in which they are separated to ensure personal freedom. On the other, they should be united for mutual help and support.

Can such an approach be extrapolated to the level of individual nations? I suppose so. Individual nations can survive for a long time in relative isolation, but such a condition cannot be considered normal. The lack of an exchange of ideas, exports, and imports, and the merging of new genetic material resulting from mixed marriages will have a negative effect on the development of an isolated nation, never mind that such a nation, affected by natural cataclysms or external aggression, lacks the support of other countries and may be doomed to elimination.

Why do people strive to belong to one nation or another? Why not become cosmopolitan, study English, begin to use it at home, and break with one's national roots? Theoretically, if people wanted this, after one or two generations, everyone on earth would be speaking the same language and thinking the same. Despite the attraction of such a proposition, it is unacceptable. People agree with internationalization of their customs and standards of behavior only when economic or political factors force them to immigrate or rearrange their life according to the requirements of world economics or the geopolitical situation.

People think that belonging to one language or cultural system is in line with their interests. They strive to separate from other nations enough that they are able to live as they like, but not so much that it threatens the successful development of their nation.

Let's examine the issue of the acquisition of independence of individual nations from the viewpoint of the mother country; i.e., that central nation that has historically dominated and controlled their people. If the imperial ambitions of the leaders of such a central nation are disregarded, it is in its interests to grant as much freedom as possible to its subjugated nations because the dominant nation cannot be completely free if it enslaves another. The constant tension eventually will cause more harm than good. However, complete liberation of subjugated nations from the central one with their subsequent mutual isolation is also not a sensible resolution. Therefore, a compromise between the level of centralization and federation and the granting of independence is necessary.

If everything is so simple and clear, what is the problem? Are national and liberating tendencies so damaging and explosive in nature? It could be that the problem is not in the nature of these tendencies but that, as a rule, they are used by inimical, competing foreign nations to weaken the mother country of the nationality striving for self-determination. There never have been objective reasons for war and never will be. Everything should be settled peacefully. However, the history of humanity is a shatters this theory.

We can ascribe the whole litany of prior military conflicts to the underdevelopment of social consciousness that recognized such moral imperatives as "All are brothers" or "To kill is a sin." These pillars of human morals have stood since time immemorial. They became most rhetorical during the twenty-first century. It is difficult to imagine the Western policy of calling for the mass destruction of another nation, although false rhetoric has existed forever. The crafty logic of Goebbels' speech in 1933 is apparent if its deadly essence is overlooked. "In solving the Jewish problem, we are only following the spirit of our epoch. Protection from the Jewish threat is only a part of our plan. The fact that discussion of just this part of our policy is becoming the main topic is the doing of the Jews themselves. Worldwide, Judaism is trying to mobilize the world against us in the secret hope of recovering lost influence in Germany. It is a certain

tragedy of this nation that the Jews have begun to play such a role in the world. But we are not guilty of this, they are!”⁵¹

Practically no one has called for the killing of innocents. The innocent are always accused of something in order to justify killing them. The philosophy “All murderers must be killed so that no one will kill anyone” does not work because any adherent to such ideology should kill himself first, since calling for the killing of murderers makes him a murderer.

Thus, while force is the primary tool for solving world conflicts, it is not surprising that any separatist leaning, even if it is peaceful in nature, will be supported by external enemies and used to extricate one country or another that is involved in the self-liberation process.

No serious separatist movement is possible without outside support because even if it is born as a democratic movement, external enemies will try to change its nature, steering it toward extremism and acts of terrorism. An excellent example of this is the history of the national freedom movement of Quebec. It reached its peak in October 1970 with the conflict between the French-speaking province of Quebec and the rest of English-speaking Canada when extremists of FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec)⁵² adopted principles of national freedom typical of third-world countries and attempted to fight for the independence of French-speaking Quebec. The British diplomat James Cross was kidnapped. Minister of Labor of Quebec Pierre Laporte was kidnapped and killed. However, armed activity was soon stopped with a military presence and mass arrests.

This is how these events look after thirty years. But how did they look then? If we examine the chronicle of these events that was published in 1972,⁵³ it becomes clear that it was not at all considered a local conflict. Prime Minister of Canada Pierre

⁵¹Rassenfrage und Weltpropaganda // Reichstagung in Nürnberg, 1933. Berlin: Vaterländischer Verlag C. A. Weller, 1933. P. 131–142.

⁵²Quebec Liberation Front (*Fr*).

⁵³Quebec—A Chronicle 1968-1972 / Ed. By Robert Chodos and Nick Auf Der Maur, James Lewis & Samuel, Publishers, Toronto, 1972.

Trudeau feared that the situation could get out of control and destabilize North America. The chronicle confirms that over three thousand armed fighters were in Quebec at that time.

From where could such a terrorist organization arise? The FLQ used Marxist propaganda and declared that English-speaking inhabitants of Canada were enslaving them. “Marxist propaganda” should clearly show how the wind was blowing. However, a connection with the Soviet Union was not easy to find. We confirm our suspicions in *Sword and Shield*, published in English by former KGB general Vasili Mitrokhin with Cambridge historian Christopher Andrew.⁵⁴ The book shows that the KGB was interested in manipulating Quebec extremists. “We do know that the KGB did influence the Quebec independence movement in that period. It’s still debatable to what degree, but the attempt was there.”⁵⁵

We can look at a map of North American to confirm our suspicions. After the unsuccessful attempt by the Soviet Union during the Caribbean crisis to get closer to the boundaries of the United States, which almost led to a nuclear war, the Soviet Union needed to influence the destabilization of the situation in Quebec, which had enormous strategic significance. If the Communists were victorious, the Soviet Union would gain indisputable advantages, placing under its influence a country bordering the United States. While the Socialist block in Europe provided a strategic buffer in case of war, pro-American Turkey had a territorial border with the Soviet Union. The failure to place rockets in Cuba should have forced the Soviet Union to act more carefully.

Look at the map of North America, considering the strategic capabilities of the USSR if the Communists in Quebec had won and a conflict with NATO countries had broken out. Such an illustration erases doubts that any national freedom movement can remain outside the gaze of special services of inimical states. When a state, to which people pledge their

⁵⁴The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin. 2000. Sep 5: Publisher: Basic Books.

⁵⁵Quote from the book.

devotion and integrity, tries to protect itself, it is accused of suppressing the national freedom movement.

This is convenient, isn't it? The right to self-determination is one of the commonly accepted principles of international law. This principle was recognized during the dismantling of the colonial system and attached to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (adopted by Resolution No. 1514 of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the UN on December 14, 1960) and subsequent international pacts and declarations of the UN.

There is a contradiction between the enacting the right of peoples to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity of the state. The inability of the sides to find a peaceful resolution of such a contradiction deepens national conflicts, often escalating into a military standoff. Thus, representatives of the central state power usually argue that territorial integrity has priority over the right to national self-determination.

It is also thought that the principle of territorial integrity is aimed exclusively at the protection of the state from external aggression. The formulation of Part 4, Article 2, of the UN Charter is connected with this. "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations." In the Declaration on Principles of International Law, it states "Every State shall refrain from any action aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of any other State or country."

Proponents of this opinion point out that application of the principle of territorial integrity is actually subordinate to the execution of the right to self-determination. Thus, according to the Declaration on Principles of International Law, "Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples."

It is concluded that the principle of territorial integrity is not applicable to states that do not ensure the equality of nations living in them and that do not permit the free self-determination of such nations. Everything would be wonderful if these same nations lived in an ideal world without the disruptions of special services and predatory ambitions. National freedom movements are a premise for the national elite (whose ambitions are supported by external enemies) to capture local power.

The economic position of the state and its citizens' standard of living, as a rule, worsen after receiving independence. History indicates that expansive, multinational empires eventually collapsed. This applies to the Babylon-Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Golden Horde, the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, and the USSR. In almost all instances, the collapse led to a sharp worsening of the standard of living in most of the adjacent, newly formed states. The processes of integration, even ones as varied as the formation of the United States of America and the creation of the European Union, also have their problems.

The ideal outcome may be shocking, but of great interest. Two mutually directed processes should occur. All countries should be integrated into a worldwide, federated organization with open borders, unified systems of taxation and social security, and means for maintaining order. Then the world should provide maximum personal freedom to each individual, converting him into a person-state.

Such a process is occurring, despite that fact that many states are unconsciously resisting. Development of the Internet creates a unified information field, based on which new business relationships and collaboration in science and art are being formed, freeing man from the need to be physically present within a separate state. It has provided him freedom not previously envisioned, converting the Internet-savvy sector of mankind into a new type of society.

States are beginning to notice the rapid pace at which they are losing their influence over the lives of individuals. Fortunately, this process seems irreversible. Moreover, it is only just beginning. Under such conditions, old forms of nation-states

become ballast. Language barriers no longer exist. Internet sites containing automated free translators make it possible to converse freely. Cultural barriers are disappearing because if customs or meanings are not clear to a participant, he can obtain accurate information in fractions of a second and better understand local features of one region or another. All these tendencies are currently in an embryonic state and have not yet been integrated into a single world system that could transform most people in developed countries into citizens of the world.

The furious development of the Internet in less developed countries is also gratifying. Internet cafés are flourishing in India, China, Pakistan, and even African countries. Practically any person can obtain access to the Internet for a nominal fee. Communications between people of different nationalities and races, physically located in different parts of the world, are arising. Sometimes these communications are stronger and more varied than are those between people in the same place. There is no sense in talking about territorial and linguistic unification. If such a tendency is maintained, the meaning of “national unity” will become outdated.

Of course, certain political regimes will try to bar their people from access to the Internet. This is especially true in Cuba. The government of China makes it impossible to view anti-government sites in their country. However, if the world is not drawn into global conflicts or avoids a cosmic catastrophe, the positive tendencies in the development of the Internet will be maintained and be hard to stop on the path of change of human psychology.

It is no secret that the Internet is, to a certain extent, a reflection of the fractionation of the modern world. Different national societies have their virtual spaces limited by their languages. However, this phenomenon also will become outdated with the appearance of automated translation.

In cyberspace, a man loses his physical body. The virtual individual is invincible. It is impossible to take away his freedom, attack, or kill him. States will learn to track Internet criminals, but despite conflicts between states, we are free to hold dialogs and even establish business relations with countries on the black

list of the “axis of evil.” This creates a “fraternization” effect, where the state power in both countries has difficulty creating the image of an enemy, an erstwhile half-person with horns. How can racism be discussed if it is unclear whether you are talking with an African or Anglo-Saxon? In the near future, each of us will be able to choose any virtual façade, expression, or skin color.

Other national features also exist, such as mentality. However, these differences are being slowly but surely eradicated. We try to emulate progressive standards of Internet conversation and behavior. Even mental differences will be overcome with the appearance of new generations born in the Internet era.

Outmoded state systems will resist these positive tendencies, but the most progressive may become the leaders of this movement. The true liberation of man from his nationality and race, these outmoded signs that inevitably perish, not on the rhetorical level of windy internationalists but on the actual level of new international relationships—not even between nations but between individuals—each of which will make of himself a free person-state.

CHAPTER 15. THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORY

Predicting the future is an unrewarding undertaking. Books dedicated to this topic are enticing, pleasantly stimulating fantasies. However, more often than not, they are disappointing. Some authors publish flat, effusive dreams, with little promise of arousing interesting thoughts. Others are limited to general predictions, for the sake of which it would be possible to refrain from all writing.

Prediction of the future refers to that vague part of human activity that circulates at noisy markets among strangely attractive gypsies with dangling trinkets, among magicians and prestidigitators, whom are never caught in the act of insincerity and indiscretion. Prediction on a global scale is also an

undertaking for people who are either exceedingly confident in their ability or are mental cases. Prediction of history is another matter. However, discussions of the future paths of development of human societies are possible and even necessary.

Grandiose events of different epochs are sometimes reminiscent of each other. Whenever modern history is considered, there is always some prototype, sometimes so similar that it seems nothing under the sun has changed. It would seem easy to predict the further development of any event based on repetitive scenarios of conquests, battles, treacheries, actions, and self-sacrifices.

However, this is the same illusion as the simplicity of a chess match, in which the unassuming dance of the pieces across the black and white squares seems predictable. However, it is one of the most complicated of human conundrums. The fact that history repeats itself cannot help us when we are swept away by the thought of future news, bloody quarrels, and glorious acts.

However, not surprisingly, the development of progress, communication, weapons, and freedom of access to information make the modern situation unique. These are not quantitative differences from thousands of years of history but qualitative aspects that could not have been foreseen. The unprecedented growth of the world's population also makes today's situation unique. Just as the delusion once existed that the earth was the center of the universe, today we could be deluded about the exclusivity of our position in time. However, the aforementioned facts make today's moment special.

Certain trends could be elucidated so that one paradigm or another could be seen. For example, we can say that unipolarity is not stable. As soon as a leading power is identified on the world stage, it always finds a counterweight, which leads to a conflict that is resolved with or without blood, leaving the world unipolar only for a moment, after which it reverts to two or more competing sides. Based on these arguments, we can propose that a global civilization controlled in a single way is utopia. Such a system will not be stable because a force bent on breaking it will be fomenting in its underworld.

Only a common threat to the world, such as an attack of aliens, can unite all nations under the control of a single government, and this only while the threat exists. Take the example of NATO. As soon as the Soviet threat disappeared, the unity of the countries of this military block became fragile, and after the second war in Iraq, in which certain countries of this strategic union refused to partake, the North-Atlantic union was shown to be illusory.

Tendencies toward separatism are strengthening in many countries. Quebec almost seceded from Canada in 1995. Various nations can be placed under a single government, either suppressed by a forceful power or unified by an outside threat that would be difficult to resist singly. According to Machiavelli, whose advice continues to find confirmation, it is not recommended for a weak country to enter into a union with a strong neighbor. It is more advisable to enter into a union with a neighbor's strong remote enemy. Would you like an illustration? Let Kuwait and Saudi Arabia unite with the USA and not with neighbor Iraq. The countries of Central Asia allow American military bases to be located on their territory. The Baltic countries are friendly with the USA and not with their neighbor Russia.

A strong central government in the modern world is ideal because even in single countries, we observe the fractionation of power, an increase of self-governing, and the physical independence of separate components of states, provinces, cities, and separate global commercial companies, which depend less and less on the central government and wish to be less subordinate to it.

What level can such a fractionation of power reach? Not surprisingly, it can reach practically the individual level of each person. Merging into a single global system of interests and values, maintained by such pervasive means as the Internet, each separate person suddenly passes the limits of geographical and social boundaries. The modern individual's interests can be disbursed far beyond the limits of his house, land, street, city, and country. In such a situation, the separate individual can have interests different from the state, even in such a delicate area as

international relations. While previously, most of the inhabitants of nation-states had no understanding and no interest in what was happening beyond the limits of their neighborhood, now many individuals may or may not have bread and butter for breakfast depending on what the political or economic situation is on the other side of the planet. The market for a wide variety of goods and services is becoming global. Individuals with no ties to the local branch of the state, living in one country and selling their services and goods in different countries, are appearing. They have no business relationship to the place in which they live.

When I was a child, relatives of ours turned up in Australia. I made up an improbable story for my grandmother that we'd had no matches and they were sending us some from Australia. However, based on the fact that many services in the modern world do not need a physical supply, my story no longer seems either naïve or fictional. The power of local governing systems is weakening. Those holding power resist the erosion of their influence on peaceful citizens. This process will lead to the death of old governing systems. People already decide for themselves with whom they wish to do business on the other side of the earth, regardless of the political and economic interests of their mother states.

One must learn to recognize and filter out the background noise of current events to view more clearly the direction of the development of history. When we consult archives—for example, newspapers at the start of the century or during the world wars—it is astonishing to realize that events that might have changed the course of history are now forgotten. It is hard to predict where one paradigm or another will lead—even knowing what historical facts followed the events described. In private life also, it is difficult to recognize, beyond the background noise of insignificant events, where our destiny will lead us.

Sometimes I try not to hear the latest news, to create for myself the illusion of temporary peace and calm my spreading neuroses. Returning to the news, I first find that the world has changed little. Second, that which changed drastically was hidden. Hearing the news for the first time after a long intermission, I did not understand much of it because the news

has, for a long time, been fed to us like an endless soup opera. Then I learned about the epochal events that seemed significant at the time of their occurrence, but now were so forgotten that I had trouble getting a clear idea of what had happened.

This clearly illustrates that historical events interfere with the discernment of the future development of history. Judgments of history, like all judgments, depend on the subjectivity of the observer. There can be no objective observer, and not only for this. As we reassess past events, so we change our impressions of future events using the imperative of present interests. Historical events have much less meaning than the evaluation of the events at present. A society can easily purge their collective memory or distort facts until history is unrecognizable. Many in the world deny the fascist genocide imposed on the Jewish nation. Denial of the obvious is a characteristic feature of human social self-consciousness. With such subjectivity of human social judgments, predictions of the future development of history might be distorted and of little value. Civilizations in the modern world (or paradigms of civilizations) have different scales and cannot be compared to many parameters. A comparison of countries using the gross national product per person provides no indication of the level of their development as a unit of one civilization or another.

Countries are differentiated, just as the cultural values of different people and the representatives of various social classes are differentiated. For what is the character of a state if not the total collective image of a representative of local national communities? Just as people differ by race, so they differ by thought and soul. This can in no way be denied. I will not say that black skin is better or worse than white skin, but only a blind man cannot see the difference. Moreover, it is strange to measure these distinguishing features with the single metric of economic efficiency.

Unification due to global information exchange is appearing more and more in the modern world. People are shedding their traditional costumes, but believe me, not changing inside. A samurai wearing a tie will always be a samurai, a proud Bedouin in a Cadillac a proud Bedouin. And a refined, hotheaded

Englishman maintains his self-respect even in a dirty tee shirt and blue jeans. Don't be fooled by the masking of national differences. Within each nation, there is a nucleus of national identity thousands of years, perhaps tens of thousands, in the making. Do not be fooled by the feeling that changed state borders will somehow affect core national identity. You can exchange Huns with Slavs, Slavs with Vikings, and Vikings with Tatars, but the heart of a nation is coded in its genes and depends more on who marries whom than on who lives in what state.

Racism is not saying that there are differences between races but rather saying that one race is better, more successful, or smarter than is another. By stamping "racist" on all who recognize the differences between different populations, we reach the same level of hysteria for which anthropology has been famous for centuries. As if labeling everyone who sees differences will save us from discrimination! Racism is, like every other ideology, a convenient excuse to take a bigger slice, build a bigger house, and be more egotistical.

What basic national characters can be identified? The world can be divided roughly into the European, Islamic, and Eastern civilizations, and the uncivilized world. Again, notice that the presence in any African country of a man in a suit, a bus on the street, and a working telephone does not mean that the country is not populated by a tribe that has not changed for the last hundred thousand years and may remain as such for the foreseeable future. I think that the complexity and stress of that community is no different from that of Manhattan or London City. Furthermore, I think uncivilized people are just as developed, intellectually or spiritually, as those in a civilized society. The plane of their civilization lies in a separate, parallel social universe and never encounters other civilizations.

One tribe has 2,500 words for different grasshoppers. Another tribe's ancient beliefs agree with modern cosmological theories and may go far beyond them. Truth does not have to be sought. So much extraneous knowledge is often found in the search that one forgets what he was doing. We think wild tribes are stupid and dirty when we apply our comfortable standards to them. A third tribe lives in the Amazon wilderness, and wild

animals eat many of the adults and children. They cannot imagine buying a gun. You say that maybe they don't want to live. No, they do. Friendly visitors from our civilization explained to them long ago that they were idiots. True, they had no money then and have none now. Wild animals eat them as before. It is an example of the clash of civilizations. When a crude civilization is taken over, there is always a catastrophe. You say that the weaker civilization will perish. Nothing of the sort. The extinct civilization of the Aztecs exists in our common consciousness as an indestructible mound. Meanwhile, Cortez's men remain pitiful warriors. The mystical, mythical Atlantis exists in the human consciousness, though nothing to prove its existence remains.

Thus, concluding that four main civilizations are identified in the modern world, we should examine them more closely. In the European civilization, northern and southern lines can be identified. I would draw the border through the north of France and Italy and make a sharp turn diagonally through Austria, catching the northern countries of Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and St. Petersburg. I would assign all European communities located below my imaginary border to the southern line. These are the Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, and Balkan states. They are, not surprisingly, closer to Islamic civilization than to northern Europe. Centuries under the rule of the Ottoman Empire left its trace. Many Greeks carry the genes of Plato. But who told them that Plato was close to the northern European culture? The fact that all western philosophy is based on Plato does not make Plato a western European. In the European civilization, the North American line, dominated by the United States and Canada, should be identified separately.

What is characteristic of the northern European civilization? It has serious internal contradictions that have historically been overlooked by a common deadly enemy. First, it was Communism. Now it is Islamic fundamentalism. Imagine that one day, modern northern Europeans wake to find they are the only ones left on in Europe. At first, they will be happy. However, after a while, they will again want to divide the world. England will spar with France. France will fight with Germany. Germany will take everyone on at once. At first, it will be a war

of words, and perhaps it will remain as such; perhaps it will escalate into a third world war. However, the members of northern Europe cannot see such a world, no more than they can their own ears.

The European Union, formed to counter the onslaught of the United States, was forced on the separate countries. Again, the characters of the states did not change after theoreticians and economists decided to create a common European currency.

In Germany, leftovers of the Hitler era, well trained in the role of Germany and successfully passing this training to new generations, still live their lives. In their hearts, Berlin did not fall and never will. Not paying attention to this makes oneself myopic and naïve. German nationalism did not come to Germany with Hitler, and it did not leave with him. It defines the essence of the German nation, and requires revenge for a banal existence, whereas booming English and French arias decided the fate of the world. Talk with any German on an abstract subject and you will get a curiously contemptuous attitude, felt not in words but in the aura of the conversation. I conclude from this that if I experience a feeling of ineptitude, my German friend experiences a feeling of superiority. It must be presumed that Germany will be highly aggressive on the world scene. I was exceedingly disturbed by its reunification at the start of the 1990s. The way that this country presents itself in news broadcasts and at international conferences in no way shows the persistent national thought in the mind of Germans that eventually will explode. Twenty-five years of a peaceful Europe in the first half of the twentieth century was only an intermission between the meaningless wars that have become traditional.

England plays a strange role on the world scene. America took from this country the most active and enterprising people. Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands suffered similar migrations. On the other hand, mass migration also sent to the West a wave of sedentary and downtrodden people. This phenomenon occurred on a colossal scale. Millions of people moved to America. This phenomenon certainly figured into the modern role of these states, and on the role that they will play in the future. In England, I had the pleasure of spending several

days conversing with a typical, middle-aged Englishman. I was awestruck by the similarity to the Israeli left of his ranting:

1. The government is bad because it does not provide adequate pensions, unemployment compensation, and competent gratuitous health care.

2. Who needs Scotland? Let them figure it out themselves.

3. Who needs Northern Ireland? Everybody is bored with it.

4. Who needs Wales? (When we were in Wales, my companion lightly joked with a museum staff member, "Do you accept foreign currency here?" He does not consider Wales English).

5. The queen? Who needs the queen? It would be better to raise welfare for the unemployed!

England is weak; perhaps the only lively segment in it is the swarthy faces of immigrants. They repeat for the local residents the mindless paradoxical assertions that are first taken as jokes and then lead to the death of a nation and the fragmentation of a country.

However, there is another hypothesis. Perhaps my honorable Englishman does not think as he speaks because to speak what one thinks is considered improper in English culture. The UK may remain an inaccessible nugget in future ages because, according to British scientists, continental drift, which will alter the geography of the planet until it is unrecognizable in the next two hundred million years, will only slightly shift the British Isles a little closer to warm seas, changing nothing of consequence.

England adheres to a position of unequivocal support of the United States, although the population despises the United States and in no way supports their politics. The prime ministers are changed. If eighty percent of the people do not support the government, they should be able to elect a different government. However, nothing changes. They still curse American secretaries of state and presidents in the English pub and elect a government that, like an obedient mutt, barks only at that which the United States tells it to bark. Englishmen hate their next-door neighbors

(continental Europe) more than USA. They choose the lesser of two evils.

France still shows its character. At first glance, it is proud and scornful, extravagant and assertive, but it, like most of continental Europe, receives the bulk of immigrants from Islamic Africa and the Far East, which changes it until it is unrecognizable. I was stunned at the colossal decline in Franco-American relations literally weeks after France refused to support the latest war in Iraq. France was not the only country that refused to support the United States, but it upset the Americans so much that they renamed French fries liberty fries! France, like other major countries, has a great need to again decide the fate of the world and not serve as an expanded Disneyland for the American public.

Reading French magazines and newspapers, the following thought crossed my mind. France has a unique cultural core that is opened only to him who has enough patience to seek it through the veil of gaudiness. France, with its Voltaire and Descartes, Rimbaud and Balzac, is alive, although shielded from the slippery mantels of prejudices.

Europe is accustomed to being the center of the world. It cannot yet deal with the fact that, while it was ardently figuring out itself in two world wars, the center of the world crossed the ocean to Uncle Sam. Europe still cannot take this seriously. Of course, an open conflict with the United States is not germane to European political culture. Even Russia did not pursue an open conflict with the USA because nuclear arms squelched any thought of a full-scale war between nuclear powers.

European politicians were always proud of their artful manipulation of other countries. The fathers of modern politicians taught their children the best traditions of the political arts. Just take the last conflict with Iraq. Germany and France behaved as if they had a unifying agreement with Iraq. Are the ideas of Islam and tyranny really cherished by the French and German elite? This cannot be explained by the large percentage of Islamic population in these countries because the political leadership usually pays no attention to the opinion of the

electorate. The electorate in most modern democracies has no means of deposing an unpopular government. The opposition or interests of the coalition influence their representatives in parliament more than the opinion of their electorate. Politics has a unique pseudo-moral that enables one to change political positions and lose one's good reputation because the population will come to each election with clean, polished minds, and elect those who have the most money for the pre-election campaign. Exceptions do occur. However, it should be noted that practically no one except for the politicians is interested in politics in safe countries. This enables them to boil in their own juice and pull dirty tricks with morals.

European politicians are carving out a weakened role for the United States by manipulating third countries. They even temporarily formed a union and gave up their national currencies in order to resist the economy of the United States, which vacuums up a quarter of the world's resources and concentrates it in the hands of 5% of the population.

The United States is still strong, cohesive, and uniform, able to mull over seriously the remnants of the future fall of an empire because, in the words of Confucius, a state needs a strong army, abundant bread, and the correct mindset in order to flourish. The United States has all three of these factors in spades. Any discord is only apparent. Americans have united their nation around the dollar. They are one in this. Blacks and whites, rights and lefts, normal people and sexual minorities sincerely think there is happiness in money.

The United States has managed to create a happy nation. A recent survey by *Time* magazine found that more than 80% of Americans think they are happy. I suggest that this is the result of the common "okay" and the broad smile. Psychologists know that there is feedback between the behavior and words of a person and his feelings. This is obvious. When a person is satisfied with everything, he smiles and says, "Okay." But it has been proven that if a person smiles all the time and says, "Okay," he sooner or later begins to be satisfied with everything.

The United States plays the role of the world's gendarme, although no one authorized them to do so. Of course, it is good

when there is a power willing to stand in the way of a brash dictator's desire to capture country after country, but the lack of legitimacy in this role makes the USA a crude conqueror. It is a serious matter to fight nations with simple dollar principles, though in general, everyone is satisfied. Therefore, it can be assumed that Europe will not be able to wrestle away their prior role.

Russia is a separate conversation. Russia is building a powerful state. It is not bound to any ideology and is headed by people who do not really value "human morals." Plato forgot to mention this form of state in his visionary *The Republic*. This is not tyranny, democracy, oligarchy, theocracy, or a military regime. This is KGB-cracy, a new form of state controlled by special services. Special services of the world have different views of the methods and means of a political fight and control than tyrants and satraps.

Insinuations, blackmail, manipulation, compromise, forged documents, audio and visual spying, assassination attempts, and arranged accidents make up the normal operating procedures of such services. Hitler and Saddam Hussein were amateurs. The new leaders of Russia are professionals. They are like agents with special orders. I cannot say if this is good or bad because they feed the hungry and politically inactive. All the politically active crash in helicopters, sit in prisons for crimes unrelated to politics or live abroad, because special services know no borders. If Russia were headed not by graduates of the KGB but by some other special service, the result would be the same. The evolution of special services, whether they served "good" or "bad" countries, result in similar missions, methods, and means. I remember an interview with an English special agent, a charming young man who testified at length that he shot an unarmed Arab in the head at a quiet way station in the Iraq desert. When the interviewer, shocked, asked what justified his actions, the officer answered that he could not endanger the operation or the safety of his comrades, although the group consisted of several armed personnel and the Arab at the way station was alone. The officer had no guilty conscience. He thought the same as those who sit in the Kremlin. I think they will have no problems holding power

because they shoot at anyone, including their own, if this will solve the problem at hand.

Alexander Dumas expressed a similar thought with great accuracy. “*En politique...il n’y a pas d’hommes, mais des idées; pas de sentiments, mais des intérêts; en politique, on ne tue pas un homme: on supprime un obstacle.*”^{*} Translated, this means, “For politics...there exist no actual people, there exist only ideas; not sentiments, only interests; in politics, murder is not considered ‘murder’ but the ‘removal of an obstacle.’”

Watch the Russian First Channel TV. They have nothing in common with Soviet shows. News broadcasts are beautifully planned. Every subject has a purpose. Not one minute of television time is spent frivolously. It seems that the staff consists of people who worry they will be shot if they goof off. It all works to resolve the problem of creating a normal, strong, satisfied, and self-respecting state. Do you need proof that the KGB is walking around openly in Russia? There may be none, but people in the twenty-first century sharply contrast their Soviet predecessors, and there is no information leak. Is this good or bad? It is not for us to judge. History will be continued by yet another wonder-state patterned after Sparta, and it will not find it so easy to cope when it finally figures out its internal problems and turns outward...

Now we look at Islamic civilization. In principle, not everything connected with Islamic fundamentalism is new. International terrorist organizations have been encountered before. The problem is that the value system of this civilization does not mesh with the European one. They are incomprehensible to each other and, therefore, combative.

It is always comical to see serious, educated people act surprised when the next African or Islamic potentate spends money intended to help his people on a new airplane for his personal use or on a palace with gold toilets. The answer in this instance is obvious. The leader does not believe that all people are equal. Worse than that, those dying from hunger also do not consider themselves equal to their leader.

^{*}Dumas, Alexandre, *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*. Gallimard, 1998. P. 114.

However, the worst is not the former or the latter. The worst is that people are not equal. Pondering the essence of a democratic society does not guarantee equality between people. It attempts to present equal opportunities but this is different than stating that all people are equal in their abilities. I do not believe that some people are second or third class. I am simply saying that all people are different, have different characteristics, different knowledge, and different abilities. There are no good or bad abilities. People with musical talents will hardly be useful if stones need to be moved from one place to another.

The Islamic civilization does not value human life. Westerners will always encounter situations in which the only thing they can do is wave its hands. Despite the fact that Islamic fundamentalism acts like an independent force, Europe, Russia, the USA, and even the Far East use it to serve their own political purposes. The more disagreements between different camps arise, the more conflicts will move to the front burner and the need to support a third side will be lost.

Islamic civilization is in its prime. Its only problem is its contemptuous attitude toward the material world. I consider the use of gold toilets a clear destruction of material resources that could be used to develop independent weapons and tighten separated Islamic nations into a single military/ industrial fist, from which nobody would recover. The Chinese box cutters that were used to hijack the planes that struck the World Trade Center are additional proof that Islamic extremists despise everything material. It is difficult to deny that more technically advanced civilizations usually win on a global scale. People incapable of strict discipline populate most Islamic countries; they are unstable toward bribery, easily intimidated by threats, and unable to draw a line between reality and the dream world. This does not make such a civilization a serious military force. Considering the report of the Senate commission on the events of September 11, 2001, I was awed with the description of the character and acts of the terrorists. They had problems with discipline, the study of English, and with training at flight schools. It was easier for them to commit suicide than to study. This is not surprising. The problem is common to most terrorist organizations. Their leaders

may be intellectually capable, but they have serious problems within the ranks, proving the expediency of the new *shahids*⁵⁶ because it seems that they are only capable of killing themselves.

Suicide terrorists appall Western society, but how many suicides occur in developed countries? Suicides are the second cause of death among youth (accidents are the first cause). No matter how unnatural suicide is, are the numbers so high even in communities where suicide is unpopular? What can be said about a society in which shahidism is a cult? Islamic fundamentalism, to compensate for its military incompetence, decided to use youth's tendency toward suicide in its battle with the Western world. Many think this is a display of force of the Islamist spirit. I think that it is a cry of desperation from leaders of terrorist gangs that are incapable of solving their personnel issues.

Because the use of suicide terrorists is the foundation of modern Islamic terrorism, I want to examine this phenomenon in more detail. Clarity is especially needed because Islamist terrorists use the fact that there are thousands of potential shahids as proof of their invincibility. The average person becomes nervous at the daily news reports about acts of suicide terrorism.

Suicide is known in nature. Rodents commit suicide when their population density reaches a certain limit. Certain species of ants overcome obstacles by creating a bridge made of their own bodies for their brethren, and whales commit suicide for reasons unknown. Nature sometimes instills an instinctive need for individuals to sacrifice their lives to ensure the survival and prosperity of the species.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, a suicide occurs somewhere in the world approximately

⁵⁶ Shahid is an arabic word meaning "witness". It is a religious term in Islam, meaning "witness", as stated, but most often "martyr." It is used as a title for Muslims who have died fulfilling a religious commandment, or waging war for Islam. The shahid is considered one whose place in Paradise is promised according to this one verse in the Qur'an:

"Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord;

every forty seconds. In 2000, 815,000 people committed suicide. This number is more than twice that of people killed that same year in armed conflicts (306,600). Whereas the number killed in armed conflicts is usually as inflated as possible (especially on the losing side), the number of suicides is often underestimated. In many instances, falls from heights, automobile accidents, and overdoses are not recorded as suicide, despite the fact that they were premeditated acts.

Even in Canada, according to WHO data, fifteen people for each 100,000 commit suicide. Among certain groups, such as the Inuits (Eskimos living in northern Canada), the number of suicides is sixty to seventy-five per 100,000. Other sectors of the population with an elevated number of suicides include the youth, the aged, prisoners, and psychiatric patients.

The number of suicides is growing. Between 1990 and 2000, almost the same number of men died of suicide in Ontario as died in auto accidents. The number of attempted suicide is three to four times higher among women than among men, although the number of suicides among men is four times higher. Every fourth death in the fifteen-to-twenty-four-year-old age group is the result of suicide. The women—shahids that have recently appeared—are also widely used by extremists for propaganda.

These figures indicate that the tendency toward suicide is exceedingly strong. It is also subject to the influence of standards in a society. Support for a suicide cult can significantly reinforce this potential. Such a statistic reveals the force behind the threat of Islamic terrorists. Hand a shahid belt to every suicide candidate and send them to places with as many people as possible, and you can destroy a large part of the planet's population.

Far East cultures occupy a plane even less connected with European civilization. The Far East is an enigma. China and its huge population and ambitions, Japan's technological progress, and the new stars on the horizon of world economics—Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and similar places—the Far East is typified by the people's ability to act as a unified,

integrated organism that ignores individual impulses and is fanatically loyal to serving the common good.

China is a special riddle. Its culture is almost extraterrestrial, and I think, not only to me. We understand little of their motivations, thoughts, and logic. The fact that many Chinese live in the West and that you and I are always dressed in something ‘made in China’ or seeing something Chinese, or eating something Chinese does not change the matter. The world is a market for the human anthill called China.

For thousands of years, China was the world’s leading civilization. During the nineteenth and beginning the twentieth century, the country was immersed in civilian conflicts, famines, and military occupations. During the Second World War, Communists under the leadership of Mao Zedong began to construct a Communist state. The country lost tens of millions of people to hunger and hardship.

China now, without significantly changing its ideological base, is undergoing an unprecedented economic revitalization. From 1994 to 2003, the volume of Chinese exports grew almost four times, from \$120 to \$438 billion. With such trade volumes, China will certainly become one of the key economic players in the world. Washington, Tokyo, and Brussels must all equally consider China’s opinion. Human rights and freedom of the press have been shoved into the background of modern politics. Everyone wishes to receive a piece of the Chinese pie or avoid the Chinese blow, although it’s only economic for now—but any economic showdown tends to turn into a military conflict.

The myth of cheap, low-quality goods from China is dissipating in front of our eyes. Cheap, high-quality goods are taking their place. American and European corporations are horrified at the trade expansion from China. Powerful personal computers for \$200, appliances for \$100-200, good clothes, and shoes for pennies—this is paradise for consumers, but it means bankruptcy for most light and electronics industries in rich countries.

Most leading brands have long ago placed orders in China and pasted “Made in China” on them. In 1998, the average television became cheaper by 9% each year, sporting equipment

by 3%, and tools by 1%. No European country has such dynamics. Today, more than 30% of Chinese exports are electronics, appliances, and famous brand name equipment. An indication of the growing confidence in Chinese goods is the fact that Wal-Mart, the largest retailer in the world, is increasing the volume of goods from China, long ago exceeding purchases of \$15 billion.

Practically all world automobile giants have their own production in China, as do many consumer companies, including Philips and General Electric. Light bulbs and gigantic turbines are made in China. This again confirms the quality of the Chinese workforce.

China has, for several years in a row, attracted direct foreign investment. During 2003-2005, the average yearly volume of direct foreign investments was planned at the level of \$55-60 billion. About half of the total Chinese exports are produced at joint ventures. Their fraction in total investments in basic funds in the country is greater than 15%. Now funds of the five hundred largest world corporations operate in the Chinese economy. This battle is not only for the Chinese market. This is the model of corporate survival in the global world.

General Motors, Volkswagen, Toyota Motors, and Ford Motors plan to spend about \$14 billion a year for production of about six million automobiles on the local market. General Motors earns almost every third cent of its profit on the Chinese market.

In 2002, the China became America's largest creditor. The National Bank of China is the second largest purchaser of USA government bonds after Japan. China financed George Bush's furious growth of expenditures. During 2002-2004, currency reserves of Asian banks grew by more than \$1.2 trillion. The Central Bank of Asia holds 80% of the world's reserve of dollars. These helped the USA delay a deeper devaluation of the American dollar in the last two years.

It is entirely possible that China will play a more serious and decisive role on the world scene in the near future. A forceful approach toward this great country is becoming more illusory. One bright spot is that the Chinese people in past centuries have

not aspired much to a world state; possibly, this is not a characteristic of this nation. However, China's problem of a lack of living space will be solved, most likely, at the expense of neighboring countries.

India is the second most populated country in the world. It is difficult to assign it a single paradigm of civilization, though. Hindus are peace loving and rarely participate in open conflict. They are good merchants. However, it is not easy to sell them something. Their ability to represent the desirable as authentic, including using sincere self-hypnosis, has no equivalent, interferes with a sober evaluation of the real circumstances of the business, and hampers business and development in general. Modern, multinational companies are establishing representative offices in India and other developing countries, shifting jobs from developed countries to third-world countries. This trend is considered extremely negative by developed countries. However, it is useful on a global level. A good illustration of the direct flow of jobs to a third-world country is the fact that, according to *Fortune*, IBM in April 2005 slashed 14,500 jobs in Europe and, according to the *New York Times*, planned to hire 14,000 employees in India.*

The reason for the job shift is the low wages, the huge number of trained personnel, and the soft labor standards in third-world countries. A large number of specialists speak English in India. According to the Confederation of Indian Industry, 2.5 million information-technology specialists, engineers, and specialists in biological sciences graduate every year in India. In addition, over 1500 doctoral degrees are granted in these same areas. I believe this has the effect of evening the world's distribution of wealth, facilitating the development of underdeveloped regions, and most importantly, engendering a more sober approach of developed states toward labor law that sometimes reduces to the absurd the hiring of lazy, ineffective employees that receive inflated salaries, are provided unreasonable rights, and most importantly, soon collect unemployment benefits. Developing a business based on such a

*"IBM Shares Its Secrets"//*Fortune*. 2005. Vol. 152. N 5. Sep. 5. P. 130.

workforce is practically impossible, forcing the employer either to replace ineffective and expensive employees with automated systems or to out-source the jobs overseas. States have no choice but to start competing for jobs by offering employers conditions that are more reasonable. The wages in third-world countries will surely increase and labor conditions will improve. I believe that if the world is not drawn into an extraordinary catastrophe, the labor market of the future will be global, and visa restrictions will be unjustified.

The main goal of the world community in the near future is to avoid wars, asteroids, and other events that push mankind several steps back into dark ages. Unfortunately, optimism is improbable because human communities have never succeeded in development without declines of civilizations. According to statistical predictions, the crash of a large asteroid is inevitable, just as large-scale military conflicts are inevitable. The United States' anti-missile defense program causes serious misgivings because if Washington is convinced that the American skies are invulnerable, other countries' nuclear countermeasures will cease to be operative.

It can be assumed that mankind will follow a path reminiscent of that of developed countries, which is directed toward a world in which rich countries conclude that it is cheaper to feed and care for the population of lesser countries than not.

The death of civilizations is as inevitable as the death of individuals, but just as the individual's thread of spiritual development is passed from generation to generation, the flash of previous civilizations will pass to their shining successors. Our civilization is full of Greco-Roman esthetics, philosophy, and culture, just as the civilization that replaces ours will bear traces of our accomplishments.

But we might be right about the inevitable death of the civilization in which we live. It is a question of time—tomorrow, after two hundred years... The fall of the Roman Empire began when it was split into two parts. After this, the western part lasted for more than four hundred years and the eastern even more—about a thousand. The only catch is that everything happens faster now. The transition from civilization to civilization does

not necessarily happen with shouts, thunder, and invasions. We are all like children from whom their parents hid the fact that everybody dies when we deny that our civilization will perish.

CHAPTER 16. TERRORISM IS NOT A CAUSE BUT A CONSEQUENCE

Terrorism tortures the world. This is nothing new. This has happened for all time. Some commentators on argue conclusively that, "Our civilization should revert back to barbarianism so that barbarianism can defeat the Islamic terrorists." At first, this seems logical.

Terrorism is not a cause but a consequence. In order to change something, it is necessary to find the cause and battle it, not the consequence. Ideology is never a cause. Ideology is never the main reason. The only reason driving history is the battle for power.

Take the Russian Communist Revolution. I do not doubt that Lenin and his comrades were fanatical idealists. However, they were not the cause but the consequence. If there were no support of the German Kaiser, this bunch of radical fanatics would never have held power. Germany took Russia out of the game simply and effectively. It hired radical, fanatical Bolsheviks to draw Russia out of the war. It was unimportant that the revolution would soon infect Germany.

What drove Germany? Fear!

It is the same with modern terrorists. Who needs and uses them? Many. Europe, which united in fear of the United States and issued national currencies. Arab countries, who drive modern politics. Russia, which is not interested in the role of the USA as a superpower in a unipolar world order. The fact that terrorists are out of control, blowing up Europe and the Arabs, threatening the stability of their regimes, and annoying Russia, supporting Chechnya, does not mean that terrorism against the USA is not palatable. We forget about North Korea, China, and other countries, to which a world gendarme, the role of which the USA has assumed, is not necessary.

These players, while they don't mind the thought of terrorism in the USA, fear the USA more than they do terrorists. Acts of terror destroy pockets of peaceful people, but the USA can remove from power practically any force on earth, or at least, significantly damage it. Therefore, the whole world, directly or indirectly, supports terrorism out of fear of the USA. This is its response to the threat of the USA and its tendency toward expansion, disrespect for local traditions, and disproportionate concentration of the world's financial strength. Direct or silent support of Islamic terrorism represents an attempt to redistribute this influence. Of course, it is impossible to reason with terrorism because terrorists are fanatical and their slogan is "Die!"

The capture of Iraq frightened the world even more. It proved they were right to fear the US. It broke the rules and removed leaders from power whenever convenient. The fact that the violence in Iraq did not abate with the departure of Saddam suggests that the matter was not with Saddam.

The USA must reach agreement with Europe, Russia, China, and other dictators and satraps. It should have reached agreement delicately and long ago. The USA must change its attitude, treating the rest of the world not as a bystander or backwoodsman but as valuable parts of the whole. The USA needed to prove that there was nothing to fear. However, this is impossible, especially now.

To defeat terrorism, it is not necessary to stoop to barbarianism. A rise to refined political culture and understanding of intertwined international relations is needed. But does USA is really willing to battle terrorism? This is a broad question. It is entirely possible that it is not. The concentration of military power, the suppression of freedoms within the USA might be as convenient to US elites, as the cold war was convenient for forty years.

Some might argue: "Is it surprising that the question 'Is the USA really willing to battle terrorism?' is a very broad question for you! If a third world war comes, unfortunately, Western victory is far from guaranteed; they are seriously discussing in Europe and America the 'adequacy' of measures for fighting Islamic fundamentalism. Terrorists use the ancient but

often valid principle that all's fair in war. Terrorism must be fought. It shows its face not in the towers of the World Trade Center in New York, in the trains of Spain, and on the streets of London. It can also crop up in your Canadian forests." Alas, the situation may be completely acceptable to the leadership of the USA. The fact is that terrorists mainly kill innocent people, which the politicians consider abstract numbers.

Will you argue that politicians of all countries are unprincipled and that their single motive is power? It seems to me that this is a common truth. As always, the interests of residents become prisoners of the interests of political figures. The world is constructed so that those who control it are professional crooks, but they took power long ago and have no need to rely on acts of terrorism. However, others, new crooks, want their own piece of the pie. The old crooks do not want to target them and try to brush them off, giving the appearance that they are fighting them. There is no simple solution to the problem. Capture another five countries like Iraq and there still will be no simple solution. The USA must understand the intricacy of Europe's political games, which consented through the BBC and *Guardian* that used to defend so called "freedom fighters"...

An agreement must be made with those who stands for the terrorists.

"Do modern politicians really want to eliminate terrorism?" It is entirely possible that absence of terrorism as a common threat will end their popularity, but elections do not occur every day. By the next election, they are glorious defenders of the fatherland with unprecedented power. Root out terrorism, and they lose power. Winston Churchill was an important figure in the victory over fascism and not re-elected at the end of the war. This will not please any politician. Politicians are driven by the same ambitions as Hamas, which becomes more active as the peace process is felt because Hamas is not needed if there is peace, and none of those who stand for it will give it money. There are no serious differences between the leaders of Europe and terrorists in the quest for power. Some were terrorists during the time of the French revolution and USA's War of

Independence. Others want their own revolution, independence, and power.

I have said nothing about Israel, and this is not by chance. At present, with the brunt of the conflict shifted to Iraq, it has almost ceased to have meaning. If Israel is recognized as the puppet it is, it will never have had any meaning in regards to world terrorism, no matter how paradoxical this sounds.

To describe the situation in Israel, I take the liberty of using a lengthy citation from the American comedian Dennis Miller, who is not himself Jewish. Dennis Miller hosts the television show *Dennis Miller Live* on HBO. Recently, trying to explain to his fellow citizens the essence of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, he said:

“Here we go: The Palestinians want their own country.

There's just one thing about that: There are no Palestinians.

It's a made up word. Israel was called Palestine for two thousand years.

Like "Wiccan," "Palestinian" sounds ancient but is really a modern invention. Before the Israelis won the land in war, Gaza was owned by Egypt, and there were no "Palestinians" then, and the West Bank was owned by Jordan, and there were no "Palestinians" then. As soon as the Jews took over and started growing oranges as big as basketballs, what do you know, say hello to the Palestinians," weeping for their deep bond with their lost "land" and "nation."

So for the sake of honesty, let's not use the word "Palestinian" any more to describe these delightful folks, who dance for joy at our Deaths until someone points out they're being taped. Instead, let's call them what they are: "Other Arabs Who Can't Accomplish Anything In Life And Would Rather Wrap Themselves In The Seductive Melodrama Of Eternal Struggle And Death."

I know that's a bit unwieldy to expect to see on CNN. How about this, then: "Adjacent Jew-Haters." Okay, so the Adjacent Jew-Haters want their own country. Oops, just one more thing. No, they don't.

They could 've had their own country any time in the last thirty years, Especially two years ago at Camp David. But if you have your own country, you have to have traffic lights and garbage trucks and Chambers of Commerce, and, worse, you actually have to Figure out some way to make a living. That's no fun. No, they want what all the other Jew-Haters in the region Want: Israel.

They also want a big pile of dead Jews, of course -- that's where The real fun is -- but mostly they want Israel.

Why? For one thing, trying to destroy Israel - or "The Zionist Entity" as their textbooks call it -- for the last fifty years has allowed the rulers of Arab countries to divert the attention of their own people away from the fact that they're the blue-ribbon most illiterate, poorest, and tribally backward on G-d's Earth, and if you've ever been around G-d's Earth, you know that's really saying something.

It makes me roll my eyes every time one of our pundits waxes poetic about. The great history and culture of the Muslim Mideast. Unless I'm missing something, the Arabs haven't given anything to the world since Algebra, and, By the way, thanks a hell of a lot for that one.

Chew this around and spit it out: Five hundred million Arabs; five Million Jews.

Think of all the Arab countries as a football field, and Israel as a Pack of matches sitting in the middle of it. And now these same folks swear that if Israel gives them half of that pack of matches, Everyone will be pals. Really? Wow, what neat news. Hey, but what about the string of wars to obliterate the tiny country and the constant din of rabid blood oaths to drive every Jew into the sea? Oh, that? We were just kidding.

My friend Kevin Rooney made a gorgeous point the other day: Just reverse the Numbers. Imagine five hundred million Jews and five million Arabs. I was stunned at the simple brilliance of it.

Can anyone picture the Jews strapping belts of razor blades and dynamite to themselves? Of course not. Or marshaling every fiber and force at their disposal for generations to drive a tiny Arab State into the sea? Nonsense. Or dancing for joy at the murder of innocents? Impossible. Or spreading and believing

horrible lies about the Arabs baking their bread with the blood of children? Disgusting. No, as you know, left to themselves in a world of peace, the Worst Jews would ever do to people is debate them to death.

Mr. Bush, God bless him, is walking a tightrope. I understand that with vital operations in Iraq and others, it's in our interest, as Americans, to try to stabilize our Arab allies as much as possible, and, after all, that can't be much harder than stabilizing a Roomful of supermodels who've just had their drugs taken away. However, in any big-picture strategy, there's always a danger of Losing moral weight.

We've already lost some. After September 11 our president told us and the world he was going to root out all terrorists and the Countries that supported them. Beautiful. Then the Israelis, after months and months of having the equivalent of an Oklahoma City every week (and then every day) start to do the same thing we Did, and we tell them to show restraint.

If America were being attacked with an Oklahoma City every day, we would all very shortly be screaming for the administration to just be done with it and kill everything south of the Mediterranean and East of the Jordan.”

CHAPTER 17. THE GHOST OF THE FINAL SOLUTION

A normal person thinks first of his safety and the safety of those close to him, which he in general considers all mankind. A normal person seeks love, friendship, success in business; craves art and creativity; is schooled in the sciences; and eventually begins to seek self-actualization, supporting others in this. There are no races, nationalities, nations, species, subspecies, ours and yours, and mine and others for such a person. He understands that if not all people are brothers, then nothing but themselves are stopping them. However, the fact is that *normal people* do not control the world.

Tell a normal person the rhetoric of Zionists and anti-Semites. He will understand none of it. Who are the chosen people? Why create a state like a priestly kingdom headed by an

ancient and uncivilized religion in the third millennium? On the other hand, why, under swastika, cremate followers of Jewish teachings? Everyone long ago forgot that man needs religion to live and die easier. Why should he be impounded, forbidden to marry, prohibited from raising children, be put to death, or denied a funeral?

If Hitler returned and wanted to finish the annihilation of the Jews, what plan would he put together after becoming familiar with the modern situation? He would want them collected in one place to be vaporized by a nuclear bomb, preferably their own.

Palestinians represent a certain type of Arabic Jew. They are outcasts in all countries. The Muslim world would like to rid themselves of all of them. How? To settle them with Jews in Israel. Pile them up and solve both the Jewish and Palestinian questions. In my opinion, it is all coming together. The rest is empty rhetoric.

Israel is also necessary for the enthusiastic Christian fanatic. He cannot impress upon himself that although you cross yourself to the ears, you do not become more holy. Holiness is not found in rituals or even in the torture and killing of Christ, only a variation of barbarian sacrifice. Holiness is in thoughts, and thoughts should be good and pure. Enlightened thoughts should be about the safety of you and those close to you, about love, friendship, success in business, art, science, and finally, about the self-actualization of you and others.

However, fanatics of all colors start with the end in mind. They seek self-actualization, starting in garbage pits. What is safety for a sadomasochist but total boredom? Love is only an idea for our fanatics. Friendship is found only with comrades in the party or religion. They need science to make better bombs and art to disseminate their ideas.

Fanatics, no matter what color, whether Christian, fascist, Zionist, or Muslim, wish that Israel should exist the same as they. Let their motives be different and their intentions, too. That changes nothing because they are all passengers on the same tram. One is an engineer, another a drug addict, a third is a drunkard. So different, yet heading in the same direction.

Sober scoundrels stand behind them. They have no ideals and ideologies for them do not exist . They have no need for money. They do not even need power. They just like to play each other. Now the Soviet Union crumbles. No matter where one goes, relatives in Israel, certified for this by the organization ‘Forum’, crop up for all Soviet Jews. Many are carrying forged documents. They left! Went to Israel. The slop is rich there! And here they rattle your cage. Anti-Semites yell after them, “Go away to Israel!” However, this is only the first part of the phrase. The second part is no secret. “Go away to Israel! We will kill you all there!”

You know it. Hitler would have been ecstatic. He would have stroked his moustache, thrust his hand in the air, and madly cried, “Israel ist für Juden! All Juden müssen nach Israel gehen!”⁵⁷

Then, noticing that non-Jews were caught in the mousetrap, our resurrected Führer would give the order to carry out the purification, catch non-Jews, and send them back. Jews would forge documents, claiming that they had relatives so that they would be let go. They would called this ‘Forum’ in Israel and order an “aliyah” for themselves. Those who altered documents and surnames would have to be sent back—not for compassion, but because führers love order and the Final Solution would start here.

Let’s hang more labels on each other. This one is a fascist, that one a Zionist. You, an anti-Semite, are acting like a Jew; I, a Jew, am acting like an anti-Semite. Let’s divide people further into races, nations, nationalities, species, and subspecies. Do Jews need Israel? Jews need safety, love, friendship, success, wisdom, beauty, and self-expression. But Israel? What is Israel? Will they kill us without it? They will kill us with it.

As long as we continue to talk in the language of the Third Reich, the ghost of the final decision will hang over all of us.

But what if we try only to be normal people?

⁵⁷ Israel is for Jews. All Jews should go to Israel.

CHAPTER 18. THE NATURE OF MODERN BARBARIANISM

Keeping in mind that humanity can boast of progress in technological development and other areas, true humanism on a global scale should also be developing, and barbarianism should remain in the distant past, in the somber depths of the bloody history of the human species. However, this is not so. The twentieth century provides an excellent example of mass barbarianism run rampant and proves that barbaric acts on the broad scale are not leaving the world's stage of history.

Barbarianism *en masse* comprises acts carried out by large numbers of people against large numbers of other people—mass killings, inflictions of physical injuries, and incarceration. Because of these acts, there occurs mass destruction of cultural and material valuables. The twentieth century was particularly notable for these acts.

How can the increase in barbarianism be explained? The simplest explanation is the unprecedented growth of the population. There are more people who can be killed and more people who can do the killing. If Hitler had tried three or four centuries ago to destroy six million Jews, he could not have done so for the simple reason that such a quantity of Jews could not be found. Second, business is better organized. Communication and transportation enable events to be carried out more effectively than in past centuries. Third, weaponry has improved. Alexander the Great's small army could not destroy the Persian army completely because Alexander did not have enough troops. Modern weapons eliminate this problem.

Finally, despite people's increased conscientiousness, new means of killing require such indirect participation that murder, especially *en masse*, has become a detached act. If we compare killing with an ax and killing by pressing a button that launches a nuclear warhead, we see that, while the ax is capable of doing the job, it will take out fewer people, and even fewer would want to use it. However, pushing a button even a child

could do—though the consequences are millions of times more serious.

These arguments explain mass barbarianism of the twentieth century from a technical viewpoint. Let us now examine the ideological underpinnings of mass barbarianism. The twentieth century became the epochal apogee of attempts to carry out utopian social transformations, nationalistic ideas, and other phenomena with ideological underpinnings. Sacrificing common human morals and biblical testaments in the name of the super race or the proletariat became a standard of life in the past century. Furthermore, every mass attack is usually justified as a reaction to a prior attack or aggression. In practically every instance of aggression, rhetoric explains and legitimizes these barbaric acts.

Before we analyze the modern age, it must be noted the twentieth century's barbarianism likely did not exceed that of previous centuries. We see more clearly that which is closer to us. Indigenous populations of both Americas were destroyed in past centuries on scales comparable to that of the twentieth century. When Christopher Columbus landed on October 12, 1492, the New World had a population of 100 to 145 million. Two centuries later, that population had shrunk by 90%. Even today, the "luckiest" of the nations existing then in both Americas has retained less than 5% of its former population. Genocide of the indigenous populations of the Western hemisphere has no parallel in world history. Pay attention. Those people were destroyed not by nuclear bombs or gas chambers, but by axes, spears, sabers, muskets and old style biological weapons – imported European infections.

To get a feel for the size of the tragedy, imagine that, like Columbus, extraterrestrials landed on our planet and began to colonize earth, destroying our cities and killing about 5.5 billion people. Too farfetched? Turn your gaze, then, to the most glaring example of twentieth-century barbarianism, the phenomenon of Hitler's fascism.

George Orwell, the author of the anti-utopia novel *1984*, noted in one of his essays that the problem was not only Hitler and the capital supporting him, but in the people's state of mind.

The state was redirected to barbarianism. It was ready to accept it and become an active participant.

It is not enough to arrange a constant stream of material benefits or to provide humanity with all that it wishes; no matter what we do, it eventually sinks to barbaric mindlessness. The impression is that all humankind suffers from a mania, sometimes replaced by long stages of remission, but often overflowing into acute psychotic episodes that become more intense with time.

In the Second World War, despite victory over Hitler, horrors were carried out and are one of the components of the human image. The world looks on precedent with trepidation. At first, an event is christened “unprecedented,” then all subsequent similar events are compared to this standard. The Second World War set the standard of barbarianism, the scales and ferocities of which surpassed all of mankind’s previous “achievements.” The world was horrified and in shock. However, the world has a short memory. Even now, theories exist, claiming that the destruction of the Jews and other horrors never happened. Such assertions are mostly ignored by a generation affected by a war in which our great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers were tortured and killed. But what will happen after a few generations?

The problem is not so much in the leaders as in the mindset. It is possible that wars do not end when an opponent wins but when the masses no longer want to fight. Previously, this period was ten years, as described in the *Iliad* of the Trojan War. During the time of Alexander the Great, it was seven years. In the twentieth century, this period was shortened to four years.

Turning our attention to the modern mindset, we see a crumbling of the understanding of good and bad, of sin and sainthood. Today’s world has drifted very far from moral standards that were accepted for centuries. Therefore, the bonds restraining barbarianism have become weaker.

What is the exit strategy for such a situation? What can help us avoid the next wave of barbarianism? Barbarianism in the world can be stopped by the same mechanisms by which it is stopped in developed countries—a strong police and army, a unified judiciary system, observance of laws, and most

importantly, education of the population in the spirit of supporting internal order.

The world must be transformed into something like the federated union of states with relations and laws like those between the states in the United States or the provinces of Canada to squelch the possibility of mass barbarianism. How far from such a unification is the world? Let us imagine the planet as a huge feudal state. Independent barons (separate countries) are periodically at war with each other and the king (e.g., the USA) is only the largest fiefdom. There are no unified laws; they may be written, but nobody obeys them. No one respects the decisions of the unified court, and everyone does as he pleases. The barons have almost limitless power over their subjects. The solidarity within the nations should be added to this because each baron has his own national roots that in no way helps the unification.

To make the world safe, we must unite under the rule of operating, international, administrative, and military authorities. Unfortunately, the UN is not such an authority. A system of international courts (those presently existing are ineffective because not all countries recognize their decisions, and those that do recognize them do not always abide by these decisions)* and an international army are needed. Even if the USA usurped the role of international gendarme, it does not mean that the planet does not need a real one. Order is not possible without a gendarme. Moreover, without order, the world is doomed to new acts of barbarianism.

What is the solution? How can the planet be unified under a single moderate power? The mindset must change, but the mass media and educational systems are manipulative. Everyone watches the same news channels and attends the same schools that propagandize certain positions instilled by a repressive portion of the population. Moreover, the world is an exceedingly heterogeneous economic medium. A person living in a developed

* Many countries do not recognize decisions of the European court on human rights, not only Asia and Africa but also the USA and Israel. The irony is that the Russian Federation, even during Yeltsin's time, adopted the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Basic Freedoms, which they still call the European Convention on Human Rights, making cases against Russia possible in the European court.

country sometimes requires a comfort for a sum that would support the life of a whole town in Africa. Such glaring inequality was observed in ancient feudal states in which social institutions and an effective, unified taxation did not exist.

An example of an attempt to unify different countries under a single government is the European Union. The EU would not disintegrate if the French voted against the EU constitution. First, we are talking only about a new constitution. Old agreements remain in force. About 54.87% of the population of France, the second largest economy in Europe, voted against adopting the EU constitution. French analysts explain that the French “No” was mainly a reaction to the successful expansion of the EU into Eastern Europe and the Baltics. “The French unexpectedly saw that they turned up in a Europe that they do not understand,” noted the newspaper *Le Figaro*. France’s current social and economic difficulties, caused by globalization, are piled onto this, changing the traditional French lifestyle. Nevertheless, these events do not signal the breakup of the EU because the Nice Agreement continues in effect until 2009.

So, if the negative factors of the premature expansion of the EU to the east, and local social and economic considerations are eliminated, the EU may become a model for the future “World Union.” It sounds like utopia at present. However, the world is already changing and will continue to change in the near future.

One of the factors helping to reduce the probability of repeating acts of mass barbarianism by forming worldwide executive and legislative authorities may be a change of the mindset of the world population by the Internet, leading to the demise of television as the most powerful weapon for manipulating social consciousness. The Internet is still in its infancy, despite its dizzying development. It cannot yet compete with television, which allows viewers passively to pump themselves up with propaganda from one geopolitical region or another.

The grafting of the Internet and television will weaken the manipulative effect of modern television because people will select subjects according to their tastes. These sources will not

necessarily be channels, programs, and sites that sanction separatist sentiments, delusional ideas of national self-importance, and anti-global opinions that hinder the formation of unified regulatory mechanisms and portend the next wave of worldwide barbarianism.

Try to imagine how events would have developed after September 11, 2001, if the world had been a World Union with unified and operating authorities. This Union would have immediately organized an effective commission to investigate the terror act, and all countries would have collaborated. The perpetrators of the terror act would have been found and turned over to the courts. The wars with Afghanistan and Iraq, the oil crises, and everything that plagued the world in the first decade years of the twenty-first century would have been unnecessary. It did not happen because local authorities have enormous powers, international authorities have none, and local national governments use terrorism for their own political games.

The increased well-being of the world's population and technical progress, combined with the evolution of mass media, which makes each individual freer to choose positions and views independent of the power of nation-states, will defuse situations and lead humanity to a new level of development.

These concepts sound utopian, and it is possible that an unprecedented explosion of total barbarianism will shatter the world tomorrow. However, regardless of the wisdom that nothing changes and history always repeats itself, something in the world is changing, and these changes provide hope that they will signify the progress of humankind toward an organization of more reasonable systems of world management.

CHAPTER 19. HAS SATANISM CONQUERED THE MODERN WORLD?

Observing the world around us, you might surely conclude that Satan has scored a victory. That which was an integral part of the witches' Sabbath and other iniquities has filled our screens, magazines, newspapers, and Internet. It is difficult to say what brutality the modern person has not seen on the screen, what perversions he has not encountered in his unending surfing of TV channels. The strangest is not that which we see, hear, and read, but our acceptance of it. Inhuman horrors invade our homes via television screens after family dinner like something familiar. What is going on? Why have acts previously considered the height of depravity invaded normal life? Why have fundamental standards of decency been brushed aside?

"Satanism" here does not refer to the movement that arose in the nineteenth century on a wave of romantic fascination with evil — a reaction to the dominance of the Christian religion. Satanists borrowed the biblical image of Satan, but treat him as a positive symbol of power and freedom.* Satanism for the purpose of this discussion refers to those actions, effects, and images that are associated with manifestations of diabolic forces in previous epochs.

There is no point in listing the parade of spectacles that we witness as soon as we turn on the television. From where does the wave of SPAM emails promoting incest, without visible commercial profit come? If such spectacles had appeared before past generations, they would have been taken as a sign of Satan's victory.

It is interesting to note that only 0.5% of a thousand grown Americans think they will wind up in hell, and

* The three apostles of Satanism are Nietzsche, the German philosopher and author of the treatise *Antichrist: The Curse of Christianity*; Alister Crowley, the mystic and theosopher, who called himself the "Beast of the Apocalypse;" and Anton Szandor LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan and author of the cult book *Satanic Bible* (1969).

approximately two-thirds of the total number of respondents think that they will end up in haven.*

Evil has lost its old meaning. The pope even “absolved” sinners, apparently because hell was no longer needed — everything that people could see and feel in hell could be had on earth. The deceased Pope John-Paul II, in one of his sermons on St. Peter’s Square, prophesized, “All righteous men, believers or not, are saved and will go to paradise.” The head of the Roman Catholic Church, an eminent theologian and interpreter of the Holy Book, promised eternal bliss not only to sincere Catholics believing in Jesus Christ, but to all “good people following his commandments in daily life,” even if they are not adherents of a Christian religion.

Satanism slithered from practical life into cyberspace, where it is no longer damned and has become something like chewing gum, only slightly harmful. Virtual Satanism was injected into humanity. Now, real tragedies are considered relatively dull when compared to horror movie special effects. Mankind is like an adolescent, mature enough that his parents let him to watch adult movies until the wee hours of the morning, but refuse to believe that he secretly smokes cigarettes.

Strange as it seems, a catastrophe has not yet occurred. Society lives as it has lived, although the crime rate is high. Television violence has increased by 100% since 1980. In one hour of prime time TV, up to fourteen scenes of violence and brutality are shown. According to some data, TV violence is the cause of 15-20% of violence committed in real life. Children and adolescents are especially susceptible to television aggression because, according to the American Medical Association, the average child sees 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on TV during his or her school years. According to another statistic, he sees 50,000 murders and 200,000 violent scenes. According to Harvard Medical School, by the time an American child reaches the age of eighteen, he sees violence on the screen over 180,000 times, including 80,000 murders. In real life a murder is

** According to the Internet news source Charismanews charismanews.com*

committed every twenty-four minutes in America; breaking and entering, every ten seconds; rape, every seven minutes! The probability of becoming a victim of crime in America is much greater than having an automobile accident. The risk of being killed is 1 in 133. Since 1950, murders among adolescents have increased by 232%.

A modern child spends twenty-eight hours a week in front of the TV. This is more than he spends in school. At a minimum, he plays for an hour a day on videogames or surfs the Internet. He devotes several hours a week to watching films and listening to music. According to Mediascope, 66% of children's TV programs broadcast in the USA contain scenes of violence. In three-quarters of the instances, TV shows programs in which violence is not punished. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, only 4% of programs with scenes of violence contain a clearly expressed call to nonviolence.

Over a thousand investigations devoted to the effect of TV and films on children have been carried out worldwide in the last forty years. The investigations were conducted in many countries using boys and girls belonging to different races, nationalities, and social groups. The results were practically identical. Aggression on the screen makes children more aggressive toward people and inanimate objects. The American Academy of Pediatrics published four fundamental conclusions from these investigations. First, children who watch many programs containing scenes of violence consider violence a legitimate method for resolving conflicts. Second, watching scenes of violence makes a person less protected from violence in real life. Third, the more a child watches violence on the screen, the greater the chances he will become a victim of violence. Fourth, if a child prefers to watch TV programs containing scenes of violence, there is a significantly higher probability that he will grow up to be an aggressive person and even commit a crime.

Minors tend to believe all that is said on the screen. The Kaiser Family Foundation revealed in 2001 that 60% of adolescents believe medical information shown on TV more than the opinion of their own doctors. Television violence is especially dangerous for small children up to eight years old because they

cannot accurately differentiate where real life begins and fiction ends. They see horror movies as reality. At the end of the 1980s, a five-year-old boy watched *Beavis and Butthead* on MTV. The characters in the cartoon tried unsuccessfully to use matches. The boy was successful. He burned down the trailer in which his family lived, killing his two-year-old sister. The mother of the dead child, local fire-fighting organizations, and other social organizations started a campaign to ban this cartoon. A compromise was found. MTV edited out scenes of pyromania from *Beavis and Butthead*. Some children have tried to fly by jumping from second-story windows after watching *Superman*.

Eighty-five percent of the most popular videogames in the USA also contain acts of violence. An investigation carried out in 1996 among four-year-old boys and girls showed that their favorite videogames (59% of girls and 73% of boys) were those that contained acts of violence. In 1999, two students living in Littleton, Colorado, killed twelve classmates and wounded twenty-three, and then shot themselves. The inquiry showed that one of the factors driving them to commit murder was probably the popular computer game *Doom*. Both adolescents played it and called classmates with whom they did not hang out “monsters” (in *Doom*, the hero fights with anthropomorphic monsters).

Television has had a greater effect on crime. The dependence is clear. The crime level in one country or another increased in the ten to fifteen years after TV was introduced. In 2001, the surgeon general of the USA published a paper devoted to the problem of youth violence (“Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General”), in which it was emphasized that watching films and TV programs containing acts of violence is a risk factor for an adolescent. It has the same effect on the consciousness of a child as poverty, poor social environment, and low intellect.

Public opinion polls indicate that about three-quarters of US residents are convinced that TV programs are overloaded with violence. A survey conducted by *Fox News* after a series of murders committed by students showed that 29% of Americans consider the creators of movies, TV programs, and music guilty of these crimes (58% placed the blame on the parents). An analogous Gallup poll showed that US residents consider TV the

second main reason for the increase of youth violence. Forty percent placed the blame on the parents, 8% on TV, 7% on ineffective teachers, 6% on psychological problems of the children, and 5% on the lack of strict moral imperatives by society.

Violence is a key subject for Hollywood film producers. According to the Classification and Rating Administration, the service responsible for rating films and determining their appropriateness for children, over 10,000 films with acts of violence as the main subject were released from 1968 to 1990. In 2002, Hollywood studios released 132 films, 49 of which contained scenes of brutality and violence.

Several experts think that the abundance of gaming films deadens people's understanding of the value of human life. Part of society now accepts catastrophes and acts of terrorism as readily as a reality show or the continuation of a war movie.

Adolescents and youths who watch TV a minimum of one hour per day are more likely to commit aggressive acts than peers who spend their time doing other things. This conclusion was made after a study that lasted seventeen years.

Only 5.7% of adolescents who watched TV less than an hour per day committed acts of violence. Among those who sat in front of the screen for one to three hours a day, the number was 18.4%. For telefanatics (>3 hours per day), it was 25.3%. Analogous trends are seen in adults. According to research by Nielsen Media Research, children 2-17 years old in the USA watch on the average about two hours of TV per day; men, more than four hours; women, more than five.

Invented horrors have a way of becoming reality. Many police and war movies become templates for the committal of actual crimes. Two thieves tried to repeat a train robbery. The template for the imitation was not the actual robbery committed in England in the 1950s, but a movie made about it—*Money Train*. In 2003, two young Americans killed their mother and dismembered her body to destroy the evidence, a scene reminiscent of one of the episodes of the popular TV series *Sopranos*.

In 1998, the marketing company Mediascope analyzed over 8,000 hours of TV programs broadcast over various American TV channels. Sixty percent of the programs contained scenes of violence. Scientists from Iowa State University, Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson, compared statistics for actually committed crimes (FBI data was used for this) and crimes shown on the most popular police and special service TV shows. The investigation showed that murders make up 0.2% of all crimes committed in the USA. However, the murders are half of the crimes shown on TV.

American film critic Michael Medved noted that American TV is the most fearful place in the country. Every day in prime time (when the most viewers are watching), a TV viewer sees about 350 actors on the screen. Seven are killed. Medved writes, "If this statistic is extrapolated to real life, all USA residents would be dead after fifty days."

Violence on the screen is dangerous for the viewers. In 2002, the movie *Jackass* was introduced to the USA. This film, based on a popular series that played for a long time on MTV, was shown in 35,000 movie theaters. The film contains jokes that are frequently truly stupid and absurd. Nevertheless, *Jackass* caused a wave of copycats. Many instances where adolescents copied or tried to copy certain tricks in the movie were registered in the USA. For example, a fifteen-year-old adolescent soaked his pants with alcohol and sat on a fire. His friends, recording the scene, sent the "actor" to a hospital. Another incident led to the death of a twenty-two-year-old man, who placed a chair in the back of a moving dump truck, set it on fire, and tried to jump out. His friends also recorded this act.

The 1993 film, *The Program*, portrayed American football. In it, players lay down on the street to harden their will. In the USA, five adolescents, independently of each other, tried to use this method in practice. Cars killed three; two received serious injuries. After a series of protests, Touchstone Films removed this scene from all copies of the film.

American advertisers consider it great success if their TV ads reach one percent of viewers. If scenes of violence affect the same percent of the population, a frightful picture is drawn. If ten

million people watch one program or film containing acts of violence, 100,000 of them will become aggressive. Furthermore, research by the American Psychological Association showed that aggressiveness produced this way can be “accumulated” and provoke a person to crime.

According to research conducted by staff members of the University of Michigan, violence on the screen is addictive. The more violence a person watches, the more he likes it. Lovers of war movies and aggressive videogames develop a habit for acts of violence. If a person is deprived of such scenes for a time, he begins to feel uncomfortable.

According to research carried out at Princeton University, violent movies and TV programs made in the USA are highly sought after in other countries. One of the reasons is that such films and programs are easier to translate into foreign languages and adapt to the tastes of local audiences. It is much more difficult to translate a comedy because a foreign viewer needs to understand the reality of the actors and understand American pop culture.

Most of these facts apply to the USA, a country fanatical about laws, where the smallest violations are avidly prosecuted, and an enormous number of people are jailed. The USA has the highest percentage of prisoners. For every 100,000 residents, 565 people are in jail. The irony is that this percentage (about 0.5%) is the same as the number of Americans planning to go to hell.

This has no other explanation than the involvement of the US government. If the government really intended to fight crime, it would adopt a series of laws prohibiting the display of violence and depravity. Maybe to understand the reasons for such a paradox, we should keep going. Not only the USA has suffered from the aforementioned phenomena. Despite the fact that certain countries in Europe (such as Norway and Denmark) exclude practically all violence from national television, movies and video games are just as available as in other countries.

Struggles with homosexuality are also clearly felt in modern society. Many films have a hero with an unusual sexual orientation. People already believe that mankind is divided almost evenly into heterosexuals and homosexuals. However,

even the most inflated estimates of confirmed homosexuals are less than 10-15% of the population (official statistics place the figure at 2-4%; however, one can assume that these results are underestimated).

Homosexual love was acceptable in ancient Greek and Roman cultures, but this cannot be said about same-sex marriages. The legalization of these unions is dangerous because it leads to a re-examination of the institution of marriage. Aristotle and Greek and Roman law identify the goal of marriage as a family with social, material, demographic, and judicial aspects. Same-sex marriages denigrate several aspects of marriage, replacing them with feelings and a sex life. We do not know what will come of this because humanity has no experience with it. Another factor is the redefinition of the roles of men and women. From time immemorial, it was thought that a man should do a man's work and a woman, a woman's. Even in ancient Rome, same-sex marriages were not allowed because it was thought that the woman should remain submissive to the man. Marriage roles were reconsidered with the liberation of women. This brought marriage to its present state in western countries—an optional, almost exclusively business union.

One gets the feeling that while religion, morals, and the family previously functioned to maintain order in society, when society could provide a strong, effective police force, the need for the family to function as such disappeared. Freedom is more characteristic of western states, while medieval laws that do not permit homosexual love rule in the East. However, I read with some surprise in the last issue of the magazine *Le Figaro* that sex change operations are allowed in Iran. Khomeini permitted them almost forty years ago.

The *Los Angeles Times* printed the following quote, "Permission for a sex change is not an approval of homosexuality. We are against homosexuality," said Muhammed Makhdi Kariminia, the spiritual leader of the holy city of Kum, one of the principal protectors of the use of hormones and surgical operations for sex change. "But we announced that if a homosexual wants to change sex, then that option is open for him." It cannot be said that a sex change in Iran is easy. The

Islamic Republic remains a traditional conservative society where the atmosphere of severe judgments and strict customs prevails. Spiritual leaders can hardly force a mother to wish that her son became a woman or to influence coworkers to tolerate it. The government's reaction is also ambivalent. Certain members vociferate as before against sex changes.

Iran is not the only Muslim country warming up to sex change but cautious about homosexuality. The Court of Kuwait recently decided that a twenty-nine-year-old man who had changed sex could live legally as a woman. This decision was later repealed by a higher court, but it caused heated debates in that country, where homosexuality is taboo.

In Saudi Arabia, an Islamic court upheld the right of an heir claiming the inheritance received by the sons although he had had an operation to become a woman. Even Al Azkhar, the ancient education center of Sunnites in Cairo, issued in the 1990s a religious edict approving a sex change in certain instances. But not one Muslim society approaches the problem with as much openness as Shiite Iran. The Ayatollah Khomeini signed laws approving a sex change forty years ago.

If a man or woman wants to change sex, assuming that they got someone else's body, considered Khomeini, they must be allowed to change the body. Nothing is said in the Koran about a sex change. That means there is no basis to consider the operation prohibited. Before Khomeini, several Islamic edicts allowed sex changes for hermaphrodites. But nobody allowed a sex change without anatomical anomalies.

Even if such regimes are agreeable to a sex change if it does not destroy the stability of society, it indicates that purely practical interests of the state are involved in adopting such laws, rather than moral reasons, and the current crumbling of customs can be explained by the strengthening of state power, under which there is no longer the need to maintain order using unreliable moral restraints. Now population in western countries is effectively restrained by the fear of prison, which the effectiveness of the police and the low level of corruption make practically unavoidable. This is sufficient in the states' opinion.

A state by definition is sexless and amoral. It does not care who marries whom or who sleeps with whom. The goal of the state is to maintain stability and expand power. Because the sex and violence industry brings in huge legal profits, its perpetrators have significant influence over any government. These industries enrich the state treasury and invigorate the economy, but mainly, they distract the attention of the masses from social problems.

In many states, they are even talking about legalizing prostitution and narcotics. Even in the Netherlands, marijuana is still not legal. The Netherlands' policy on narcotics is geared toward harm reduction. The goal is to eradicate use of narcotics and limit the risk and harm they engender. This addresses both those that use narcotics and their environment.

In Holland, narcotics, cannabis (marijuana and hashish), and heavy narcotics are clearly differentiated. Based on this differentiation, the possession of cannabis for personal use (less than 30 g) is considered a civil violation. The goal of such a policy is the separation of the markets for heavy narcotics and cannabis (which is sold under controlled circumstances in coffee shops). The sale of cannabis in coffee shops (maximum 5 g per person per day) is considered a minor violation and not prosecuted.

The goal is to limit contact of cannabis users with heavy narcotics. If a cannabis user buys it from an illegal dealer, the probability of his encountering heavy narcotics is much greater. Because of the separation of the markets, it became possible to protect the cannabis user from narcotics that (from the viewpoint of health care) are much more dangerous. The widely held belief that marijuana is sold legally in the Netherlands is erroneous. All narcotics are forbidden in the Netherlands. This is one example of a "gray area" that includes illegal immigrants and other officially forbidden, but allowed in practice, phenomena.

Returning to the involvement of governments in the spread of violence on the screen, we find a fact that is surprising at first glance. The good of an individual is of no interest to a state. Despite the fact that an individual, as Rousseau stated, gives his self, his rights, and his freedom to the power of the

state, he receives at best a concern for the society as a whole. Any state can ignore the freedom and life of an individual. There is nothing to say about such triviality as a TV program. If you do not like it, do not watch and do not let children watch, says the state. Each film is given a rating — one with a break of the hand, another with a break of the head. In another, they use bad language — but with good intentions. The state, when not necessary, is exceedingly attentive.

Society must rely on itself in this situation. The position can be changed if the demand for violent and sexually oriented products decreases. Even now, social movements opposing the spread of violence and depravity are appearing. Despite the fact that the state is satisfied with its position, families worry that the level of aggression increases their children's probability of winding up in prison. Here, the interests of the family and the state diverge. Bringing up a child in the modern world has become a complicated endeavor. The schools and TV are running out of strength to make of him a moral monster. It is not easy to oppose such a force.

Pursuing post-industrial goals, the state tries to destroy the institution of the family with its propaganda about premarital sexual relations. The husband becomes one in a long chain of boyfriends and the wife, the twentieth girlfriend. The American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released results of research carried out for the US government. It involved 11,000 women aged from fifteen to forty-four years. The results are curious. It was found that couples who did not live together before marriage had a better chance of remaining married. Marriages made while young, with little money, without religious convictions, and by couples whose parents are divorced fell apart more often. Meanwhile, sociologists confirmed that the chances of staying married were much greater for an unofficial civil marriage. Three of four women are married by the age of thirty, but many of these marriages fall apart. Overall, 43% of marriages do not last for fifteen years.

How can long-term relationships be discussed when the institution of dating is forced on children barely eleven to thirteen years old by movies, the Internet, and even in school? It is

unregulated and no one knows what happens in these relationships. The display of sexual scenes with minors is prohibited. Minors and their parents must guess what happens behind the scenes. If I am thirteen years old, is it time to lose my virginity or should I wait?

Society is starting to oppose the resulting situation. A tendency has recently appeared to advertise the retention of virginity until marriage. Science is not an objective source on this subject. Psychologists, sociologists, and psychiatrists follow the style of thinking and values of their era. At the start of the nineteenth century, much was written about the dangers and negative consequences of an early sex life, and few paid attention to the neurotic features of the romantic personality, with its exaltation, mysticism, and the impossibility of simple personal relationships, including sexual ones. On the other hand, in the second half of the twentieth century, the pathogenic aspects of non-communication and sexual frigidity were emphasized. Any extremes are bad. It is rigid and thoughtless to sweep all people under one label. "The biggest possible mistake in this area is the suggestion that all other people are exactly like me and, if not, then they should become such...No sexual rules, laws, or ideals encompass equally the introvert and extrovert, the neurotic and stable individual; one man's food is another man's poison. Psychiatric health begins with this understanding." (J. Wilson, *Psychology of Sex*)

Society is capable of self-regulation. The existence of a ban encourages society to oppose it. When the ban is lifted, interest begins to wane after a certain flash. Next, the situation stabilizes. Such tendencies can be seen in past examples, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this book.

People tend to assume that an existing situation will last. However, we can conclude that all processes are cyclic. Many researchers do not consider the potential for self-regulation. This is especially true when discussing human society. Therefore, it can be proposed that problems and deviations will, in the future, become balanced. The unbridled ferocity on-screen may continue to elicit a negative reaction from society, decreasing the demand for such a product. Because the goal of movie and TV magnates

is money and not the perversion of the planet's population, and because society, voting with money, decreases the sales of products it finds distasteful, a tendency toward reduced violence in movies may eventually be seen. Recently, there have been some very profitable films in which no one is killed and nobody attacks anyone or even curses. Viewers will be able to more freely select tasteful programs as TV and the Internet continue to fuse. This will strengthen existing positive tendencies. A ban on movies containing violence and advertising promiscuity will only heighten interest and repeat the cycle.

Aggression and the sex drive are natural needs inherited by man through evolution. Unfortunately, bans change little. The ability to obtain release of aggressive and sexual energy as sublimation in cyberspace will decrease its manifestation in reality, however paradoxical this sounds. Increasing the severity of punishments and improving the quality of virtual reality will recalibrate the human temperament toward peaceful sublimation and away from acts covered by articles of the criminal code.

However, classical Satanism in the historical perspective includes not only violence and depravity, but also the cult of witchcraft. How can the popularity of the Harry Potter books and films be explained? The fact that they are written and filmed according to old standards of good and bad does not answer the question. It complicates it. We forget that the principal protagonists are witches and wizards and simple people without magical powers are disdainfully called "muggles" or "people incapable of magic."

What about other positive modern heroes? Batman, a man dressed in a black cape. Is this not reminiscent of the classical image of Satan? However, this hero is positive. And Spiderman, the man-spider? What about Catwoman? Why not a butterfly? Why not a rabbit? Why do they pick animals and insects associated with the cult of Satan? The bat, spider, and cat are symbols of the dark forces.

However, the balance between good and bad has remained as before, as a hundred years ago, as thousand years ago. Maybe the quantitative scale on which good and bad operate has changed, but the ratio has remained unchanged and even

shifted toward the good. Life for most people, especially in developed countries, has become easier. The length and quality of life has changed significantly for the better. The daily world, with rare exceptions, is not reminiscent of the kingdom of Satan, despite the increase of violence and depravity. Unfortunately, we do not have statistics from past centuries because many acts of violence in those centuries were not considered crimes. The death penalty has also been banned in many countries.

Perhaps, when talking about the use of symbols that contradict Christianity, we are actually talking about the symbolic reaction to prohibitions of Christianity, which are weakening everywhere. The unwavering loyalty of the pope and the blow to the Catholic Church's authority by the priest-pedophiles indicate that the pope is trying to raise the popularity of the Roman Catholic Church through his pronouncements. This has been very successful. The new pope began his term with a visit to a synagogue and a trip to Germany, where the pontiff welcomed a crowd of his countrymen, among which were many youths. The pope himself was once a member of the Hitler Youth organization. Despite this surrealistic illustration, there is hope that the talk is only about form. What the Catholic Church did during the inquisition raised doubts about its reputation. So being a member of Hitlerism, especially in his distant, 'innocent' youth, hardly does harm.

Mankind is still very young. If modern civilization is represented as the life of an individual, then our civilization is about sixteen to seventeen years old. Look at this table:

Age of child	Corresponding years of development of civilization	Characteristics and skills of child (mankind)
Birth	450-550 CE	Baby separated from umbilical cord (Greco-Roman civilization)
1-3 years	500-900 CE	Learns to walk, uses the toilet. Does not yet see differences between himself and others. All conflicts resolved by force.

3-6 years	900-1400 CE	Preschool years. Learns to read and write. Plays with toys as before. Favorite game, knights.
6-9 years	1400-1700 CE	Youngest school classes, basics of mathematics. Continues to work out relationships with fights.
9-13 years	1700-1900 CE	Begins to play with electronics, smokes, and experiments with narcotics. Works out relationships as before with fights.
13-18 years	1900-2050 CE	Begins to take an active interest in sex. Plays with prohibited toys. Success in school, progress in natural sciences and physics. Lags in humanities. Misses physical education classes. Seen in especially violent acts. Recorded several trips to the police. Fights less but often with self-mutilation. Intentional, self-inflicted cuts found on his body. Principal danger is attempted suicide.

If you have a good imagination and much free time, you can continue this table.

A parallel can be made by comparing the flash of depravity to similar phenomena accompanying the decline of the Roman Empire. However, it is better to take the present situation as a sign of the appearance of freedom and the approaching maturity of modern society. The thought that modern civilization is a teenager is more palatable to many of us than the confirmation that Satanism has conquered the world. Thus, each of us will gain an understanding of its current and future quirks and placate its parents, Greco-Roman philosophers, so that they pay no attention. Another century will come, and you will not recognize it. Our civilization will grow up and be filled with the energy of a young man.

What can we, the next lost generation, do? Wait while mankind matures? It is impossible to shield our children from the evil of this world, pent up within us as natural instincts and tendencies. The way out consists of moderation, the ability to distinguish good from bad, and a relaxed attitude toward the imperfections of the environment.

CHAPTER 20. POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF FUTURE PHILOSOPHY

Definition of philosophy

The expediency of being a philosopher is as controversial as ever in the modern world, where the absolute idol is financial might. Philosophy does not earn money, and therefore, is of little interest to the modern person.

Accusations of the uselessness of philosophy are not new. Even Aristotle told the story of a philosopher-astronomer who became bored of being poor and his science not making him rich. He applied his philosophical and astronomical conclusions and found a way to become rich easily and quickly. Thus, “he proved that philosophers can easily become rich if they wish but this is not the objective that drives them.”*

Philosophy is a rational analysis and recommendation for application of various illusions.

The concept of “illusion” in this definition does not have a negative connotation, as does the generally accepted definition of illusion as an erroneous mental representation (erroneous speculation). The absolute truth does not exist and even if it did, it would be impossible to prove because it could always be proposed that he who proved it did not have the complete information required for convincing proof. Consider an omnipotent and omniscient God. Even he could not prove to himself that his omnipotence and omniscience were not a figment of his imagination. If even God cannot know the absolute truth,

* Aristotle. *Politics*. I 4, 1259 a 9-18//Aristotle. Works. Vol. 4. P. 397.

how can we? Nobody needs the absolute truth because it is an absurd concept.

Literature and philosophy

Michel Gourinat remarked correctly that philosophy is the search for knowledge, recognizing itself, and that its first question is one of its own nature.* Philosophical concepts are expounded upon by expressing them using the literary language. Therefore, philosophy uses the written or spoken literary tradition as the only means of expression.

Philosophy is related to literature, not only by formal signatures, but also through its basis because a philosophical work is an expression of the individuality of the author. Despite the fact that literary critics are unwilling to admit that philosophy is literature, philosophy has no other means for expressing its ideas. Philosophy must be separated from literature by identifying a special type of publication reminiscent of a scientific article.

Philosophical works should follow strict rules for writing scientific reports and include clearly separated sections such as the summary, background, dictionary of terms used in the work as they are defined by the author, introduction explaining the essence of the problem, statement of the philosophical question and its proposed resolution, discussion, rebuttal, and conclusions. Points included in the philosophical work can be much broader, but philosophy as a science needs to use a simple and clear language—in which, for example, laws of states are written. Then, separate literary works can be used to popularize the content of a similar work. However, it is necessary to have a main text written in a strictly legal style using great effort to overcome spurious points and ambiguities. Plays on words, flowery phrases, parables, allegories, and a paradoxical style all should be removed from a philosophical work.

Thus, **literature and philosophy should be separate from each other.** By such a definition of philosophy, Plato,

* Gourinat, Michel. *De la Philosophie*. Hachette livre, 1994.

Montaigne, Pascal, Nietzsche, and many others are not philosophers. Perhaps if their works were rewritten in a clear scientific and philosophical style, people would be able to breathe easier because mixing literature and philosophy enables the author to defer to poetic diversions instead of clearly expounding his ideas, leaving an endless expanse for interpretation.

Science and philosophy

According to Einstein, “Most fundamental scientific ideas are in essence simple and can be expressed in a language understandable to all.”* The same is true regarding basic philosophical ideas.

Regardless of the imperfection of human language, in certain areas, a high degree of accuracy of expression, aimed at minimizing ambiguity has been achieved. An effort was made at the place where a person’s personal interests, such as well-being, freedom, and life, are placed. The legal language should also be recognized as accurate. It was noticed long ago that definitions could be understood differently and sometimes in diametrically opposed directions. Because of this, every law usually contains definitions of the terms included in it. This should also be a required criterion of any philosophical work.

Philosophy should be separate from science because philosophy does not have a basis for proof based on experiment. Science should be separated from philosophy, religion, politics, and scientists themselves.

Independent experts, ignorant of the meaning and goals of the stated experiment, should carry out any scientific experiment, and the data they produce should be partially or completely blocked from their interpretation. Such a practice is widely used in clinical investigations where an investigator, a “free-willed clinical practitioner,”* is separated from the sponsor that planned the investigation. Thus, there is no question of interference with

* Einstein A. *Evolution of Physics*. 1956. Taken from the preface to the French edition.

* See: International Conference of Harmonization – Good Clinical Practice Guidelines.

the subjectivity of the researcher. An extra effort was made when the lives of millions of people and human society are at risk; then, the use of the “double blind,” in which neither the researcher or patient know if a drug or a placebo is used, is obligatory. In any case, laboratory research is most often carried out in independent laboratories.

In modern science, distortion and outright falsification of results occurs on massive scales. Thus, the need to publish results, obtain positive results, and prove certain theories should not weigh on those involved with the scientific research.

The practice in modern science whereby another group of scientists repeats an experiment and confirms or disproves the data of the original discoverer is ineffective because the control group of scientists may express subjectivity aimed at confirming or rejecting the original results.

Another example of the quality of scientific research is applied science that operates for the common good—for example, the semiconductor industry. Neither political motives nor religious opinions affect these developments. The only thing of interest to such laboratories is the creation of new effective production technologies for cell phones, computers, etc. The criterion of success for such scientific activity is the practical results. Basic research should be separated from a focus on the result—the proof or rejection of any theory. It should be planned for collecting information. A good example is the project for decoding the human genome.

That which occurs in the modern scientific world differs little from medieval skullduggery, despite the fact that modern science has exclusive technical resources and accumulated, factual knowledge.

Because basic science is the mistress of the state and private donations, scientists must spend time seeking grants awarded based on society’s political, economic, and religious interests, and if modern science must prove the again myth that the earth is on turtle’s back, it will.

Thus, **philosophy must be separate from science, and basic science from politics, religion, and targeted funding.**

In areas with a direct threat to human life and social health, people have found more or less effective methods for making research objective and controlled. The sad state of objectivity in science affects human life and social health the same, if not more, than the unethical conduct of clinical research. However, this link is not obvious and is therefore widely ignored. Philosophy based on the results of such science proves that whatever is paid for cannot be objective. Philosophy must be held at a distance from scientific experiments, and their objectivity and the value of their interpretation must be questioned a priori.

Religion and philosophy

Religion should be separate from God because in most instances, it is unrelated to him. Religions are a collection of national traditions aimed at the moral self-regulation of human communities. However, religions in the modern world, as for the whole of human history, are exclusively the tools of geopolitics on a general level and an alternative to psychotherapy on an individual level. Thus, religion has no relationship to God, and these two concepts in philosophy should be strictly separated.

Religion is a sociopolitical phenomenon that should be studied from the viewpoint of sociology and political science and viewed as philosophy only as much as philosophy affects the discussion of these sciences.

Art and philosophy

Art is based on esthetics. To define the relation of philosophy to art, the etymology of the word “esthetics” must be understood. Esthetics should be defined as a theory of sensory reception. Kant used this term exclusively in this sense.*

The definition of art was extremely broad in the past. The word “art” in French and English was formerly used to mean “ability, occupation, property of the individual.”

* Kant I. Critique of pure reason. I. Part 1. § 1// Kant I. Works: in 6 Vol., 1964. Vol. 3, P. 128-129.

Therefore, only the term “pure art,” which is separate from the manifestation of any trade, should be discussed. Based primarily on the fundamental contraposition of technical production and artistic creativity, Kant’s esthetics define elegant art as the “art of genius.”* Therefore, pure art is separated from the production of its fruits because this is already becoming a trade. Kant defines pure art as the most perfect knowledge that is incapable of quickly being incorporated into an esthetically valued form.

Art has no direct relationship to philosophy because it has no independent philosophical meaning and is the result of an excessive exchange of ideas. Art in its practical expression is part trade, piecework, or industrial production of consumer products controlled by demand, or in its “pure” manifestation, part knowledge expressed through language, and therefore, belonging to literature. Art is evaluated on the esthetic taste of the evaluator when the esthetic satisfaction caused by the beauty begins to differ from a simple sensory satisfaction.

Is there a difference between sensory and esthetic satisfaction on a physiological level? If there is such a difference, then viewing an erotic picture in *Playboy* and the statue of *Venus de Milo* should excite different sections of the brain. If there is no difference in principle, and the observer in both instances sees only an image of an attractive naked body, then the separate principle of “esthetic” satisfaction can be questioned. If the brain’s reactions to the erotic picture and reading aloud one’s favorite poetry or listening to one’s favorite music are compared, the purity of the experiment will be compromised because the centers receiving music, poetry, and erotic pictures are located in different regions of the brain. The channel for receiving information about the picture is visual, whereas for poetry or music it is audile.

Metaphysics

Aristotle defines metaphysics as the area of knowledge located on the other side of physics. If physics deals with the

* Kant I. Critique of the ability for judgment. § 46//Kant I. Works. Vol 5, P. 323.

sensual world, then metaphysics is involved with everything outside our sensual perception. (This is true even now. Try to ask a scientist deprived of sight, hearing, smell, and touch to carry out any physical experiment except the verification of the law of universal gravitation, which he will prove by plopping onto the floor after taking a few steps.)

If metaphysics is located beyond the limits of human senses, then the world should be divided into four uneven parts:

- The part of the world evident to itself and therefore accessible for study through sensory perception;
- The part of the world indirectly evident to itself and accessible for study through sensory perception using indirect characteristics;
- The part of the world not evident to itself either directly or indirectly and inaccessible through sensory perception even using multiple amplifying powerful instruments, but which is susceptible to our mental analysis;
- The part of the world that is unreal but also susceptible to our mental analysis.

Metaphysics concerns the two last parts, which are inaccessible to direct or indirect study through senses, and accessible only to mental analysis not based on sensory proof.

The boundaries between these parts are flexible. For example, the discussion about planets around other stars could be thought of as metaphysics because mankind could not determine their existence using either direct or indirect sensory measurements. However, more than a hundred planets have been found through new indirect methods. They may be directly observed in the near future. Who knows? Maybe tomorrow instruments will appear that can take a photograph of our soul, and this ephemeral substance will move from the area of metaphysics into study by conventional sensory perception.

The Kant metaphysics project “is nothing other than a systematized inventory of everything we know thanks to pure

reason.”* The Kant definition of a priori elements of knowledge makes it possible to study metaphysics. Physics is the factual analysis of experiment limited by the capability of modern experimental methods. Thus, physics bogs down in complicated dilemmas where comprehensive answers to the fundamental questions of philosophy are difficult because technical limitations, the purity of the experiment, and the objectivity of the researcher will always raise doubt. **In metaphysics, there is no need to limit reason with the aforementioned difficulties, making metaphysics an excellent tool for philosophy, rational analysis, and recommendations for the application of various illusions.**

Because the world consists of four parts, as mentioned above, and physics can study only a small part of it, metaphysics is required to obtain a more complete picture of the world in terms of the illusion that satisfies philosophy.

Moral principles

Attempts to quantify the meanings of good and bad are insubstantial. Good and bad can be addressed only relative to the point of view of the examiner. However, universal meanings of good and bad based on the Maslow pyramid of needs can be derived. Bad is when these needs are unsatisfied; good is when they are.

If two individuals satisfy their needs without bothering each other, then between them there may not arise conflicts; therefore, those relationships can result in bad as well as good, which also have psychological charge because it places the individual receiving the good in a dependent position and forces compensation of the received good by a corresponding good.

Thus, if all needs of an individual corresponding to the Maslow needs pyramid are satisfied, he will be in a state of sensible happiness. It is important to follow only if, in satisfying

* Kant I. Critique of pure reason. Preface to the first edition//Kant I. Works. Vol. 3, P. 80.

his needs, he did this at the expense of not satisfying the needs of another individual.

Keeping in mind the problem of limited resources, the following system of satisfying needs is suggested.

Satisfaction of basic needs

Food

It is possible to satisfy the food requirements of all mankind by producing necessary food stocks and imparting to them useful, balanced properties and excellent gustatory quality. Even now, western countries discard enough food to feed all the inhabitants of the earth. Gluttony in developed countries is tied to commercials for various food products. The population uses three to four times more food than required and suffers catastrophic obesity. Reasonable food education and a redistribution of resources may satisfy the growing needs of the whole earth.

Animal slaughter creates a serious moral and ethical problem. Why does man consider it his right to take the life of creatures in close proximity to him on the ladder of evolutionary development? And yet, in protecting animals, millions starve.

The solution is simple. The growth of cow muscle tissue under laboratory conditions has already been started, and it must continue to be developed. Colossal plantations growing meat products can be established, and herds of domestic cattle can be gradually reduced by natural attrition and limiting births. Over time, the gustatory quality of cultivated meat products will gradually improve.

Housing

A new approach to constructing housing is needed. First, the Internet revolution should be used to make most social functions virtual so that large cities can be resettled to expanses of vacant land. Cheap methods of raising simple and thermally insulated housing using local resources (wind power, solar power, water resources) must be developed so that service lines are not spread over many kilometers. Cheap and reliable means of air transportation must be developed.

These measures will help resolve the housing crisis in large cities and halt the development of new lands. Countries with enormous amounts of free space will be able to settle it with immigrants that require nothing from the state except a parcel of land because they will make and receive most of his working relationships and services virtually.

Problems with cleaning should be solved at the design level of the construction, using “self-vacuuming floors” or waste-purifying nanotechnology. Furnishings and decorations will be created using screen technology, by which the wall of the house will show images of external architectural design. Decoration of the walls, floors, and ceilings will be produced the same way.

Health care

Further development of the pharmaceutical industry, nanotechnologies, and stem cell cloning will make early detection and treatment of diseases possible. Furthermore, a person will be able to strengthen his muscles, protect himself from injury, and increase the activity of sense organs and the brain.

Sex

A life with all needs met reduces a person’s dependence on sexual relations, and the electronic virtual world can relieve many of the demands. However, the importance of natural love is in no way diminished. A person should not suffer violence in the family or moral pressure due to the presence of a sexual partner. The choice of cohabitation and formation of a family should be made based on higher considerations and not trivial sexual needs that scientific progress will be able to satisfy just as effectively as through natural means.

Alcohol, smoking, and narcotics

These are ineffective and dangerous means for regulating one’s mood and escaping real life. All three evils result from social activity and commercial or street propaganda, and should die out with sufficient physical separation and minimal negative social life. The need for alcohol and narcotics will disappear with greater accessibility to effective pharmacological and electronic behavior modification.

Healthy lifestyle

Balanced sporting activities regulated by computers, the need for which will be instilled in childhood, will significantly improve individuals' well-being.

Accumulation of money

People behave like squirrels, storing in their nest everything that is not tied down. Most benefits need to be re-evaluated using a shift into virtual reality. Anyone, wealthy or not, using computers with the same amount of memory, can create as many Word files as he wants. Thus, just as created and deleted files are depreciated, material possessions and luxury items should be depreciated because appearance is an illusion easily reproduced by electronic means.

The accumulation of money should become senseless, like the accumulation of worthless files. The entire population must be re-educated.

Need for aggression

The need for aggression should be redirected into creative energy, but prohibitions limit us. Aggressive computer games must be used wisely, given to those for whom such a program acts as a means for sublimation. Such programs should not be available to those on whom they may stimulate physical aggression. Psychological tests can easily determine the difference.

Satisfaction of needs for safety***Protection from imaginary dangers***

Most people fear imaginary dangers. The decrease of criminal activity from a shift to virtual relationships, and the prohibition of acts of violence in the media and over the Internet will cause a healthy population's fear level to drop sharply. People suffering neurotic changes will be quickly diagnosed and given the opportunity for pharmacological treatment.

Protection from actual dangers

The increased effectiveness of health care, reduced crowding, safer house construction (nonflammable materials, sprinklers, avoidance of harmful substances), and the prohibition of weapons and fighting will satisfy the need for safety. Robbery will be reduced because most valuables will belong to the virtual world, and criminal activity will be almost nonexistent. And, if all needs of the criminals are satisfied, their motivation for criminal activity will be greatly reduced.

Criminals will not be isolated and crowded into prisons where they are subject to Darwinian survival of the fittest and released either broken or even more criminal. House arrest will be adequate and protect society from the criminal while the criminal undergoes virtual re-education.

For armed conflicts, residents, perhaps together with their easily assembled and disassembled houses, will be evacuated to safe countries. Only those with the urge to fight will remain at the site of the conflict. People will be monitored at the exit so that no one leaves with weapons.

Lie detectors will become more powerful. A person will not be able to hide his intentions. Those thinking about killing each other will reveal themselves, be caught by military robots, and placed under house arrest. Civilians will not be used for blackmail or kept as prisoners.

Need for love

The Internet of the near future will be able to satisfy most of our needs for love. Videos and holograms will create the illusion of normal communication with friends, loved ones, and relatives. The hour is near when everyone will be able to choose his favorite appearance and clothes and present that image of himself to his friends and companions because everything is possible in cyberspace. This reduces the need to manufacture expensive clothes, cosmetics, and perfume. It will not replace ordinary communication, but such communication will be reduced to that needed for the conception and upbringing of children. Thus, a person is converted into a mass of ideas and thoughts, not held back by material limitations.

Need for acceptance in society

Virtual communication presents limited opportunities for societal acceptance. Because most people's living conditions will be about equal, free communication will be practically limitless. The Internet will supplant any attempt at aggressive behavior in video forums and chats. Furthermore, education and prohibition on aggressive films will reduce the level of aggression and increase one's chances of being accepted by society. For those who develop serious problems, "virtual" friends who accept them for what they are will be created.

The modern lifestyle is no longer justified and only followed by habit and the lack of reasonable reorganization. Eventually all these changes will happen.

Need for knowledge

The proliferation of the Internet will make schools and other educational institutions unnecessary, although mental activity will be a required subject for every individual. People will study their whole lives. However, the curriculum will cease to be the accumulation of knowledge and focus on improving one's ability to find, classify, and analyze it. A person will be converted from a memory chip to a professor.

Most people will be involved in virtual labor operations that require their direct analytical capability, controlled and supported by computers. Others will be occupied with the arts or the advancement of science.

Need for esthetics

As already stated, electronic devices will satisfy esthetic needs for music, house decoration, furnishings, accessories, and clothes. The illusion of space and the view capturing the soul from windows will raise the esthetic satisfaction of life to an unprecedented level. Recognition of that reality is just as illusory, as virtual reality will provide satisfaction in any lifestyle at practically no cost.

Need for self-actualization

This need is still the least satisfied in the modern world. Only ten percent of people are self-actualized. Mankind does not sufficiently understand the importance of self-actualization, but our biggest disappointments are not from hunger, sexual deprivation, danger, hate, illiteracy, or a lack of esthetic beauty. Problems arise because of those who are ready to kill millions of people for the sake of self-actualization—a phenomenon of Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Saddam, and Bin Laden.

Society should figure out how to use unlimited electronic resources to make self-actualization possible for the most of the population. Having undergone self-actualization, people will strive to help others to become self-actualized. They will become a self-serving organizational structure. Only the initial push is needed. The organization of such a system would be preserved and utilized on a common human level.

A suitable education aimed at a search for an “existential design” is needed, about which Sartre spoke.

Space and time

Time is only an illusion of human consciousness. Space may also be an illusion. For example, during a computer teleconference with a companion on the other side of the earth, how do you measure the distance to his nose? Your sense organs tell you this distance is about thirty cm, while the true distance may be 12,000 km. What is the actual distance? What distance makes sense? You behave as if the companion is nearby—and this is with far from ideal communication methods. In the future, the quality of holographic images will create a picture indistinguishable from reality.

Using the most modern means of communication and computer operation, many actions are reversible. Pressing “Ctrl + Z” on the keyboard returns us to the previous step and even more strongly pierces our reality. We can make fewer fatal errors.

Imagine that your companion is a computer program and that you angered it somehow. It would be worthwhile to take a step backwards. And you turn back time. Virtual copies of people

can help alleviate nostalgia for broken relationships and the departed. Create a virtual image of your childhood home. Decorations will be replaced with the push of a button. Interiors will be changed rather frequently. Yesterday, the interior was a Versailles palace; today, a comfortable village hut. The illusion of free space and infinite halls is also easily created.

Space and time will cease to have meaning when people convert to the virtual way of life. There will be no need to go on most trips because they will have become meaningless. If you want to visit the Louvre, press a button, and your room will be transformed into a Louvre hall.

Because trips lose meaning, energy costs will be reduced. Flights into space will become meaningless because it will be possible to visit any heavenly body of the solar system without making dangerous journeys. Human civilization will become self-sufficient and satisfied without unneeded flights to distant stars because in virtual reality, this will all be possible without expending energy. Is it so important to know what lifeless slopes look like on a planet rotating around a distant star? In virtual reality, man can miniaturize himself and land on the nucleus of a hydrogen atom.

Even the search for intellectual life will become meaningless because those who want to meet with them will be able to do this in virtual reality without affecting people who do not want to meet with them. The same technical principles that create computer games can be used to create a virtual reality that will solve all human problems. Perhaps this is why we have never met extraterrestrials from more advanced civilizations. They have probably been happily sitting in their own homes on their own native planets in their virtual reality. What is the difference if they assume we have three legs and seven ears? Soon, looks will cease to have significance. Everyone in virtual reality will be able to look like a talking chair if he wants.

What we see now in a person is an attractive external body, but that is only the surface of a person. Within is the stinking reality. However, if we are content to observe only the outside, why not go further and see a person as he would want us to see him?

People complain, not about the use of virtual reality, but about the technical specifications; i.e., the image is not realistic enough or there is no aroma, feeling, or dimension. This is all correctable. Soon, it will be possible to create a virtual reality more real than the actual, which is nothing more than an illusion impinging on our sense organs.

Philosophy of creation and the soul

There is no reason to seek all-encompassing theories of creation. The philosophy of the soul should recommend illusions in which man would take a worthy place in a mysterious universe. We should concentrate on a plan for data collection and their methodical analysis, regardless of one cosmological paradigm or another.

Consciousness

Despite the fact that consciousness is the main definer of personality, it is imperfect. Therefore, its capabilities must be enhanced in every way, using virtual reality.

Language

Language, like consciousness, is an imperfect tool for communication. However, it can be perfected using electronic devices and computers, which is already occurring.

Work

Work doesn't need to be productive in the usual, industrial meaning of the word. The priority for the work of any individual should be the satisfaction of his own needs according to the Maslow pyramid. The second goal of work should be the satisfaction of needs in others, not because of an irrational Christian compassion, but for the practical consideration that if a neighbor is hungry, he will come, take bread from you, and perhaps kill you and burn your house.

The function of laborers should include either the satisfaction of their own needs or those of others, but all routine,

monotonous work should be done by computers and automated systems.

Freedom

The freedom of choice should be limited. No one should encourage the freedom to be unhappy or aggressive. Unhappy (unsatisfied) and aggressive people interfere in the lives of other people. Therefore, **it is every person's duty to satisfy fully his needs—but not at the expense of other people—and to help satisfy the needs of others when his own needs are satisfied.**

Freedom can be only conscious and positive. A person should not have the freedom to self-destruct and inflict physical or moral harm to others. The immigration problem will be resolved, nation-states will be weakened, and after living conditions are standardized across the world, we'll see the rise of world management systems. Self-regulation will be developed and simplified in a virtual world.

Any person will be able to construct a virtual empire. It should not be condemned but improved and advertised because there is no shorter route to freedom than through the Internet and similar systems.

History

History should be re-examined in light of the aforementioned basic concepts. This may lead to the recognition that not all events in history were exactly as recorded. History has little meaning because it is a collection of poorly verified facts, the majority of which is distorted beyond recognition. History should be separated from politics and religion because most geopolitical conflicts rest on historical facts, actual or fabricated.

Mankind must recognize that most of its history was spent in diapers of dubious cleanliness. Historical facts should not be inflated. They should be studied from the viewpoint of historical science without throwing a shadow on modern events. The manipulation of historical facts for political purposes should be categorically condemned.

Geopolitics

Only a fraction of mankind is ready to develop according to the principles of the philosophy of the future. However, the Internet can expand this circle. The world will long carry the charge of hatred and aggression and the inertia of medieval envy and cannibalistic ferocity. But the sooner western civilization begins to convert to the virtual way of life, the less envy it will elicit from nations whose development is much slower. Furthermore, it will be possible to improve the standard of living of underdeveloped nations by rational use of material resources freed up by the conversion to a virtual civilization.

God

God is everything capable and incapable of existing. Therefore, we can resolve the contradiction arising above—that even God cannot prove to himself that he is God. God is everything and nothing because that which exists and can exist falls under the definition of everything, and that which cannot exist, correspondingly, falls under the definition nothing. Therefore, such a God will prove nothing to himself.

CHAPTER 21. OH, HOW MANY WONDERFUL DISCOVERIES...

The ability to think is exceedingly rare. Maybe you do not believe it but I spend most of my life not thinking. We wander around like sleep walkers, now and then bumping into each other and rubbing each other's nose.

Either thinking requires a special expenditure of energy or the thought process is somehow harmful to health. This is strange because the results of the thought process are usually advantageous. Why is it hard to think if this ability enabled us to survive without fangs or claws?

Why do we not like to engage our only evolutionary advantage—our mind? It is unbelievable that man has not carved out special time for thinking. For taking a shower, he did; for wolfing down food in chunks, he remembered and even invented

breakfast, lunch, and supper. Why not set aside special time for thinking? It is worthwhile to set aside some time, even just a little, for thinking. We could make many wonderful discoveries. It is worthwhile to contemplate what exactly you are doing with your life. And the discovery will not make you wait long. People spend time at least once a day taking care of personal hygiene so that we are not embarrassed. Why is it not that a person who does not think for several weeks is just as repulsive as one who does not wash himself?

Ben Gurion said that thinking is an art requiring much effort; few do it, and then only in rare instances. What other wonderful discoveries does simple thinking promise us? Permit me.

First discovery: Life is like an unpretentious, free-spirited woman with romantic inclinations. She is agreeable, for a small sum, to being whatever you wish. There is no set plan, be you happy or unhappy. Simply give life a cheap ring from the jewelry department and do whatever you see fit with her. If you want, you can sincerely love her and pledge your heart and soul. However, life, no matter how docile she seems, is fickle. You can meet her on the street in a seedy district and suffer a setback, not out of an evil intent, but because of the nature of her wandering soul. Remembering with whom you are dealing, you can surround your life with love and the comfort of home while she drops her street smarts.

Second discovery: The process and not the result is important in life. Therefore, try to make it pleasant and not be too disturbed at the results. Many are out of our control. It is better to concentrate on the stream of life. Pick a direction and go—but only happily, singing songs, dancing, and now and then asking, “But where are we going?” Then smugly pat yourself on the back, “We are taking the true road, my friends!”

Third discovery: Everything in life is an illusion. That which we see and hear, smell and touch, is an interpretation by our brain of electrical impulses generated in response to external stimuli. Flies see differently, frogs yet another way. So whose

vision is true? As it turns out, none. Everything in life is a stubborn, relentless illusion. Reality is only the interaction between and within our illusions. That is all that we perceive as reality. It is not necessary to think that nothing exists. Our interpretation of this existence must be an illusion. That's all. Just as there is no point in taking too seriously a magical light throwing visual images on a screen, life should not be taken too seriously.

Fourth discovery: If everything is an illusion, try to select the pleasant and useful ones and to forget and cast aside the harmful, fearful ones. Under the “law of equality of illusions (LEI),” all illusions are equal. This is the whole law. One illusion is no more or less absurd or reasonable than another. Because of this, we were given free will—the freedom to choose illusions. Do you buy broken eggs in the store? You carefully touch each egg, a delicate creation of natural architecture, and put the cracked one into another pack. Apply this simple operation to illusions. Do not pick the cracked, rotten, and broken illusions. Take the fresh, well-formed ones—like a good egg. No one will accuse you of being picky. We are not talking about scrambled eggs, thrown into the garbage and forgotten. We are talking about life and happiness.

Fifth discovery: Do not wait for life to provide good luck. Create it for yourself. We often hear people say that most things in life depend on chance and available opportunities. Many people are convinced that when opportunities present, they do not let them get away. However, the truth is that they do not fully believe because they lose hope and simply say, “Maybe sometime,” after decades of patiently waiting for the golden opportunity. How can you be sure that you are not letting your own opportunity get away? How can you train yourself not to let opportunity escape if good luck is such a rare commodity? People almost certainly cannot recognize opportunity when it knocks on their door. One must learn not to let opportunities slip away. One must recognize them for himself and those around him. Then

they will appear at a given place and time, as does everything that is planned.

Of course, it is an expensive luxury to create opportunities for one's self and others. For example, dream about becoming a great movie director. It is necessary to open a movie studio and record film. Critics who like your film must be found. You are a great director. But from where will the money for the film come? Oh, money, that is no problem. Learn to earn as much as needed by attracting and buying help from others. How? Simple. Start to think in the morning, at lunch, and in the evenings. With time, insights will appear. Do not dwell much on the thought process, or you will remain a homebred thinker. Thinking must also be moderated. Sometimes it is necessary to act. But while you are immersed in the thought process, create an opportunity for yourself; buy a pack of writing paper and write scenes because having a scene usually makes it easier to record a film. Creating opportunities and using the support of your staff, you will eventually be successful.

My only advice, before setting out on this long road, is to ponder well whether you need all this trouble. If so, then go forth boldly, buy the paper, and do not wait for good luck. Create it yourself!

Sixth discovery: Do not get too one-sided. Do not exert too much strength on a single idea. Otherwise, you will crash, fall from orbit around your idea, and not be able to get away from it. It will end with you obsessed, which destroys your family, then damages your psyche, and finally reserves a place for you on a bed in the psychiatric hospital or on a slab in the morgue. Ideas, like anything, are dangerous if dwelled on too much.

Do not try to achieve perfection. Nature does not tolerate perfection and punishes perfectionists. Entertain many ideas and do not let one idea engulf you. Ideological monogamy is contraindicated. Any obsession is tortuous.

Seventh discovery: Do not let passion overtake you. Bridle your passion and make it serve you. Passion is a universal energy. It can drive space ships and encompass continents. Learn

to control your passion, and it will be converted from a supercritical thermonuclear force to an evenly burning flare that lights your path in the darkness.

Eighth discovery: Learn to make the passion of others serve you and your ideas. Hand over to others everything that you no longer want. Do not ask for money to pay for this other work. We have already discussed money. You cannot do everything yourself. If he who decided to build the pyramid of Cheops had not asked for help, he would still be dragging the first stone. Learn to make the illusions of others serve your illusions. Illusions of all countries, unite!

Ninth discovery: Try to surround yourself with good and love because to do this and receive the same in return is surprisingly pleasant.

Tenth discovery: Learn to get to the meat of a question quickly. Do not linger or procrastinate. Be able to understand any initiative honestly and know why you need it. Do not let others tie you to their illusion, especially those who repulse or bore you. Always try to understand the motivation behind other's acts. Many people think aloud because they are used to nobody listening to them. If you listen closely to what people say, you will be able to understand their motivations and predict their actions. The ability to predict and understand another's motive will enable you better to achieve your goals.

Eleventh discovery: Do not struggle with your inadequacies. Try to convert these inadequacies into something of value, avoiding them or including them in the network of your ideas. If a person is lazy, he will hardly be able to compete effectively with you. If a person is stupid, he will hardly be able to outfox you. These inadequacies will become advantages if you learn to use them correctly. Do not give an idiot that which requires wisdom, or a lazy person that which requires strength and heavy labor. A lazy fool is a rare combination. More often than not, fools love to work because they can compensate for

their lack of brilliance. And lazy people are smart and crafty because in order to be a successful deadbeat, one has to be able to open minds.

If you yourself are lazy and stupid, this must be admitted and recognized. Recognize that you are a fool, and you sometimes cease to be such, which unfortunately cannot be said of laziness, the recognition of which does not make you more industrious. However, this is all correctable. Hire a working helper and a wise advisor and rule the world.

Twelfth discovery: Try to extract from every disappointment something that is useful to you or that softens the twists of fate that are inevitable, no matter how clear the sky above your head is. Remember this, but do not let yourself get upset. If you handled problems in the past, you will most likely be able to do so in the future.

These are my wonderful discoveries. Love to think, and you will continue this modest list with your own discoveries. The ability to think is the most valuable gift given by the good Lord. If it sometimes seems to you that he is giving you the finger, remember that this is only a stubborn, relentless illusion.

CHAPTER 22. LANDMARKS FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION

If a ship loses its course, no matter how strong its hull, no matter how great its provisions, and no matter how cohesive its crew, it is doomed to be lost in the vast expanse of the world's oceans. At first, everything on board our imaginary ship will be fine, but with time and understanding that the ship is irrevocably off course, the crew will despair. If the course was properly laid out, even a poorly constructed ship with minimum provisions and a drunken crew will have a chance to reach its goal.

Those who take an uncertain course and do not see beyond daily tactical problems will be convinced that nothing needs to be changed until they figure out that they are doomed. But until then, they label the canaries predicting catastrophe as panicky and predatory because they destabilize the crew. One way or another, a ship needs a course and landmarks.

How should the course of civilization be defined for the ship known as the human community? The conflict between the interests of an individual and society is eternal and irreconcilable. The needs of the individual must be placed on the level of society. Specifically, the hierarchy of needs of Abraham Maslow must be applied to human civilization as a whole and to each community in it separately.

The basic needs of any human society are food, water, shelter, a normal population growth, and basic health care. If these problems are not resolved, nothing can be said about higher needs. If this is the directing principle, we cannot talk about pulling our belts a little tighter in the name of a shining future or the myths of mass self-sacrifice in the name of freedom. The conqueror resists the value of life of his citizens, and hunger and epidemics have no justification. The primary obligation of leaders is to satisfy the physiological needs of the people entrusting their fates to the hands of society.

When the physiological needs of a community are satisfied, effective protection from external and internal destabilizers—criminals, robbers, and terrorists—must be organized. Again, no “higher” idea can justify the disruption of the safety of another community. Protection should be non-aggressive. Isolation, worthy living conditions, and disarming criminals and external enemies is preferred to their destruction because the “killing of the killer” will foster an endless chain of murders, up to mass destruction of the community.

The third level in Maslow’s hierarchy is the need for love. This need can be satisfied by educating the population in the spirit of mutual love and the infusion of love and respect to other communities.

The fourth level of Maslow’s hierarchy addresses esteem. If the three preceding levels are achieved, this one presents no complications because neighboring communities will have no need to challenge their own leadership.

The fifth level is the need for knowledge. Having satisfied the four preceding need levels, a community should orient itself on cognitive activity and effective systems for storage, processing, and thoughtful analysis of information.

The sixth level addresses esthetic needs and includes nurturing esthetic taste and a love for the beautiful.

The seventh level is the achievement of a community's self-actualization. Philosophy schools that help define this "higher" calling must be developed. This idea cannot include inflicting damage to members of the community or other communities.

The highest level is assisting other communities in achieving self-actualization. If we examine a community as mankind, other communities can mean extraterrestrials, if they exist—other types of creatures that exhibit similar thought and consciousness.

Many of you, having read these lines, will brush it off. The next utopia—perhaps the next *harmful* utopia. One way or another, these principles will at least create distinct landmarks. Let them not indicate the means that can be used to achieve them. However, if we try to continue on our ship's course, by using these landmarks, we have a chance to salvage our sailing from a global catastrophe, regardless of the deficiencies in its construction and the silliness of the crew.

THE UNCERTAIN UNIVERSE

A QUEST FOR THE ULTIMATE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

What is Heavenly Wisdom to Us?

So that we should not lead each other astray, we will begin with a clarification: Speaking of heavenly wisdom, I do not mean the religious aspects of our existence.

This book is about my investigations in the area of contemporary knowledge of the universe—that with which the science of cosmology is concerned. The discussions will be seasoned with astrophysics, from which cosmology sprouted, and gently touched with philosophy, without which cosmology would have no special meaning, at least for us simple folks.

Why should the science of cosmology concern us? What does the principle question laid in the basis of this science really mean? On the face of it, not much. And the same could be said of other sciences. We use mobile telephones and computers, not really considering—more accurately, not considering at all—how the microcircuitry works, and many have no idea what is inside these electronic devices. We use the universe like an automobile, without considering the workings of the engine. The universe carries us from birth to death virtually without pause, and insofar as it seems not to miss a beat, normally, we do not try to understand the core of its off that which is not broken.

We are “consumers” of the universe as we are consumers of the services of airline companies. Should we really concern ourselves with how the airplane is constructed, and why it carries us to the end of our journey and does not drop out of the sky in mid-flight?

In the case of the universe, everything is simple. We do not know the time of arrival at the destination airport; therefore, if the universe throws us out of everyday reality and into another world or non-existence (and it is a matter of taste—take your

pick) before the schedule-established time, our complaint would not be quite valid.

For the schedule to us is unknown, and we accept our mortality as a fact. Or perhaps we do not accept our mortality and attempt to forget that the essence of the universe is immutable. Yet even if we try to comprehend the construction of the airline universe, we will remain only mortal. Thus, following from the above statement, the manifestation of our interest in cosmology is not something that is more justified per se than an interest in the workings of a vacuum cleaner.

There is, of course, one more factor that could cause us to take an interest in such an abstract subject, and that factor is none other than simple human curiosity. Like kittens, we stick our noses where they don't belong. But curiosity has its limits, and coming up against strange terminology and unimaginable masses, distances, and temperatures, we look away from this impractical science. We confuse the conceptions of meteorites and galaxies, and focus our curiosity on something simpler and more concrete.

Occasionally, the apocalyptic news of an asteroid that might end human existence grips the world, and for a time the public warms to the celestial sciences, though as before, people confuse astronomy with astrology and cosmology with cosmetology.

In the past, cosmology was inseparable from religion, and therefore interested society to a much larger degree. People discussed questions such as "Does God exist?" or "Whose god is superior?" People's lives were directly affected. Heretics were burned at the stake, and the question concerned not only learned men.

Somewhere at the crossroads of past ages, the direct link between cosmology and religion was lost. Although people continue to kill each other in large numbers with relish for questions of religion, it is hard to imagine that someone today would be executed because of his adherence to a particular cosmological theory.

But what do we hear? The *New York Times* reports in October 2005 that a representative of George Bush at NASA, George Deutsh, asked a Web design agency to add the word

“theory” to occurrences of the term big bang on the NASA website.⁵⁸

The administration of the most powerful person on Earth, George Bush Jr., isn’t quite indifferent to whether the big bang is considered the premiere theory, or whether it is only one of many possible theories. (By the way, one must note that in this respect, Bush is completely correct: The use of the word “theory” at every mention of the big bang is the completely correct approach from the scientific point of view.) Most likely, however, Bush’s primary concern is not scientific correctness, but of a religious bent. A similar situation is observed in the newly resurrected dispute over teaching Darwin’s theory of evolution in schools without mention of the theory of intelligent design.

It is possible you do not agree that the president of the United States—in January 2008, it is still Bush—is the most powerful person today. One may even say that his power matches the power of the gods. He can punish and have mercy on all of humanity. If one evaluates his power by its ability to destroy the world, consider that Bush is one of the few world leaders who possess a suitcase containing a control center for a huge nuclear arsenal. In the decades following the Cold War, we forgot about these nuclear suitcases, despite the fact that they have not ceased to exist. Incidentally, it is a known fact that President Nixon, in his time, delivered an order to start a nuclear war. (His subordinates ignored him, however.) Allegedly, there even existed a secret internal memorandum to ignore such orders from Nixon, who liked to play the role of a madman⁵⁹—or actually was one! In any case, the ability to start a nuclear war gives one power. Bush’s fundamental enemies, those he has dubbed the “Axis of Evil,” do not yet possess sufficient power to destroy at once the entirety of humanity.

You can say that there is nothing wrong with religiosity, a fear of God, and endeavoring to sustain morals, and I will agree with you to a certain extent. On the other hand, most civilized

⁵⁸ “NASA Chief Backs Agency Openness,” *New York Times*, Feb 4, 2006.

⁵⁹ Carroll J. Nixon’s madman strategy. Boston, 2005.

countries already declared a while back that religion should be separated from the state. This has become sort of a self-evident notion in our time.

Now that we have illuminated possible contradictions, we return to cosmology. Therefore, properly speaking, cosmology has become separated from religion only from scientists' point of view. Statesmen and religious figures consider cosmology relevant to their own objectives. How else can one explain the interest of the Catholic Church in the conduct of independent research in cosmology and astrophysics? After all the Catholic Church, as far as I know, does not independently elaborate on the physics of semi-conductors or other practical issues!

Insofar as cosmology plays a role in politics and religion, it simply cannot be without affect on our lives. Granted, the connection is subtle; multiple layers of demagoguery mask it, but the question of the design of creation has always been and will remain the fundamental element of political and religious speculation.

If you do not agree with my assertion, allow me to clarify. The current conflict between Western and Islamic civilizations is founded, on one hand, on Islamic dogmatists and, on the other, strange as it may be, on Christian dogmatists—specifically, Protestant dogmatists, advocated for by the current U.S. administration. Bush sees his position as moral and pious. He constantly invokes his Protestant God as witness to his high intentions and divides the world into friends and foes. Moreover, foes by Bush's philosophy are associated with world evil. In this respect, the position of Islamic terrorists hardly differs from Bush's position. They also base their motivation on articles of faith, invoking their Islamic God as a witness to their high intentions and again dividing the world into friends and foes. Moreover, foes by the philosophy of the terrorists are also associated with world evil.

Thus, to varying degrees, both sides require confirming arguments that their God and faith are the only true ones. Where else besides in the questions of cosmology would one seek substantiation of creation's divine beginning? To my astonishment, I once came across a propaganda video on the

Internet, which started with an explanation of contemporary cosmological theory. It then went on to call for a conversion to Islam.

And so cosmology, along with the battle over Darwin's theory of evolution (which, by the way, is just a piece of the overall cosmological picture and therefore of secondary importance) has not lost its former potency. It is still able to move nations and ignite wars. Again, you will perhaps not find a direct correlation between politics and religion and any sort of cosmological discoveries. Worse yet, whatever the cosmological discovery may be, the result is simplified and distorted to the point of being unrecognizable in order to make it serve one or another politico-religious concept.

Such being the case, that cosmology is not separate from religion and politics, there is an urgent question facing contemporary society. Where does the fault lie? Do astrophysicists and cosmologists themselves allow political profiteering with their behavior, generalizing, and half-serious names of complex astrophysical phenomena such as "Big Bang,"⁶⁰ "black holes," "dark matter," and "dark energy"? Or does the fault lie at the level of the philosophers who interpret the cosmological discoveries? We usually gauge a civilization's development by its approach to cosmological models.

In a highly politicized environment, science simply cannot develop independently. If the president's representatives dictate to scientists how to name and characterize scientific theories, and if the president himself, with one stroke of the pen, can take away the lion's share of the budget for fundamental cosmological research, dooming the Hubble telescope (now civilization's main celestial eye, directed toward the farthest reaches of the universe), and can redirect funding to highly-politicized, utopian, and poorly conceived future flights to the moon and Mars with questionable scientific value, then science cannot develop independently. We are doomed to remain a

⁶⁰ The term "big bang" wasn't invented by supporters of this theory. It came from a sarcastic remark of one of its leading critics. Sir Fred Hoyle coined the name, referring to it sarcastically as "this big bang idea" during a program broadcast on March 28, 1949 by the BBC Third Program.

society that conceives its cosmological ideas on the level of turtles, whales, or strings.⁶¹

Because of the abovementioned reflections, I decided to travel the world in search of direct encounters with people who study astrophysics, cosmology, and philosophy, in order to understand what goes on in this secretive area of human knowledge that has so often been the cause for bloody world catastrophes.

Don't fear an asteroid flying at us from outer space; fear the idea that our politicians and religious leaders can drink their fill of poorly understood scientific concepts.

How do you like the following sequence Darwin – Nietzsche – Hitler? Darwin innocently points out that species evolve by natural selection, which is the driving force of evolution. Nietzsche applies Darwin's theory to human society, calling a person a mere bridge between an ape and a superman. Then Hitler appears, a person trying only to help natural selection and destroy all inferior races in order to hasten the triumph of the superman.

The facile application of deep scientific principles to human society usually results in colossal catastrophes. It seems completely logical to examine comprehensively today's cosmological beliefs and determine at which moment a truly scientific approach was substituted with an adventurist politico-religious approach—an approach that causes the world to tremble.

Thus, before you is the story of my wanderings on Earth in search of heavenly knowledge about how and why this heavenly knowledge turns to delusion, at times as hopeless as a freefall into a black hole.

⁶¹ String theory is a model of fundamental physics, whose building blocks are one-dimensional extended objects called strings, rather than the zero-dimensional point particles that form the basis for the standard model of particle physics.

The Black Holes of Harvard

My perceptions of Harvard were formed from a combination of many things: a paper symbol, a certification printed on expensive paper, a seal, a scepter, an increate monument of human prestige. Harvard to me was one of the artifacts produced by centuries of human civilization, like the pyramids of Giza, the lighthouse of Alexandria, and other wonders of the world.

Imagine my astonishment when my perceptions took shape and grew to the size of real buildings with brick walls built in the style of mildly aesthetic barracks that were standing before me. And the people, yes, the intelligent people, the *Homo harvardiens*—I saw a multitude of young, bright, pensive faces. You won't find that many places nowadays. Imagine a youth whose trousers aren't sliding off his backside! What a rarity in the modern world! What a Sabbath for a soul troubled by presentiments of the degradation of human civilization.

After a short flight from Toronto to Boston, we set out for the room I reserved, which was in an ordinary, dreary house lacking even a sign. There was a heap of confusion, including the absurdity of stepping on post-it notes explaining in ample detail how to get into the house and where to leave the key when I left. The obvious greed of the homeowners bore witness to the palpably near presence of the next marvel I was to behold. People behave this way in Paris, where human bodies ebb and flow constantly, and the probability of meeting the same tourist twice is as small as finding a needle in a proverbial haystack.

Do you mind if I express myself so abstrusely? It must be the beneficial influence of visiting Harvard. Here, everything is esoteric and reminds one of a riddle marred by the clumsy hands of time. Anyway, coming across the third note in this mangy room, which from the looks of it was densely populated with bedbugs and—good grief!—rats, I, keeping my calm, decided to have a firm and frank conversation with the landlady. She, of course, deigned not to make an appearance, but talked to me via cell phone. In our conversation, I communicated my rich travel experience, mentioning Cuba, Israel, Russia, and even some

forsaken holes that I'm not keen to name in decent company to the wife of a former professor who had decided to augment her pension by renting her unprepossessing rooms for 180 dollars per night (that was the going rate). I told her I was experiencing a certain disappointment in this degrading accommodation, where my son's bed consisted of blankets providently laid out on the floor. In the end, I was let go to the four winds, but I soon happened upon a much more pleasant camp where weary travelers could find rest. My son and I settled in the hotel Irwin House at the very end of Cambridge Street, which practically abuts the venerable complex of buildings by the name of Harvard Yard. These buildings form the heart of the famed symbol of knowledge and Western prestige. Spending only an extra twenty dollars per night, we spared ourselves the experience of sharing our beds with fleas and rats, which was a joy. Just before our arrival to Boston, we had gone on a safari outside of Toronto, and weren't yearning to encounter any more small creatures.

In the morning, I set off for the conference at the Gutman Library. My journey took me through the campus and past the famous statue of John Harvard, the founder of this respected university, who in the 17th century left half of his estate to the new college, which then consisted of nine students, all candidates for the priesthood. Passing though the main gates, I followed Church Street, then turning right and walking for less than a mile I reached my goal. Not very far indeed, especially if one considers the remoteness of the conference's subject—black holes in the centers of galaxies.⁶²

A galaxy is a huge agglomeration of stars, in which innumerable suns⁶³ revolve around a galactic center. The most

⁶² The Fourth Harvard-Smithsonian Conference on Theoretical Astrophysics. "The History of Nuclear Black Holes in Galaxies." Sponsored by Raymond and Beverly Sackler. Monday, May 15 through Thursday, May 18, 2006. Harvard University, Gutman Library, 6 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA. Scientific Organizing Committee: Avi Loeb (chair), Andrea Ghez, Lars Hernquist, Rashid Sunyaev, and Scott Tremaine Local Organizing Committee: D. Adams, A. Loeb, N. Rathle, L. R.

⁶³ It might sound strange, but astronomers usually find it difficult to agree on even an approximate number of stars in our galaxy. The sources listed below give similar quotes of

non-prosaic object of all creation lies at the center of a galaxy—an exceedingly huge black hole, as massive as several billion of our suns.⁶⁴ Our solar system is located approximately thirty-thousand light years from the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way. Therefore, to walk a mile to learn more about this remarkable phenomenon was simpler than to course at the speed of light in the direction of the Archer, whose name in Latin, simply and without rank, is Sagittarius.⁶⁵ It is there, in the clouds of galactic dust, gas, and multitudes of stars, that the enigmatic object hides. Have I intrigued you? Maybe just a little? Of course, I understand that such galactic problems don't resonate strongly in our everyday lives and consequently are easy to

a hundred billion stars. "Our own Milky Way, a typical giant spiral galaxy, includes at least 100 billion stars in its diameter." (Vidali, Gianfranco, Marco Falcioni, and Eric Gregory. "Galaxies." SETI Module Astronomy Tutorial Page. Syracuse University) "There are about 100 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*. Astronomy. 2000) "The Galaxy is nothing else but a mass of innumerable stars planted together in clusters." (Boorstein, Daniel J. *Discovery of the World*. New York: Random House, 1983: 320) "We can only see a few thousand stars at most with our unaided eyes. These are a mixture of stars which are nearby, and bright stars which are further away; but they are only a tiny fraction of the 100,000,000,000 stars in our own galaxy." (Butterworth, Paul. *Stars in Our Galaxy. Ask a High-Energy Astronomer*. 1998)

⁶⁴ A super massive black hole is one with a mass of an order of magnitude between hundreds of thousands and tens of billions of solar masses. It is currently thought that most, if not all galaxies, including the Milky Way, contain super massive black holes at their centers.

⁶⁵ Sagittarius A is a bright, very compact source of radio emissions at the center of the Milky Way Galaxy, part of a larger astronomical feature at that location. On October 16, 2002, an international team led by Rainer Schödel of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics reported the observation of the motion of the star S2 near Sagittarius A* for a period of ten years and obtained evidence that Sagittarius A* was a highly-massive compact object. From an examination of the Keplerian orbit of S2, they determined the mass of Sagittarius A* to be 2.6 ± 0.2 million solar masses, confined in a volume with a radius no more than 17 light hours (120 AU). Later observations determined the mass of the object to be about 3.7 million solar masses within a volume with a radius no larger than 6.25 light-hours (45 AU), or about 4.2 billion miles. For comparison, Pluto orbits our sun at a distance of 5.51 light hours or 3.7 billion miles. This is compatible with, and strong evidence in support of, the hypothesis that Sagittarius A* is associated with a super massive black hole.

ignore. But how could one not notice the existence of such wonders? They do exist somewhere. Their existence is inevitable. And so, appreciating the magnitude of such objects and feeling the force of their gravitation on myself, I walked along the brick-lined Harvard pavement. I was content, sensing that I was in the right place.

Finding myself in an auditorium among fifty of the world's leading astrophysicists, I was satisfied with my fortune, which allowed me to indulge earnestly my human curiosity. Here I was, simple-heartedly breathing in the myriad numbers and basking in the intelligence and seriousness of the presenters. I was delighted because in my presence, facets of these enigmatic objects, super massive black holes at the hearts of galaxies, were being revealed that could only be discovered with the help of modern technology.

In short, I experienced exquisite pleasure. It was as if my material presence dissolved as I focused my attention on the presentations. I was in the clouds of gas; I was there with the stars, revolving around the galaxy's center. I was content. I didn't talk with anyone, because the conference participants discussed minute technical details that I found uninteresting. Everything genuinely interesting appeared on the huge screen hanging in the auditorium.

At the outset of the conference, I realized that most astrophysicists don't make astronomical observations firsthand. Rather, they work on data collected by other scientists with access to the best telescopes or busy themselves with modeling, often using computer programs.

The days when any astronomer could place a homemade telescope in the window and make a meaningful discovery are long gone. Even though sometimes miracles still happen,⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For example, the SN 1987, a supernova on the outskirts of the Tarantula Nebula in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a nearby dwarf galaxy, became visible to the naked eye. It could be seen from the Southern Hemisphere. It was the closest observed supernova since the year 1604. The light from the supernova reached Earth on February 23, 1987. Ian Shelton and Oscar Duhalde, at the Las Campanas Observatory in Chile, discovered it on February 24, 1987. As the story goes, Shelton spotted it with his naked eye. He was the right guy at the right place, obviously at the right time.

nowadays, celestial observation requires the best technology, which is available to very few. The rest channel their ambitions into modeling.

During the evening of the first day, I stopped into a huge bookstore that occupied three floors. I was amazed at the quality of the books in this shop. Any one of those books I would have bought, if only one would appear in the bookstore of the town where I have deigned to reside for the last five years. But at Harvard, I allowed myself to buy only a few books; I wanted to buy the entire store, impossible as that may sound. In the store, a presentation about a book by the former rector of Harvard, Gary Lewis, was showing. Lewis led Harvard from 1995 to 2003. I stopped to listen as he hotly criticized contemporary university education, filling the store with people gathered to witness his scandalous (by Harvard's standards) speech. All of this interested me greatly, this scandal in the holy family. At the store checkout counter, I tendered twenty-six dollars and purchased a signed copy of the book.

At Harvard, you can hardly walk two steps without running into one or another luminary pushing an autographed copy of his exceptionally scandalous book⁶⁷ for a mildly speculative price. Lewis wasn't the only such personality I met, but I'll tell you about the rest later.

What is the book about? You can be the judge. In his time, Lewis taught Bill Gates, who was kicked out of college before he finished.

Lewis writes that there's not a Bill Gates in every class, but in every class, there are students who are smarter and more inspired by science than most of the professors who teach them. He admits that he became skeptical that universities could give something to these students. Further on, Lewis adds that the fact that Bill Gates, his best student, was dismissed from college possibly confirms that the more you are educated, the less successful you are in life.

⁶⁷ Lewis Harry R. "Excellence without a Soul. How a Great University Forgot Education." *Public Affair*: 2006 P. 22.

Lewis admits that Harvard has turned into a commercial business, where a year of study costs more than forty-three thousand dollars. To satisfy the expectations of parents and students, Harvard allows students to study anything they wish, while allowing their eminent professors, who would be welcomed with open arms at any other university, to choose topics for their lectures as they please. As a result, a few years after graduation, when people ask Harvard graduates what they studied in the famed university, they struggle to give a clear answer!

Lewis writes about the extent to which his students are under the control of their parents, who because they paying the cell phone bills, know who their offspring speak with, how late they go to sleep, and how early they rise.

Lewis calls these parents “helicopter parents,” since they appear to hover over their children, controlling their every move. What can become of these kids? Well, Harvard is the place where future American and world leaders are educated.

The most sensational admissions of the former Harvard professor sound like the conclusion of a book. A liberal education, in the sense it is currently understood by Harvard, is an education whose goal isn’t to make the graduate employable. Such an education is intended not to be overly specialized or progressive and doesn’t include courses of practical benefit in the real world. Harvard’s understanding of an education reflects the aristocratic ideal of the student athlete whose intention is not to go professional. At Harvard, to become a specialist in any profession, simply in order to earn a living, is considered poor taste.

Indulging myself in reflections about Lewis’ book and the illusory nature of Harvard’s charm, I set off for the banquet at the Sheraton Commander on the penultimate day of the conference.

In the informal atmosphere of the banquet, I noticed that the astrophysicists were clearly attracted to the bar, where drinks of varying strength were being dispensed. I drew the well-founded conclusion that a bar in a banquet hall commands a significant gravitational field, distorting space in such a way that

the majority of the academics formed a highly massive cluster around it.

I, having selected a cocktail glass filled with a green liquid giving off the familiar odor of vodka, modestly seated myself at the farthest table, hoping to spend the evening in my own company. I wasn't really prepared to converse with the coryphaei of the conference, in whose speech the Eddington limit and Kerr metric sounded much more frequently than the words "thank you" and "you're welcome."

From out of the blue, however, a couple dressed in red approached my table and seated themselves. The older gentleman's red tie was odd against the background of the drably dressed astrophysicists and their minimally less drably dressed spouses.

The two, practically in unison, informed me that they were the authors of the new book *View from the Center of the Universe: Discovering our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos*.⁶⁸ At first, the lady in red peppered me with questions: who was I, where was I from, and why was I here.

I answered clumsily that I was a writer with a special interest in astrophysics, and I planned to write a book. I added that I would be attending a cosmology conference in Cuba and a conference on the philosophy of cosmology in Montreal.

The answer didn't satisfy my questioner, however; she requested I share the concept of my future book. As I planned to write a book called "The End of Cosmology" and prove that cosmology is, at its root, a false science, I couldn't reveal my plans. This was especially so now because when the couple introduced themselves, their names seemed oddly familiar and intimately connected with cosmology.

Pressed to give an explanation, I began talking vaguely about the interaction of various trends in cosmology and astrophysics, along the way dropping references to various problems such as the one with dark matter.

⁶⁸ Primack, J.R., Abrams, N.E. *The View from the Center of the Universe: Discovering Our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos*. Riverhead Hardcover. 2006. April

“What problems?” my interlocutor asked with pique. “I was the one who discovered dark matter, and there’s no problem at all with it!”

The gentleman turned out to be Stanford professor Dr. Joel R. Primack, the coryphaeus of contemporary cosmology, the co-founder of the theory of cold dark matter, on whose shoulders rest most of cosmology and a good portion of astrophysics.

I said that no one had discovered dark matter, whose only manifestation is a hypothetical concentration of a huge amount of mass, due to which the edges of galaxies revolve against Kepler’s and Newton’s laws with the same speed as the regions adjacent to galactic centers, and that clusters of galaxies would not be able to stay together if it weren’t for dark matter holding them together with its mass.

“But,” I said, “why was it necessary to name this phenomenon ‘matter’? Why not name it ‘the paradox of the space-time continuum on a large scale,’ or something else?”

The point is, if the phenomenon is called dark matter, we mislead an enormous number of honest taxpayers who are far removed from science, as well as academics, who for many years have conducted an unsuccessful search for dark matter.

Professor Primack listened to me with a fastidious half-smile, but he didn’t offer a rebuttal. He informed me that there were no longer any problems with the theory, and that it predicted many things that were subsequently supported experimentally.

His spouse and coauthor, Nancy Ellen Abrams, turned out to be an attorney and former adviser to Congress, and she went for me with all the zeal of a Washington top player. I was incorrect because I was incorrect by definition. However, I was ready for that type of behavior and unflappably voiced my objection that the comment Mrs. Abrams found fault with wasn’t my opinion, and I never said it was. Nancy was dumbstruck, but quickly recovered and announced that I articulated my thoughts unclearly and therefore it was hard to speak with me. I tried to expound my position about the condition of contemporary science with utmost clarity, but those present interrupted me, requesting I clarify concepts that were generally comprehensible

to all and would be difficult to explain in brief without seeming a fool. However, I was able to extricate myself from that situation by abruptly asking everyone's opinion of Bush's idea to send American astronauts to the moon and Mars, thereby completely tanking the budgets of all the leading astronomical projects, including the ill-fated Hubble telescope.

Coming out of a prolonged silence, the second half of the table proved no more supportive than the others. This group consisted of the conference's administrators and organizers. They took up my discussion topic and started to criticize Bush, but for some reason, towards the end of their outpouring, they accused me of being sympathetic to his administration. At that, I rather loudly announced that in academic circles, an excellent method of destroying your opponent is to attribute statements to him that he did not make. The group again fell into a state of mild discomfiture, and taking advantage of this moment of silence, I again posed my core question, aggressively gesticulating in the direction of the group of taciturn astrophysicists, who by chance had seated themselves at our "elite" table.



First row from right to left: Joel Primack, Nancy Ellen Abrams, Anna Kriger, Bruce Kriger

I turned to Doctor Primack with the question:

If all cosmological theories proposed by humans up to now were proven false, would that cause you to think your theory is true? ⁶⁹

The astrophysicists delightedly guffawed, which made everyone feel a bit uncomfortable and attracted the attention of the neighboring tables. Nancy answered the question, rushing to battle like a natural lawyer.

“Our theory is correct because it is true!” announced Mrs. Abrams. Realizing that such a Marxist explanation didn’t satisfy us, she added that since her husband’s theory was based on scientific observations, it could not be false. At this point, I brought up as an aside the history of science Ptolemy and Kepler. That subject again somehow led to Bush. The conference organizer announced that in her opinion Bush was responsible for everything. I asked somewhat spitefully, “And is Bush also responsible for the fall of the Roman Empire?” to which the conference organizer answered resolutely and even with a bit of pleasure, “Yes!” Then she thought about it and added, “Because of Bush, America is entering the same phase as the Roman empire before its decline.”

“Well, what can you do? One civilization’s replacing of another is a natural process. The main thing is that this replacement be as bloodless as possible,” I announced, as I tucked into to my chicken as if nothing had happened. I thought to myself, if they have fleeced us for ninety dollars a head for this banquet, I should at least try the chicken.

Hearing my prediction of the downfall of American civilization, the table grew oddly quite. Then everyone began

⁶⁹ Newly collected data indeed attest to the theory most popular among astronomers, according to which the universe is filled with cold dark matter or slow-moving particles of yet-to-be-determined composition. With the aid of a hundred-million pixel digital camera and the high-powered French-Canadian telescope in Hawaii, formations of more than 1.5 million individual galaxies were studied over a period of two years beginning in 1999. These galaxies were distorted by the gravitational action on the transmitted rays from the side of the closest 120 thousand galaxies. Two additional years were spent analyzing the data. As a result, the conclusion was drawn that the invisible halos of dark matter possibly do exist.

talking about the bloodshed in Iraq. The atmosphere was labored, and I had a vision of this classic banquet room with its luxurious, yellow material-covered walls, like a ward for violent deranged people, its waiters dashing about with kebab bouquets and appetizers set in the 1930s, the Second World War about to begin.

I interrupted the silence with a suggestion to return our attention to cosmology. No great enthusiasm followed because astrophysicists don't like cosmologists. They consider them adventurers, which they are. The conference organizer admitted that she wouldn't understand much of what was discussed because she was involved strictly in theoretical science. She was asked what kind, specifically, of theoretical science she was involved with, and she answered jokingly, "The kind no one understands but will give the most money for."

I began to advocate my views, carefully sidestepping my opinions of the falsity of cosmology. I talked about how the interaction and cooperation of scientists brings with it an accumulation of delusions, which are formed into false concepts, the experimental verification of which takes huge amounts of financing and effort. I also mentioned that it impedes scientific development for decades, if not centuries.

The table listened to me almost without interruption because I assured everyone that I wasn't generally specifically targeting their science and the United States. I said America was not synonymous with the world; the world was larger than this country. The table willingly, if a little distractedly, agreed. But as soon as I hinted at the problems of cosmology, Primack again pounced on me. "What problems? Well, name at least one!"

I answered, "For example, the problems that were discussed at this conference. How did galaxies and clusters of galaxies manage to form when the contemporary cosmological model allows practically no time for that to occur?"

In the deep field observed by the Hubble telescope, fully formed galaxies with high red-shift values are visible. This indicates their age, which almost coincides with the age of the universe, according to the estimates of contemporary cosmological theory.

My reply again came in the form of a sour smile. If they could be collected, I would probably earn a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the proprietor of the word's largest collection of sour smiles.

Later, Nancy Abrams resolutely informed the table of the topic of her book, suppressing an aesthetically minded astrophysicist's half-hearted objection to a reference to God. The next event liberated us from conversation. The coryphaeus and most senior academic of the conference, Donald Lynden-Bell, a British astrophysicist known for his theories of galaxies containing massive central black holes that are the sources of quasar energy, stood up at his table. He didn't need to use a microphone because he possessed such a sonorous voice. Donald Lynden-Bell related to those gathered the entire history of the discovery of black holes, beginning with Newton. The way in which he spoke even suggested the existence of a warm personal relationship with Newton. The main idea of his speech was how the interaction and cooperation of scientists brings with it an accumulation of delusions, which are formed into false concepts, the experimental verification of which takes huge amounts of financing and effort. He also mentioned that it impedes the development of science for decades, if not centuries.

Joel Primack promptly feigned sleep. Nancy had a blank look, agitatedly crossing and uncrossing her legs. After the speech, we all shook hands and decorously took leave.

On the way back, I visited the place where George Washington accepted command over the Continental Army on what would become Independence Day. A statue of Lincoln was nearby.

"One wished not to pay taxes to Britain and founded the North American colonies; the other decided to bankrupt the independent South, which fed the entire country," I thought to myself. "These are famous milestones of American history."

We left the black holes of Harvard, soaring upward into the cloudy heights of the Massachusetts heavens in a Canadian jet. I remembered with relish how, riding in the taxi on the last day of my visit, I informed the cab driver that cosmology was a false science and Harvard was nothing but a scam. Having given

the unhappy black person a big tip, I slammed the door. “Well, have you finally had your say?” asked my son Jacob.

The Gravitation of the Isle of Freedom

My visit to Harvard and the engaging conversations at the banquet didn’t satisfy me, and I continued my journey across Earth in search of something that could increase my understanding of what I consider the core questions of the universe. It would seem these questions are far removed from everyday life, but to me, they are as real as any human undertaking.

Sometimes I seriously frighten myself with my hastily conceived geographic hop-scotching and tendency to change spatial coordinates impulsively and eccentrically. This possibly unhealthy passion has intensified lately, for my Canadian passport and anti-depression tablets have been sending me to increasingly further corners of the earth—ones forgotten even by explorers. Morning after morning, I behold with eternally sleep-deprived eyes some simply painted wall, and my mischievous head remembers with difficulty where my no less mischievous body, nimble even with its sagging belly and startlingly slender ankles, took lodging for the night.

Such was the case on this particular morning. I awoke, mildly bewildered, in a bungalow decorated in Indian peasant style, situated within the hotel complex Los Caneyes.

“Cuba is far! Cuba is near! What do you mean near? It’s more than near! There it is.” It sneaked up on me as a huge expanse of ocean, unrestrainedly peeking in at me first through the cabin window, touched by the confectioner’s sugar of fierce stratospheric frosts, then staring up at me with its greenish waters through the window of whatever floor I was on in the Havana hotel. In the room, the window was open from floor to ceiling—you could jump if you wanted. You won’t find that anymore in Western hotels. The Isle of Freedom is truly free. Jump if you’d like, or if you’d like, sit and bide your time.

At first, Cuba met me as ocean breathing on my face, but now it was gauzily staring at me in the form of a simply painted

wall of a hotel bungalow—the proud structure of a chicken-filled tourist town. Apparently, the chickens were brought in deliberately so I could feel at home. This was good, as absent my morning wake-up calls from the rooster I keep back home, I was finding it hard to wake up.

If you consider that I have a reputation for being a demure homebody, these mad leaps in space concern not only me. This is my second visit to the island in the last three months, and before these trips, I had never been here. This fact may cause one to suspect that some sort of special Cuban gravity prevailed and attracted me, my tiny suitcase, and my loyal travel companion—my spouse. She, of course, also had a suitcase, small, happy, and green, like a box of oatmeal flakes. I don't like heavy luggage and insisted we make do with small, wheeled suitcases, which were packed in fumbling hurriedness on the night before the flight into tropical obscurity.

My geographical impulsiveness is unhealthy and mildly dangerous, especially in combination with my topographical madness. Some can get lost in three pines. I can get lost in two. We won't even mention palm trees! I acquired my unhealthy propensity to activate my “planetary roaming mechanism” during years of intensive flight from myself. It very effectively allowed me to break away, at least for one or two days, from the fear chasing at my heels and breathing down my neck. This fear abated under the effects of my pills, but the impulsive desire to break free remained.

How would you feel if you couldn't say with certainty where you would turn up the next evening? Good Lord, having shared these thoughts with you, I have actually begun to frighten myself. There was a time we would leap to our feet and rush out headlong without a thought. Now travels are initiated by a piece of paper, such as an official letter from a university holding a conference on gravitation and cosmology. I've always loved papers, and here, in response to my humble request to invite my wife and me to a conference as science writers, our Cuban comrades didn't send a worthless e-mail invitation, but instead

dispatched an official letter of invitation bearing a huge oval seal.
70

I brought the prize to my wife in the bedroom. We had just returned from our trip to Harvard. Before that, she had been vacationing with me in Cuba. She was feeling a little worn down and disinclined to travel. However, being no less worn down than I by five homebound years, she tensed up at the suggestion of travel. She wanted to go, for my research and me, but she wanted to go for herself as well. In the bedroom stood an unfinished painting of her that depicted an aquamarine sea, a white Cuban beach, and a huge, branchy tree, seemingly unwilling to be completely drawn. It was posing naked, without the ovate leaves that are so fun to hold to your head as ears as you impersonate a bear or Mickey Mouse. My wife looked at the tree, sighed, and agreed.

The deed followed the word. We bought the tickets and awaited our departure, much as some await an unavoidable date upon which something stressful but desirable will happen.

No longer will I plan trips ahead of time. Riding the wave of mad midnight enthusiasm, deciding to dash off to the ends of the world the very next morning—what's the use? To plan ahead to go in an unknown direction is thoroughly unpleasant. But we held silent and, panting, moved toward our departure with the universe, which was stippled not with stars, but with question marks. The departure date, which was fixed on the space-time continuum and pinned in its quantum liveliness to the hour our Air Canada ticket had precisely designated, approached.

Why are so many words necessary? Tell me directly, why are you charging off there? Or better yet, just keep silent. I'm not really one to hold my tongue. As they say, we will keep silent in the grave, but an explanation I'm glad to give—as detailed as you care to hear.

You already know about my abnormal enthusiasm for cosmology, my agonizing ambivalence toward that science,

⁷⁰ Second International Workshop on Gravitation and Cosmology, Las Villas Central University, Santa Clara, Cuba.

which simultaneously lures me and turns me against it with its self-assured and occasionally intolerable fantasies. These models and theories are firmly supported by advanced mathematics; a circumstance that should make them more real, though in reality achieves the opposite effect.

Cosmology is the branch of astronomy and astrophysics that studies the origin, large-scale structure, and evolution of the universe. The data cosmologists use are generally collected from astronomical observations. In the early 1920s, these observations, in combination with advances in theoretical physics, put cosmology on par in importance with other exact sciences. Before then, cosmology was in the domain of philosophy and an excellent excuse to burn heretics at the stake.

Today there are two schools of cosmological inquiry: the empiricists and the theorists. The former limit themselves to the interpretation of observable data and do not extrapolate their models into unstudied areas. The latter attempt to explain the observable universe using hypotheses chosen for simplicity and elegance.

It's not difficult to surmise that I am a strong advocate of the empiricists, for I'm deeply vexed by the philosophical, political, and religious speculation that accompanies cosmological models. If the cosmological constant is equal to zero, the story goes, God exists, and one must follow his commandments. If it is not zero, you can behave disgracefully, or any way you see fit. Feel free to insert your own imbecility here. Are these a madman's ravings? That's what I'm saying: it's raving madness. But who am I to talk? Theoreticians seek artificial solutions to artificial problems, and a whole gang of pseudo-philosophers is ready to explain to the simple folks—you and me—what and what not to believe in. What if the universe is a diaphragm or, more accurately, a rug? Then what? Can we kill one another on Thursdays? What if the universe is nothing but a dust rag? Can we kill each other on Fridays? What if—and what if you keep silent in the hopes you'll be taken as intelligent? No, you won't be taken as intelligent. Not at all!

Thus, maybe for lack of other activities or due to a passion for learning or the new physical sensations a change of climate brings, we traveled to Cuba.

Some trips are accompanied by seemingly minor, but on close inspection terrible discomforts. Before the flight, my lower back seized up in such a way that I could neither bend over nor straighten out. However, the persistent thought ‘the tickets have been purchased’ drove me forward, and after suffering three and a half hours in a cramped airline seat, I arrived on Cuban soil a rather hunched form.

A Soviet-style travel agent with a broad mustache met us. As he broadcast his broken English to us, it became clear that he was more skilled at speaking than understanding the language. Sure, he could repeat the same worn phrases over and over, but he had a rough time understanding. So rough, in fact, it seemed like he no longer tried.

The travel agent sat us in a taxi alongside a Canadian cosmologist, ethnically Italian with the sonorous surname Faraoni. We noticed him at the airport because of the perpetually grim and skeptical look on his face and his absorption in his thoughts about—what else?—the vibrating membrane of the universe. We made each other’s formal acquaintance and left for our Havana hotel, where I continued suffering intense back pain.

It’s strange how a person becomes defenseless when he’s far from home. No doubt, credit cards, mobile phones and comfortable hotels help, but you can’t fool your body. It’s tough to be in a new place; eventually, your body will start to ache. Sometimes a pain will appear out of nowhere then disappear without a trace, only to be replaced by a different ache. Of course, you shouldn’t pay attention to what I’m saying, for I am a certified neurasthenic and hypochondriac. I’m in therapy for that. Isn’t all of world literature, though, minutely detailed descriptions of people’s neuroses?

The next day, I had a massage from a local rehabilitative therapy specialist, a well groomed, strapping young fellow who half-looked like a charlatan. I rationalized parting with an obscene sum as money well spent on a Spanish lesson. I had an in-depth conversation with the masseuse in Spanish about my

fatigue and psychosis. During our conversation, I must have used my entire Spanish vocabulary. With deft hands, the masseuse poked me with pins, gave me a rub down with hot oil, and towards the end, briefly but skillfully massaged my body. Usually, I hate when people touch me. That probably stems from a sense of detachment from my body. Besides, I have always been agonizingly bashful. However, even in Cuba, it's not hard to come by the most wonderful antidepressants. Now it seems I could strip naked on the square and feel absolutely comfortable, though not enraptured. Exhibitionism is not my cup of tea. The masseuse tried to persuade me to visit his "international clinic" on my return to Havana after the conference. I couldn't figure out why he insisted on using the word "international." Only in the West can someone start a fly-by-night operation and call it an "international clinic." In our little town, the only one who lives on the misfortunes and suffering of others is a young Greek, and he is a sad homeopath. I'm not one to fall for a scam, but once he stiffed me a pretty penny by performing an analysis on the composition of my hair.

Yes, Cuba is a socialist country. But it has a budding business sector, authorized by Castro in the "special period" when Cuba was forced to tighten its belt. Without orders for grapefruit and sugar from the Soviet Union and without Soviet spare parts and oil, the country switched to plowing their fields with oxen. "International" before "clinic," in this destitute country, means nothing more than the establishment is tolerable (that is, does not smell of urine) and designed exclusively for foreigners.

These insights would come in time. After recovering from the "rehabilitative therapy," I left on a bus, with the cosmologists, for Santa Clara, a three-hour drive from Havana.

As the bus cruised through Havana, Cuba's poverty held our attention. It was clear Cubans aren't ashamed of poverty. They display it for all to see, as if it were a national point of interest.

It never occurred to our European minds that building sturdy houses in Cuba is as pointless as saddling a bull. Eventually, he will fling you off his back to the trampled ground.

Hurricanes, which begin at the start of the summer and last until the middle of winter, carry away everything that is not built sturdily. In Cuba, this is everything not chained to the ground, and on the Isle of Freedom, there aren't any chains, for what kind of freedom would you have if there were chains? Actually, the Isle of Freedom lacks a lot more than chains. A lack of material goods is a common feature of the disastrous fusion of socialism and Latin-Americanism, but it seems the people don't suffer from the impoverishment. The only thing they invest in is a solid stone floor. After the latest hurricane, they collect their wind-strewn plywood walls and furniture, rebuild their dwellings, and continue living in almost universal and therefore shameless poverty.

The island has stood its ground against hurricanes and an American blockade with Fidel and Raul, the revolutionary bearded Barbudoses, who disembarked from a dirty schooner to capture the island. Che Guevara, their loyal commandant, who once captured the entire island, is present in Cuba in the form of monuments, posters, and one grandiose memorial in Santa Clara. This memorial holds his ashes and the remains of his comrades from Bolivia, where they fomented revolution.

Why is commandant Che significant? Even though I am not organizing a revolution, I can fully imagine myself sitting in a government office in Havana as the minister of health of a young republic. Then I can imagine I am fighting in the Congo. The next moment, I lie dead in Bolivia. I can imagine anything. The same flights of imagination, unconstrained by reality, were what Che had. The same energy pulsing outward—out into space and other worlds. For Che and me, there is no reality, for we are reality itself. Do you believe me? I've smoked a Cuban cigar and decided that I'm a revolutionary hero, too. Or maybe not. Well, my beard is growing. Second, I have an *a priori* dislike for all governments of the world. And third, I'm joking. I am to Che Guevara as my lazy cat is to a saber-toothed tiger. She's fury, but that's where the resemblance ends. Yup. I really don't aspire to shoot, kill, or sit in trenches in a muggy swamp. That life is not for me.

And so Commandant Che Guevara is besides the point, though when you're in Cuba, you must nod your head to him. Everywhere you hear songs that are amazing in their expressiveness and plaintiveness. The Cubans who have, it seems, long ago lost faith in the revolution, obediently and with emotion praise Commandant Che Guevara, and for their suffering, they receive special converted pesos from stirred and touched tourists.



Cosmological Conference in Santa Clara, May 2006

Midway between Havana and Santa Clara, we got out to breathe the hot, dense air. By the road, I noticed a small pond next to an iron sculpture of an emaciated cow. Livestock in Cuba reminds one of concentration camp inmates. Looking at the sculpture, I thought hopefully that it was just a certain breed of cow, that the Cubans hadn't seen any other types of cows, and Socialist Realism required artists to sculpt true to life. Three large fish were swimming in the pond, and three turtles were plodding around as well. One of the cosmologists gazed at them intently. I mused that in his head, the next cosmological theory, of the universe on a turtle's back, was forming. The turtles were busy, too—trying to climb on top of one another; maybe they spied the bus that carried us here. Surely, they were thinking it must be

some kind of gigantic turtle. “But where is its head?” thought the turtles, tensely peering at the bus. But no head appeared, and the turtle-bus theory fell apart. Good lord, why can’t we avoid anthropomorphism in our conceptions? Like the turtles, we try to explain everything from our own shell-bound perspectives.

The conference began with a power outage, which happens often in Cuba. It’s just like in Canada; our electricity goes out every time a breeze blows. God save us if there’s a snow flurry. Snow in Canada, you see, is a new and unusual phenomenon, especially north of Toronto in the forests of the hinterland where I live. I am being sarcastic, of course.

Since without electricity it was inconvenient to conduct presentations, the participants opted instead to stroll around outside. Under the scorching sun, they studied the chickens pecking the ground near the modest conference center, host of the international scientific event.

Paying for the entire stay in advance depleted my cash. We took a taxi to Banco Internacional in the city center to get some money. At the bank, we were watched so intently that I wanted to vanish. We finally managed to convince the bank staff to process our transactions, but for all the arguing, at the end of the day, we were exhausted, as though we’d been battling Cuban partisans. If we hadn’t been able to withdraw cash from my credit card, my adventures would have been a lot crazier.

After the trip to the bank, I took my spouse back to the hotel in a taxi and returned to the conference. The power came back on, and I was able to listen to three or four presentations before lunch. They fed us there in the conference center. As usual, I occupied a separate table, not intending to join anyone, but three Spanish-speaking cosmologists sat down next to me, and we became acquainted. Sensing that I was some sort of strange interloper, my tablemates bristled slightly; nevertheless, we fell into conversation.

To my left sat a cheerful bearded fellow who was smoking a pleasant-smelling pipe. (Smoking is permitted virtually everywhere in Cuba.) This was Roberto Sussman, a professor from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. Across from me sat Axel de la Makora from the Institute of

Physics of the same university. I don't remember our third tablemate. They stopped conversing in Spanish and, switching to English, focused their collective attention on the modest personage before them who was tucking into a plate of fried chicken. I finished chewing and explained with a bit of difficulty who I was and what I was doing there. When the initial bewilderment had passed, we began speaking of my interest in cosmology. We didn't touch on any new topics, but rather rehashed the same arguments and counterarguments common to cosmology. After a while, I asked Axel if he truly believed that our human interpretation of time applied to vast cosmological scales. To my surprise, Axel and Roberto firmly assured me that, in their opinion, human understanding of time had no relationship to cosmological time. We measure time with respect to the mechanical movements of material bodies. For example, time can be measured with respect to the movement of Earth around the sun. Axel said that in the beginning stages of the universe's development there were not, and could not be, any material objects. Sussman added that in the big bang theory, history is roughly subdivided into three periods, which together reflect our current understanding of the formation of the universe. These periods are standard cosmology, particle cosmology, and quantum cosmology.

Standard cosmology is the most reliably explained epoch. It encompasses the period from approximately one hundredth of a second after the big bang to the present day. The standard model of the evolution of the universe in this epoch has stood up to a multitude of precise observational tests.

Particle cosmology paints a picture of the universe as it was preceding the epoch of standard cosmology, when temperatures were hotter, yet still within the range of known physics. High-energy particle accelerators at CERN and Fermilab allow us to test physical models of processes that could occur only 0.0000000001 seconds after the big bang. This branch of cosmology is more speculative because it requires various extrapolations and often runs into insurmountable computational complexities. Many cosmologists believe that reasonable

extrapolations can be made right up until the time of the phase change of the Grand Unification Epoch.

[illegible]

How does the human mind conceive of time in Plank's Epoch? It's not a concept that is compatible with our everyday understanding of time.

“Why do you maintain that the universe is approximately 13.7 billion years old?” I asked. “What is the force of that assertion?”

Axel replied that in cosmology they don't use the concept of "years."

He was referring to the measurement of vast cosmological distances by the degree of red shift in galaxies' spectra. He confirmed that we were talking about this instantiation of the Doppler Effect, on which Hubble's law relies.

“And all of those ‘light years’ are for the public,” summarized Axel De La Makora.

“Ah, so that’s it! You’re aware that you can’t translate cosmology into ordinary human concepts, but you think all of this up for the public, feeding us terms like ‘dark matter,’ ‘dark energy,’ ‘big bang,’ and ‘quintessence.’”

“Yes, some really dislike us because of the mystical terminology,” acknowledged Sussman.

“Is there really no other explanation for red shift?” I asked, starting on my pet topic. “What about the Compton Effect?”

“Why the Compton Effect?” responded Axel. “There are many explanations having to do with the ‘aging of light’ and so forth. The point isn’t that it’s difficult to find an alternative explanation. You can find an alternative explanation for any phenomenon, but the theory of the expanding universe best explains all phenomena at once—the distribution of hydrogen

and helium in a constant ratio throughout the universe, red shift in the spectra of remote galaxies, background radiation.”

“And dark matter, you propose, is prominent among the latest discoveries, which have put a nail in the coffin of modified Newtonian theory?”

“How could dark matter not exist?” said Axel, becoming nervous and glancing at me unkindly. “If you bumped into a dresser in a dark room, would you assert there is no dresser in the room because you can’t see it? Can there really be another explanation besides the physical presence of a type of matter that manifests itself in no way except by its gravitational interactions with visible matter?”

“Yes, there is. A hallucination, for example,” I said obstinately. Axel became visibly upset.

“Dark matter—it’s not the primary question now,” said Axel.

“The primary question is dark energy,” said Roberto Sussman, taking the conversation in a new direction. “It’s a hypothetical form of energy having negative pressure and evenly filling the entire space of the universe.”

According to the general theory of relativity, gravity depends not only on mass, but also on pressure. Moreover, negative pressure should give rise to repulsion, or anti-gravity. According to the latest data proving the acceleration of the expansion of the universe, this force does act over cosmological distances. There are two explanations of dark energy’s essence. The first explanation is that dark energy is a cosmological constant, a constant energy density filling space homogeneously. The second explanation is that dark energy is a kind of quintessence, or a dynamic field whose energy density can vary in space and time.

We must precisely measure the speed of the expansion of the universe in order to choose between the explanations. The rate of the expansion of the universe is described by a cosmological equation of state. Finding the solution to the equation of state for dark energy is one of the most pressing tasks of contemporary observational cosmology. Inserting the cosmological constant into the standard cosmological model (the

Friedmann-Lemaitre-Robertson-Walker or FLRW metric) led to the appearance of the contemporary model of cosmology, known as the Lambda-CDM model (Lambda-Cold Dark Matter model). This model fits existing cosmological observations very well.

I butted in, “And Joel Primack, who I met in May at a conference at Harvard, is one of the founders of that theory and its biggest champion.” I couldn’t help boasting of my newly acquired acquaintances among top cosmologists.

“I know him,” said Susman. “I met him in Israel.”

“He and his wife just came out with a book *View from the Center of the Universe* in which they undertake to explain to the public in an accessible, cabalistic, and spiritual way Primack’s new theories.”

“You don’t say!” laughed Susman. “I know Nancy. She sings a beautiful guitar accompaniment.”

Cosmologists attempt to study the history of the universe from an evolutionary standpoint. Observing the most distant regions of the universe, from where light has traveled more than ten billion years to reach us, they expect to see less-formed galaxies. However, as if out of spite, in the Hubble deep field (images from the Hubble orbiting telescope created to reveal the most distant objects in the universe), one sees rather large, well-formed galaxies. According to the present theory of an expanding universe beginning with the big bang, there wasn’t enough time for such large galaxies to form after the initial explosion. What would happen if we obtained higher resolution images, penetrating further back in time, in which we discovered gigantic, well-formed galaxies? I changed the topic of conversation again.

“Yes, that would be a big problem,” answered Sussman pensively and a little sadly. “Cosmology is going through tough times. The newly discovered acceleration of the expansion of the universe has nonplussed many cosmologists. And that’s not necessarily bad for cosmology. On the contrary, it makes it more interesting. It’s not enough that the universe is expanding; that expansion is accelerating. The question of the size of the cosmological constant worries academics. For many leading theoretical physicists, this is the number one question.”

The anthropic explanation of the size of the cosmological constant is that of all the possible sizes of this parameter allowable in the multi-verse (the aggregate of all universes), life can occur only when the cosmological constant falls within a very small range. (It goes without saying that it's close to the size of the cosmological constant in our universe.) Since other universes are not accessible to us, proving this explanation is difficult.

"Well, there's Abraham Loeb, one of the organizers of the Harvard conference that I attended in May. He thinks he was able to devise such a test," I added. The main idea is that if planetary systems could form at a z value of 10 (the quantity z indicates the degree of red shift in a galaxy's spectrum, and therefore the distance of the galaxy from us), that means planetary systems could form in universes where the cosmological constant is different from ours by a factor of 1,000. If it is possible to prove that planets exist in star systems that with such high red shift values, then, Loeb proposes, the anthropic theory will suffer a serious blow. Of course, observing evidence of the existence of a planet whose z value is 10 is presently impossible, but one can search for them in old systems; for example, in globular clusters and dwarf galaxies. It's possible to do that with the help of microlensing.

This approach, even if planets are detected, cannot seriously upset the ranks of those supporting the anthropic explanation. First, as Lakatos correctly writes, it's not easy to bring down an entire research program. Second, Loeb's conclusion about the decrease in probability of an anthropic explanation to 0.1 percent if planets are discovered is based on a number of assumptions that may not hold true. The presence of planets doesn't imply the presence of life. Furthermore, one must evaluate the quantity of civilizations and the average length of their existence.

We finished lunch and returned to the conference room. I was very impressed by Chris Impey's presentation. He is a professor studying quasars at the Steward Observatory of the University of Arizona. Chris, the wonderful speaker he is, elected to use the microphone, which immediately captured everyone's

attention. Chris and his group made geometric measurements of dark energy using the Alcock-Paczynski test and the emissions of quasars as data sources. When the presentation ended, I went up to Chris, and after expressing my admiration and respect, asked him to clarify one of the points in his presentation. His eyes lit up, and he explained everything to me again.

Geniuses and idiots look and behave identically. (This idea came to me through the observation of cosmologists.) How can you tell the difference without delving into the essence of the questions they discuss? Therefore, people rely on scientific authorities and public opinion. In public opinion, the collective consciousness of humanity is revealed. Just as an individual develops, makes mistakes, and becomes degraded, so does the collective consciousness. Where is the way out? How does one find a universal yardstick with which to measure truth?

Conveying information visually is incomparably more effective than delivering it orally. An aphorism: “Better to see once than to hear one hundred times.” Not using visual methods for teaching in our age is senseless. Teaching, like any conveying of information, should be supported, when possible, with visual images. The problem with visual teaching, however, is that it can cause thought to come to a standstill: once a visual image is learned, it is discarded only with difficulty. In this way, the brain’s formulation of new concepts can be slowed. For example, while we had electricity, slides were presented and the ideas were at least partially comprehensible. However, as soon as the cosmologists switched to oral discussions, it was lights out—nothing was comprehensible.

A person must be in a friendly environment to think and express ideas effectively. Certain individuals pursue the glory of winning arguments. However, an amicable and respectful dialog, when a person is not afraid to say something foolish, is the most productive form of intellectual exchange. The truth, if it exists, is a result of collective thought in the form of a Platonic dialog.

What is more important for society, a few brilliant thinkers, or the elevation of the public’s level of thinking? In the first case, quick and brilliant achievements are possible in any area of science or the humanities. In the second case, amicable

conditions and an effective general education lay the foundation for a massive breakthrough in two or three generations. But in contemporary society, it's impossible to be sure that a long-term investment such as this won't be scuttled by hostile interference from within, or by revolutionary movements in society. Most nations take the first path, not resolving to make long-term investments, instead choosing candidates for the sciences on a competitive basis. The weight of established scientific and social goals crushes those chosen for their great intelligence. Their reward for their achievements is neurosis and similar problems. The only escape from this situation is the pursuit of science; in other words, that which crushed them in the first place. It's an endless cycle. It's like breeding a mule, who is only suited for work, and for whom work constitutes the meaning of his existence. Dual societal pressures affect individuals: the weeding out process, which eventually causes the less capable to cave in, and the rigid appropriation of the capable for society's purposes. A genius able to withstand these dual pressures is a rare occurrence. Progress would occur more efficiently if society adopted the second approach toward education. How large a contribution those weeded out could make and how bright those inducted into academia could be, if only they possessed a normal life and sound psyche! Today's system of higher education reminds one of the processing of timber. Logs are split, hewn, and sawn to produce a few toothpicks, but the overwhelming mass of lumber is turned into sawdust and discarded.

Science fiction, at the turn of the 21st century, is dying out of because those predisposed to love it are migrating to the sciences, where computer simulation allows them to exercise their imagination much more than a fantasy novel would. The presentation on the membranous nature of the universe included a discussion about the proposed density and temperature of this hypothetical membrane, which was much more thrilling than Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Simulation or, roughly speaking, legitimized science fiction, is considered more prestigious than observation, though the opposite should be true. It's entirely possible that contemporary "modelers" take their inspiration from Einstein. First, he formulated his theory, and then he proved it

experimentally. Now people try to claim as much theory as possible in their writing—something is bound to be true!—because the scope of the theory cited is so wide.

The next day, all the conference participants went on a group excursion to the city, which is on the Caribbean Sea, about two and half hours from Santa Clara.

In 1514, Diego Velázquez founded Trinidad on the rivers Agabama and Jayoba, which at that time were still prospected for gold. In the town's early years, the residents of Trinidad earned their livelihood from contraband. Pirates, however, often attacked them, and in the 18th century, they sought a legal (albeit more labor-intensive) source of wealth: growing sugarcane. When sugar prices were booming, Trinidad experienced a golden age. However, when Havana and Cienfuegos became hubs of commerce and the abolishment of slavery was right around the corner, Trinidad lost its significance as quickly as it had gained it. But because of this decline, colonial architecture was preserved for us to enjoy in the present day.

The most frightening and insidious element of this architecture was a cobblestone road made from smooth round stones that appeared to have been excavated from a streambed. Every time we walked this road, we risked twisting an ankle!

During our walk, we lost our way under the scorching high afternoon sun and decided to rest in the shade on a church parapet. Pirate figures materialized before me in the hot and humid mugginess. It seemed I was becoming delirious. But my wife confirmed my hallucinations. It turns out the Cubans were filming a movie in the square in front of the church.

We sat on the parapet while our group steadily passed. After a while, we rose to follow them. No sooner had I turned around than my wife fell and twisted her ankle. Her foot immediately began to swell, just as if it were made of puffy dough.

My wife couldn't put any weight on her foot, and our group had already walked by. I left her in the company of a mangy, wheezing dog and ran to catch up with the group. Just then, the Cuban police officer who had organized the cordon for the filming stopped me. He didn't seem to want to release me;

however, after murmuring a few unintelligible phrases, he let me pass. I circled the town center twice before I found the group of cosmologists indolently lounging in a nearby bar. I cheerfully informed the group leader that my wife had sprained her ankle. He responded by asking if there was a doctor among those present. A rather beautiful Moor wearing an earring volunteered. He was a doctor, though he worked in a concert hall bar because the pay there was higher.

And so my Cuban comrades and I set out to find my spouse. At the first intersection, a police officer from the cordon stopped us. Our group leader's explanations didn't help the situation: they still wouldn't let us through. I made a sign to our Cuban comrades, jestingly indicting that my amigos were backing me up. Having run around the town center several times in search of the cosmologists, I'd already discovered which back alley would lead us closest to the church.

But on this path, too, we ran into a policeman. The doctor began shouting anti-revolutionary slogans (from what I could understand of his Spanish) and accusing the policeman of shameless behavior in the presence of foreigners. He retreated down the street and from his new position began shouting that he was ashamed for Cuba. The policeman's unfriendly eyes searched for the Moor. I thought that we would all be arrested for anti-Soviet activities.

Somehow, the group leader and I made it past the policeman. We found my wife crying on the parapet next to the shallowly breathing dog.

All around us, the pirates continued to shoot and carry on with the soldiers, who were chasing after them dressed in 18th-century uniforms. It was surreal. Soon we were retrieved by an ambulance and brought to the International Clinic. From there we were taken to a simpler clinic for an x-ray.

No bones were broken, and my wife (with a plaster splint on her ankle) was able to hop up into the ambulance that took us back to Santa Clara. The driver spoke little English and didn't understand anything I tried to tell him. I was glad for the opportunity to practice my Spanish with him on the way back to the hotel.

In the morning, my wife rose and, using me for support, hopped to the bathroom. To my horror, while she was leaning on me, she set off my gouty knee. I also started limping, though I didn't need to hop around on one leg.

So began the tedium of my spouse's hobbled ambulation. Unfortunately, we weren't able to find crutches in Cuba. I tried to bribe a hospital worker who knew a nurse in the hospital. The idea was to steal *muletas* (crutches) from an invalid. However, the Cuban invalid, it seems, was able to fend the nurse off with those very crutches. Thus, my wife hopped away from Cuba on one leg, flying home with me two days early. She demonstrated to everyone empirically, having fallen and dislocated her foot, that gravity on the Isle of Freedom was in working order.

At home, our kids, who weren't surprised at finding lame-footed parents, met us.

"We told you not to fool around with those cosmologists! We knew they would eventually rough you guys up if you kept nosing around in their business."

The Uniqueness of the Universe

Apparently, it doesn't require special proof that the science of cosmology has little effect on the daily life of an individual. Although it seems overwhelmingly distant from our immediate concerns and mundane worries, cosmological ideas have, for centuries, played an essential role in shaping philosophical views, and therefore, they have heavily influenced numerous aspects of religious and political life.

Cosmology, as a science, limits itself to the study of the universe as a whole—its contents, structure, and evolution. Cosmological beliefs are based on the conclusions drawn from astronomical observations and mathematical models, but they still substantially influence the media and raise public interest.

The study of cosmology has changed from a speculative enterprise into a data-driven science that is part of a modern standard physical theory and supported by a wealth of observations. Nevertheless, some theoretical proposals are being made for the very early stages of the universe that have no

observational support. Thus, in some respects, it remains a principle-driven enterprise, with observation subordinate to theory, which means that the foundations of this science are inherently consigned to some degree of speculation.

In this book, we are going to undertake a breathtaking journey into the very roots of the philosophy of cosmology to appraise rigorously this degree of speculation. This will allow us to attempt to define the ultimate limits of human knowledge to form a sober view of what, exactly, we can and cannot know.

We hope our efforts will escape possible accusations in agnosticism and will distance ourselves from Socrates' saying, "I know that I know nothing," by trying to estimate the limits of our knowledge while appreciating tremendous progress of science since the days of the great Greek thinker.

The first difficulty that the philosophy of cosmology encounters is the uniqueness of the universe. The most fundamental issue is that there is only one universe. This essential uniqueness of its object of study sets cosmology apart from all other sciences. In particular, the unique initial conditions that led to the current state of the universe were somehow "set" by the time that physical laws as we know them started governing the evolution of both the universe and its contents. We are not able to alter these unique initial conditions in any way. They are given to us as absolute and unchangeable.

One of the major implications of this is that the universe cannot be subjected to physical experimentation. Obviously, we cannot re-run the universe to see what would happen if conditions were different, so we cannot carry out scientific experiments on the primary object of our study, the universe itself. Furthermore, due to its uniqueness, the universe cannot be observationally compared with any other universes.

For example, the laws of inheritance, which laid the foundation for modern genetics, derived by Gregor Mendel, needed tests on over 28,000 pea plants. His experiments wouldn't have been possible if he had only had one pea to examine.

Unfortunately, we have only one universe to study, and one that we can only partially observe. Because we cannot compare our universe with any other universes, we are limited in

our ability to derive laws that would apply to the whole group of objects that we aren't even sure exists.

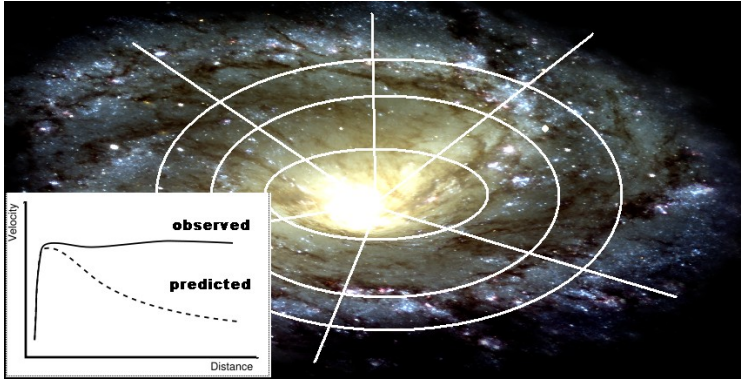
This example may illustrate that the concept of the 'laws of physics,' since it applies to only one object, is questionable. We cannot scientifically establish 'laws of the universe' that might apply to the class of all such objects, for we cannot test any proposed law except in whether it is consistent with one object. Indeed, the concept of a 'law' becomes doubtful when there is only one given object that is possible to study. The idea of a physical law is that it applies to a group of objects, all of which have similar characteristics despite possible variations. These variations result from different initial conditions for the systems on which the law acts. Scientific experiments allow us to vary the initial conditions of the systems we wish to test. This is not possible in the case of cosmology because we cannot re-run the universe in the lab.

We can observe the laws of physics locally and confirm that they look the same on a small scale anywhere in the universe, but we have difficulty extrapolating them on the higher level of hierarchy of the organization of the universe. For example, Newton's laws of gravity⁷¹ work perfectly on the level of our solar system, but they can not be applied with the same degree of certainty once we examine the orbital speeds of stars around the galactic center, which are higher than expected, or the behavior of the galaxies in clusters that stay together despite the fact that their visible mass shouldn't be able to hold them together, and other issues. Even though modern cosmology explains this by the presence of the missing mass dubbed "dark matter" in the halos of the galaxies, there are alternative theories, like modified Newton's gravity (MOND)⁷² that challenge

⁷¹ Gravitation is one of the four fundamental interactions in nature, the other three being the electromagnetic force, the weak nuclear force, and the strong nuclear force. Gravitation is the weakest of these interactions, but acts over great distances and is always attractive. Newton's law of gravitation states that every particle in the universe attracts every other particle with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

⁷² In physics, modified Newtonian dynamics (MOND) is a theory that explains the galaxy rotation problem without assuming the existence of dark matter. MOND was proposed by Mordehai Milgrom in 1981 to model the observed uniform velocity data without the dark

mainstream cosmology from time to time, upsetting advocates of the Lambda cold dark matter model that currently is in agreement with observed phenomena.⁷³



On a higher level, the laws of gravity cannot explain why the universe is expanding and accelerating in its expansion. There is a need for new laws to describe the missing energy, dubbed “dark energy,” responsible for such expansion which may take the form of the cosmological constant or quintessence. Although such new laws may provide reasonable explanations, they cannot be checked because we cannot observe them on any other object but our universe.

Because of the restriction of a global solution to a local neighborhood, we can employ as a solution the hypothesis that we have zillions of “mini-universes,” on which we may test the laws that control the local nature of the universe, but a mini-universe is not the universe; it is a small part of the whole. By examining these “mini-universes” and seeing if they are essentially the same everywhere, we can, to some degree, check that the laws of physics are the same everywhere in the universe (a key feature of all cosmological analysis) and that the universe is practically the same in all areas and directions. The latter

matter assumption. The most successful relativistic version of MOND, proposed in 2004, is known as “TeVeS” for Tensor-Vector-Scalar. (Bekenstein, Jacob D. “Modified Gravity vs Dark Matter: Relativistic Theory for MOND.” JHEP Conference Proceedings, 2005)

⁷³ Lambda CDM represents the current model of big bang cosmology that is aimed to explain cosmic microwave background observations, as well as large-scale structure observations and supernovae observations of the accelerating expansion of the universe.

feature has to be explained by a “law of the universe.” Verifying homogeneity does not explain why it is the case.

Finally, the concept of probability is problematic in the context of the existence of only one object. Problems arise in applying the idea of probability to cosmology as a whole, but a concept of probability underlies much of modern argumentation. For instance, we are talking about very low probability of the observed ‘fine tuning,’ which means that physical constants have precise values that allow them to create conditions not only for life to exist, but also for atoms to form. If the constants were different, the atoms would never form, the stars would never shine, thermonuclear synthesis of the elements wouldn’t be possible, and the diversity of the chemical elements that supports life would never emerge.⁷⁴

This assumes both that things could have been different and that we can assign probabilities to the set of possibilities that have never become a reality in an astronomically provable way. The issue here is to explain in what sense they could have been different with well-defined probabilities assigned to the different theoretical scenarios, if there is indeed only one universe with one set of initial conditions.

We cannot scientifically establish laws of creation that might determine different initial conditions and resulting probabilities. First, it is useful to distinguish between the experimental sciences, physics, chemistry, and microbiology on the one hand, and the historical and geographical sciences, astronomy, geology, and evolutionary theory on the other. The experimental sciences are usually discussions of the scientific method. The understanding in these cases is that we observe and experiment on a class of identical, or almost identical, objects and establish their common behavior. The problem then resides in

⁷⁴ Thermonuclear fusion is the process that takes place inside the stars throughout their lives and when the stars explode as super-novae. Gravity causes clouds of gas to collapse and form a star. In the core of the star, very high pressure and temperature ignite the thermonuclear reaction. By this process, multiple nuclei join to form a heavier nucleus. It is responsible for the diversity of elements in the universe and works to fill in the Periodic Table of Elements. The tremendous energy released in this process makes the stars shine and allows us to enjoy sunlight.

just how identical those objects are. Quarks, protons, and electrons are all identical to each other, and so have exactly the same behavior (indeed, this feature underlies well-tested quantum statistics). All DNA molecules, frogs, human beings, and ecosystems are somewhat different from each other, but similar enough that the same broad descriptions and laws apply to them; if this were not so, we would be wrong in claiming they belonged to the same class of objects in the first place. Water molecules, gases, solids, and liquids are in an intermediate category: almost identical and certainly describable reliably by specific physical and chemical laws.

As regards the geographical and historical sciences, one explicitly studies unique objects (the Rio Grande, Antarctica, the solar system, the Andromeda Galaxy, etc.), or events that have occurred only once (the origin of the solar system, the evolution of life on Earth, the explosion of a certain supernova star). Because of this uniqueness, we can only observe rather than experiment; the initial conditions that led to these unique objects or events cannot be altered. However, at least in principle, there is a class of similar objects (other rivers, continents, planetary systems, galaxies, etc.) or events (the origins of other galaxies, the evolution of other planetary systems, the explosion of other supernovae, etc.) that we can observe and compare with our specific exemplar, carrying out statistical analyses on such cases to determine underlying, regular patterns. In this respect, these topics differ from cosmology.

If we truly cannot carry out such an analysis, that subject poses a legitimate question about the nature of cosmology. One may claim that the dividing line is that if we convince ourselves that some large-scale physical phenomenon essentially occurs only once in the universe, it should be regarded as part of cosmology. However, if we are convinced the phenomena occur in many places or times, even if we cannot observe them (e.g. we believe that planets evolved around many stars in other galaxies), then the study of that class of objects or events can be distinguished from cosmology precisely because there is a class to study.

Some scientists have tried to get around this problem by denying the uniqueness of the universe. They propose the physical existence of many universes, to which concepts of probability can be properly applied, envisaged either as widely separated regions of a larger universe with very different properties in each region (as in chaotic inflation, for example), or as an ensemble of completely disconnected universes with no physical connection whatsoever between them, in which all possibilities are realized.

So far, there is no hard proof that other universes exist, and we have to stick to the statement that the universe we live in is unique, at least from our point of view, and deal with the philosophical implications of such an approach.

The Large Scale of the Universe in Space and Time

The problems arising from the uniqueness of the universe are compounded by its vast scale in space and time, which poses major problems for observational cosmology. We therefore need to introduce various principles, in addition to the observations, in order to develop working models that will support theories that interpret the current observations and predict future ones with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

To get an idea about observations on the large scale of the universe, let's look at the distances with which we are dealing. The distance to Andromeda, the nearest large galaxy, is such that it takes light about two million years to travel to Earth. The speed of light is about 300,000 km per second, which means that if you send a powerful light signal from Earth, it will not reach Andromeda for a couple million years. The present size of the visible universe is about five thousand times bigger than the distance to Andromeda. This size, relative to our own physical scale, places major constraints on our ability to observe distant regions (and certainly prevents us experimenting with them). The uniqueness of cosmology in this respect is that it deals with this scale: the largest with which we can have causal or observational contact.

Astronomical observations are confined to the past null cone, fading with distance. We can effectively only observe the universe, considered on a cosmological scale, in one space-time event⁷⁵ in terms of “there and then.” Visual observations are possible only on our past light cone, so we are inevitably looking into the past as we see to greater distances. Uncertainty grows with distance and time.

On the other hand, the vast scale of the universe implies that we can effectively only view it from another space-time event “here and now.” If we were to move away from this spatial position at almost the speed of light for, say, 10,000 years, we would not leave our own galaxy, much less reach another one, and if we were to start a long-term astronomical experiment that stored data for 20,000 years and then analyzed it, the time at which we observe the universe would be essentially unchanged. Its age is now believed to be about 13.7 billion years, and the extra time would make a negligible difference. This is unlike other geographic sciences. We can travel everywhere on Earth and see what is there. The situation would be quite different if the universe were much smaller. Given its actual scale, we are now seeing galaxies whose present distance from us is about ten billion light years; the effect is as if we were only able to observe Earth from the top of one mountain and had to deduce its nature from those observations alone.

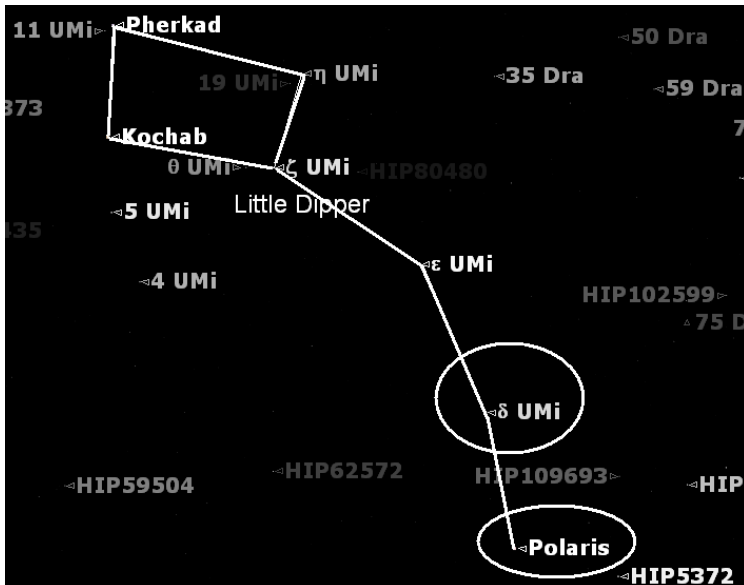
We can only observe the universe by means of the particles and electromagnetic radiation coming to us at the speed of light,⁷⁶ and we can run astronomical observations of distant sources and background radiation by telescopes operating at all wavelengths (optical, infrared, ultraviolet, radio, X-ray, gamma rays), but all of them are constrained to rays lying in our past light cone. These allow detailed observations (including visual pictures, spectral information, and polarization measurements) of matter as it intersects our past light cone. In observing distant

⁷⁵ This means that we cannot see what is going on in the Andromeda Galaxy right now; we can only observe the space-time events attributed to this region of space as they would appear for local observers about two million years ago.

⁷⁶ According to Albert Einstein’s theory, so far proved correct, nothing can travel faster than the speed of light.

regions, we can also aspire to use neutrino and gravitational wave telescopes, and perhaps cosmic ray observations, representing information coming to us at the speed of light or less. However, all our detailed data about distant regions is gathered along our past light cone. Consequently, we encounter the following problems in interpreting the astronomical observations.

First, because we cannot travel considerable distances from Earth and cannot change the point from which we observe the universe, we can obtain only two-dimensional projections of the sky, which gives us only partial information about the real, three-dimensional distribution of matter in the universe. Many stars that appear close in the sky are, in fact, separated by great distances along the axis of our observation, and only their projection's two-dimensional plane let us view them as close counterparts. Constellations, those groups of stars that for millennia were considered parts of one stellar structure, have nothing to do with each other, apart from the fact that they appear in close proximity on the two-dimensional plane. Let's have a look at the constellation Ursa Minor (the Little Dipper).



The well-known, bright star Polaris, or North Star, is 432 light years from us, while the next star in the constellation, Delta Ursae Minoris, is 183 light years away, making it twice closer to us than the more luminous Polaris. Why does Polaris appear brighter if it is farther away? Because Delta Ursae Minoris is a main sequence star (like our sun) while Polaris is a giant. The things in the sky are not as they appear.

We need reliable methods to measure distances and obtain a true picture of the universe. Even though we have succeeded in using different objects as “standard candles,” this method of measurement is not quite reliable. Some distances are measured with precision as low as 50%, which is like if you were asked the distance to next gas station and you replied, “Between fifty and a hundred miles.” It’s a big difference even on Earth scale, saying nothing of possible mistakes of thousands of light years. There are many stars the distance to which is unknown.

The second problem in the interpretation of astronomical observations arises with the realization that we can see distant galaxies only at earlier times in their history. There is no way for us to know what’s going on in these galaxies now, because light coming from them left its source millions, and for more distant galaxies billions, of years ago.

It is the same as if we could learn about the geography of what now constitutes the continent of Africa only by observing it as it used to look in the era of dinosaurs. This gives us some advantages by making cosmology a combination of geographic and historical science, although the science is cursed with disadvantages. Because we are looking at the past appearance of the object of our observation, we have to consider the evolution of this object to determine the distances. In practice, it is one of the unknowns we are challenged to determine.

The third problem arises when we face the fact that distant sources appear very small and faint, both because of their physical distance and because their light is highly red shifted (as suggested by mainstream cosmology due to the expansion of the universe).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Red shift occurs when the visible light from an object shifts towards the red end of the spectrum. (The spectrum is the range of colors observed when white light is dispersed

It is difficult to detect the light that comes from great distance, let alone determine characteristics of the objects that emit it. Moreover, there is the problem of absorption by intervening matter that can interfere with light from distant objects. The farther away we look, the worse these problems get. Therefore, the certainty of our knowledge of the universe decreases rapidly with distances.

A certain solution to these problems comes from the availability of geological-type data; that is, the present-day status of rocks, planets, star clusters, galaxies, and so on, which contain much information on the history of the matter comprising those objects. Reviewing this data allows us to obtain detailed information on conditions near our past world line in space-time very early if we interpret the data correctly. Geological type observations can probe our immediate vicinity in the distant past. Physical and astrophysical observations tell us about conditions of the far distant past of more distant objects.

This constitutes the basis of physical cosmology, which is the study of the evolution of structures in the universe tested by comparison with astronomical observations. We have also an opportunity to measure the abundance of elements in our region of space and confirm it in distant regions, which can serve our better understanding of nucleosynthesis in the hot big bang.⁷⁸

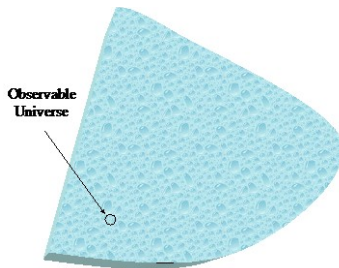
through a prism. Spectrum refers to a plot of light intensity as a function of frequency or wavelength.) More generally, red shift is defined as an increase in the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation (in this case light) received by a detector, compared with the wavelength emitted by the source. This increase in wavelength corresponds to a decrease in the frequency of electromagnetic radiation. Conversely, a decrease in wavelength is called blue shift. So, expansion of the universe is explained by mainstream science as the Doppler Effect, the apparent change in frequency and wavelength of a wave perceived by an observer when the source of the waves is moving relative to him.

⁷⁸ Nucleosynthesis is the process of creating new atomic nuclei from preexisting nucleons (protons and neutrons). The primordial preexisting nucleons were formed from the quark-gluon plasma of the big bang as it cooled below ten million degrees. This first process may be called nucleogenesis, the genesis of nucleons in the universe. The subsequent nucleosynthesis of the elements (including all carbon, all oxygen) occurs primarily in stars through nuclear fusion. Using the big bang model, it is possible to calculate the concentration of helium-4, helium-3, deuterium, and lithium-7 in the universe as ratios to the amount of ordinary hydrogen, H.

The measured abundances all agree with those predicted. The agreement is relatively poor for ${}^7\text{Li}$ and ${}^4\text{He}$, the two elements for which the systematic uncertainties are least

If we can obtain adequate quality data of this kind for objects at high red shifts, we can use this to probe conditions very early in their histories at some distance from our past worldline.

One of the main challenges of observational cosmology is determining the large-scale geometry of the universe. The obvious way to approach this problem is to try to determine the geometry of the universe from observations (assuming that the nature of objects observed is properly understood). This approach is based on the observational cosmology theorem, which states that the data available on our past null cone from astronomical observations is necessary and sufficient to determine the space-time geometry on that null cone.



Even if these assumptions are right, and there is sufficient data available to determine the space-time geometry on that null cone, it is possible that the observable universe is only a fraction of a bigger universe that may always stay beyond our observational abilities, especially if one believes in the acceleration of the universe, which may separate different parts of the universe at a such pace that light from these sources will never reach our telescopes.

The size of the observable universe has grown one thousand times larger in the last one hundred years as our observational equipment has improved. Maybe it is worth waiting until we are able to observe an even bigger part of the universe before we jump to conclusions about its geometry. The currently

understood. This is considered strong evidence for the big bang, as the theory is the only currently available explanation for the relative abundances of light elements.

observable universe appears flat, which may not be the case as the size of the observable universe increases. Analogously, from a terrestrial point of view, Earth appears flat, but when seen from space, it appears round.

It is a good question—whether there is a need to research areas that obviously lack sufficient data to obtain conclusive results, or if it is better to leave these areas alone until other methods prompt us to reconsider the questions researched. Alas, this is not the approach in modern science. What was the point of losing lives to reach the North and South Poles when in half of century it was reachable by flight? The flight was developed for independent purposes, but later was available to satisfy the thrust of geographers to learn what Earth's poles were concealing from them. It turned out, not much.

We already mentioned the allegory that describes the cosmologist as a man standing on the top of a hill in the desert, trying to make meaningful conclusions about Earth as a whole, with no ability to see the oceans. Anyway, from the data available, it is possible, in principle, to determine the space-time in the past of the null cone, and if there is no interference, its future. However, in practice, this is difficult to carry out, both because of the problem of estimating distances for all observed sources, which requires knowledge of the nature of the sources, and because of the difficulty in obtaining some of the needed data (which includes apparent distortions of all distant objects and the transverse velocities of all observed matter). The further we observe down the past light cone, the larger the uncertainty becomes.

This direct observational approach, where no prior model is assumed for the space-time geometry, has been pursued to some degree. In essence, this approach underlies the observational studies that discovered large-scale structures⁷⁹ such as the great walls and voids.

⁷⁹ In physical cosmology, the term “large-scale structure” refers to the characterization of observable distributions of matter and light on the largest scales (typically billions of light years). Sky surveys and mappings of the various wavelength bands of electromagnetic radiation have yielded much information on the content and character of the universe's structure. The organization of structure appears to follow as a hierarchical model with organization on the scale of super clusters and filaments. The “Great Wall” is a sheet of

Nevertheless, it is not widely adopted as an overall approach to cosmology, both because of these observational difficulties and because it has little explanatory value. The direct observational approach simply tells us what the geometry and matter distribution is, but not the nature of it.

It is acceptable in mainstream cosmology to use a theory-based approach. We assume a priori a model based on space-time geometry with high symmetry and then determine its essential free parameters from the comparison of theoretical relations with astronomical observations.

There is always a need for the link between observations and theoretical models. Such standard models of cosmology are the Friedmann-Lemaître (FL) family of universe models. Their metric describes a homogeneous and isotropic universe, which has the same uniform composition throughout, independent of the direction in which we look. These models are easy to comprehend and have good explanatory power. Moreover, the physical predictions of these models (the existence of blackbody cosmic microwave background radiation⁸⁰ and specific light element production in the early universe) seem confirmed by observations. The problem is, to what degree do observational data confirm these universe models for the expanding universe geometry?

According to current astronomical observations, the observed region of space is nearly isotropic about us. It is true regarding the distribution of galaxies on a large scale, and it is also true regarding observed cosmic microwave background radiation.

galaxies more than five hundred million light years long and two hundred million wide, but only fifteen million light years thick. The existence of this structure escaped notice for so long because it requires locating the position of galaxies in three dimensions, which involves combining location information about the galaxies with distance information from red shifts.

⁸⁰ Cosmic microwave background radiation, also referred as “relic radiation,” is a form of electromagnetic radiation discovered in 1965 that fills the entire universe. It has a thermal 2.725-Kelvin black body spectrum that peaks in the microwave range at a frequency of 160.4 GHz, corresponding to a wavelength of 1.9 mm. Most cosmologists consider this radiation to be the best evidence for the hot big bang model of the universe.

Indeed, background radiation is spectacularly isotropic, with a slight anisotropy, which is understood to result from our motion relative to the rest frame of the universe.

The fact that on a large, cosmological scale, no major matter concentrations in any particular region of the observable universe were found signifies that the space-time structure and matter distribution are isotropic about us. This allows us to design exact, spherically symmetrical universe models that would be supported, or at least not contradicted, by current observations. In general, such models will be spatially inhomogeneous, with our galaxy located at or near the center. Philosophically speaking, this won't be a very popular theory, because of the previous failures of geocentric and heliocentric models. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible, though not probable.

In order to supply convincing observational evidence for spatial homogeneity, in addition to spherical symmetry, we may employ various arguments.

One such argument is the cosmological principle. Just assume spatial homogeneity because it is the simplest case and you need nothing more complex based on current observations. We may simply adopt a philosophical principle as the basis of argument. This is essentially an a priori prescription for the initial conditions of the universe. It means a universe that initially has an isotopic geometry will have that geometry later, because the symmetries of the initial data are usually preserved.

Another argument is the Friedmann-Lemaitre (FL) observational relation. If we could show that the source observational relations had the unique FL form as a function of distance, this would establish spatial homogeneity, in addition to isotropy.

However, the observational problems mentioned earlier, specifically that we couldn't measure distances reliably enough, do not allow us to carrying this through. Astrophysical cosmology could resolve this in principle, but it is unable to do so in practice.

In the face of this, the usual procedure is to assume that spatial homogeneity is known in some other way, but attempts to prove spatial homogeneity observationally fail. Even though the

alternative interpretation would be that this observational data is evidence of spatial inhomogeneity, i.e. that we live in a spherically symmetric inhomogeneous universe in which we are situated somewhere near the centre, with the cosmological red shift⁸¹ being partly gravitational.

Similarly, the supernova data usually is understood to imply the existence of a cosmological constant. This could also be interpreted as evidence of inhomogeneity, without the need for “dark energy.” Most cosmologists regard such proposals as very unappealing, but that does not prove they are incorrect. It just proves that there is uncertainty in this question and obtaining the hard evidence of homogeneity is not as easy as it might look.

Another argument is the physical argument. It states that physical processes such as inflation make the existence of isotopic regions highly likely, much more probable than spherically symmetric inhomogeneous regions. Even though it is a viable argument, we must be clear that we are merely replacing an observational test with a theoretical argument based on a physical process that may or may not have happened. It may seem to many mainstream cosmologists that there is no definitive observational proof that inflation took place.

The inflationary universe theory is popular because of its predictions of the detailed pattern of cosmic background radiation anisotropy on a small scale. That argument would only become rigorous if it is shown that spherically symmetric inhomogeneous models (with or without inflation) cannot produce similar patterns of anisotropy. In fact, however, such models can produce similar patterns of anisotropy, because the acoustic oscillations that lead to the characteristic predicted anisotropy patterns take place after inflation and can plausibly happen if suitable initial conditions occur without a previous inflationary phase. Doesn't that mean that before we attempt to explain inflation by a cosmological constant or quintessence (or any other form of

⁸¹ In physics, light loses energy when it moves away from a massive body such as a star or a black hole; this effect reveals itself as a gravitational red shift in the frequency of the light and is observable as a shift of spectral lines towards the red end of the spectrum.

“dark energy”) we need to obtain substantial proof that inflation has really taken place?

There is an alternative to conventional cosmological thinking. In his book *In the End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics*⁸², first published in 1999, Julian Barbour asserts that the existence of time is an illusion. Barbour begins by describing the evolution of his view of time. After taking physics courses in graduate school, Barbour became obsessed with the idea that time is nothing but change. During his studies, he encountered the work of Paul Dirac, which turned his attention to the results of quantum physics. Working as a translator of Russian scientific articles, he was able to pursue his research freely.

Despite the counterintuitive nature of his central claim, Barbour attempts to persuade the reader that our experiences are, at the very least, consistent with a timeless universe. He does not explain, however, why one might seek to exclude time from his or her view of the universe.

Barbour points out that some sciences have long ago done away with “I” as a persisting identity. To take atomic theory seriously is to deny that the cat that jumps is the cat that lands, to use one of Barbour’s illustrations. The seething nebulae of molecules that make up humans, cats, and all matter are constantly rearranging themselves at incomprehensibly fast speeds. The microcosms metamorphose constantly, which motivates the idea that one must deny that a cat or person persists through time.

Barbour addresses the charge that writing with tensed verbs disproves his claim of a timeless universe. The next revolution in physics will undermine the use of tense in speech, according to Barbour, who adds that at present there is no way to speak or write without using tense.

If the universe is composed of timeless instants and non-enduring configurations of matter, one could nonetheless have the impression that time flows, Barbour asserts. Consciousness and the sensation of the present, which lasts about a second, are

⁸² Julian Barbour. *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics*. Oxford University Press, 2001

just in our heads. Information about the recent past is indeed in our brains, but it is not there as a result of a causal chain leading back to earlier instants. Rather, it is a property of sentient beings, perhaps a necessary one, to begin thinking in the first place. Brains are “time-capsules,” in Barbour’s words. He investigates configuration spaces and best-matching mathematics, fleshing out how fundamental physics might deal with different instants in a timeless model of the universe. He calls his universe, absent of time and fixed positions, *Platonía* after Plato’s world of eternal forms. Barbour’s *Platonía* consists of an infinity of “nows.”

Why is the true frame and object of the universe the instant in configuration space, and not matter in space-time, as traditional cosmologists believe? Barbour marshals as evidence a non-standard analysis of relativity, the many-worlds theory, and ADM formalism.⁸³ Since he believes we should be open to physics without time, we must re-evaluate physical laws such as the Wheeler-DeWitt equation⁸⁴ without respect to time. These laws take on radical but powerful forms when time is excluded. Barbour writes that our notion of time and insistence on including it in physical theory has held science back. A scientific revolution awaits, he claims. Barbour suspects that the wave function is somehow constrained by the “terrain” of *Platonía*.

⁸³ The ADM formalism developed by Arnowitt, Deser, and Misner is a Hamiltonian formulation of general relativity. The formalism supposes that space-time is foliated into a family of space-like surfaces. Using the ADM formulation, it is possible to construct a quantum theory of gravity in the same way that one constructs the Schrödinger equation corresponding to a given Hamiltonian in quantum mechanics.

⁸⁴ In theoretical physics, the Wheeler-DeWitt equation is a functional differential equation. It is ill defined, but very useful, especially when solving equations involving quantum gravity. It is a functional differential equation on the space of three-dimensional spatial metrics. The Wheeler-DeWitt equation has the form of an operator acting on a wave functional (the functional reduced to a function in cosmology). Contrary to the general case, the Wheeler-DeWitt equation is well defined in mini-superspaces like configuration space in cosmological theories. An example of such a wave function is the Hartle-Hawking state, named after James Hartle and Stephen Hawking. It represents the wave function of the universe, a notion meant to figure out how the universe started, calculated from Feynman’s path integral.

Barbour ends with a short meditation on some of the consequences of “the end of time.” If there is no arrow of time, if there is only being and no becoming, creation is equally inherent in every instant.

Man’s Duel with Time

All human misfortunes and sorrows can be traced to passing, merciless, all-devouring time. “Men don’t kill time; time kills men.” “Time is the best teacher. It’s a shame it kills its students.” “All seconds wound, the final one kills.” These are just a few examples of what man has said about time, his frightening, deadly, and uncompromising enemy. Time is always associated with death, and as Ralph Waldo Emerson correctly noted, “The blazing evidence of immortality is our dissatisfaction with any other solution.” But while man meets his own death only once, he runs up against time at each passing second.

Few conceptions in man’s consciousness can be decoupled from time. Even on this printed page, it is impossible to get by without a concept of time, for anything that presents itself as a succession of ideas is firmly yoked to it. Without time, there can be no succession; without succession, there is no logic; without logic, there is no thought; and without thought, there is no existence. “I think, therefore I am.” Existence as man conceives it cannot be without time. The thought of time’s absence is more distressing than the reality of its presence. Time is like a splintery, floating log that overturns the moment a drowning person reaches for it, entombing the poor soul beneath it in the abyss of nonexistence.

It would seem that the sharp, wounding sensation of time passing communicates itself to us by way of our mature consciousness’ understanding of the meaning of time. One might suppose that he who doesn’t reflect on the meaning of time and lives without counting the days is happy and invulnerable. William Ernest Hocking expressed the idea thus: “Man is the only animal that contemplates death, and also the only animal that shows any sign of doubt of its finality.” While watching a cat comfortably sprawled out in the sun, lazily pawing the air with closed eyes, one unwittingly begins to envy the unconcern and

happiness of its existence. It's doubtful that man alone can become distraught over the thought of his own death, but never having been an animal, it's hard to judge what one feels in relation to its life and time.

Children in the most carefree stage of their life, who do not yet comprehend the concepts of "today" and "tomorrow" subconsciously feel the painful melancholy associated with the passing of time. A child parts with a toy reluctantly because he feels he may never see it again. The fear a child feels when his mother leaves the room is associated with the dread that she will disappear forever. What a child doesn't see and touch is nonexistent for him in his early years. The most vivid manifestation of the feeling is the universal reluctance of practically all children to go to sleep. It's more than a desire not to miss interesting events in the world of wakeful souls. It is the feeling of irretrievable loss that will occur when the child is asleep. Most likely, a mature consciousness protects us from childish fright before irretrievably passing time. The reluctance to discard papers and broken toys has, at its base, nostalgia for that which has past irretrievably and a fear of loss, subconsciously communicated to us by the irreversibility of time. It often seems that small children are privy to knowledge that we have long ago forgotten. It's as if they bring something from the other side—from nonexistence or life before birth. Seneca compared the act of birth to death. He characterizes both as an entrance into a new world.

Man has always tried to prove that his existence is not meaningless. This is the essence of the eternal battle waged with time. Primitive cave drawings helped to halt the flow of time, serving to remind viewers of particular hunts and actual events. The preservation of amulets made from the bones of slain animals also served as a reminder of past events. When a person is not able to keep track of time, he is defenseless, as if living blindfolded in an infinite abyss of being. Winters, droughts, and old age occur unexpectedly, and in order to gain a measure of control over what is going on, man invents simple calendars and primitive clocks based on the sun, moon, and stars.

The ability to draw and record enables memory to return to the past, helping man cope with irreversibly flowing time. Books have become the most important man-made instrument with which to preserve time. Their construction is the first model of time as it truly is. The beginning, middle, and end exist simultaneously. This simultaneity, however, is accessible only to the creator. The first creator (man) paints vases and carves bas-reliefs, in which he depicts events sequentially, as in comics. The nature of this medium allows the end and beginning to exist simultaneously. If the heroes of these scenes were endowed with consciousness, time for them would have the same irreversible progress. The further the technical abilities of man develop, the more closely his creations model time. Photographs freeze time so exquisitely that we can now observe with the highest degree of reality ancestors who died a hundred years ago. Finally, photographs begin to move. A film creates a live reflection of time, where for its creator the heroes are immortal and the beginning and end exist simultaneously. Even though the creator and the viewer cannot see all of the film's scenes simultaneously, the reality of the existence of the beginning and end on the celluloid film isn't disputed. The heroes of the film, as before, appear to suffer from the irreversibility of time, even though the reversibility and repeatability of time in the film is obvious to viewers.

An End to the Commonly Accepted Conception of Time

In a letter of commiseration to the loved ones of his deceased friend Besso, Albert Einstein wrote, a month before his death, "The separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, however tenacious, and death is no more real than the life that it concludes."

Time is a stubborn illusion within which our entire existence passes. We wouldn't be able to imagine anything without time. Yet time is a deception of our senses. Evidence leads us to believe that fear and worry experienced in connection with passing time is naive. This does not mean, unfortunately, that this worrying is less agonizing. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's*

Adventures in Wonderland, the heroine cries when she is told she is unreal and simply dreaming. To her response that if she is crying she is real, Tweedledum answers, “I hope you don’t suppose they are real tears.” The same can be said of us. No matter how we may persuade ourselves, no matter how many philosophical arguments for the reality or unreality of time are made, we remain human. We are burdened with the baggage of our illusions and delusions. Copernicus didn’t displace man from the center of the universe; Darwin didn’t make man the descendant of apes; Freud didn’t diminish man’s intellect by elaborating on the chaos of the subconscious. Man will always be man, philosophical outlooks, and scientific discoveries aside. However, if we come to see that time, which causes us tremendous grief and dooms us to nonexistence, is an illusion (albeit a stubborn one), perhaps we will look upon the world with a relieved smile. We will sense our eternal connectedness with creation and in this feeling lays our immortality. The thought that time is nothing but a stubborn illusion leaves us a ray of hope that our sentence in this life isn’t final and immutable. Freud wrote in *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

I had not properly appreciated the true source of religious sentiments. This, he says, consists in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without, which he finds confirmed by many others, and which he may suppose is present in millions of people. It’s a feeling he would like to call a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, “oceanic.” This feeling, he adds, is a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but it is the source of religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into particular channels, and doubtless also exhausted by them. One may, he thinks, rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion. I cannot discover this “oceanic” feeling in myself.

It's possible that Freud got by without this "oceanic feeling"; many of us, however, cannot. Without it, we are insignificant creatures tormented by the apathy of time.

The ideas presented here are invoked to prove that what we consider time does not exist. At first, that assertion sounds paradoxical to the point of banality. It seems it should be grouped among such declarations as Nietzsche's "There is no God," Solvyov's "God exists," or "There is no such thing as motion" from Zeno. It's a pity that only through the categoricalness of declarations one can attract attention to one's work in the hope that one's lines will be read by someone besides their author.

Philosophical literature has proven its abstruseness and baroque style to the extent that it's impossible to expect any sort of interest towards a new philosophical work, even if it addresses the questions most stirring to thinking people: life and death or the hollowness of existence or its possible meaning. Philosophers have forgotten that man needs philosophy. Philosophy without man has no value. If a person can't use philosophy to make sense of his life, what is its use? Therefore, stepping back from the "language of tiresomeness" in which philosophical works are written; stepping back from opaque citations, meaningless words and academic fame, I turn to the ordinary person, the person who has sought but not found the answers to eternal questions, the person who is frustrated not to find at least a partially satisfying answer to his questions.

If we investigate all of the emotional stresses of life, it's not hard to see that the cause of suffering is time, or more precisely, what we understand time to be. Time carries away life irretrievably. It consumes our flesh, leads us to our inevitable death, and deprives our life of meaning. Numerous unfounded, philosophical and religious concepts promising us "eternal life" and "immortal souls" don't satisfy us. Such is also the case with materialistic worldviews, which reassure us that the meaning of life is based on the utility of our biological existence from the point of view of our species. We participate in the process of generational change and the creation of posterity; therefore, our lives have meaning. Assurances by Schopenhauer that if we are living we don't have any relationship to death because we are

still living, and if we are not living we don't have any relationship to death, are none too helpful. This is so despite the long intellectual pedigree of this idea, which reaches back to the time of Epicurus and Seneca. Much has been said by wise men of humanity, but their postulates don't help the average person find answers to his eternal questions, questions that arise because of time. In the absence of time, all of these questions lose their meaning.

In this essay, I attempt to demonstrate the flawed basis of our current understanding of time and expose all of the undesirable consequences of the delusion of human intellect in connection with the mistaken understanding of time. Further, I reconsider the fundamental aspects of creation and world perception from the standpoint of the negation of the concept of time.

What can a close reading of this essay yield? The ability to completely reconsider man's view of creation and his role in it. This new perspective, which will leave a believer a believer and an atheist an atheist, frees us from the fear of death, the feeling of the emptiness and senselessness of existence, and the pain of loss and misfortune. It can positively affect our understanding of justice, happiness, and self-actualization through debate and reason in the arena of contemporary physics, astronomy, biology, and psychology.

What will not reading this essay give us? Possibly a short-lived satisfaction of our feeling of superiority over the next "Messiah" that the author portrays himself to be. But the question of unhappiness, death, the emptiness of existence, the irreversible passing of life, and time lost forever will go without a reasonable solution, regardless of whether the potential reader is an atheist or a believer. For not one of today's faiths or conceptions fully satisfies the inquiries of a contemporary person, if only because the major religions are poorly adapted to everyday reality. But our focus isn't shifting to religion. We shall attempt to find, study, and eliminate the source of our problems, which is the human mind's incorrect conception of time.

Time, or what we name as such, is no more than a perception. Before we begin to support our argument with

scientific fact, we should make the proviso that human language cannot be used to discuss concepts that aren't discoverable through our sensory organs. (Further on, we will evaluate separately the question of the inadequacy of the resources of human intellect to interpret creation.) Therefore, we must analyze time in terms of space. At first, this may seem like nonsense, but as we will show later, our senses represent reality not as it really is; they are mistaken time and time again. We will show that it's up to us whether these delusions cause us to suffer.

Our consciousness is organized in such a way that we apprehend the world with respect to temporal sequences. That's not surprising. We can't think several thoughts simultaneously, and we can't make multiple mathematical calculations at the same time, despite the fact that computers capable of executing several actions at once were long ago invented. Our cognition has evolved the ability to process only one thought at time. (Those who consider themselves capable of doing many things simultaneously are simply very adept at switching from one thought to the next, returning easily to the former thought without losing track of the next one.) Because thoughts don't occur simultaneously and are dependent on preceding ones, a chain or succession of thoughts forms when we think. Consequently, our perception of time is based on a succession of thoughts connected with the intake and processing of impressions taken from the surrounding world. How did the brain's way of functioning come about, and why is it so limited in comparison to artificial intelligence, which is man's creation? The cause of thought's asynchronism lies in the asynchronous way events transpire in the universe. A glass falling from the table breaks. It never spontaneously reassembles itself from glass shards, and it never rises back up to the table. A glass is never in the form of a glass and glass shards simultaneously. The consecutive way in which events unfold in nature is directed along the thermodynamic arrow of time, along which entropy, or the dissipation of energy, increases. This directionality of events in nature is reflected in the process of human cognition. Which phenomenon drives the other? Is our consciousness capable of determining the sequence of events only along the arrow of time? Or is creation imperfect,

foolishly squandering its energy into space, infinitely expanding towards its own destruction? Before we charge the universe with imperfection and profligacy, let's evaluate our abilities, the abilities of the descendants of primates, realistically. We note that our inability to perceive events simultaneously does not necessarily entail that these events do not exist simultaneously.

No matter how intensely we peer at the horizon, what lies beyond it remains unseen. What is beyond may as well not exist with respect to our sensory organs. Our knowledge of the physical world doesn't allow us to assert that it does not exist in reality, however.

We don't think when we are reading a book that the read pages have disappeared irretrievably when they are no longer directly in view. Similarly, we don't doubt the existence of the pages ahead because we don't yet see them.

We can't read all the pages of a book simultaneously; however, a book exists as a whole entity independently of whether we desire it to or not. Our experience teaches us this, but we may also verify it by jumping ahead to later pages or by returning to ones previously read. It's not so easy to do this with a presentation when slides are shown to us in sequence. An image on the screen appears and disappears. We can neither go back nor jump ahead, because another person controls the slides. In this case, as well, experience teaches us that all of the slides exist simultaneously, though we view them sequentially.

We turn now to events we can observe, events with which we have no direct experience, and the occurrence of which does not depend on us. One such event is the sun's rising. For the greater part of his existence, man believed that the sun "sank in the sea" when it set. Later on, man decided the sun revolved around the Earth. It was only fairly recently that we discovered that Earth revolves around the sun. Nonetheless, we stubbornly persist in saying (and thinking) that the sun "rises" and "sets," despite what academics tell us. And all the more rightly, because with these words we reflect our impressions of the sun more precisely. It is a fiery ball, which gradually falls and becomes obscured, or appears, rising above a line dividing Earth and sky. Mankind eventually discovered his perception of the sun's rising

and falling was an illusion. Similarly, we may discover our perception of other universal things is equally illusory.

There were faiths built on people's fear that once it had set, the sun would never again rise. Prayers and ceremonies of ancient peoples were often rooted in this fear. Now, using the facts that science gives us, only a madman could doubt the sun's persistent motion and become distressed that it may not reappear in the morning.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Immanuel Kant writes:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. I have not to search for them and conjecture them as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence. The first begins from the place I occupy in the external world of sense, and enlarges my connection therein to an unbounded event with worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and moreover into limitless times of their periodic motion, its beginning and continuance. The second begins from my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world which has true infinity, but which is traceable only by the understanding, and with which I discern that I am not in a merely contingent but in a universal and necessary connection, as I am also thereby with all those visible worlds. The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates as it were my importance as an animal creature, which after it has been for a short time provided with vital power, one knows not how, must again give back the matter of which it was formed to the planet it inhabits (a mere speck in the universe). The second, on the contrary, infinitely elevates my worth as an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality and even of the whole sensible world, at least so far as may be inferred from the destination assigned to my existence by

this law, a destination not restricted to conditions and limits of this life, but reaching into the infinite.

The star-filled sky above our heads has not ceased to be a symbol of eternity and immutability. When it comes to moral law, alas, it is not necessary to prove its relativity; with respect to the star-filled sky, one can say it doesn't exist in reality. What we see gazing upward into a dark, clear night is the same deception of our senses as the rising sun. The truth is that all stars are located at varying distances from us. When we observe two seemingly adjacent stars, we don't realize one may be located twenty thousand light years from us and the other a million light years more distant. Their light reaches our retinas simultaneously, but the stars could have long ago ceased to exist. They could have exploded as supernovas, changed in size, luminosity, or temperature. They could have even changed their relative positions in space. This doesn't at all correspond to what we observe. What kind of picture is developing of the heavens above? It's like all of the train schedules for the last hundred years, if all of the entries had been mixed up. Would one find such a chart useful? What we observe in the night sky does not correspond to reality.

Here's a much-cited example. A station platform begins to depart when the train starts moving. Of course, this does not occur in reality. Before we begin to feel the jolt of the carriage's acceleration, it seems to us that the platform is moving as we remain in place.

And if we propose that we have just such a false impression with respect to time? What if it just seems to us that time "flows," but in reality, it's the same deception of our senses as the sun's rising, the stars in the night sky, and the station platform?

Let's examine man's earlier attempt to understand the essence of time. The feeling of conditionality and limitation in our intellect's understanding of time has long since been noted. Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, draws conclusions that do not contradict the assertions in this essay:

Time is nothing else than the form of the internal sense, that is, of the intuitions of self and of our internal state.

For time cannot be any determination of outward phenomena ... It [time] determines the relation of representations in our internal state. And precisely because this internal intuition presents to us no shape or form, we endeavor to supply this want by analogies, and represent the course of time by a line progressing to infinity, the content of which constitutes a series which is only of one dimension; and we conclude from the properties of this line as to all the properties of time, with the single exception, that the parts of the line are co-existent, whilst those of time are successive ... Time is not an empirical conception. For neither coexistence nor succession would be perceived by us, if the representation of time did not exist as a foundation a priori. Without this presupposition we could not represent to ourselves that things exist together at one and the same time, or at different times, that is, contemporaneously, or in succession. Time is a necessary representation, lying at the foundation of our intuitions. With regard to phenomena in general, we cannot think away time from them, and represent them to ourselves as out of and unconnected with time, but we can quite well represent to ourselves time void of phenomena. Time is therefore given a priori. In it alone is all reality of phenomena possible. These may all be annihilated in thought, but time itself, the universal condition of their possibility, cannot be so annulled. The infinity of time signifies nothing more than that every determined quantity of time is possible only through limitations of one time lying at the foundation. Consequently, the original representation, time, must be given as unlimited. But as the determinate representation of the parts of time and of every quantity of an object can only be obtained by limitation, the complete representation of time must not be furnished by means of conceptions, for these contain only partial representations. Conceptions, on the contrary, must have immediate intuition for their basis.

Space and Time in the Framework of a New Model of Creation

“It is my supposition that the world is not only queerer than we imagine, but queerer than we can imagine,” said John Scott Haldane. And he was absolutely correct. Recent centuries have seen the concepts of space and time dethroned. Once clear, tangible, familiar, and constant concepts have been relegated to the realm of the ambiguous and indefinite. The curvature of space and slowing of time at speeds approaching the speed of light became banal truths. Few understand these truths, however. Since this is the case, there’s no need to spend much effort proving that man’s perception of time, far from corresponding to the state of affairs in reality, is in fact very much at variance with it. And it’s not necessary to prove that man’s perception of time differs from the generally accepted, everyday understanding of time. The astrophysicist Steven Hawking, whose genius is compared to that of Albert Einstein, establishes in his scientific work that time has some properties of space, and at every point in it, physical laws and constants are uniform. Based on his conclusions, one can imagine the universe as a sphere in time. We can conceptualize the universe’s space as an infinite many cuts in the sphere, all of which are perpendicular to the arrow of time. The arrow of time is directed from the pole of the sphere (the big bang, the start of the universe) toward its center. Further, it appears there will be a tipping point, where the arrow of time will continue to the other pole of the sphere (the end of the universe). A theory such as this solves both the problem of the singularity of the big bang and the problem of preserving physical constants at the beginning of time. In the conditions existing at the time of the Big Bang, it would have been impossible to preserve the physical constants known to us. In this way, the phenomena of the expansion of the universe and the recession of galaxies are explained. We are capable of observing time only when it is directed along the thermodynamic arrow. It’s as if we as observers are located at an angle below the pole of the sphere of time, viewing the recession of galaxies from this vantage. It’s as if we are moving through an extended tunnel with torches along its walls. If we were, we would have the impression that a torch travels away from us at a

speed directly proportional to the speed at which we move through the tunnel. Not delving too deeply into the laws of astrophysics, it should be pointed out that the phenomenon of galactic recession, which is based on the Doppler Effect, or the shift in m spectrum of the light emitted by receding objects, could be explained by yet unknown properties of large expanses of cosmic space. The presence of masses of invisible matter in these expanses could be capable of distorting the spectrum of light passing through them. If the only evidence for proposing the phenomenon is based on the Doppler Effect, it is possible galactic recession does not exist. We will not assert that other evidence of the mutual recession of galaxies will be determined equally untenable, but it can be proposed that the theory of the “big bang,” which is founded in part on the phenomenon of Doppler shift in the spectra of receding galaxies, could be called into question when other facts emerge. Such facts may be the striking homogeneity of background radiation in all directions. If the beginning of the universe really occurred with the big bang, one would expect this background radiation to be distributed non-uniformly. It’s possible that the theory of the big bang will crash just as Ptolemy’s geocentric model of the universe did, though to this day, when we observe the rising sun, we say “the sun is rising” instead of “we are rotating,” referencing the motion of the sun with respect to ourselves.

There is a certain absurdity in the theory of the “big bang.” As the theory goes, all of creation is an unstable system, with matter flying about in different directions as a result of a gigantic explosion, which occurred after all matter was concentrated at a single point. The absurdity of this is patent, just as it is in the model of creation where the entire universe rotates around us. Intuition, however, never served as a reliable guide in the world of science, especially of contemporary science. Anyhow, we do not aim to disprove this model. We accept Stephen Hawking’s point of view, which presents the universe as a sphere of time in which we, by virtue of our intellect, travel in the same direction as the arrow of time. What effect can this model have on the metaphysical level of time’s perception? Time exists simultaneously from its beginning to its end, much as the

beginning and end stations of a railroad line coexist. Intellect, whose system is built on consecutive perception, cannot exist and therefore, cannot recognize itself in any other direction besides the one moving with the arrow of time.

In order to illustrate this limitation of our perception of time, we can create a hypothetical intelligent being that is even more limited than are humans. We create conditions in which this being will experience the same limitations with respect to space that we experience with respect to time.

If a subject spent his entire life in a moving train without the ability to communicate with those leaving the train and could not see oncoming trains, what would he feel? Undoubtedly, the subject would develop a relationship to the space outside the train's window that resembles our psychological perception of time. In the first place, everything flashing by outside would, from the perspective of the subject, disappear irretrievably and cease to exist. Our passenger would perceive any person departing the train as lost forever and having ceased to exist. Second, the individual would perceive his own departure from the train as death, with all of its accompanying psychological stresses. Even if the subject were endowed with a normal intellect, his existence in such constrained circumstances would make it impossible for him to imagine that the places he passed would continue to exist and that the departure of his fellow passengers could be anything but a fateful event. We imagine that we are the same way. Repeatedly, we are deceived by our senses. We move through time in only one direction, perceiving each past moment as irretrievably lost and each future moment as non-existent. The real picture could be different. A section of our life could be an insignificant slice of Hawking's sphere of time, a slice the thickness of a lifetime, in which everything exists simultaneously.

Stars influence everyday things, such as our kitchen pots and pans, little. This influence is imperceptible. Therefore, my fanatic interest in all that is located beyond the limits of Earth's gravity can appear eccentric and unnatural. It is inexplicable that I can read the most sophisticated astrophysics articles for hours and repeatedly flip through popular astronomy magazines,

absorbing facts I assimilated long ago, facts that remain contradictory. No other area of learning arouses in me such a tragically all-encompassing interest.

Perhaps there is some explanation of this. I can pontificate endlessly on the fact that the solutions to age-old philosophical questions can be found in the cosmos. I can talk big about how everything in the world comes from stars and will end in stars. Stars are the source of all elements heavier than hydrogen. The origin of every atom in every molecule of the fingers that are typing these lines can be traced to the nucleus of a giant star.

It's generally accepted that most elements (including inert gasses) originate from the nucleosynthesis of star material. Nucleosynthesis occurs in the center of a massive star when thermonuclear reactions of hydrogen are accompanied by increases in pressure and temperature. This creates the conditions necessary to synthesize C_{12} and He_4 . Because of the release of energy, the process of compression ceases, allowing the syntheses of heavier elements in the star mass to begin. Strange as it may be, the whirlwind heads of Earth's population didn't assimilate this simple truth, even though it became known in the middle of the 20th century. Yes, exactly. We are all star children. We feel a certain familial connection with proud Sirius or Aldebaran, rising up above the horizon.

I didn't have the opportunity to observe stars directly until recently, when a cozy little telescope shop in a neighboring town went out of business. I indulged myself in the purchase of a rather large reflector telescope, which was romantically named "Genesis." On the first night, I observed the blindingly bright moon, and like all newbie astronomers, I was completely overwhelmed by its majestic, glowing beauty. I tried to find the place I was viewing on a globe of the moon, but I apparently suffer from topographical ineptness not only with respect to Earth. In the darkness, the moon globe slipped out of my hands and rolled onto the recently frozen pool, leaving me to strut and maneuver through the fragile ice sheets. Maxine soon came to the rescue with a skimmer, and on the seventh try, she fished the moon from the pool, thereby saving the wonderful heavenly body.

Other stellar objects did not make a proper impression on me. Mars in my telescope was no more than a slight red disk, and it's not even worth mentioning the rest. The joy of warming one's frozen limbs on a cold December night can't compete with the domestic comfort offered by an astronomical computer program, which allows one to view detailed images of the surface of most of the planets in the solar system and their satellites. I spent several evenings crawling over the entirety of the photographed parts of our galaxy and other galaxies, and then I became bored. I named one distant star cluster that had a colorful appearance "Maxine's Treasure Box" and was satisfied.

I was astonished at how insignificant a part of our galaxy contains practically all of the stars that form the familiar constellations. The distance to many distant stars has been determined with an accuracy of up to fifty percent. Therefore, their mass can also be determined, though inexactly. Astronomy is not such a respectable exact science as it may appear to an outside observer.

My nature is remarkably predictable: as soon as a strong desire is satisfied, I lose interest in the subject that initially excited me. I looked over the entire collection of images several times, but it seemed like there was nothing at all to view with the telescope. Jupiter would be rising over the horizon only in January. There was nothing to do with my gigantic tube in the snowy December yard.

Why didn't I make astronomy my life's work? Well, in school, I had a reputation for being a fool. I maintain this reputation to some degree even today. And as my mom explained, you need to have strong math and physics skills to excel in astronomy. I was disgracefully weak in both of these subjects. Only approaching thirty I understood that neither math nor physics present much difficulty to master, but alas, it was too late for me to go back to school. Upon the attainment of the age of Christ, there comes an inescapable desire to teach, and the instruction of another mentor is received poorly at this age. Of course, I'm kidding. I study constantly, but I couldn't imagine going to university again. Why would I go back? To sit again in a classroom with a bunch of brats? To be spoon-fed by pompous

turkey-professors and receive a doctorate in astronomy at age fifty? And after that try to win grants so I can look through a bigger telescope? That's a joke.

I dealt with my heightened passion for astronomy much more simply. If you want to research something, you don't have to be a specialist. I hired a couple of first-class scientists to help me solve one theoretical question in astrophysics that had been bothering me. It was my attempt to explain the paradoxically high speed of the rotation of stars on the peripheries of galaxies.

Curve A on the graph reflects the speed of a galaxy's disk rotation as a function of its distance from the center, as predicted by Kepler's laws of planetary motion and Newtonian mechanics. Curve B represents what is observed in reality. This phenomenon spurred the invention of the theory of the mysterious and invisible "dark matter," which allegedly composes most of the universe's material. It's true that in time the theory of dark matter was also used to explain other problems that arose in astrophysics.

I attempted to take into account the interaction of a gravitational field on the flow of time at a point in space where a source of radiation is located. In this way, I intended to calculate the differing characteristics of gravitational fields directly adjacent to the center of a galaxy, at the point of observation and on a galaxy's periphery. I hypothesized that this could explain the effect depicted by Curve B. I won't get into the technical details, but thirty pages of correspondence with one Canadian astrophysicist explained my question conclusively. I was satisfied that, first, my question was legitimate and, second, it is impossible to answer my question given the current state of observational technology. It would require a device equivalent in length to the distance between Earth and the moon to study the question.

Now I was set ablaze by a new idea. The task was no more and no less than to kill cosmology, and please, don't confuse this science with astronomy, astrology, cosmonautics, or cosmetics. Don't be dim like the primordial dark matter that fills our unhappy universe, slandered repeatedly by scientists. One way cosmology is described is "the study of the universe as a

whole, of the contents, structure, and evolution of the universe from the beginning of time into the future.” Notice that the description itself smacks of charlatanism. You probably noticed it annoys me that scientists create theory after theory, while the universe, according to their quackish views, migrates from the backs of turtles to various other absurd places. The basic tenant of my idea is that cosmology is a false science. How can one trust a science that has deceived us throughout humanity’s history? In our day and age, research into perpetual motion machines and alchemy is not a respected endeavor. It would behoove science to cease creating all-embracing models of the structure of the universe, for we will always experience a shortage of information and are eternally doomed to failure. Even if one of these days an astronomer peers through a telescope and sees that the edge of the universe is a brick wall—even that would not put the question of the end of the universe to rest decisively. Scientists would immediately begin to construct theories on who built the wall, what exists beyond it, and other such baseless speculation. Contemporary physics and cosmology are increasingly speculative sciences. Specifically, the conclusions from these theories are extrapolated beyond the bounds of the area where they can be reliably applied. Newton made this mistake when he extrapolated the action of his law of the composition of velocities to infinite speeds. And today, the very same mistake is made again by the most venerable physicists, who talk up the “big bang” and forget that at such great depths of time, these models become less reliable. They forget that the concept of time lacks a reliable physical basis and that the flow of time not only varies in different epochs but also in various positions in space. Thus, there isn’t any sense in pontificating on the age of the universe.

This position in cosmology has changed little in recent decades. The discrepancies are many, and they crop up faster than cosmologists are able to explain them. For example, now theories about multitudes of universes are fashionable. This is nonsense by definition. Many authoritative authors write, “The universe is all matter,” “There is but one universe,” “Other universes, by definition, cannot exist,” “The universe encompasses everything that exists. Outside the universe, there is

nothing. Moreover, not only galaxies and other matter are absent, but there's nothing at all—no space, no time.” “The universe is everything that exists; outside of it, there is nothing—not even emptiness.” The phrase “multitude of *theoretically possible* universes” is blasphemous. In contemporary cosmology, the word “universe” is used to mean what in dialectical materialism is called objective reality or matter. And it's not just that some author or even a majority of authors persist that there is only one universe. It is common knowledge that when one creates a theory or mathematical model of an object, it's essential to give the boundary conditions of that object. These boundary conditions reflect the interaction of that object with its surroundings. Not a single cosmological model gives these conditions for the universe. In cosmology, the universe is viewed as an object with no surroundings or boundaries. Even learned philosophers say the universe is infinite.

In cosmology, there are not only firmly established conclusions like the ones described above, but also unresolved problems. If one doesn't consider specialized problems, such as the origin of galaxies, the rest of the problems relate to one of two types. First, there are problems related to the “very beginning.”

What caused expansion to begin? How did the world expand in the very beginning? Was the density of matter infinite at the beginning of expansion? What was there before observable expansion? How reliable is the conclusion about the beginning of expansion, about the state of the huge density of all matter (as they say—the singular state), what processes were occurring in the super-dense matter, what caused the material of the universe to expand and finally, what was before expansion, before the moment of singularity?

Beginning in the 1980s, the genesis of the universe was discussed within the framework of the “scenario of the inflatable universe.” According to the inflatable universe scenario, the entirety of the universe visible today formed from an area smaller than a Plank length. This makes it possible to consider the origin of the universe (or its visible part) a result of initial quantum fluctuations. Such a universe initially had a small size and

expanded exponentially. In this process of inflation, it reached its present size. All matter contained in the observable universe came into existence as a result of work done by gravitational forces inside an area which initially contained no more 1×10^{-5} grams of material.

The second problem that is often addressed in cosmology is the problem of the geometry of the universe. It turns out that the curvature of three-dimensional space may be similar to the curvature of a sphere. It can close upon itself, becoming borderless but finite, like a sphere. It's unknown whether our universe is open or closed.

We note that in his time, the answer to that question wasn't a riddle for Albert Einstein. In 1917, in the section entitled "Considerations on the Universe as a Whole" of the work *Relativity: The Special and General Theory*, he wrote:

It follows from what has been said, that closed spaces without limits are conceivable. From amongst these, the spherical space (and the elliptical) excels in its simplicity, since all points on it are equivalent. As a result of this discussion, a most interesting question arises for astronomers and physicists, and that is whether the universe in which we live is infinite, or whether it is finite in the manner of a spherical universe. Our experience is far from being sufficient to enable us to answer this question. But the general theory of relativity permits of our answering it with a moderate degree of certainty ... The results of calculation indicate that if matter be distributed uniformly, the universe would necessarily be spherical (or elliptical). Since in reality the detailed distribution of matter is not uniform, the real universe will deviate in individual parts from the spherical, i.e. the universe will be quasi-spherical. But it will be necessarily finite. In fact the theory provides us with a simple connection between the space-expanse of the universe and the average density of matter in it.

It is likely my book will be ignored and not cause a scandal. However, by writing it, I can check off the part of my existential project called "Try to Undermine a False Science that

Has Enabled Religion and Politicians to Pull the Wool over People's Eyes for Centuries.”

Peculiarities and Limitations in the Perception of Time

“With the exception of the edge of the present moment, the entire world consists of that which does not exist,” said King Izhikovsky, expressing a widely held view of man's perception of the world. One can speak of the ability of human consciousness to perceive “real existence,” which lasts for a few seconds. Our sensation of reality is a manifestation of the conventional way our consciousness works, not the negation of the existence of all events that came before the present moment. We have spoken repeatedly of the tendency of consciousness to distort the real world for the benefit of our feelings. Why couldn't we propose that in our perception of time, too, we observe the same phenomenon?

Speaking of the perception of time, we find it insightful to cite the position of Descartes:

Let us grant that there is no God, no earth and that that we ourselves have no body. We cannot suppose, nonetheless, that we do not exist ... It is senseless to propose that which thinks does not exist. For more clarity we examine the opposite position: our cognizance of our own existence is the result of an internal awareness of our cognitive activity, which consists of the receiving of inputs from our sensory organs and the comprehension and processing of these inputs. If we didn't feel the cognitive process in ourselves, we would not notice the absence of a like feeling. If one accepts that man's understanding of existence is a direct result of thought, then only the subject himself can say with certainty whether or not he exists. It is like, for example, when a subject awakens after fainting. He has no recollection of his thought processes while he was unconscious. He cannot confirm that he continued to exist when he was unconscious. If this subject were in the presence of onlookers, however, these people would observe the fainting and would

confirm with absolute certainty that during the period of unconsciousness the subject continued to exist—at least physically.

The existence to which Descartes refers is not physical in the everyday sense, but the result of the presence in the subject (more accurately, in his intellect) of self-sentiment. Adopting a similar position, stating that only reason itself is able to establish the fact of its own existence, we can easily agree with Kant: “If I remove the thinking subject, the whole material world must at once vanish because it is nothing but a phenomenal appearance in the sensibility of ourselves as a subject, and a manner or species of representation.”

Since time, like other manifestations of the physical world, has only the meaning a thinking intellect attributes to it, one cannot assert that time can identically manifest itself as a phenomenon (that is, something perceived by a person) and as a noumenon (the thing in itself), the manifestation of which is not comprehensible our intellect. In any event, we cannot agree with the generally accepted view of the objectivity of time, which holds time is a phenomenon perceived by a subject. Further, we cannot accept the view of the uniformity of the flow of time if we view time as a phenomenon perceived by a rational being. Using an opportunity to conduct a survey among subjects of varying ages, we were able to establish the existence of an acceleration of the perceived flow of time with age. Attempts were also made to establish a biophysiological basis of this phenomenon (KMR, Oct-Nov 1999). The surveyed individuals noted that with age, the rate at which they perceive time to pass increases. Moreover, the respondents answered that the process can be quantified: time passes two to three times more quickly as age increases. In reality, the prevailing method of keeping time based on the periodicity of day and night and seasonal climate changes has nothing in common with how the human intellect perceives time to pass. This results in a serious inconsistency between astronomical intervals of time, which are of equal durations, and periods of time as they are perceived by sentient beings. Mention of this inconsistency is found everywhere from literature and art to everyday conversations among people of varying ages who

express a feeling of loss in relation to passing time. Most often, this feeling of loss relates not to physical wealth and achievements, but to the metaphysical understanding of self-awareness and maturity. “I’ve lived life, and yet I haven’t understood a thing in this world”—the basic tenor of this feeling of loss is concentrated in this phrase. The onset of the feeling of “having lived life” and the rapid acceleration of the perception of the flow of time does not occur in old age or even middle age; it occurs early in life. A person’s acquaintance with such a phenomenon, as was the case when Freud’s subconscious was introduced, could alleviate the suffering of many individuals caused by the acute awareness of elapsing time. Legitimizing the phenomenon of the subjective perception of time and refuting the postulate of the uniformity and objectivity of time’s perception, one can alleviate the suffering of individuals who believe that these feelings are their personal tragedy. For these individuals, the feeling of loss results from their nervous and unwise use of time in the spiritual sense. Giving the subject knowledge of the metaphysical property of time to accelerate, we give him the ability to measure his time more reliably. For example, if you take the average coefficient of the acceleration of time to be 1.5 and measure biological age and the psychological equivalent, then at age twenty, the individual’s perception of his age may correspond to the psychological age of thirty. Between thirty and forty, the psychological age is forty to sixty. (It is possible the fantastic ages of biblical prophets were based on their psychological age.) Counting the number of years remaining in a person’s life instead of the number of years lived, and assuming an average life expectancy of seventy-five to eighty years, it’s not hard to calculate that the remaining years of a twenty-year-old is not fifty-five, as is true according to biological age, but forty years. At age thirty, the remainder is thirty-three years. That is the middle of a person’s life. In certain cases, the scale becomes even less optimistic. This discrepancy between the self-sentiment of the subject’s age and the generally accepted opinion that a thirty-year-old is a young person, having lived only a small portion of his or her life, leads to the psychological suffering of

the individual and an acute feeling of the loss of time. This feeling lies at the base of typical age-related crises.

Now that the limitations of the perception of time in the context of age have been discussed (we will return to this idea in the continuation of this essay), we should like to address the question of the capability of perception to distinguish reality from unreality. We are referring not to the simple deception of our senses, as in the case of the rapid advancement of film cells that gives rise to the illusion of motion. Here, at least among educated people, arguments about the reality of what appears on a movie screen do not arise. We are referring to a more subtle deception of the senses, when life's considerably removed and insignificant events mesh and become indistinguishable from memories of dreams. We are discussing insignificant events that have had real consequences and influence on the course of our lives—rather, insignificant events, or impressions of things that have or have not been seen in reality. If we rummage around in our memories and consider insignificant worries, events, and images, we find we often cannot clearly distinguish events that have occurred in reality from those we have dreamed. We attempt to conduct a search for evidence of the reality or unreality of these events by identifying their connections to events reliably known as real to our memory. If we're not able to find this confirmation of the reality of trivial events, they retain the status of half-real, half-dreamed events. Incidentally, this does not bother us at all. In the preceding example, we see that in our consciousness, there is no great difference between the real and the imagined. If our dreams flowed in a ceaseless succession and were completely subject to the logic of evolving events, as are events in real life, we would be unable to distinguish dreams from real life.

One more conclusion can be drawn about the merging of dreams and reality in our memories. Dreams are just as meaningful a component of our lives as reality, and if they had a direct and manifest continuation in our real life, they could attain a status equal to that of reality.

In any case, taking dreams as examples, we may analyze the mechanisms of our perception of reality in their pure form, when the focus is directed inward toward the depths of our

consciousness. How is time perceived in dreams? Its role in sleep is much less significant than in real life. It's as if we find ourselves in reality, and the logical connections that lead us there completely agree and exist as if they were an independent block. When we recall the source of the situations in which we find ourselves while dreaming, we invariably find in our memory (the pseudomemory of the given dream) logical confirmation of the reality of our existence at that moment in the dream. While we're in the thick of the events of a dream, we often do not doubt the reality of what is occurring. We awaken when our attempts to remember preceding events encounter obvious contradictions with our "real memory," and when, through willpower, we interfere with the flow of the dream. Subordinating a dream to your will, one disturbs the "real" logic of the flow of events in the dream. This makes a dream unreal, and its further serious perception is impossible.

Time in dreams is easily compressed and stretched both in relation to itself and in relation to real time. The phenomenon of pseudomemory, which exists in dreams, is very interesting. Our consciousness, asking itself in a dream how it ended up in one or another situation, obligingly furnishes explanation after explanation drawn from the pseudomemory, where situations and sensations that connect us with our real life are stored. But this process of verification does not occur constantly. Rather, it is replaced by a general feeling of certainty in the reality of our present situation. As in real life, we don't give way to the constant thought of how we ended up in the present moment; rather, we are satisfied with the general feeling of the undoubtedly logical coherence of the events proceeding the present moment. In a dream, we're not made uneasy by manifestly illogical (from the point of view of our real memory) inconsistencies in circumstances, events, and the environment. Hybrids of houses and apartments and various cities where we have lived, admixtures of countries and times, these do not make us uneasy. We're not disturbed by the presence of people who could not have been brought together in space and time. Sometimes our dreams bring together people whom we met at various periods in our lives even though they could have changed

altogether or even have ceased to exist. In sleep, we don't think about this since we are captivated by the events of the dream. And the moment we fall into thought, our consciousness tries to corroborate and resolve the conflicts of the dream with its pseudomemory. When the futility of this task is exposed, we awaken. Fears and worries in dreams can often be intense, and the moment we experience them, they can be perceived as more real than those we experience in real life. In view of the linearity of the progression of thoughts, we, absorbed by the development of events in a dream, are not capable of always maintaining a critical eye on what is transpiring. We can easily become a victim of the deception of our own consciousness. Time in dreams doesn't flow backward, nor does it stop or slow down, for we would be unable to imagine it. But dreams allow us to experience events as if outside the frame of real time, not so much by traveling backward to the past or forward to the future, but by experiencing existence in a certain world that lacks time altogether. Even though fears and worries in dreams resemble real ones and all events transpire in alignment with the arrow of time, restrictions are more flexible. Looking at our life in dreams as one global experience interrupted only by wakefulness, we can firmly assert that our existence blends both a real and an imagined life, one flowing into the other, with the boundary between the two weakly delineated.

What is the quantity of experiences in dreams? If one tries to measure the information that flows through one's consciousness as we do with computers, measuring memory in bytes, kilobytes and megabytes, one can say with confidence that the informational burden of dreams is perhaps greater than that of real life. The fact that we recall only a small portion of our dreams (and only very dimly and in the context of a reappraisal by our waking consciousness) tells us the world of our dreams can be no less extensive, and possibly more extensive, than the world of our real life. That we remember only a fraction of our dreams is counterbalanced by the fact that in a dream, we remember only a fraction of our real life. Further, one can assert that most often we remember those dreams that directly precede our awakening, and with respect to narrative structure and logic,

these dreams always remain unfinished. Just when one begins to make connections between the real world and the imagined dream world, one's waking consciousness becomes aware of the dream and the dream is remembered. What is remembered is not so much the dream itself as the evaluation of the dream, plus a few visual-sensual images. The remainder of the dream is completely cleared from our "real" memory, and emerges from the subconscious under hypnosis during psychoanalysis.

What can we say about the discontinuity of our life in dreams? It's possible that if we could remember all of our dreams and comprehend the logic of the atemporal development of events in dreams, we would realize we live a parallel life in sleep. For while we sojourn in the world of dreams, we perceive our real life to be just as disjointed and illogical as our dreams seem to our waking consciousness. Interpreting our life not as a chain of consecutive events, but as a unified whole or a repository of feelings and perceptions, we see practically no difference between dreams and reality. Further, the relationship to real life, like the relationship to dreams, can give us unlimited freedom of enjoyment of the infinitely many variations on the ways events, feelings, and perceptions can develop. It frees us from the physical bonds of time, and legitimizes the feeling of eternity, to which many of us feel a latent connection. "You live gloomily within me, like a secret premonition of immortality." In the words of Yuri Vizbor, we fumble for the feeling of the vast depth of our existence as it appears to us from an everyday perspective.

Therefore, we don't find proof of the evenness of the flow of time in our perception, and we can't reliably sense its continuity, which is interrupted by dreams differing from reality only insignificantly. What is reliable in man's perception of time? Can one call the commonly accepted opinion of the perception of time anything but the rudest of assumptions, necessary for the sequencing of certain unimportant events in our life? Time, whose passing so dispirits us, is possibly nothing other than the result of our habit to interpret the flow of certain events in one of the "real" variations of the development our lives, which is no less real than other variations that exist in parallel.

The human memory records individual episodes and erases the unimportant intervals between them. Our perception of life always occurs in episodes, not in a consecutive, uninterrupted flow. Insignificant events are quickly forgotten, forming a memory of a string of episodes. It's not a coincidence that art, attempting to reflect life through the prism of human perception, also records individual episodes, omitting the connecting routine of unimportant events. A picture records an event. A narrative consists of episodes flowing in parallel and in sequence. A film shows us individual episodes, sometimes using the devices of "two hours later," "the next day," in "twenty years" and "at the same time in a different place." That approach isn't by chance. It completely reflects the mechanism of human memory, segregating a chain of episodes to recognize and remember from a vast quantity of other unimportant connecting episodes, which are temporarily or even completely forgotten.

We also perceive dreams as episodes with the loss of connecting links that we're not able to recollect. These links are considered absent when analyzed by the waking consciousness. While sleeping, however, we don't perceive the fragmentary nature of the episodes we experience, and therefore, while dreaming, we don't lose the feeling of realism, without which would make lengthy continuations of dreams impossible. This means that memories of real events, like those of certain fragmentary visual-sensual episodes, hardly differ from memories of dreams, which are characterized by episodes just as fragmentary. If one proposes that we remember only a small portion of dreams, one can assert that during a single dream, one can experience an almost infinite quantity of episodes with links assumed forgotten or omitted from the frame of reference of the sleeping consciousness. These links are only forgotten and omitted on the level of a dream. In many cases, awakening in the middle of the night and falling asleep again, we encounter the continuation of the plot of the same dream, or we encounter a new dream with a different plot. One cannot say that one can dream several dreams at once; however, we understand time in the usual sense, which we have convinced ourselves is false. Can the multitude of dreams not be considered a certain model of the

multitude of simultaneously developing logical lives, whose echoes we attempt to capture upon waking, and only due to an abrupt transition to a new stream of events a dream seems to us inconsistent and therefore unreal? Sometimes we experience a multilayered dream when we dream that we're dreaming and dream that we awaken. Only when we awaken in reality do we realize that the awakening in the dream was false. What do we dream in dreams that occur when we dream that we fall asleep? Do the intervals between episodes of that dream vanish? Isn't what we feel as real life one of the possibilities of a set of dreams existing in parallel? Are our dreams real lives passing in parallel? Are you reading these lines in one of these real lives? Don't dreams command respect and consideration equal to that commanded by real life? Or is it the opposite? Are we justified in relaxing our psychological exertion, approaching real life a little more as we approach dreams, where, from the point of view of waking consciousness, events are reversible and not so decisive? After all, events of our real life seem to our dream-seeing consciousness not so decisive and reversible. In one way or another, the proposed model of a possible parity between the realities of dreams allows one to alter one's perception of the flow of time, with its imaginary limitations, and declare the flow of time illusory.

The Limitations of Human Language and Consciousness in the Comprehension and Description of Creation and Time

"The world does not exist, but rather is constantly occurring. Its continuity is the result of a lack of imagination." In his brilliant aphorism, Stanislaw Jerzy Lec expressed the limitedness of human reason in its attempts to comprehend and describe the elements of creation. In the words of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things." Unfortunately, we don't have access to another thinking being's perceptions and comprehension of creation. And although "out of the crooked timber of humanity, nothing straight was ever made" (Immanuel Kant), we don't have at our disposal any other object or observer besides human consciousness.

It's hardly possible for one to understand creation on one's own. No, this doesn't contradict the image of the lone philosopher, disengaged from the bustle of everyday life. By this, we mean that a person who doesn't find himself in direct and prolonged contact with like beings and who doesn't study the language and logic of thought isn't capable of developing his consciousness to the level necessary to question creation. As numerous cases have demonstrated, people who become excluded from human society at a young age fail to develop interpersonal skills. The ability of these people to interact with other humans in later life remains at the level of an animal. But even for a person who possesses a normally developed human consciousness, it is insufficient to accept an unsubstantiated opinion that could not be understood and accepted by another person. And though objectivity is merely the sum of subjectivities, any knowledge outside of objective analysis is subject to scrutiny.

Human language, undoubtedly, is the primary means by which this understanding is realized. The flow of thoughts is based on language. Even if it seems to us that some thoughts fail to find expression in words, it's impossible to imagine a proper cognitive process without verbal language. At the inception of a thought, a concept or feeling arises in our consciousness. This thought is expressed, often imperfectly, in words. For convenience, when complex thoughts are processed, we mentally express them in words. For those who speak several languages with equal ease, the language in which the ideas find expression does not matter. Thus, we can speak of language on two levels. It is not necessary for the language of consciousness to consist of grammatically well-formed words and sentences as human language does. The language of consciousness consists of completely defined and mutually distinct concepts and cognitive images, which may or may not have verbal analogues in human language.

The richness of the verbal trove of a language and a person's ability to utilize his innate linguistic resources significantly influences the exactness with which he expresses his cognitive images. "The worse you speak a language, the harder it

is to lie in it,” (Christian Friedrich Hebbel). Often, the richness of a language’s resources is used not with the intent of expressing thoughts more exactly, but in order to avoid the decisive formulation of a thought. This distorts the cognitive image or replaces it with another one. According to Talleyrand, “Language is given to a person so he may conceal his thoughts.” In reality, many people do not attempt to reflect their cognitive images accurately. Often, a subject’s goal is to hide his incomprehension of something when he lacks a precise understanding of it. Or he may have an altogether different and selfish goal, which has little in common with the attempt to express the cognitive image precisely. A similar situation is encountered in discussions of philosophical and abstract subjects. This is an additional serious limitation of language as a means to acquire knowledge and describe creation.

In addition to the obstacles mentioned above, it’s necessary to note the frequent non-correspondence in the meaning of one and the same word, which different subjects can imbue with different meanings. “You can converse with those who speak a different language, but not with those who place entirely different senses in the same words,” as Jean Rostand observed. It’s also impossible to give an object an exhaustive description. Followers of Socrates very skillfully practiced a rhetorical method whereby they asked their interlocutors to provide a description of what they were talking about. The philosophers would find something unaccounted for in the description, and in doing so undermined it, proving the impossibility of defining a concept with infinite precision. People relate even limited descriptions to different concepts, and therefore it is impossible to achieve an exact expression of a cognitive image. In other words, not only the source of the thought suffers from its imperfection, the listener to whom the thought is expressed also suffers because of the limited and often incorrect decoding of the expressed thought.

Before we discuss the imperfection of verbal human language, it’s necessary to determine whether the language of our consciousness, which is based on cognitive concepts and images, is perfect in itself. Undoubtedly, this language of images and

concepts has as its first principle the language of concepts and images of higher mammals, which for a variety of reasons is expressed with gestures, body movements, and sounds. At present, we cannot equate these means of communication with articulated human language. Is this language of consciousness intended to comprehend creation deeply? After all, any attribute that has developed as a result of the process of evolution has a distinct goal. Does human consciousness have the goal of understanding creation? The process of evolution is well understood. If, over the course of hundreds of thousands of years, the individuals who out-competed their peers were those who could comprehend creation more lucidly, perhaps man would have evolved a consciousness more adapted to the comprehension of creation. However, natural selection didn't follow this course. In fact, quite the opposite happened. The survivors were individuals who commanded more concrete and limited intellects. They lived more successfully and were more successful in creating posterity. If natural selection based on man's ability to understand creation did occur, if anything, the trait was disfavored. One could suggest that modern humans are no more capable of understanding creation than was primeval man or even animals. The creative process, or, as Engels called it, "labor," wasn't saved, either. The fact of the matter is that the process of creating and the process of understanding creation are not at all the same thing. As Anatole France justly remarked, "It is easier to create the world than to understand it."

Is man a perfect instrument of learning? The question can be put another way: Is man the final product of evolution? Is the comprehension of creation one of the goals of the development of the biological world? If you accept that this is truly the goal of evolution, then most likely, man is not its final product. Friedrich Nietzsche echoes this idea: "Man is a rope, stretched between a beast and a super-human—a rope over an abyss. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end." If this is so, one shouldn't be concerned that our consciousness is imperfect. Somehow, evolution, either on its own or with the help of man, will eventually reach a higher level of intelligence. Perhaps computers will be the continuation of evolution. And if one

believes Lawrence Peter, who said, “The devil can change again. Once he was an angel, and maybe he will continue to evolve,” we should hope that the further evolution of man will not see him become more like the devil.

Taking into consideration the limitations of the base cognitive language of consciousness, formed from cognitive concepts and images, it’s not hard to imagine that the second system of signals, which is ordinary, segmented human language, is an even less effective instrument for the description of abstract concepts. This is not so. On one hand, language consisting of words limits the expression of cognitive images. On the other hand, language creates new cognitive images when a word acts as the object of expression in the cognitive sense. For example, the word “galaxy” calls up in our consciousness an expansive image of a colossal aggregation of stars. Telescopic photographs seen previously support this image visually. In this case, the word along with the earlier seen representations initiates the image, not the other way around. It is upon this effect the co-development of consciousness and language is based. Consciousness generates new images for which new words are created. These new words, in turn, form the basis for new images. And in this ability, we observe an advantage of modern man’s consciousness compared to that of primeval man. However, along with the benefits of an articulated language come certain disadvantages. Often, incomprehension and the absence of a precise cognitive image lurk behind difficult words.

One must point out that languages based on ideographs are closer to the basic language of consciousness. And a thought is even more vividly expressed by way of a proverb, which is a search for an analog of complex concepts in everyday situations. This is the language in which the New Testament is written, if what is written in it truly reflects what the son of Christ said and is not a distortion.

“The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible,” was the opinion of Albert Einstein. Comprehensible—if we’re talking about the process of comprehension and not the result. For example, it’s like measuring Earth with a ruler. We could easily imagine using a

ruler to measure the circumference of Earth. We could even begin doing it. It's exceedingly improbable, however, that one could finish the task. And the main problem wouldn't even be the gigantic size of Earth. Most places on Earth can't be measured, due to the presence of mountains and oceans. Attempting to understand the fundamentals of creation is like using a ruler to measure Earth. And taking the analogy a step further, we're not even measuring Earth with a ruler; we're measuring centuries with a ruler. In this way, we're attempting to measure time with an instrument intended to measure length.

"The universe is a thought of God," said Friedrich Schiller. And within this thought there is a certain confirmation of our idea: The thoughts of God are incomprehensible, for one who can think as God is God.

It's not surprising that no matter how we try, the resources of the human language are insufficient to express concepts man doesn't encounter in concrete form, and the more removed a concept is from a concrete event, the less likely it is possible to express it precisely using language.

Often, words acquire such importance for our consciousness that many philosophical works engage in a sly substitution of words that denote the same concept. This work of consciousness is often found, for example, in the pages of Kant. It appears to the author himself that he is creating a new concept or category when searching for a denotation of a new word or phrase.

It's clear that the limitations of consciousness and language mentioned above don't allow us to define our concept of time with precision. Furthermore, language fetters our consciousness, forcing it to express what we perceive of the simultaneity of time, eternity, and the limitlessness of life using inexact words and expressions meant to describe entirely different concepts. Therefore, our words and expressions often assume the form of a banality, simplification, or absurdity, and are inexactly interpreted by the reader or listener.

The Problems with Heavenly Philosophy

I had to decline participation in the Montreal conference, with which I had intended to conclude my quest for heavenly wisdom. I met with astrophysicists at Harvard and cosmologists in Cuba, and I had planned to meet with scholars specializing in the philosophy of cosmology in Montreal. There's no stopping a person thirsting for knowledge, however. Declining real participation in the conference, I nonetheless studied the conference materials and reviewed the proceedings. I also became familiar with an extensive body of work on the philosophy of cosmology.

One of the works I read was particularly interesting. I found it on a website called E-prints, which provides access to scientific publications in electronic form. E-prints allows scholars to publish their work on the Internet, thereby making articles available to the scientific community regardless of the desire of scientific journals to publish them. This method of publishing makes contemporary science more democratic and efficient. Anyone may submit their article, regardless of their scientific education or academic status. Certain sites require aspiring contributors to be recommended by an author who has already published in his or her field. The recommending author, however, is not required to verify the correctness of the new author's work. Publication in serious scientific journals remains the primary way to inform the world of your work; however, E-prints sites allow you to make your article available to the world's scientists and the public almost immediately. When you search the system on a specific topic, you will inevitably find all related publications. Using the site is usually free for both authors and readers. If you consider that a subscription to a journal such as *The Astrophysical Journal* costs a lot, it's not hard to see the attractiveness of E-prints. One often finds notes appended to articles in E-prints indicating the journals to which they have been sent for consideration. This system has strengthened science a hundredfold. Surely, the future of scientific publication will be influenced by it.

The South African scholar George F.R. Ellis of the University of Cape Town wrote the article I found interesting. It was published under the title “Issues in the Philosophy of Cosmology.”⁸⁵ To my surprise, it contained not only everything I wanted to say about the topic, but many things I didn’t even consider. I have never experienced true scientific ambition and am resigned to my humble function as a writer-joker of limited acclaim. Therefore, I was overjoyed to find this work and immediately e-mailed the author with a proposition to publish it in book form. I even agreed to cover all of the publishing expenses. To this end, I began the Kriger Research Foundation, a fund that provides small research and publication grants to scholars working in various fields of science.

Believe me, the existence of this work made my life easier, for I had long planned to express similar ideas. Here my plan was realized with a degree of sophistication I would have hardly been able to match.

The offer to publish this work as a separate book seemed sufficient to advance the ideas expressed in it, ideas that I, for the most part, strongly support. And my name—what does that matter? It’s enough that my name will appear in the name of the organization sponsoring the project. After all, Harvard was known well before Einstein, and will be known after the next Einstein proves the old Einstein wrong on some points. The position of Nobel and Harvard in science seems sufficiently prestigious and persistent.

What makes this article so wonderful? It is the most complete overview of contemporary cosmology—its achievements and shortcomings, its potential and limitations—existing today. Philosophical questions are posed in the form of propositions followed by a detailed discussion of all of the *pros* and *contras*. The article depicts the current state of cosmology, and most importantly, draws conclusions that are completely in

⁸⁵ Ellis, George F.R. “Issues in the Philosophy of Cosmology.” Mathematics Department and Applied Mathematics. University of Cape Town, e-print. 2006. May 15.

line with the conclusions I made after visiting two conferences and studying the materials of a third.

My view of cosmology became less negative after reading this manuscript. I discovered that the science of cosmology was, in fact, acceptable. If certain norms are observed in its pursuit, cosmology can remain a respectable science. My plan to write a book entitled *The End of Cosmology* was misguided. What I really wanted to say should probably be called “The End of Political Cosmology,” for what bothers me is speculation and invoking cosmological concepts to achieve political or religious ends. I wrote about this idea in the first sketch of my cycle of cosmological musings.

In Ellis’ article, we are again confronted with the image of an ant attempting to build a model of the planet Earth. The ant views its surroundings from atop a hill in the middle of the Sahara Desert. According to this ant’s theory, Earth is a desert. The forests, mountains, and seas inaccessible to the ant are impossible to incorporate into its system.

There are definite limitations to our learning, and cosmology should acknowledge them. Even if our methods of observation were more sophisticated than they are today, and even if we felt we had absolute knowledge, we still would not be able to completely convince ourselves of the accuracy of this knowledge. We wouldn’t be able to prove this knowledge was truly absolute or that there was no additional knowledge that would influence what we know.

George F.R. Ellis concludes:

Cosmology considers questions of physical origins in the uniquely existing physical universe. These questions can be extended to include ultimate issues if we so desire, but physical theory cannot resolve them. In the end, there are a variety of mysteries underlying the existence and nature of the universe. The scientific study of cosmology can help illuminate their nature, but cannot resolve them ... As well as celebrating the achievements of cosmology, one should take into account the limits and problems considered in this chapter, and not claim for scientific cosmology more than it can actually achieve or more

certainty than is in fact attainable. Such claims will in the long term undermine cosmology's legitimate status as a project with solid scientific achievements to its name. In the opposite case cosmology loses its scientific legitimacy.

I will permit myself to reproduce and discuss the primary assertions of Ellis' work in the following paragraphs.

The universe cannot be the object of physical experiments. We can't "restart" the universe with different initial conditions to observe how it would evolve differently. It's impossible to draw comparisons with other universes based on observations of our own universe. Further, we can't compare our universe with similar universes. We're not able to test our hypotheses about the makeup of our universe by performing a statistical analysis of the characteristics of a known class of existing universes. Presently, it does not appear to be possible to prove the existence of other universes.

The idea that a universal set of physical laws exists that hold true only with respect to one object (our universe) is dubious. We can't determine, scientifically, a set of universal laws that relate to an entire class of like objects since we wouldn't be able to test any of these laws on more than one object. We may only test laws on our observable universe.

Astronomical observations are tied to the past of the region of the universe in which the observations are conducted. The further away our telescope looks, the more weakly visible an object and the longer the light we're studying takes to reach us. Consequently, we can't observe the present cloudiness of the Andromeda Galaxy. What we see is a picture of two million years ago, because that's how long the light took to reach Earth. We can observe the universe on a cosmological scale effectively only with respect to one event occurring at a given point in space and time. Even if we were able to continue our observations over the course of tens or hundreds of thousands of years, it would be too short an interval of time to observe changes that shed light on the regularities of the universe's evolution.

Geological observation allows us to study the distant past of an object near us. Conversely, astrophysical observation yields information about the deep past of very distant objects. The basis

of cosmological observations lies in the principle that information received by observing space along a defined space-time cone is sufficient to draw conclusions and create cosmological models. The principle also states that it is possible to determine the space-time geometry of the universe. Theoretically, it is possible to do this based on these observations, but only if it is assumed that the information we receive is not distorted. In practice, however, the avoidance of interference is a difficult or even impossible task, since it is not easy to determine the distance to the objects under observation with a sufficient degree of accuracy. Further, it is difficult to determine the nature of these objects reliably. Finally, avoiding interference is difficult because we know the relative velocities of the observed objects with a limited degree of accuracy. The further in the universe's past we direct our observations, the higher their uncertainty.

How should astronomical observations be made? When they are conducted outside the framework of a cosmological theory, for example, when mapping galaxies, they can yield unexpected results: the discovery of gigantic structures on the super galactic order, walls of galaxies, and "wells" of space that are practically devoid of galaxies. Nonetheless, this approach is not often taken in contemporary astrophysics and cosmology. This is not only because of the aforementioned observational difficulties, but also because of the low possibility that the results will enhance our understanding of the universe. For example, the results of galactic cartography reveal the geometry and distribution of matter in the visible universe, but they do not inform us of the nature of what we observe.

Interpretations of cosmological observations depend on how they are understood in the context of astrophysics. A cosmological analysis depends on the theoretical framework in which the researcher is working. There is sometimes room for the researcher to assist an ailing theory when the observed data doesn't completely agree with what is predicted. After every series of new observations, it is permissible to alter the theory slightly, thus making verification difficult when new results are obtained in the next series of observations. In cosmology, it is customary to look in the back of the book for the answers. Of

course, observations that completely contradict the theory are put to rest, although sometimes not for long. Often, old theories are brought back to life and returned to circulation.

In standard cosmological theory, it's essential to confine oneself to reasonable tests. The universe should not be younger than the oldest stars in it, for example. In these cases, it's often helpful to question how accurately we think we can determine a star's age.

Despite the fact that astrophysicists have achieved remarkable results in explaining the evolution of stars, determining a star's age remains a significant problem in modern cosmology. The necessity to be in accord with the fundamental observations is a precondition for cosmology to be considered an empirical science.

The limits of astronomical observations are postulated based on an assertion of standard cosmological theory that says objects in the distant reaches of the universe are receding from us at speeds greater than the speed of light. This does not contradict Einstein's assertion that speeds greater than that of light are impossible. We're not talking about the motion of material objects, but an expansion of the universe itself. The light from these distant objects will never reach an observer on Earth. Thus, we're not able to see far enough into the past to explain the nature of the initial evolution of the universe. If we don't live in a "small universe" we can suppose that the largest part of matter is located beyond the horizon of possible observations. Consequently, the large-scale geometry of the universe cannot be tested.

Standard cosmology asserts we have made significant progress in the completeness of our observations. Since we can observe most of the universe, we are able to draw well-informed conclusions about its structure, nature, and evolution. Unfortunately, this is not so. In all of its existence, cosmology has had delusions of grandeur (to put it mildly). However, new observations have continually moved the physical boundaries of the universe farther and farther out. Astrophysical observations constantly bring surprises, such as the discovery of objects that threaten the integrity of the standard cosmological theory. The

existence of gigantic, well-formed galaxies in the most distant regions of the observable universe was such a discovery. There wouldn't have been enough time for these structures to form in the framework of the aforementioned theory.

There is a limit to the possibilities of physical observations. In order to test the conditions of the initial evolution of the universe, more energy is required than particle accelerators are capable of producing. It's necessary to extrapolate known physics and apply its conclusions to conditions of extremely high energy, assuming that in this way we can determine what really happens in the poorly understood realm of high-energy physics. The hope that these assumptions are correct is, alas, not great. The lack of clarity about the universe's expansion indicates that the current theory is not complete. Expansion theory's promise to establish a connection between cosmology and particle physics remains unfulfilled.

The theory that the universe began at a single point of infinite density called the "initial singularity" appears equally plausible and implausible. The universe could have started at a specific time in the past, but various alternative scenarios exist—an eternal universe, a universe in which time as we understand it arose in some way, an anthropic perception of time. We don't know what happened, but the ideas of quantum gravitation allow us to avoid a singularity in which all of the known laws of physics don't exist.

Experimental physics cannot explain the initial state of the universe. Consequently, it cannot explain its nature. We have a range of possible "beginning scenarios" to choose from; however, the fundamental question is the basis for supporting our choice. Why did the universe take its present shape and not another permitted by the laws of physics? The reasons for choosing between various possibilities cannot be explained scientifically. It is a question of philosophy and metaphysics.

Physical laws may depend on the nature of the universe. Significant difficulties exist in the attempt to establish differences between the general laws of physics and individual boundary conditions in their cosmological context, observed at certain places and times. Real physical laws can depend on boundary

conditions. They can even vary in different space-time regions of the cosmos. It is possible this contradicts basic cosmological principles.

We cannot accept the known laws of physics as necessary givens. Cosmologists are interested in studying hypothetical universes, where the laws of physics differ from those in our universe. Approaching the study of the universe in this way helps cosmologists understand why the physical laws are the way they are in the real universe.

A theory's criteria of satisfaction cannot be selected scientifically. Criteria of satisfaction, however, are essential for the selection of a good cosmological theory. These criteria should be based on philosophical considerations. The main criterion of a theory's satisfaction is its ability to explain both particular phenomena and the cosmological picture as a whole. A successful theory should be supported by experimental data and astronomical observations.

Scientists are motivated to create theories consistent with the theory of inflation because of the theory's ability to explain the observed structure of the universe and its growth. Inflation theory's explanatory power makes it attractive to physicists, despite the fact that the physics on which it is based aren't completely understood. The theory's central predictions are not testable on a large scale, yet it remains attractive.

A cosmological theory can address a broad or narrow set of questions. The standard cosmological theory attempts to answer questions that have a philosophical basis. This makes it attractive among both academics and non-academics. Reality, however, is fully reflected neither in observations nor in theoretical models. The problem is that observations and theoretical models often attain the status of reality. Theories and observations are our essential tools of the trade; they help us study the surrounding world. They can mislead us with respect to reality, however. Theories shouldn't be elevated to the status of reality!

New matter can arise in the expanding universe because of its evolution. The appearance of new matter is permitted by boundary conditions of local systems. Life can be examined as

one of the manifestations of such a physical newness in the evolution of the universe. Life, as we know it, is possible because the physical laws and boundary conditions of our universe have a very specific nature. Only certain laws and initial conditions in the universe allow the existence of intelligent life. Again, we note we're talking about intelligent life in its known form. The evolutionary process in a similar form of life would be impossible if these laws and conditions weren't in their existing form.

The weak anthropic principle is based on the assertion that it's not surprising that the observable universe allows the existence of life. If life didn't exist, the principle states, no one would be present to observe the universe.

The strong anthropic principle⁸⁶ asserts that intelligent life necessarily exists in the universe because the presence of life is necessary for the universe to be meaningful.

To progress in our understanding of anthropic principles, we must discover the fundamental cause of the phenomenon of life. When we examine the chain of physical causes and effects that brought us to the present, we're left with an unanswered question: Why is this chain the way it is and not another way? Why did it lead to the phenomenon of life? Whatever answer we propose, we must admit it will not have a physical basis. In search of answers to such questions, we explore the field of metaphysics. It is also possible to simply ignore these questions as do the majority of serious academics. Continuing along this path, we can identify six fundamental approaches to explain why our universe is the way it is and why it supported the appearance of life and continues to support life's needs. These approaches are: 1) mere chance, 2) necessity, 3) high probability, 4) universality, 5) cosmological natural selection, and 6) deliberate design.

The first approach is based on random chance. It doesn't clarify anything. It asserts that the initial conditions of the universe came into existence haphazardly. The probability of that

⁸⁶ Barrow J., Tipler F. *The Cosmological Anthropic Principle*. Oxford, 1984

cannot be calculated. This approach is logical and possible; however, it is not satisfactory since it doesn't possess any explanatory power or lead to the unification of ideas on the development of the universe and intelligent life. This fact, however, doesn't necessarily mean this approach is incorrect.

The second approach is based on the principle of necessity. Things should be the way they appear to us. Variations of what exists are not permitted. According to this approach, the aggregate of the existing laws of physics is self-sufficient, and all logically possible universes are subordinate to the same principles of physics. If it were possible to prove the correctness of such an approach, the science of cosmology would obtain a self-sufficient and complete basis. Nonetheless, we cannot imagine alternative universes! Why should they be excluded from consideration? Another problem we encounter with this approach is an insufficient knowledge of physics. Neither quantum physics nor fundamental mathematical concepts rest on a completely stable foundation. Until these problems are solved, it doesn't make sense to insist on an approach that presupposes the necessity of the existence of a single body of physical laws that are not completely understood.

The third approach is based on high probability. Despite the fact that the formation of structures in the universe seems improbable to our intuition, from a physical standpoint, they are rather likely to occur. A similar argument is only partially successful, for it is impossible to calculate this probability scientifically.

The fourth approach is based on universality. What is possible will happen. All possible universes exist, and ours is one of them. This approach satisfies both the strong and weak form of the anthropic principle.

The fifth approach presupposes the existence of cosmological natural selection. Our universe is the most persistent and capable of supporting life.

And finally, the sixth approach states that the design of the universe was predetermined. The delicate balance of physical laws allowing the formation of atoms and heavy elements suggests some higher being planned and created the universe.

This approach satisfies theologians. Unlike the other approaches, this one adds an element of significance and special meaning to creation. Alas, it appears science is unable to prove this approach, and this is the reason scholars avoid examining it. This doesn't make it less probable or logical than the other approaches. From the standpoint of physics, which studies physical laws, it doesn't make any difference, for it doesn't change the research methods, the analytical techniques, or results. Further, shifting the responsibility to a certain creator simply avoids the task of explaining creation, for one can ask who created the creator, and so forth, *ad infinitum*. If we adopt a version of creation that involves the self-creation of the creator, we again find it necessary to choose one of the five remaining approaches to explain how the "self-creation" occurred.

No matter how you look at it, the physical dimensions of the observable universe are immense. The images we receive of distant objects are extremely blurred, yet they are practically the only source of information we have about them. It is astonishing that despite this, we're able to understand the universe as well as we do. Until cosmology decides its most fundamental questions, such as the nature of "dark matter," which comprises the majority of material in the universe, and the nature of "dark energy," which makes up the majority of energy in the visible universe, contemporary cosmological theories will continue to engender skepticism.

We don't know whether a fundamental law of cosmology exists in reality, but we can claim with certainty that, according to the formulation of McCrea, there exists an "uncertainty principle in cosmology"⁸⁷. Thus, the cosmos frames two uncertainty principles: one on the small scale of quantum mechanics⁸⁸ and another on the large scale of cosmology. Scientific research can tell us a lot about the universe, but it tells us little about its nature

⁸⁷ McCrea, W. "A Philosophy for Big Bang Cosmology." *Nature*. 1970. Vol. 228. P. 21.

⁸⁸ Isham, C.J. *Lectures on Quantum Theory: Mathematical and Structural Foundations*. London; Singapore, 1997.

and its fundamental geometric and physical characteristics. It's possible that some of this uncertainty can be resolved, but most of it will remain unresolved. The science of cosmology should acknowledge this uncertainty, which is a core part of the study of our universe.

Lilli-Bunny and the Secret of a Happy Life



Preface

Who is this Lilli-Bunny anyway?

As a matter of fact, questions such as "Who are you?" have existed since the day of creation. Our Lord, after getting his hands dirty in the clay, molded the bearded muzzle of Adam, and when this little chump had hardly opened his eyes, he reached up to God's nose, asking, "Who are you?" God did not answer. God has still not answered. Perhaps he was offended—or is still thinking about the question.

Thus, of course, expecting the legitimate question, "Who is this Lilli-Bunny⁸⁹ anyway?" I present you with the following explanatory conversation, because readers indeed love books with a lot of conversation and pictures, and I don't want to disappoint you from the first page.

- Who is this Lilli-Bunny? Is he that important to write or, even worse, read novels about? We have never heard of him. Did he kill fifty million people?
- No.
- But did he participate in any massacres?
- Nope.
- Did he invent the A-bomb?
- No, he did not.
- Did he drop an A-bomb? (One of those who dropped the A-bomb was recently declared a hero by *Time Magazine*.)⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Lilli-Bunny derived from Lilliput - a land imagined by Jonathan Swift that was inhabited by tiny people.

⁹⁰ He regretfully recalled the day he ate pineapple Jell-o and since then could no longer eat it. Try to imagine: The guy is eighty now and he went almost his entire life with no pineapple Jell-o! That is a real human tragedy!

- No, Lilli-Bunny didn't drop the A-bomb.
- Maybe Lilli-Bunny is the kind of bearded guy, like Karl Marx, that invents the kind of theory that makes a couple of continents almost strangle themselves?
- No!
- Well, would you excuse us, but this personality is unremarkable, because it is necessary to murder a certain number of souls in order to be considered a great hero or even a historically significant figure.

I'll try to argue that Lilli-Bunny is an ordinary character with the virtues of anyone trying successfully to live a happy life, but you won't listen. You'll turn away. My novel will stomp into the corner sniveling.

You'll go on with your life, through your uneventful working days between traffic jams and washing machines, proving my novel to be unimportant. Actually, you don't realize that novels are guiding your lives. Look out at the street – do you see Harry Potters carrying their brooms, Raskolnikovs³ with their axes, Pickwicks sitting on the benches, Captains Nemos hiding silently somewhere in the city sewers? Each of us selects, subconsciously, a character from a novel read in one's childhood, and this person hobbles through one's life.

You might say that the present generation does not read any literature. They simply read new novels or watch the movies, which does the same simple trick. These books and movies rule our lives...

As a matter of fact, this is a novel for you. It will treat your anxieties, make your back pain go away and help you work healthy insight into your life (This is true, of course, only if you haven't been so abused and neglected before you reached these lines that it is already too late to help you out. In that case, you will carry on with your miserable life, dragging Raskolnikov's axes to kill old ladies for money. Or maybe you will play the role of an Idiot⁹¹ and feel sorry for Raskolnikovs and old ladies

³ Raskolnikov is a character in the Dostoevsky novel *Crime and Punishment*.

whispering to their own ears sweet fairy tales about their uniqueness. But murdering with an axe sounds so unique that it deserved to be included in the novel.)

Lilli-Bunny is a positive hero and does not fight with axes. Then why should you give precious minutes of your priceless existence to the reading of my book? Because the efforts of your teachers shouldn't go in vain. Your English teacher, some Mrs. Watson, didn't sleep at night reviewing your English papers. You are indeed the last generation that can still read! I do not mean inscriptions in graffiti on the walls; I mean text longer than a parking ticket.

Anyway, God forgot to give us instructions on how we are supposed to use ourselves. So we can be excused, at least, for reading those.

Lilli-Bunny might be you, but without the dog-eat-dog life, work that sucks, shrimpy wage, abuse and discrimination, burnt porridge, rubber love, clay conscience, spat soul, snotty childhood, wooden toys, finger in the glass of milk in kindergarten (so that the neighbor would not drink it), blots in your copybook, ice cream fallen to the pavement, slaps of bully schoolmates, Jules Verne ships that set sail without you, pathetic marriage, or pressure of "certain circumstances" that became fully-grown boneheads who smoke in your basement (not just tobacco), dysfunctional family, disrespectful grandchildren, measly old age, early death, solitude in the crowd, and also of course the Major Disappointment of Your Entire Life (what-so-ever you choose it to be) and other insignificant troubles...

Lilli-Bunny might be you if, of course, you add to your life a full scoop of sunny days, some semolina porridge with raspberry jam, a friendship with a teddy bear, some common sense, some sense of humor, some sharp-toothed satire, some merry laughter, some unrestrained laughter with hands swinging and feet stamping on the floor—"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

⁹¹ Idiot – character of "Idiot" – from a novel by Dostoevsky

Chapter 1. Lilli-Bunny's Furry Slippers

Lilli-Bunny was famous for his furry blue slippers. First, Lilli-Bunny met his right slipper. It hopped along the road singing a slipper-y song. Lilli-Bunny liked this funny guy and so gave him a cookie—Lilli-Bunny always carried one in his pocket just in case something like this should happen. So, Right Slipper followed Lilli-Bunny home and settled under Lilli-Bunny's bed. Then it came out that Right Slipper had a Left brother. However, Left's left-foot views were too liberal for everyone's taste, which made it impossible for respectable Right Slipper to introduce his brother to Lilli-Bunny.

But at five o'clock tea, Lilli-Bunny showed his political indifference. He offered raspberry jam to those who sat to his right side and those on his left, without any discrimination. Moreover, he even sent some jam to Hamster Hamlet, an insignificant inhabitant of his house who lived in the basement near the furnace and didn't care to show up for tea. Seeing such a pluralistic approach in Lilli-Bunny's behavior, Right Slipper found the courage to introduce his Left brother, in spite of the leftist slogans Left was apt to spout: "Distribute the Wealth!" "Overthrow the Government!" "Reduce Gas Prices!" "Turn off the Light!" and even "Death to Global Warming!"

Left Slipper was invited to join the very next tea party, where he was pleased to make acquaintances with the merry company which lived in Lilli-Bunny's cozy brick house: Lilli-Bear, Lilli-Kitty and Lilli-Jake, two cats (Lilli-Bunny usually carried an armful of cats, even though he had only two of them. His were pretty fat, or to be more exact, fat and pretty), two quite articulate little



parrots with well-developed two to three word vocabularies with which they could fully enjoy their freedom of speech, and Hamster Hamlet, who has already been introduced to my honorable reader.

However, Hamster Hamlet soon departed from Lilli-Bunny’s house, because it turned out that he had solved the popular question, "to be or not to be?" in the most irresponsible way, amorally engaging himself in random relationships with numerous mice in the house.

Very soon, Lilli-Bunny started to notice the seemingly inexplicable appearance of mutant mice offspring with hamster ears and mouse-tails in his house.

Such an impact on the course of evolution quite upset Hamster Hamlet himself in such an unfortunate way that he placed the following ad in the local newspaper:

Hamster Hamlet (Way cuter than average) Looking for a new apartment Won’t accept any offers from mutant mice.
And the telephone number

Hamster Hamlet had a telephone line of his own. He, frankly speaking, was a hamster-individualist. I am sorry, but Hamster Hamlet did not give me his consent to disclose here his number, because he doesn’t want to be disturbed during his winter hibernation that usually starts in mid-August and ends in mid-June. Though, in case of some sort of emergency, you may find it in the phone book under his name. But don’t look under the section “Rodents.” You must look under “Princes of Denmark.”

After acquiring such politically engaged slippers, Lilli-Bunny ceased to express any interest in politics. But it often occurred that Lilli-Bunny fell asleep while watching TV, putting his slipped feet right in front of the screen. While Lilli-Bunny took his nap, the slippers attentively watched all available political commentary and quietly discussed the current political climate (climate is very important because if it changes, some politicians will start sneezing and coughing, and might even need warmer

cover-ups to cover their political ass—yep, you got me right , I was going to say “assets.”) Sometimes the slippers even debated different changes in the political system. You probably know that not all changes in the system are healthy. For example, changes in the gastrointestinal or cardiovascular system can turn deadly. Some democratic changes in the political system might be good for democracy itself, while changes in the systems of internal organs usually are considered a disturbing sign. Democracy between the systems of body organs may lead to some undesirable consequences if it gets too far—imagine that your liver passes a no-confidence vote against your head, or—excuse the medical details—your rectum impeaches your dignity. Sorry? Dignity is not an internal organ? Sometimes it is.

But debates among the elective organs are a good thing, for this means democracy is on the move. Democracy needs more physical activity, otherwise it gets obese and finishes up all the food in the nation’s fridge. But democracy shouldn’t move too fast, because it is not very young anymore, and its constitution sweats if it gets too heated.

Then the world’s tyrannies declare with disgust that democracy has got its constitution sweaty. Democracy promptly checks on its constitution and honestly confirms, “Yes, it is pretty wet. But this is reparable. But look at you, bloody tyrants! You keep your constitution dry, and it is entirely eaten up by moles!”

Then tyranny and democracy jump on each other and have a fight. And the rest of the world yawns while watching it on TV.

I always supported democracy and the ultimate authority of the majority in theory, though I never got a practical answer to what should be done if the majority is evil or gets things wrong. Perhaps democracy has some mysterious power to improve human nature, otherwise wild and brutal, and which only gets worse in a crowd. Probably I am wrong and democracy has never turned bad, or if it has, people try to forget such unfortunate occurrences. Let us forget it too, for it is better to forget unsolvable questions than try to solve them.

The only problem with the politically-engaged slippers popped up when Lilli-Bunny woke up and went to the bathroom. He was very sleepy, and by mistake, put the right slipper on his

left foot and the left slipper on his right. This forced the slippers to change their political orientations almost immediately. This occurs fairly often in politics, but was tough for the slippers because they retained shreds of dignity, which isn't quite true of politicians. To remain consistent in such confusion, the left slipper argued that he had gone so far to the left, that for the first time in his life, he had actually got things right, and the right slipper tried to convince himself and the others that since he had now traveled so far to the left, he had to adopt some leftist tactics. Don't get heated, my dearest reader. This is a simple truth of political life. Changing one's mind constantly is just one of the professional hazards of any political career.

But Lilli-Bunny was sleeping and not paying attention to all these political acrobatics. Once, he slept so deeply that he flipped over in his armchair. Thus, he pointed his slippers up at the ceiling. That was the real moment of national unity. By raising both up, Lilli-Bunny won the hearts of his slippers. They agreed to elect Lilli-Bunny as President.

They cast their ballots that way because, first, Lilli-Bunny treated everybody to raspberry jam, which made him very important, and second, he sometimes threw the slippers at his cats when they got too playful—and who, if not a real president, would do such a drastic thing in order to restore public order? You know, excessive playfulness might interfere with healthy sleeping, and this is unacceptable! Never wake society while it is sleeping. This may have serious consequences, especially to the one who wakes it up. And third, Lilli-Bunny was the owner of the house, and who, if not the owner, is supposed to be elected president? I mean, he owns the house. It is very important for democracy to confirm the real situation of society by electing the one who would rule anyway, even though he wasn't elected. This practice adds more legitimacy to the government and therefore makes the loyal citizens feel better. Isn't that what modern democracy is all about?

The slippers didn't tell Lilli-Bunny about their decision, because they were afraid the knowledge would make him nervous and preoccupied with his new political career. The slippers knew such preoccupation could seriously damage not

only the household of the politician himself, but also households of many fellow citizens. Nor did the slippers tell anyone else in the house about electing Lilli-Bunny for the office. The other inhabitants seemed not to care. But that was just okay, because in a normal society politics shouldn't much interfere with household issues.

Now the slippers formed a coalition and began to run against Lilli-Bunny's winter boots, which would compete with the slippers for the leader's feet in December, or even as early as mid-November, if it snowed early that year.

Chapter 2. Lilli-Bunny and Lilli-Bear

Lilli-Bunny was always looking for a real friend, and finally he found him. This was Lilli-Bear. Lilli-Bear was a kind of teddy bear, but even more educated and polite. You might say that lilli-bears are not very talkative and tend to fall on one side. This is true. This Lilli-Bear also always fell on his side, trying to fit himself to benches, sofas, armchairs, or, generally speaking, to everything it was possible to lie down on with a reasonable degree of comfort and peace. But one couldn't call him "not talkative" or "untalkable." That just was not true. He kept silence here and there, now and then. But all of sudden he'd start talking, and God witness, it wasn't easy to make him mute. At such moments, Lilli-Bear tried to say everything all at once, and one would think he heard a chorus of lilli-bears. So far, conventional science hasn't found any reasonable explanation of how it is possible for one lilli-bear to sound like many, though this is not the only thing conventional science finds difficult to explain.

Lilli-Bear talked especially much if he sat on something wet. It also occurred in the pond or the bath. Then he became so chatty one could make friends with him as much as one wished. That's why Lilli-Bear avoided towels after a bath—he didn't want to

lose his capability to complete the sentences that he might start once he was wet.

I must say, it was even worse when Lilli-Bear sat on something cold, like a bench lightly frosted with snow. Then he could go so far as to write verses of songs.

Here is one such song. Lilli-Bear wrote it for Lilli-Bunny with help from all the fellow inhabitants of the Lilli-Bunny house.

We love Lilli-Bunny and both of his slippers
And this nice household that we gladly possess
Because Lilli-Bunny is the one who can feed us,
Two parrots and an armful of cats.
He always works hard, but he never gets tired
He shoots any trouble, once and for all,
You can't find a person who's equally kind
Such goodness may save our world.

Keep walking with courage in your furry slippers,
And always with an armful of your stupid cats,
We cannot express our love any deeper,
We love you as much as it possibly gets!

Lilli-Bear looked at his poem and thought, "I like it, but if I can use French to speak of my love for Lilli-Bunny, why don't I?" French is the best language for expressing love. Even if you order French fries in French, it sounds like erotic talk—*Je voudrais*. Listen to the sound of this word: v-u-u-d-r-e-e—the "r" sounds like the roaring of a sleepy tiger. Does it turn you on? Well, try it again, and eventually, you'll get there.

Without distinctly knowing whether he should use French to express his love to Lilli-Bunny, Lilli-Bear decided to take the chance and wrote the following song:

*Nous aimons beaucoup notre lapin
Et notre maison que nous possédons
Parce que notre lapin nous traite avec le bouillon*

Et parfois il nous donne même du vin!

*Il travaille toujours dur, mais il n'est jamais fatigué,
Et quand il travaille, c'est un plaisir à voir,
C'est vrai, depuis que ce vieux monde s'est créé,
Il n'y a pas pour lui de meilleur espoir!*

*Marchez avec le courage vers un meilleur l'avenir
Nous t'aimons et nous aimons tes chats
C'est si important encore pour devenir
Le meilleur lapin que le monde possédera.*

Lilli-Bear didn't quite know what this poem looked like because he didn't exactly know French, but successful writing of the song in two languages encouraged Lilli-Bear. So he tried to write it in Russian, as well. He knew those nice guys who call themselves "new Russians" and speak Russian in New York and London exactly as they speak it in Moscow. They think if they speak Russian louder and slower, people will understand them. Anyway, Lilli-Bear wrote the poem in Russian, just to make his friend Lilli-Bunny prepared for such a pleasant invasion. It is so educational to live in the United States, Great Britain, or Canada in our day! You don't need to travel the world to meet people from distant corners of the Earth. They are all here. You can save the money you'd spend on expensive tickets and tours. And you can calm your fear of falling victim to a terrorist attack while you are in the air. They are all here too!

And French is not that bad after all. Look at you, what you are going to say when we all have to learn Chinese? I already did. You don't believe me? Well, here I go:

"Wo Schan Yao Chi" and "Wo Schan Yao He!" This means "I want to eat and drink."

One of my friends told me that he knows how to say "Hello" and "Good-bye" in Chinese. We decided to act together in case the world turns all-Chinese soon. He will be my "public relations department." He will say, in Chinese, "Hello" (just to make the conversation more polite), and I will say, "I want to eat and to drink," and then he will say

“Good-bye.” I think this is an excellent plan for survival. Don’t you think so? It is much easier than trying to make more children and teaching them to work hard, the only way Chinese know to work.

What was I talking about? Now I remember. Do you want to listen to the Russian song? Then here you go:

На свете есть Маськин в голубеньких тапках,
У Маськина много есть разных хлопот,
То кошек своих он таскает в охапках,
А то вдруг всем варит он вкусный компот.

Среди непонятностей внешнего мира
Наш Маськин понятен и нужен всегда,
Чтоб милые тапки ходили красиво,
Весь мир наш спасает его красота.

Шагайте же дружно, пушистые тапки,
Хватайтесь в охапки, дурные коты!
Мы Маськина любим свооо без оглядки,
Ни дня не прожить без его доброты.
И может, звучим мы, как три подхалима,
И может, мы слишком хотим подхалить,
Однако наш Маськин, откуда вестимо,
Даёт нам прекрасно и весело жить.

“Wow,” said Lilli-Bear to himself. He always was saying wow to himself, just to make himself feel better. But he didn’t say “wow!” with an exclamation mark, as everybody else does. He said it with period in the end, like this: “wow.” Lilli-Bear was confident that wow with a period on the end sounded more convincing.

When Lilli-Bear read all three poems to the fellow inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny’s house, they made pale efforts in the beginning to applaud him; but these efforts were too hopeless to be persisted in. The inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny House didn’t know many languages. Only Lilli-Bunny clapped his hands loudly and kissed Lilli-Bear on the nose. Lilli-Bunny loved his friend, because only

a real friend can write you a poem in three languages he doesn't quite know.

The truth is you don't have to know a language in order to use it. There are so many ways to express yourself without employing any language at all. Lilli-Bear had many other things that could do the same trick: giggling, clapping, coughing, sneezing, yawning, and even farting—Oh, I am sorry; I wasn't supposed to say that. But too late. Lilli-Bunny's left slipper likes to look over my shoulder at what I am writing, and when he saw the word "farting," he went crazy, proclaiming a new slogan: "Freedom of Farting! Freedom of Farting!" and I didn't have much way to stop him. Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god—How could I use such a vulgar slang in my noble piece of writing? Well, there's still some hope that the editor will delete the whole passage. You know, deleting is much more creative than writing. Because when you write, you don't have much choice what to write. You are just expressing your heart, exactly as Lilli-Bear did. But when someone has the power to delete—oh, that is a hell of a power! One might say that deleting is, in a way, more influential than writing. So, if you still can read all this, blame the editor, not me.

After so much linguistic effort from Lilli-Bear, how could Lilli-Bunny not consider him a best friend? He even gave Lilli-Bear a present: a ring, a cute little ringlet with writing on its inside: "For Love and Friendship."

Lilli-Bear was so happy he put two sticks in the ground in his backyard and started to throw the ring, trying to get it on a stick. He labeled one stick "Luff," and on the other, he wrote "Phrent-Sheep" (Lilli-Bear's way of spelling the words "Love" and "Friendship").

As a direct descendant of the Honorable Winnie the Pooh, and like all his descendants, Lilli-Bear suffered from slight difficulties in spelling.

Once I thought that spelling would die out by the next generation, but computers saved it with their "check spelling" option. Now we don't have to remember the exact spelling even of simple words to get them right and be considered a well-educated person. Shakespeare didn't have such a luxury. Poor

thing! Once a computer does the spelling for me, I can allow myself to become a strong supporter of the conventional way of spelling.

Can you possibly imagine how many generations of teachers' kicks and slaps the word "enough" carries on its bloody letters? Regretfully, teachers don't beat up their students anymore (they found more elaborate ways to humiliate their students. We must admit that this constitutes substantial progress in the educational system), but it doesn't make the word "enough" any less bloody. Its Old Germanic origin caused a lot of damage to young souls in their unhappy years of schooling, maybe even more damage than the German military machine did to Great Britain and the English-speaking world. Well, I guess we had enough with the word "enough." We must let it rest in peace.

So Lilli-Bear always followed Lilli-Bunny and tried to fit himself on anything it was possible to lie down on. Lilli-Bunny kept telling Lilli-Bear, "You lay around too long," or "you sit too long." But Lilli-Bear didn't argue. He always agreed saying, "right," and then staying where he lay. When Lilli-Bunny baked pancakes for him, Lilli-Bear would lie down on a small gauzy bench that Lilli-Bunny put in the kitchen for him.

When the pancakes were ready, Lilli-Bear always started to philosophize. So specialists promptly dubbed this sort of philosophy "Kitchen Philosophy."



Lilli-Bear's Kitchen Philosophy:

1. Pancakes are better than buns.
2. Pancakes are better than buns, particularly because I ate all the buns yesterday, and I'm eating pancakes today. If I eat waffles, that means that they exist, whatever Descartes has to say. "I think, therefore I exist." —Not true. Waffles do not need to think in order to exist.
3. Nietzsche is an idiot.

That's it. Lilli-Bear, of course, had new thoughts sometimes, especially if he was given semolina porridge with raspberry jam, but these thoughts were so short that Lilli-Bear wrote them with his spoon directly on the porridge, and porridge is not a very reliable material for preserving eternal ideas. So, humanity shall have to be satisfied with the three lines of Lilli-Bear's Kitchen Philosophy that we have already respectfully presented.

Chapter 3. Lilli-Bunny and Lilli-Kitty

As a matter of fact, it was Lilli-Kitty who first called Lilli-Bunny by his name. Before that, Lilli-Bunny was just an ordinary bunny without any special function in this world. Now we know that the main function of Lilli-Bunny is to find the way to live a happy life. But when Lilli-Bunny was just an ordinary bunny, this function was obscure and undefined.

At first, Lilli-Bunny started to argue. "I am not a Lilli-Bunny." But Lilli-Kitty just ignored his objections and called Lilli-Bunny "Lilli-Bunny." She often said,

- "Lilli-Bunny, let's go shopping!" or
- "Where is Lilli-Bunny?" or
- "Lilli-Bunny, let's draw pictures together!"

And eventually, Lilli-Bunny got used to his cute name. He ceased to grumble when she used it, and then judged it philosophically, "Well, I am Lilli-Bunny. But who is not?" Then he looked at himself at the mirror and noted with relief and satisfaction, "Everyone is a lilli-bunny." If you don't believe it, look at yourself in the mirror, and you will see that sometimes you are just a cute little lilli-bunny, no matter what you do in your official life.

Lilli-Kitty and Lilli-Bunny were friends. Lilli-Kitty even found her own funny pair of furry slippers, but hers were politically illiterate.

Lilli-Kitty liked to spend quality time with Lilli-Bunny. Each day, they took a small, fresh Piece of Time and treated it so

kindly that Time did not want to depart and always remained to drink tea.

Lilli-Kitty knew how to do everything better than anyone else. She cooked scrumptious meals while Lilli-Bunny was occupied with training and educating his cats. As he trained them, he studied them in a scientific and philosophical way. This occupied much time. First of all, it was necessary to wait until they woke, and they slept most of the day; in fact they slept almost always. Unless, of course, they were busy taking dust baths in the backyard.

After some thought, Lilli-Bunny concluded they did this to ward off the fleas. Fleas attach themselves by their teeth to the cat's skin. But when the cat bathes in the dust, the fleas' noses fill up with it, making the fleas sneeze and fall off the cat.

This is why the cats were so clean, even though Lilli-Bunny's cats were of low-class origins. No, I didn't say that they were garbage cats. I said, "Low class." Well, if you insist—they had some garbage-cat background on their résumés. But it was all in the past, and there is nothing wrong or humiliating in being a cat of garbage class. If you get a garbage cat clean and feed him well, he will be even better, happier, and healthier than some aristocratic or middle-class cats. You ought to love garbage cats! They are the true source of hegemony for any progressive reforms! They also are the only hope for nuclear-weapons-free future. You don't agree again? Well. Please raise your hands who ever saw a garbage cat with a nuclear bomb in his paws. Now do you agree I am right? Well, if garbage cats get their paws on the nuclear bomb, there won't be anyone around to ask my stupid questions or answer them, anyway.

When Lilli-Bunny was busy educating his cats, he had to sleep a lot, because he had to wait until they woke up. Lilli-Kitty managed Lilli-Bunny's household when Lilli-Bunny was busy sleeping. Sometimes it took a lot of time, because when Lilli-Bunny was awake, the cats were sleeping, and when the cats were awake, Lilli-Bunny was sleeping.

This is exactly the same situation we have in our society. When the Best People of the Nation are awake, the society is

sleeping. The Best People of the Nation don't want to wake the society, because it may have disturbing consequences. So the Best People don't know what to do with themselves and just take it easy and smoke pot. Eventually, they fall asleep. Then the society wakes up and finds that the Best People of the Nation are sleeping. So society lights a joint, because it really has nothing to do without the Best People of The Nation leading everyone to a better future. Society doesn't want to wake the Best People of the Nation, because it knows that while they are awake they may disagree with the current values of the society, and it may suffer some inconvenience, like a civil war. So society covers the feet of the Best People with warm blankets and puts pillows on their faces, not because it wants to suffocate them, but to prevent them from waking suddenly, when society is not quite prepared. Then society finishes the joint that it took from the cold hands of the Best People of the Nation. Society eventually gets stunned and falls asleep. The Best People somehow manage to remove the pillows from their faces and wake up anyway, and so on and on and on, in rounds.

Well, what goes around comes around. The Best People of the Nation actually never meet their society in person. Pot makes both of them a little bit hippy and less ambitious with time. You might ask, what society am I talking about? Doesn't matter. They are all the same. You might argue: What about China? They are very ambitious and active lately. Oh, that's because they are antipodes and smoke anti-pot. Obviously anti-pot makes people less hippy and more ambitious.



I have to confess that I never tried to smoke pot. Probably because I am not a Best Person of any Nation, nor do I fill a real part in any society.

Lilli-Kitty was very cute and handy. She went fishing, and drew naturmorts with fruits (it is very economic to draw naturmorts with fruits. You buy one apple and draw it a couple of times, so you get a

whole bunch of apples in the picture. You just have to make sure Lilli-Bear doesn't eat your apple by mistake before you have drawn it at least once).

Lilli-Kitty also made sure there were no quarrels of any sort in the house. Sometimes everybody would sit around the table and have tea. One such time, Lilli-Bear asked Lilli-Kitty, "How are you doing?"

"Doing what?" asked Lilli-Kitty and burst into tears. Then she said, "Here we go; it all started again!"

"What started again?" asked Lilli-Bear.

"Everyone is shouting," said Lilli-Kitty, starting to shout.

But Lilli Bear said, "Wow." Yes, "wow," with a period in the end, and Lilli-Kitty felt better.

"You ask how I am doing? I am okay. Thank you," Lilli-Kitty told Lilli-Bear in a calm voice.

Lilli-Kitty had many shadow-like friends. They came and went, and never took their hats off.

They usually joined dinner. Lilli-Bunny watched them closely, trying to discern whether the newcomers were good or bad. Then Lilli-Bear told them his kitchen philosophy, and tried to teach them to say "wow" with a period in the end. They seldom got it right; they said "wow?" or "wow;" or—

When Lilli-Bunny found that one of them was more bad than good, he didn't give the person any more jam, because jam usually affects the head, and all good and bad comes from this part of the body, even when you think it comes from another part.

Lilli-Kitty's friends never took off their hats, because hats helped them find their heads. And the head is a very important part of the body, if you know how to use it. For example, you can use it for eating or sneezing. When Lilli-Bunny tried to take their hats off, they didn't let him and this caused a lot of confusion, and added to their shadowy nature. But eventually they all said, "wow." the right way, and became quite welcome in the house.

Chapter 4. Lilli-Bunny and Lilli-Jake

Lilli-Jake was a nice guy who looked like a little bear, even smaller than Lilli-Bear. He possessed many unique things: binoculars, small cute bells, locks, bolts, sand clocks and even a sand thermometer. Yes, a sand thermometer. Lilli-Bear made it for him as a birthday present. It worked the following way: if the sand was warm, the weather was hot, and if the sand was cold, it meant the weather was cold. Lilli-Jake also had a small portable Angry Face Generator, but he sold it. That wasn't very smart, because he sold it cheap, and angry faces are now in high demand. But the advantage was that he could not make angry faces anymore.



Encouraged by his first commercial success (no matter how insignificant was the profit), Lilli-Jake decided to start his own company.

He called it Brain Company, Ltd. Every time Lilli-Jake had a problem to solve, his Brain Company went into action. Small, smart boys jumped out of his head and asked, "Okay, what is the problem?" These micro-lilli-jakes could solve any problem.

Lilli-Jake liked to be a just person, and always made sure there were no injustices in Lilli-House. He always gave the cats enough food, in even parts. So the cats grew fat, looked like barrels, and slept even more than usual. Once, he gave one cat a snack, but decided it was unjust not to give the same snack to the other cat. But when he gave some to the second cat, he realized that the first cat had gotten less. He continued to feed the cats until the bag with the snacks was half-empty. Then he activated his Brain Company, and the little boys jumped out and said, "There is nothing to think about, you must feed the cats until the bag is empty."

Isn't this what we have with social services? They try hard to be as just as possible, and end up with empty bags. So, what are we to do? Maybe think a little bit more than Lilli-Jake's Brain Company did.

Look at our society:

The government apparatus, bulky and ineffective, spends on itself the larger part of what it collects in taxes. The state does not love to advertise how much it spends on itself; official numbers usually hide it under the obscure title "Other Spending." Why is government so inefficient? Since the state does not experience the competition that exists in the world of business, there are no external mechanisms to force the state to reexamine its role in the life of society.

This can be remedied. First, the majority of state works must be transferred to private firms under strict control and on a competitive basis, exposing state functions to the positive influence of competition. This will increase effectiveness and reduce the cost of services and systems for which the state presently bears responsibility. This practice does exist, but is not widespread.

Second, basic concepts of the economic life of the society should be reexamined. For example, taxation. What part of his or her income does the active member of the middle class return to the state in the form of taxes? Income tax, real estate tax, sales tax—it seems you can't make or spend a dollar without paying the state. Overall, taxes in many countries exceed 40%, and in some, they reach 60-70%.

The legitimate question arises: why, exactly, must taxes constitute 60% of the household budget, rather than 80%? Or why not 100%? It could be necessary to make taxes 120%—on each dollar earned, you return a dollar to the state and pay the remaining twenty cents for the privilege of living in the country.

You say that people cannot survive in that manner. You are correct. You think exactly as the government thinks. In essence, the state withdraws as much money from each household budget as is possible to take from the population and leave people willing to work and keep silent. But then state leaders loudly

report their great achievement, the reduction of a tax by one or two percent, and expect everyone to applaud it. And the masses do applaud, electing the reformers to another term.

Politicians forget that the state is nothing but an institution created by its inhabitants to advance their common interests. Turning to Rousseau, we read “*Chacun de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la supreme direction de la volonte generale; et nous recevons en corps chaque membre comme partie indivisible du tout,*”⁹² which means, “Each of us shares his person and all his power to the supreme direction of the general will; and we become like indivisible part[s] of the whole.”

What can we expect in return from the state, if not fulfillment of our desires and protection of our interests? But see how this is not achieved in practice.

I don’t think there is a conspiracy of the state against its people. The problem is ineffective organization of the system.

Computers, relatively new to this world, can make most systems more efficient. But we still use them more like printing machines than intelligent partners.

Moreover, the state, which once took upon itself responsibility for social welfare, has shifted this responsibility to the employer, forcing employers to pay, in addition to high wages, whose larger part goes to taxes, “social taxes,” like retirement, health insurance, and unemployment.

Consequently, the work force becomes expensive and drives up product and service prices. Most of the population, already paying high taxes, sinks into debt trying to pay the 18-22% rate on credit cards.

The question arises: how does the state use the money it gathers?

One source of major spending is government contribution to the creation of workplaces. The state tries to fight

⁹² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique”: “Du pacte social” Archives de la Societe Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Geneve, 1762.

unemployment because it is generally accepted that in modern society all healthy persons must work. This needs to be reexamined. In today's society, and especially in the future, it may not be wise to require each person to work the way *work* is defined today.

The creation of workplaces, often used as a main criterion when evaluating governmental performance, should not be. The majority of the created workplaces produce nothing useful; however, their creation requires enormous spending. For instance, must we force single parents to work? Allowing them, if they wish, to stay home and care for their kids by paying them for this important work would save government and business money and improve childcare.

Modern computers and robotic systems are thousands of times more efficient than humans are at most tasks. More money should be spent on the development of automated systems that will replace inefficient human labor and let people stay home with their families, leave big cities, and raise their kids.

You say people sitting at home will die of boredom. But doing hard, inefficient work (like regulating traffic on the construction site of a new highway) eight hours a day is not thrilling, either. Yet in the opinion of today's nations, such people are in their place.

But the state is less criticized for inefficient projects employing thousands of people than high unemployment rates. So the government tries hard to create jobs, when we just need to improve the efficiency of our systems in respect to a new era of artificial intelligence.

Sorry, I forgot that I am writing a funny story. Sorry for not being funny in this chapter.

Lilli-Jake was always excited about being a king and having a lot of money. But the two rarely come together in our day. Once, Lilli-Jake proclaimed himself king, but he ran out of funds almost the same day, and had to respectfully take the paper crown off his head.

Such a pity it is that the kings are disappearing. Of course, I am not a supporter of absolute monarchy, but at least we would have a nice crowned head to print on our stamps.

Chapter 5. Lilli-Bunny and His Cats

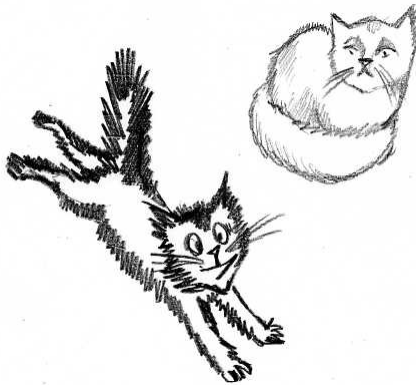
Lilli-Bunny adored animals. Every kind of animal: big and small, fat and skinny, furry and not very furry. It was easy to amuse Lilli-Bunny by telling him a story about them. That is why Lilli-Bear read illustrated journals about different animals. Sometimes, when Lilli-Bunny came to the kitchen, Lilli-Bear lay down on his bench and retold the stories. He told how bird's eggs hatch, how whales breathe, how elephants take their baths—Lilli-Bunny liked these stories and listened happily. That is how Lilli-Bunny came to think he needed a pet. At the time, he didn't have any pets in the Lilli-House, and he dreamt of having a whole menagerie—cow, horse, piglets, dogs, sheep, geese, and many others.

But Lilli-Bear didn't want to share Lilli-Bunny's love and attention with anyone, so he said to Lilli-Bunny that it was enough to have his slippers for pets.

Lilli-Bunny was so upset that Lilli-Bear wouldn't let him keep any pets or farm animals he almost started to cry. Then Lilli-Bear agreed to let a cat in the house, because Lilli-Bear loved Lilli-Bunny a lot and didn't like to see his friend upset.

Lilli-Bunny brought a small kitten to the house. The kitty's yellow-orange fur shone like gold, so they called him Golden Cat.

Lilli-Bear liked this cat a lot, and started to play with him and talk to him. Lilli-Bear even helped Lilli-Bunny educate the cat.



The opportunity to make friends with cats exists only when they are small. Then they are still playful and active, they jump and race around the house, showing their vitality. Only after growing up did the Golden Cat discover his philosophical nature. He sank

into philosophical thoughts, sharing them rarely. For the most

part, he spent his time sleeping in different poses. One could name this occupation “sleepy tourism” or “tourist sleep.” During a single day, it was possible to see Golden Cat sleeping on all the tables, all the chairs, all the beds, and all the armchairs, to say nothing of such exotic tourist places as the piano cover and the basket with the clean laundry. Lilli-Bunny studied how Golden Cat changed the place of his sleep over twenty-four hours. As a young sprout moves its timid head in the direction of the sun, Golden Cat began the morning in the solar speck of light on the floor in the bedroom, then passed with it into the corridor, drawing room, and so forth. Lilli-Bear’s *Encyclopedia for Lilli-Bears* revealed that the process of catosynthesis, in which many cats are constantly occupied, caused Golden Cat’s need for the sun. Its namesake, photosynthesis, forms nutrients and oxygen, useful for the surroundings. But from catosynthesis, nothing, not even the cat itself, is formed. You ask what, then, is catosynthesis good for? Simple: for the sake of the process itself. Try to imagine—you lay in the sun, you catosynthesize, you wave your tail—it is good, isn’t it? The philosophical thoughts of Golden Cat revolved around themselves. They descended to the depths, for a long time, they hovered in the air. They lengthened, deepened, and passed into no less philosophical dreams. But no one in Lilli-House could write down one single cat thought. Nor could anyone decipher them. Despite this, everyone in the house considered Golden Cat the wisest of them; and even Lilli-Bear, known in his lilli-bear circles as a great poet and philosopher, considered Golden Cat no more or less than his teacher. These were golden days for the Golden Cat. No one dragged him around in an armful of other cats; no one called him a foolish cat.

This all ended when a new cat appeared in the house. Her name was Basia. She was the complete opposite of Golden Cat. She was genuinely stupid, forgetful, fussy, importunate, unbalanced. She skipped everywhere like a real fool, and always aimed her bites at Golden Cat’s head, rear parts, paws, and tail. Golden Cat was almost hospitalized with the diagnosis “injured by a cat” when he fell down the stairs, unexpectedly attacked by stupid Basia.

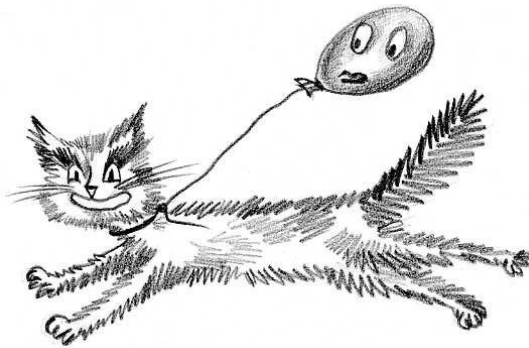
Golden Cat's philosophical thoughts began to grow dim. He became nervous and took aspirin for his headache. He was so upset, frustrated, and confused, that he mistakenly urinated on Lilli-Bunny's bed.

Golden Cat felt as ill as he had when the snake bit him. He had prepared to die, until Lilli-Bear read in his encyclopedia that the snake was not venomous. Then Golden Cat recovered.

Imaginary illnesses often strike us. You may watch a television special about the chicken flu, and then begin to sneeze like a bird!

Thus, Basia bothered Golden Cat so much that he became quite wicked, and did not call for help when Basia tried to squeeze under the sofa with a yellow air balloon, which obviously couldn't fit, tied around her neck.

Imagine yourself a stupid cat trying hard to get under the sofa, but the air balloon doesn't let you, and its rope almost suffocates you. When Basia fell silent because she almost died, Golden Cat at last felt pity for her and called Lilli-Bunny, who helped Basia pull free.



Lilli-Bear and Lilli-Jake let the balloon rise into the sky and tried to shoot it with arrows. But the balloon was not a fool and flew to the heights, where it met a sparrow and complained to him of Lilli-Bear and Lilli-Jake. So the sparrow deliberately deposited its droppings on the poor guys, completely free of

charge, thereby following the tradition of mutual assistance, which unites all pilots (as Sparrow and Air Balloon undoubtedly were).

Air Balloon continued its flight to the north and finished its transient days in a settlement close to the North Pole. It served as a simple rubber rag, with which the local friend of icy fields and polar bears sealed his bottle of firewater, acquired on the unemployment assistance the good people from the south pay him so he can over imbibe and die before global warming melts his icehouse.

When Basia reached the second of her nine cat lives, she started to respect Golden Cat. She ceased to disturb him and calmed down. This is what happens to a creature of God close to unavoidable death on the rope of an air balloon which won't fit under the sofa, as it spends the last of its strength, choking, trying hard to squeeze under, and almost gets suffocated.

We all often try to fit under sofas with ropes around our necks. We struggle through the crack that our air balloons won't fit and pray that the All Mighty will send us Golden Cat, who will call Lilli-Bunny, who will free us from the loop in which we caught ourselves. Then we will be good. Likely, it is not possible to become good without this exceptional adventure.

Despite all that, the status of the cats in Lilli-House lowered. Now Lilli-Bunny dragged them around in armfuls and called them stupid cats. Golden Cat decided to brush up on his French and leave this nightmare. He planned to move to Paris, to the Institute of Pasteur where he, long ago, was offered a place: Head of the Laboratory of Catosynthesis. He knew only the cat language known to linguists as Catish. So he opened his Catish-French dictionary, but yawning began to overcome him while he was reading the third letter. On the fourth letter, the yawning strengthened and passed into murmur. When Golden Cat awoke the next day, he discovered that instead of the dictionary, he was sleeping on an instruction book, *How to Ride a Bicycle*. Golden Cat didn't want to ride a bicycle. So he remained at Lilli-House, but firmly decided that if Lilli-Bunny brought a third cat to the house, he (Golden Cat) would indeed learn French, or leave to live with the Friend of the Ice Fields that lived near the North

Pole. Golden Cat knew this Friend was a kind person, though not quite by nature, but mostly from excessive consumption of firewater.

Chapter 6 . Lilli-Bunny and Monsieur Silvouplaît

Monsieur Silvouplaît appeared in Lilli-House quite suddenly, but not uninvited. Lilli-Bear greatly respected Silvouplaît, a Frenchman famous for his good manners, ultra-modern views, and excellent education. Lilli-Bear had read his book, in which was written, “Why good manners and ultra-modern views will save all of us,” and became very impressed with Silvouplaît’s erudition.

Lilli-Bear also knew Monsieur Silvouplaît had very special acquaintances. Silvouplaît knew personally Monsieur Almost-Napoleon, who was the manager of a sausage factory, Monsieur New-Robespierre (an associate of Madam Guillotine), and Monsieur Not-quite-Balzac—a very well known modern writer. All these gentlemen were good friends of Monsieur Silvouplaît, the historian and geographer. Lilli-Bear dreamed of being introduced to this circle of true intellectuals, and wrote an invitation letter to Monsieur Silvouplaît.

Invitational letter of Lilli-Bear

Dear Monsieur Silvouplaît,

Please come to visit me at our Lilli-House. We’ll have for dinner, salad Olivier.

Your Lilli-Bear

I don’t like books where the writers mention good food, but never give the recipe to cook it. I am not like this. I always give the

recipe if I mention something delicious (that is, delicious, according to my humble opinion).

The French cook Olivier, who in 1860 opened the prestigious restaurant Hermitage, in Moscow, introduced salad Olivier. The contemporary version differs considerably from the original, but this does not diminish some persons' love for this salad. In Lilli-House, it was cooked slightly differently from the official recipe. You will need the following ingredients:

Crabsticks

1 pound boiled potatoes

2 average-size salt cucumbers

1 glass of canned or frozen peas

1 average onion, finely diced

1 boiled carrot

7 ½ ounces of mayonnaise mixed with sour cream

2 hard-boiled eggs

6 large black olives

8 twigs of parsley

Cut crabsticks, potatoes, and cucumbers into small cubes. Mix crab, potatoes, cucumbers, eggs, carrot, green peas, and cut onion. Add salt to taste and the mayonnaise with sour cream. Mix, but do not choke, vegetables. Cool before serving. Garnish with olives and parsley.

Nothing special, but Lilli-Bear liked it a lot.



Lilli-Bear re-read his letter and put it into the envelope. Then he tried to attach the stamp with the queen on it. When he licked the stamp, the queen was not happy, because Lilli-Bear licked the wrong side of the stamp. The queen scratched the licked place. Lilli-Bear apologized and licked the backside, and the queen smiled. The queen and Lilli-

Bear liked each other very much.

In truth, Lilli-Bear had a slight problem with sending letters because he didn't like to lick the backsides of the great people

printed on stamps. He tried to lick their backsides a couple of times, but always felt nausea. So he started wetting stamps with water. The great persons on the stamps complained to the special place where such complaints are taken care of. So Lilli-Bear was asked to start licking, as everybody else does. Lilli-Bear chose stamps with the queen, because he thought that if he had to lick the—stamp, let it be the stamp with the queen.

Whose backsides haven't we licked in the long history since the dawn of the postal service era? I think the stamp was a great discovery. In times of old, not all people were allowed to lick the backsides of great persons, but with the development of democracy and liberty, everyone now has equal right to lick the backside of any great person he wishes, if, of course, the personage's portrait is printed on a stamp.

Monsieur Silvouplaît was glad to receive the invitation of Lilli-Bear, because he knew of the latter's philosophical work (published under the title *Kitchen Phylosophy*) and wanted to meet in person this distinguished thinker of our time. Lilli-Bear had also mentioned the salad in the letter, and this made Monsieur Silvouplaît accept the invitation all the more gladly.

That is why no one was surprised in Lilli-House, when one day, Monsieur Silvouplaît showed up at the front door. He said:

“Voila, Merci,
Please pay for taxi...”

Lilli-Bunny ran out to pay the taxi driver. But the number on the bill couldn't be the fee—it was so large! Lilli-Bunny thought it indicated the date, or perhaps the phone number, Alas! It was the bill.

The taxi driver politely explained that Monsieur Silvouplaît had, along the way, dropped in to Quebecestan to visit his friends, purchased fresh waffles with maple syrup for Lilli-Bear, then detoured into Algeria and acquired some fresh fruit, and finally visited an atoll in the Pacific Ocean, where his friend the

ambassador was being treated for radiation sickness (which was first diagnosed as the sort of disease he might get from his local lover, then as manic-depression. But when nuclear testing in the atoll increased in frequency and the ambassadress, who did not like to sleep with the light on, began to complain that the ambassador shone too brightly at night and burnt the mattress in two places, the doctors recognized it as radiation sickness.)

At the atoll, Monsieur Silvouplaît, the sick ambassador, and the taxi driver, Jacques Agauche—which in French means



“Jacques to the left”—ate the waffles and fruits intended for Lilli-Bear. Jacques Agauche taxied on back into Algeria and Quebecestan in order to supplement his passengers’ reserves of fruits and waffles, which Monsieur Silvouplaît, by mistake, ate again right before his arrival at the home of Lilli-Bear. Furthermore, Jacques Agauche, in contrast to his partner, Philippe Adroit (Philippe to the right), always turned to the

left. This is why the taxi stayed so long in the lush regions of Algeria and Paris, and the taxi counter ticked all the time. Lilli-Bunny paid for the taxi on credit, because he could not refuse his hospitality to the educated friend of Lilli-Bear.

Monsieur Silvouplaît ran in circles around the house in search of a tube with which to call his wife. Common telephones, in the opinion of Monsieur Silvouplaît, so strongly distorted his pronunciation—making him sound insufficiently educated—that he rejected them as a device for talking. But Monsieur Silvouplaît found it necessary to call his wife, Madame Silvouplaît, who always worried when her husband gadded somewhere and did not stay, as he usually did, with his mistress, with whom Madame Silvouplaît was good friends. Lilli-Bear gave Monsieur Silvouplaît his telescope, taking out the glass and the bird’s nest where two parrots were enjoying their second honeymoon observing the stars. Monsieur Silvouplaît used the tube to speak with his wife, for he didn’t live very far away—at least not so far as it might seem if you looked at the taxi bill.

At last, they all sat for dinner, and Lilli-Bear began his polite conversation.

- "Monsieur Silvouplaît, do you think good manners and ultra-modern views really can save our world?" asked Lilli-Bear.
- "Yes, of course. My friends Monsieur Almost-Napoleon, Monsieur New-Robespierre, and Monsieur Not-quite-Balzac tried to teach everyone good manners, and they almost always succeeded."
- "But I think that, for example, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery did more to promote your culture in the rest of the world than all of your revolutions and armies," said Lilli-Bunny. "Is it that hard to follow simple rules in life, so everyone will be happy?"
- "What rules?" intruded Left Slipper.
- "Just simple ones: Do in your life what you really like to do, but make sure that this doesn't bother others. Don't change your beliefs so often that you are considered unreliable and inconsistent, and don't be dogmatic, insisting on something that is obviously proven wrong. Try to love people and animals, even if they hurt you sometimes. Don't work too much and remember to rest, but don't be too lazy. Not only don't kill anyone, but also try not to hurt anyone, by force or even by words. Don't be a pig around food and love affairs. Don't lie, at least most of the time. Don't take what doesn't belong to you. If you possess something, share it with others without hurting yourself or your loved ones. Respect God, whether you believe in him, or not. That is pretty much it," Lilli-Bunny answered calmly.
- "Isn't that what the Ten Commandments are about? They are so old and out-dated," said Monsieur Silvouplaît.
- "If at least once in history, people would honestly follow these simple rules, everyone would be happy," argued Lilli-Bear.
- "But happiness is just the chemistry of our brains. Take a pill and you are happy," said Monsieur Silvouplaît with a smile. He obviously was on some sort of pills.

- “This is true,” said Right Slipper, “most of the time, people in the modern world need pills to escape the hell of depression. But if people would follow these simple rules, everyone would be happy, even without pills.”
- “You have a very special culture, and people would gain a lot if they could listen to you, but for some reason, they don’t,” said Lilli-Kitty to Silvouplaît.
- “Yes, we need more books like *The Little Prince*; they really show how cute and kind is your simple truth,” said Lilli-Jake.
- “But our best modern writer, Not-quite-Balzac, says—” began Monsieur Silvouplaît, but Lilli-Bunny interrupted him.
- “Are you sure the kids can hear what your best writer says?”
- “No, I am not sure,” said Monsieur Silvouplaît.
- “This is the problem. The best writer of our time says things that not only children, but also adults are not supposed to hear. I read a joke about women on the first page of his new book, and I felt like I’d sunk in a barrel of dirt,” admitted Lilli-Bear.
- “That is definitely not a common opinion in our circles,” said Monsieur Silvouplaît, yawning.
- “I think that humankind is just a teenager, and it will grow up soon, into a nice mature person,” said Lilli-Bunny.
- “You are so weird,” Monsieur Silvouplaît broke in. “How do all of you survive in the modern world? You are such idealists—”
- “Sometimes it’s better to be a happy idealist than a depressed egoist,” answered Left Slipper, ending the conversation.

The fact that someone speaks with a weird accent and doesn’t want to fight a war we started, doesn’t mean he’s bad, or that he’s not worth our love and attention. Yes, we are all imperfect. But try to stick to the rules that Lilli-Bunny mentioned, no matter how old and outdated they look, and we will all be all right one day.

Chapter 7. Lilli-Bunny's Golf

In our day, nothing can be done in the business world if you don't play golf. Lilli-Bunny was not a businessman, but wanted to keep up with the times. He decided to take up this noble pastime, but didn't quite know how.

So Lilli-Bunny examined pictures in a book about rich people and noted the things required for the game of golf: special sticks and little balls, larger than pigeon eggs but smaller than chicken eggs. The main thing, of course, is a rich partner—a gentleman with a cigar and a very cynical appearance. A green lawn with small holes is necessary, as well.

Lilli-Bunny decided to begin with the lawn. But the lawn in Lilli-Bunny's backyard was a torn-up mess of dirt and uprooted grass—eaten by moles.

Lilli-Bunny decided to fight them, but the moles did not want to fight. They surrendered immediately, but did not cease to damage the lawn.

So Lilli-Bunny put on his blue slippers and went to the mole supervisor. You think I made a mistake saying “supervisor”? Should I have said “the mole *king*”? No, I said it correctly. Moles, in spite of their blindness, are very clear-sighted people. They knew from the newspapers thrown by tourists that, topside, it long ago fell out of fashion to be called a “king.” It is trendy, now, to be called a “supervisor.” Upon learning this, the mole king appointed himself supervisor of the mole country and removed the royal crown from his head. He placed it under the royal throne, to be stored there until kings become fashionable again.

Lilli-Bunny arrived at the court of the mole supervisor. He said, in a strict tone of voice, that if the moles continued to spoil the lawn, then he, Lilli-Bunny, would all at once cease to love them and call them “cute and pretty.” Their status, in his classification of the animal world, would fall from that of cute animals he liked a lot to the one he gave the mice, whom he didn't quite like because of their naked tails and high, impulsive unpredictability.

When a mouse ran about the Lilli-House, Lilli-Bunny always panicked and asked the cats to help him catch it. But the cats were too lazy to do their job. Each time, Lilli-Bunny had to catch the mouse, put it in a jar, and drive at least three miles from the house. Then he would release the mouse and give her a sandwich with caviar as compensation for the inconvenience. Each time, Mouse sold the caviar to the Russian Mafia and peacefully returned to the house in a brand-new Mercedes toy car.

It was getting dark and raining, the air filling with the evening serenades of frogs, but Lilli-Bunny and the mole supervisor still sat on the hill and argued about Lilli-Bunny's lawn.

Finally, they agreed that if Lilli-Bunny gave the supervisor of moles a pair of old sunglasses, the moles would cease to eat the lawn. Sunglasses were extremely necessary to mole supervisors, who wore them in order to look not-blind among the blind. Who, seeing the mole in the sunglasses, would think him blind? Why, everyone simply thinks the gentleman is on vacation. To be considered not-blind in a blind kingdom is an excellent way to maintain royal power and legitimacy of the leadership. The mighty of the mole kingdom based their great traditions on the ancient values of the mole kings, who never disgraced their beds with black eye bandages of the sort we steal from airplanes and put on before sleeping so the morning light does not bother our eyes, eyes that have seen so much. Thus, to be considered sighted among the blind, honored by national tradition, gives more than just the foundation for being called a supervisor or any new-fashioned word indicating royal power: President, Prime Minister, General Secretary—

Lilli-Bunny gave the mole supervisor his old, but by mole standards, quite new-fashioned sunglasses. The mole supervisor of royal blood settled the glasses on, and all the other moles left to eat the lawns of the neighbors, whispering



excitedly to one another of their super-sighted ruler, with whom they could proudly enter the third millennium, now that he had destroyed the discriminatory image of the blind mole.

Moles are not blind! They simply do not stare too much. They dig and do their simple mole work—eating lawns. Never point your finger at someone for being blind! If you do, he will find the means to make you blind, too.

So, having effected, by his Sunglasses Pact, a full-scale revolution of mole public self-image, Lilli-Bunny went to buy a golf stick and a set of little white balls.

As it differed slightly from conventional golf, the game he played was named Lilli-Bunny's Golf. It is similar to conventional golf, but prior to the beginning of each game, it is compulsory to produce a full-scale revolution of public self-image in some society of the blind. In the mole society, there appeared the ruling party, "Sighted Moles." They can, in truth, see as well as you see in darkness.

Lilli-Bunny's Golf doesn't include a cynical partner with a cigar, though...

Chapter 8. Lilli-Bunny's Car

When Lilly-Bunny was a baby, he didn't have a car. He did have a little pocket, where he kept the shiny stones, cockleshells, and other baby's treasures he collected. But when he began to grow up, the pocket wasn't sufficient for its purpose. So Lilli-Bear bought a utility bag for his friend. But the bag got older, and when bags get older, they suffer from holes. All Lilli-Bunny's treasures started to vanish through the holes in the utility bag. Lilli-Bunny brought a briefcase, which temporarily satisfied his needs. But it was necessary to keep books and workbooks in the briefcase, in addition to treasures, since Lilli-Bunny, at the same time he collected pebbles, went to school for lilli-bunnies, to become a well-educated Lilli-Bunny. So Lilli-Bunny bought himself an enormous travel bag. It held articles of Lilli-Bunny's daily life. Since the bag became very heavy, Lilli-Bunny fitted it

with small wheels. In time, he added a steering wheel, motor, carburetor, and car body, then signal lights, headlights, exhaust pipe, whistle, doors, windows, and everything else which is required in a modern car-bag. True, it was necessary to remove the old bag from this construction, as it dragged under the wheels and slowed their motion. So Lilli-Bunny got a car.

At first Car was very young and naïve, and thought she was a cow, and drove onto the lawn to eat fresh grass. However, she and Lilli-Bunny agreed that Car was not a cow, and her need to eat fresh grass was eliminated.

Later Lilli-Bunny painted his cow, I mean car, a beautiful Bordeaux red to give her a cheerful look. Lilli-Bunny planned to paint chamomile flowers on, but for some reason did not.

Lilli-Bunny often drove his bag, I mean cow, I mean car to the store to shop. Surprisingly, the economic situation of the country where the lilli-bunnies lived was not as bad as it could be. So Lilli-Bunny bought a lot. The machine groaned, but never resisted. For this, Lilli-Bunny treated her to fresh carrots and sometimes an orange.



Then it turned out that Lilli-Bunny's car didn't quite know the traffic rules and was bad at some maneuvers. So Lilli-Bunny sent her to ballet school to develop her rhythm and help her learn important motions, such as backward and forward. Lilli-Bunny even fitted her with a short ballerina skirt and special ballet slippers. The car, after ballet school, became very elegant and mobile. She knew how to park backwards, sideways, and (a little) forwards.

Lilli-Bunny and his car were good friends. They went to shows together. Once, Lilli-Bunny took his car to the circus. There they bought ice cream and sat in the first row. The performance started, horses rushed, and whirls of sawdust splashed Lilli-Bunny and his car. But they were happy! Lilli-Bunny giggled; the car giggled. As they left, an elephant was shown to them, large, and apparently eating a lot. Then they climbed up on the

elephant, and the guy in the cylinder took an instant photo—Lilli-Bunny with his car on the elephant! What could be better?

Lilli-Bunny and his car had many adventures. They discovered new countries, continents, stores, and gas stations. Once, they even made it across the Atlantic Ocean. But, frankly speaking, it wasn't the real Atlantic Ocean, just a huge puddle on Lilli-Bunny's driveway. They bravely crossed it.

They were great travelers, but not everything was bright on the shores of the Atlantic. On one side were frogs with spots and on the other were frogs without spots. I don't have to explain to my honorable reader that such a difference is sufficient reason for a long military conflict. So fighting there was between the two nations of frogs. The armed forces of the spotted frogs hurled loud, irritating cries to annoy the frogs without spots. The cats got nervous and kept Lilli-Bunny awake at night. But the real nightmare started when the frogs without spots retaliated. They sounded their voices, and soon there were waves of attacks from both sides. The din was so ear shattering that it seemed a huge power station was working beside the house.

Lilli-Bunny called in the council: his cats, Lilli-Bear, Lilli-Kitty, Lilli-Jake, and Car. Car was sent as an envoy to the spotted frogs, Lilli-Bear was sent to the frogs without spots, and the cats weren't sent anywhere because they were lazy and wouldn't go anyway, especially as it was wet outside. Lilli-Bunny's car didn't care whether it was wet outside or not. Wet weather was pleasant for her, because the sun didn't shine too brightly, and her tires didn't get too hot.

Lilli-Bunny's envoys came in sight of the battle as it reached its peak. The head of the spotted frogs croaked so loudly that the moose in the neighbor's bush got a headache and asked his wife to get him some painkiller. So she quickly placed a compress on his antlers.

Thus, the conflict spread beyond the shores of the Lilli-Atlantic and began to affect the whole region. Lilli-Bunny's envoys attempted negotiations while he retired to the kitchen to cook jam and ponder our world.

Lilli-Bunny's Thoughts on Our World

I quote here a short list of Lilli-Bunny's thoughts on this grand subject. The full list can be found in the 28th volume of *The Complete Works of Lilli-Bunny*, located in a big, old chest in his attic. Here you can also find Lilli-Bunny's commentary regarding his own thoughts. We recommend that you become acquainted with the full index of his "second thoughts" and additional comments regarding the methods of cooking jam and proposed improvements to the jam industry.

To return to his global philosophy:

Thought 1: If everything is quiet in the world, you should not make noise, because this can make the cats nervous. Then they won't let anyone fall asleep.

Thought 2: If something in the world is not quiet, you should tell the world to turn on its side. Sing him a lullaby, and all will eventually quiet.

Thought 3: To achieve world peace: if the world asks for something else, don't give it to him right away. Ask him to wash his ears first, clean his room, and promise not to say the words he learned from the bad neighbor boys anymore.

Those three thoughts Charles Dickens wanted to use in his extraordinary work, *The Tails of Two Cities*. But unfortunately, Lilli-Bunny wasn't born yet, and Charles Dickens had to be satisfied with his own thoughts. Even great minds as Dickens' aren't perfect.

So the envoy Lilli-Bear, using his umbrella, painted spots on the frogs without spots. And Lilli-Bunny's car explained to the spotted frogs that all frogs are brothers and sisters, and tied bows onto them to mark the true spotted frogs for scientific purposes. Then all the frogs, none of whom realized the significance of the bows, went quiet and went to sleep. Soon, Lilli-Bunny, his car, and the two cats went home and had tea with jam. They were very happy to enjoy the silence.

Lilli-Bunny's car liked the silence and the jam, because if you treat your car with love and attention, it becomes your real friend.

Chapter 9. Lilli-Bunny and the Fox

One day, a fox entered Lilli-Bunny's backyard. As the fox was very skinny, Lilli-Bunny first thought the animal was a dog. Lilli-Bunny liked dogs: well-bred dogs, stray dogs, large dogs, small dogs, and even Baskerville dogs. He stepped forward to pet this one.

But, as Lilli-Bunny quickly saw, it wasn't a dog. It was a fox, and Lilli-Bunny didn't exactly like foxes. He didn't like their attitudes, their immoral behavior, and the fact that they resembled politicians and corporate executives (who, as everyone knows, are cut from the same dough). The fox that intruded into Lilli-Bunny's backyard was very pushy, and gave one the impression that he was going to settle. This monster put his ugly tail between the iron fence pickets and began to sniff around, especially where Lilli-Bunny and his cats used to sit near the fire and sing funny songs just to cheer themselves through the long nights.

Lilli-Bunny got very angry and tried to shoot the fox with the mop that happened to be in his hands, but the fox paid no attention to Lilli-Bunny's attempts. Then Lilli-Bunny got his fox fur coat from the closet and waved it like a flag in front of the fox's nose. Lilli-Bunny hoped, in this way, he could show his unfriendly intentions towards this particular fox and foxes in general. In our day, it is not a big deal for a middle-class bunny to have a fox fur coat, and no fox can really feel safe any more, because our generation is the first to live, not only in a dog-eat-dog society, but also in a bunny-eat-fox society, and even a nobody-cares-who-is-eating-whom society.

The fox paid no attention, though; it continued to sniff the empty bowl where the porridge had been, the bowl Lilli-Bear used when he relaxed in the pond in Lilli-Bunny's backyard. Lilli-Bear liked to sit in this pond as millionaires sit in their swimming pools, but instead of martinis with olives, he liked to have thick porridge with cinnamon, which Lilli-Bunny usually cooked for him and served to him in the pond.

Lilli-Bunny guessed the fox might be rabid. To rule out this worrying possibility, he asked the fox specific questions

about the government, voting rights, and the political situation in the country where they both resided. The fox did not answer, so Lilli-Bunny concluded the fox was not rabid. Lilli-Bunny took his fox fur coat back to the closet and complained to his cats about the fox's irritating behavior. The cats immediately implemented their "Plan B": they went to their litter boxes and dropped their "dirty bombs," which left very slight chance of the intruder's survival.



Lilli-Bunny was counting on the fact that Lilli-Bear always left his huge towel with the picture of a leopard out. He never used the towels after bathing, but Lilli-Bunny always put a fresh one out anyway, in case Lilli-Bear ever needed to employ the "stop thinking" tactics used in modern psychology. Lilli-Bunny thought that if the fox saw the picture of the leopard and smelled the presence of large cats in the vicinity, it might make her leave. Alas, it didn't work out this way. The fox put on her gas mask and continued exploring Lilli-Bunny's backyard.

"This is war," thought Lilli-Bunny. He ran inside the house and found his old Boy Scout bugle, and began bugling. The fox took out her notebook and began to map the battlefield. Then Lilli-Bunny took his firecrackers, sneaked up to the fox while she was focused on mapping, and lit one off right next to the fox's ear. Later, in her memoir *My Military Career*, the fox admitted that Lilli-Bunny's action stunned her. She experienced slight deafness for the rest of her life, especially when her fellow foxes asked to borrow money. At the moment, though, the fox showed no sign of confusion.

Lilli-Bunny declared a ceasefire, and issued an ultimatum: that if the fox would not cease and desist all military actions and leave Lilli-Bunny's yard immediately, Lilli-Bunny would unilaterally cease his own military activities and go to sleep. The fox could continue sitting in the backyard until morning, when

the dew on the leaves would make the fox get her paws and tail wet, and she probably end up with rheumatism. Can you imagine a fox with rheumatism? They need to chase hares,⁹³ stupid jumpy creatures that foxes feed on between elections and annual shareholder's meetings, but you can't chase a hare while suffering from rheumatism, can you?

The fox left immediately. Who's to say that peace negotiations aren't efficient? You just need to add some peaceful threats to the talks. Then you will get favorable results.

Chapter 10. Lilli-Bunny and Global Warming

Lilli-Bunny checked on his backyard every day. Someone had to be stealing parts of it. When he bought the house long ago, the backyard was huge; now it looked much smaller.

This often happens to objects in the material world. A house that once seemed huge, in time appears small. Not to mention one's salary—it constantly shrinks in our eyes, causing many troubles.

Each morning, Lilli-Bunny strode out, hoping to catch the backyard thief. But one morning was different. The backyard was actually bigger, and burning heat rippled the air. Lilli-Bunny was puzzled, until he remembered that things grow bigger when they get hot.



He retreated to the cool of the house and switched on his TV. They were showing India, where it was also very hot. "This warming really is global," said Lilli-Bunny. Then he went to check to see how well his fox fur coat was doing. He found it was doing just fine.

Lilli-Bunny was training the coat for winter. It already knew two commands: "come here" and "go away." When it heard the command "come here," it slowly slid

⁹³ Who are not bunnies. A bunny is an intelligent individual with a mid-sized income.

down the hanger and wrapped itself around Lilli-Bunny's shoulders. When the coat heard the command "go away," it peacefully slid off Lilly-Bunny's shoulders and went to sleep in the closet, where it was successfully fighting the moths. Lilli-Bunny patted his coat on the back and said "Cheer up. It's so hot, it will be a while before I go for a walk with you."

It was indeed very hot outside. The pond had almost completely dried up, and all the frogs were so tanned that they became black. Lilly-Bunny saw a black frog and shouted:

-Look! The frog is black!

The frog looked at him with irritation, and with a raspy voice said, "I am not black! I am African-American!"

Global warming didn't catch Lilli-Bunny unprepared. He was quite ready, because in our time, everything is globalized: Global stupidity, global ignorance, global digestion, which is called "Fast Food." That's why Lilli-Bunny wasn't very surprised by global warming. His cats were even happy because they felt so cold when it was just warm. The shallow sleep they slept in such cold so tired them, that when the weather gave them true heat, as it did that day, the relaxed, pleasant expressions on their sleepy muzzles seemed to say, "just don't wake me up." Their fur radiated warmth, but they didn't take it off, probably because they were afraid to lose the cat documents they kept in their pockets.

You say cats don't have pockets? But at least you will agree they have fur, and cats' fur is their most attractive and charming weapon. With it, cats have taken over humanity and put us to their service, settling in our houses, sleeping on our pillows, and tenderly pushing with their paws the heads of their masters from their lawful place of rest. That is why all cats, without exception, fear getting wet. A wet cat looks exactly how it was created by the universe—a disgusting creature not much bigger than a rat. If cats were wet most of the time, they couldn't have become the most successful species on Earth, conquerors of the majority of humanity.

Global warming didn't bother Lilli-Jake. He started wandering around without his shirt, showing off his cute, naked belly, and frequently checked the sand in his sand thermometer,

which he hid in the closet to prevent the cats from making a litter box out of the complex scientific instrument.

Global warming didn't bother Lilli-Kitty, either, because she had just purchased three new bathing suits and global warming was a great excuse to get them wet in the pond and hang them all over the house to dry like the flags of foreign countries.

Only Lilli-Bear gravely suffered from global warming, just as he suffered Global Cooling the previous winter, just as he suffered other global events like Global Weight Loss, Global Ass-Shaking, and Global Farting. The whole world was full of these crazy times. Lilli-Bunny decided to help Lilli-Bear out by splashing him with cold water, but Lilli-Bear shouted:

"Lilli-Bunny! You got my socks all wet!"

Lilli-Bunny looked at his friend. Lilli-Bear had on wet pants, but was not wearing any socks. Lilli-Bunny liked precision and paid attention to details, and so asked,

"How could it be that I got your socks all wet when you aren't wearing any socks?"

Then Lilli-Bear took the wet socks from his pockets. Lilli-Bunny recalled that Lilli-Bear, during the summer, always kept socks in his pockets in case global cooling suddenly arrived or summer suddenly ended.

Lilli-Bear knew that many things end suddenly. Cookies ended suddenly, maple syrup ended suddenly, not to mention the chocolate candies that are inclined to unexpectedly pass away.

Lilli-Bunny gave Lilli-Bear some ice cream and left for negotiations with Global Warming. He took some wild raspberries and blueberries, some fresh pancakes, and a small bottle of homemade liqueur, good for breaking the ice (just to overcome the discomfort of the first moments of conversation). Lilli-Bunny supposed that Global Warming would like the idea of breaking ice because that's what it usually does anyway, threatening us with floods, but granting us the luxury of fishing right out of the windows of our houses. Lilli-Bunny understood that without small presents, it was not very comfortable to visit Global Warming, and Lilli-Bunny took the liqueur because Global Warming was of legal drinking age, and liked drinks that made one even warmer.

Lilli-Bunny found Global Warming in his own backyard. Global Warming was sitting with his shirt off, trying to get a tan under the harsh sun, and playing cards with Global Stupidity, Global Ignorance, and Global Neglect. This merry company was not playing just for fun; they were playing for rewards. We can observe the effects of this important game in the daily life of our world. If Global Stupidity is winning, everyone has to pretend they are stupid; if Global Ignorance is winning, everyone has to pretend they are ignorant; and if Global Neglect is winning, everyone has to say, "I don't care."

Global Warming had maliciously affected his partners with his tremendous, overwhelming heat and was trying to cheat. But Global Stupidity wasn't smart enough to pay attention, Global Ignorance didn't know the rules of the game, and Global Neglect just didn't care and started to fall asleep.

Lilli-Bunny, without small talk, poured the drinks, and everyone raised their glasses for a toast to good acquaintances. Global Neglect finished the bottle and fell over, passed out, so Lilli-Bunny was invited to take his place playing cards. Lilli-Bunny won the first round, and then Global Warming asked, "Who are you?"

"I am a Global Bunny," answered Lilly-Bunny.

"Then everyone must be a lilli-bunny," said Global Warming. Then it, too, fell asleep.

Soon it got cold in the world, and Lilli-Bear felt better, making Lilli-Bunny happy. Only the cats were upset because they didn't get to finish even one of their hot-globe dreams.

Chapter 11. Lilli-Bunny and His Mailbox

Lilli-Bunny once had a small, plain mailbox, which stood near the road. It was dark green; Lilli-Bunny loved his mailbox. But one winter, an evil tractor broke it down. Lilli-Bunny bought himself a huge new mailbox, painted it Bordeaux red, and wrote on it, "Lilli-Bunny."

The post that held the mailbox Lilli-Bunny painted like a national border post, with red-and-white inclined strips. Traffic began to stop in front of it, the passengers getting out to show

Lilli-Bunny their documents, because they thought the post marked a national border. For Lilli-Bunny, it was necessary to hang an enormous poster:

**Pass!
This
is
not
a border!**

But, since the traffic on the road passing Lilli-House was two-way, Lilli-Bunny added on the reverse side of the poster:

**You pass too!
This is also not a
border!
Please don't take
your pants off.**

People of Earth are so used to the fact that a national border can be drawn in any place that when they see any striped post, they obediently grab their documents and stand ready to take their pants off for the more thorough checking used to make sure no one transports anything forbidden beyond the limits of the striped post.

Before the post, these things are allowed, and after it are not. If you try to cross with some anyway, you will end up in prison.

People do not like going to prison. And so they, as one, arrange themselves in lines with their pants down before any striped post. Once, the extraterrestrials from the planet Boozon⁹⁴

⁹⁴ I will give you the exact coordinates of this planet later on. Probably in the second book.

decided to take over the Earth, but then saw, with their extraterrestrial telescopes, all the people of Earth standing in line before striped posts with their pants down. The Boozonians, thinking this might be contagious, took over another planet, leaving Earth to the crazy Earthlings. And we continued to establish new boundaries and borders, and the lines of people with their pants down grew and multiplied. “Do Not Trespass!” became a world slogan. This is important; it must be done to maintain order. If we do not hold a large part of humanity in lines with their pants down, how can we ensure world peace?

No one was surprised to see Lilli-Bunny’s border post, because most citizens are loyal and obedient. Voluntarily, they forewent their suspenders, to be better ready to support national security by stripping off their pants before the striped post.

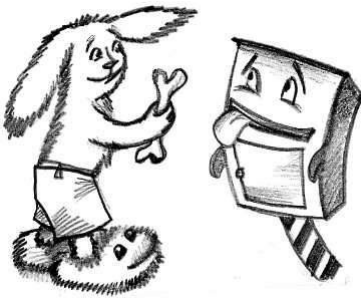
Lilli-Bunny’s explanatory poster practically solved the problem. But it was still necessary, once or twice a day, to stretch the pants, taken by mistake, of passing drivers with weak sight or poor knowledge of letters.

Knowledge of all the letters of the alphabet considerably facilitates reading. It is possible, of course, to read without knowing all the letters—it is simple to turn over the pages of the book, search for familiar letters, and read only them. But looking for letters such as “B” or “U” in some books will cause the meaning to slip off the reader; therefore, our schools attempt to train people to read most of the letters, although some present difficulty.

Since well-developed modern school systems ensured that the majority of population had knowledge of the alphabet, people began to write each other letters, and the postal service was born to transport them.

Indeed, writing letters to send abroad is much easier than standing in line for two hours at the airport with your pants down, and then another two hours on your way back, all the while risking prison if you do something illegal like carry manicure scissors. We understand that the war on terrorism is more important than nail care. But try explaining that to women...

Lilli-Bunny didn't like to travel abroad, and therefore, always made sure his mailbox was ready to accept new letters. Surprisingly, the way the exterior of your mailbox looks greatly influences what messages you receive. When Lilli-Bunny's mailbox was green, all the letters he got were as melancholy as the green. But as soon as he put up the new Bordeaux-red box, merriest on the entire road, he began to receive funny postcards from tropical countries, letters of congratulation with pictures of chamomile flowers, periodicals with jolly pictures, and candies from Santa Claus. Lilli-Bunny was as surprised as one can be that the color of the receiver's mailbox could influence the sender. Lilli-Bunny even wrote a letter describing this phenomenon to the esteemed physicist Super-Einstein, who got drunk because of



the insolvability of the paradox. Then, after being given a morning-after drink (a solution of fast neutrons), Super-Einstein gave a name to the phenomenon—the “Lilli-Einstein-Super-Bunny Paradox.” And that is how it is entered in contemporary textbooks on

quantum postal physics.

However, as Lilli-Bunny did not rely solely on theoretical science, he sat down in the bushes next to the mailbox to see what really happened when the postman, Goodnewsman, came. Mailbox was gladdened and began to lick the postman on his nose, wagging its post like a tail. “Sit still!” said the postman, but the box didn't calm down. It sniffed the postal bag, snatched out the merriest postcards, and swallowed them immediately. But the postman did not get angry at it.

When Goodnewsman left, Lilli-Bunny took his mailbox for a walk, built it a doghouse, and bought a doggy bone.

Chapter 12. Lilli-Bunny and his Sponge

Aristocratic title is no longer a tribute to origin and noble blood, but to a well-fed childhood and superb education. Now it is possible to meet aristocrats in any class of society: workers and peasants, sponges, tubes of tooth paste, manicure scissors, and especially, it goes without saying, powder cases. I personally had the honor to know a remarkable, exceptionally well-brought-up powder case, which until now lived in the secret two-room pocket of Lilli-Bunny's purse. She had not been used to powder noses for a long time, but had prepared herself exclusively for elegant conversations. Mademoiselle Powder-Case was presented by Lilli-Bear as a good old friend of the family of his grandmother, who in turn was introduced to Mlle.⁹⁵ Powder-Case at the International Exhibition in Paris, in 1937. But since then, lonely, unmarried, pretty, old Powder-Case didn't feel quite comfortable living in young Lilli-Bear's toy box—it was just inconvenient. So Mlle. Powder-Case happily consented to settle in the purse of Lilli-Bunny, where she found modest but convenient apartments.

Lilli-Bunny's sponge was also aristocratic; therefore, Lilli-Bunny wouldn't dare allow himself the insolence of using her services as an ordinary sponge. Lilli-Bunny soaped himself with Lilli-Bear's sponge, because Lilli-Bear didn't need it anyway—he bathed in the pond and didn't use the sponge much.

Even so, it is necessary to say that Lilli-Bear persistently asked Lilli-Bunny for that sponge, and even arranged a small demonstration of protest like those many brave people used to organize in front of the Kremlin in the Communist days of Moscow. There are not many brave people who do this now. This signifies a real victory for freedom in Russia.

The wall of Lilli-House was covered with Kremlin-style red bricks, so Lilli-Bear marched by it, waving a picket-sign:

⁹⁵ Abbreviation of Mademoiselle

A Sponge for the
Bear!

and loudly proclaiming his revolutionary slogan: “A Sponge for the Bear!” “A Sponge for the Bear!” again and again. Moreover, he drawled out the word “sponge” so sorrowfully—“Spo-o-o-o-o-o-nge”—that Lilli-Bunny took pity on him and purchased Lilli-Bear a sponge. Lilli-Bear immediately lost interest of any kind in it, and he bathed in the pond without it. So Lilli-Bunny had to employ this sponge in order to keep unemployment low in Lilli-House. As you remember, Lilli-Bunny was the lawfully elected president of Lilli-House, and he worried about its levels of unemployment. This could serve as a good example to other presidents. Worry about the levels of unemployment, and you don’t have to worry about anything else. Unemployment is the new God of politicians. You may cheat, lie, steal—no one cares. But if unemployment goes up, you are politically dead. Because, as we once said, every healthy individual has to work, and it doesn’t matter if he/she/it works as a sponge and cleans someone’s—not important what, or soaps someone’s—other very important things.

Thus freed from her official responsibilities, the Sponge of Lilli-Bunny delegated the duty of washing Lilli-Bunny to her younger colleague, the new sponge of Lilli-Bear, and occupied herself writing poetry.

In the bath, warm steam
I forgot my dream—
I forgot myself
And I lost my health—

Mlle. Sponge sensually recited, and looked out the window of the bathroom, smoking a long lady’s cigarette in no less long amber mouthpiece:

My soap thoughts,
Leave me alone!
I spent my life
Washing someone's ears—
I want to die,
I want to sink in tears,
And then my bones
Will see another world.

Lilli-Bunny listened and sometimes asked provocative questions that would irritate any beginning poet, like,

- "But Mlle. Sponge, you don't have any bones!"
- "Leave me alone. Leave me alone—" answered the depressed Mlle. Sponge.

The melancholy of Mlle. Sponge grew each day. She sank in self-pity; she felt pulled down by an insurmountable force of uncompromising terrestrial gravity; she swelled in weight and twice fell to the floor with the hook on which she hung.

Lilli-Bunny began to worry about Mlle. Sponge. He introduced her to a famous therapist and psychologist, the neofreudofartist Dr. Coffinson, who preached the idea that it is not necessary to hold inside what is possible to let out. His books made much progress in this glorious new direction of psychology, Neofreudofartism.

In the psychologist's office, Mlle. Sponge only moaned and released soap bubbles. Mr. Coffinson, cheerful because of his duty, proposed that Mlle. Sponge travel, but she objected, in verse reckoning:

"Leave me alone. Leave me alone—"

Mr. Coffinson's wife was the only travel agent in town, and for some inexplicable reason, all his patients needed to travel. They usually were told to buy a tour around the world as part of their therapy. Mrs. Coffinson always added to this all-inclusive

package a substantially discounted detour to the Moon, because Mr. Coffinson recommended to all his patients a visit to this heavenly body, in order to enjoy the proven therapeutic effect of its particularly cheerful landscapes.

Mlle. Sponge attempted to tell Mr. Coffinson about her dry, unhappy childhood in the store, in which she spent one-and-a-half cheerless years without a droplet of soap, feeling rejected. However, Mr. Coffinson didn't want to hear about her childhood. He was a little disappointed that Mlle. Sponge didn't follow his advice to travel, so he proposed that Mlle. Sponge at least purchase his new book *Just Let it Out!*, which Mr. Coffinson, it is necessary to give credit, was selling to his patients not at all for the speculative price.

Why are psychologists never quite satisfied with the money we pay for sessions? Why do they always try to sell us their books? Maybe because writers always try to sell us the psychological advice in *their* books. There is constant competition between psychologists and writers. Who will get our money? They are very dangerous people—psychologists and writers. Sometimes they are ambitious, greedy, and impulsive. Writers don't read. They always say, "I am not a reader. I am a writer. Why should I read?" And psychologists usually have messy personal lives. They say, "Why should anybody else be happy, if I am not?"

You might say, "You aren't a psychologist. But, obviously, you are a writer. Why are you saying such things?"

I don't know. Maybe because I am a good writer! Maybe because I am trying to be honest! I already know what I am going to buy with my Nobel Prize in Literature. (A new vacuum cleaner. Even though this thing has a very deceitful name—a vacuum is empty space. Right? So why would you need to clean a vacuum?) You might ask, "And why are you talking about vacuum cleaners?" Well, if you are a good writer, you don't care what you say. Writers just say whatever comes to mind.

Mademoiselle Sponge did not purchase a book, left the psychologist, and simply decided she was mortally sick and

going to die soon. She'd seen the television show *SpongeBob SquarePants*, and so she knew that sponges are just like people. They have everything: the pants, the brains, and even the souls.

Lilli-Bunny decided to distract Mlle. Sponge from her sad thoughts. He bought her flowers, but she tragically stated, "Save these flowers for the funeral. I don't have children, so there won't be anybody else to put flowers on my grave."

Lilli-Bunny decided that Mlle. Sponge was sad because she didn't have any kids. He bought her an animal friend so she would take care of it and forget her depression. It was a fly. This fly was a chubby little boy, but Mlle. Sponge didn't take care of him, and the chubby little boy grew up to be a garbage fly. He was not very clean, and finally he was sent away to a rehabilitative clinic after he was caught smoking green tea, a powerful and illegal aphrodisiac for flies.

Thus, Mlle. Sponge remained alone. Her poems became increasingly sad, there appeared headaches, she couldn't sleep, and she suffered from dryness (Oh God!). Mlle. Sponge began to fall to pieces.

Dry winds of Death,
Tear me apart!
I won't be happy!
I won't be happy.

To make me wet
Is that your art?
Then make me soapy
For the last time, maybe...

When Lilli-Bunny heard this poem, he started to cry and urgently soaped Mlle. Sponge. But Mlle. Sponge spat out the soap and shouted that she was not looking for earthly soap, she needed spiritual soap, and Lilli-Bunny didn't understand a thing in her poor sponge soul.

Lilli-Bunny was frightened for Mlle. Sponge's health. So he helped her dress in her favorite veil, made from toilet paper, without which she never left the bathroom, and quickly transported her to Doctor Diefast, who gave Mlle. Sponge a Full Sponge Scan (FSS) after injecting contrast-enhancing shampoo into her main artery.

Mlle. Sponge was diagnosed with Acute Generalized Sponge Melancholy (AGSM) and Chronic Soap Deficiency (CSD) and forbidden to write verses.

Mlle. Sponge immediately asked for the priest. Most people don't know it, but sponges are very religious.

The fate of Mlle. Sponge was decided the morning of the following day, when she, after confessing one not-very-serious bath sin, prepared to leave this imperfect world for another one, where cleanliness is not a forced need but an achieved fact.



Fortunately, that same morning, Lilli-Bunny noticed that Lilli-Bear had lain around too long and become a bit stale. Lilli-Bear did not argue—he took his new sponge, which usually washed Lilli-Bunny, and started to bathe with it in the pond.

Lilli-Bunny, having completely forgotten the terrifying situation his sponge was in, grabbed her sleeping from the hook, decisively soaped up, and used her according to her primary function, which was not poetry, but bathing.

Surprisingly, Mlle. Sponge recovered immediately and was never sick again.

Chapter 13. Lilli-Bunny and the Global Economy

Once upon a time, Lilli-Bear asked Lilli-Bunny to buy him three nuts. Lilli-Bunny went to the marketplace and paid for three nuts. But he was told there was a 50% nut tax, and they could give him only one and a half nuts. Lilli-Bunny asked if he could buy six nuts, and get three in total after tax.

No, was the answer, because there was a law that you could buy only three nuts at once. Why was there such a law? And why is there a law that prohibits camel hunting in Arizona? What about the law in Marshalltown, Iowa, that prohibits horses from eating fire hydrants? Why, in Devon, Connecticut, is it unlawful to walk backwards after sunset? There is a law in Tennessee that says a man must run in front of a vehicle that a woman is driving, and that the car may not go faster than five miles an hour!⁹⁶

So the limitation on nuts purchased could result from some stupid law voted in maybe 200 years ago when someone bought four nuts and choked or went into anaphylactic shock because he had an allergy to four units of nut products, while he was fine with three. Who knows? To spare Lilli-Bear worry, Lilli-Bunny put the blame on himself.

But it got worse. The next time Lilli-Bunny went to the market to buy nuts for Lilli-Bear, the signboard at the entrance to the market had been changed. Instead of the old words “Welcome to the Market!” it now read:

Welcome to the Global Economy!

⁹⁶ According to www.stupidlaws.com

Lilli-Bunny didn't pay attention to such a minor change. He almost immediately met the market lady that always cheated and charged Lilli-Bunny that little extra, selling him 1½ nuts when Lilli-Bunny had paid for three. Lilli-Bunny understood that the market lady was probably cheating him, but he never objected because he was a loyal citizen and almost always paid his taxes on time.

But now the market lady had become Mrs. Global Economy, and cheated Lilli-Bunny for three nuts at once. Lilli-Bunny stood still, looking at Mrs. Global Economy. At that moment, Lilli-Bunny made the immortal discovery that he was not going to get any nuts at all, no matter how much he paid.

We must admit, Lilli-Bunny found it difficult to comprehend the new rules. He understood the need of a developing society to transition from a local economy with fresh olive oil and milk to a more developed, global one with milk made of powder and olive oil made of petroleum products. Nevertheless, Lilli-Bunny wasn't ready to return home with no nuts at all, especially since he had paid for three of them.

The old deal was bad enough. When he was forced to bring Lilli-Bear only one-and-a-half nuts, Lilli-Bunny explained that he ate the other one-and-a-half along the road, so that Lilli-Bear would not be disturbed by all this economic improvement. Lilli-Bunny loved Lilli-Bear so much he couldn't disappoint his friend in such a brutal way. Lilli-Bear was an idealist with a practical mind. He naively assumed that if you pay for three nuts, you must obtain precisely three nuts, and not two-and-one-half, not one-and-three-fourths, not even one-and-a-fourth. This occurred in other countries, where Lilli-Bear therefore chose not to live. Lilli-Bear had read the revolutionary books of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and since then had watched the state, to keep it from abusing its citizens. Lilli-Bunny worried about this, because the state doesn't like people watching it and usually gets angry. Maybe it's obese and doesn't think it has a nice body to look at.

Lilli-Bunny respectfully declined the new bargain. For the price of three nuts, he was going to get *nothing* in a nice wrapping. (We must admit that wrapping was exceptionally nice,

with cute little bears drawn on the red paper, and for a moment Lilli-Bunny thought to take the deal anyway.)

- “Sorry, Mrs. Global Economy,” said Lilli-Bunny politely, “I did not expect such a challenging opportunity. Instead of three nuts, you now give nothing, even though it comes in very nice wrapping. But Lilli-Bear is not going to like it! He is going to say, ‘I love nuts!’ Are you sure those are the current rules of marketing: to give nothing in a nice wrapping?”
- “Absolutely sure,” replied Mrs. Global Economy, looking at Lilli-Bunny with her honest global eyes.
- “But this is so strange—” Lilli-Bunny began to say.
- “What is strange?” asked Mrs. Global Economy angrily, now staring eagerly at every object near her but Lilli-Bunny himself. “God bless me, what's the matter?”
- “Well, I am not quite sure this is right,” insisted Lilli-Bunny, trying hard to stay calm. (When you get heated in a public place, you can easily be arrested and even be shut up for no reason. This is one of the advantages of our society—now you can be shut up anywhere, anytime. It is so comfortable.)
- “Do you know how much it cost to change the signboard? We spent a lot of money to become really global,” argued Mrs. Global Economy, very convincingly. She kept shoving Lilli-Bunny with the global forms on her chest, and Lilli-Bunny thought it was probably time to go home before things got any worse. But



Mrs. Global Economy continued:

- “You are an intelligent member of our society. You have to understand that consumption of nuts does not constitute a basic need of lilli-bears, according to the scale of needs of the great American sociologist, M.A. Slow. Therefore, acquisition of nuts is now charged with a one hundred percent tax with the immediate payoff of partial compensation in the form of very creative wrapping. You will need, of course, to fill in your application for correct filing of taxes for nuts. Here you are! Take and fill in the form N.U.T.S. 433 and return it to me whenever you are ready.”

Lilli-Bunny took the form and even said, “Thank you.” Then he thought another minute and asked Mrs. Global Economy again:

- “Are you sure this is the right form? I have never heard that the tax can be 100%.”
- “Once the economy goes global, everything goes global. And global, Mr. Lilli-Bunny, also means “total.” If you missed this lesson at school, I can explain it again,” answered Mrs. Global Economy, very much reserved.
- “But what is the basic need of my Lilli-Bear, according to your M.A. Slow?”
- “Well, porridge we consider a basic need for him. Therefore, consumption of porridge is almost tax-free, except for Local Porridge Taxes (LPT), which I believe are not high at all. Only one spoon to every two packages eaten.”
- “But Lilli-Bear has started to read Rousseau, and now it looks more like robbery not only to him, but to me, too.”
- “You, Lilli-Bunny, don’t have a deep sense of the development of global economy,” said Mrs.

Global Economy with sincere disappointment in her voice.

- “But how can people survive in such circumstances?” asked Lilli-Bunny.
- “Well, you may break the law, and refuse to pay your taxes. This is your free choice. But if we find this out, we will put you in prison for the rest of your life,” said Mrs. Global Economy very convincingly, “This is a free country. In a free country, everyone has free choice of when to go to prison!”
- “So you are going to put everybody in prison?” exclaimed Lilli-Bunny with despair.
- “Not necessarily. But it is convenient that everyone has some tiny little sin. Then all of you feel guilty, and become manageable, like children.”
- “But how is my Lilli-Bear is going to survive without nuts? He likes them so much!” Lilli-Bunny almost cried.
- “Excuse me; I didn’t refuse to sell you the nuts. I just collected the tax,” answered Mrs. Global Economy coldly.
- “But where is all this money going?” asked Lilli-Bunny suspiciously.
- “What, you don’t watch TV? Don’t you know that we have to help the Africans?” asked Mrs. Global Economy with slight irritation.
- “So you send them food? You send them the nuts that you take from Lilli-Bear?” asked Lilli-Bunny with some hope, thinking all his suffering was for a noble cause. “Lilli-Jake has been helping the kids in Africa for a long time. He sends them a nice bun every Sunday.”
- “That’s very nice of him. But I see, Mr. Lilli-Bunny, you are very far from understanding the global economy,” said Mrs. Global Economy, “We sell nuts and buy warm boots.”

- “Why would they need warm boots in Africa? It is too hot there, anyway!” exclaimed Lilli-Bunny with surprise.
- “Do Africans have warm boots?” asked Mrs. Global Economy.
- “No,” answered Lilli-Bunny.
- “So, this means they have a deficit of warm boots. In order to balance their economy, we send them warm boots. They sell them to our northern people, who in return send them bottles emptied of booze.⁹⁷ In Africa, they use the bottles to make Molotov cocktails to fight with,” explained Mrs. Global Economy.
- “To fight whom?” asked Lilli-Bunny.
- “It doesn’t matter. They are independent nations, and they may fight whomever they choose. We cannot interfere in their choices. Non-

⁹⁷ If you think this could never happen in the “real world,” consider this: I knew a truck driver who loaded up with onions grown in Canada and shipped them to Mexico. There they put the onions in bags. And the truck driver transported the bagged onions back to Canada to sell.

Another example: trucks with Coca-Cola go in both directions across the US-Canadian border.

A lot of stupid things happen in the modern global economy.

Yesterday, I read in the French journal *Le Figaro* that the modern philosopher Alain Finkielkauf said:

"Notre société est toujours plus rationnelle, mais aussi de moins en moins raisonnable"*

Our society becomes more and more rational, but also less and less reasonable.

***Le Figaro Magazine # 1307, Nov. 12, 2005 p. 62**

interference is our basic democratic principle,” Mrs. Global Economy remarked proudly.

- “I don’t understand—” said Lilli-Bunny in frustration.
- “You are not supposed to understand. Let me worry about these issues. You pay your taxes and keep your mouth shut. You don’t live in Africa, so be happy; we will take care of the rest,” answered Mrs. Global Economy politely.
- “But how can my Lilli-Bear be happy without nuts?” asked Lilli-Bunny again, and painfully pinched Mrs. Global Economy.

Surprisingly, Global Economy got excited and asked:

- “Why are you doing that?”
- “I’m preventing the stagnation of processes,” said Lilli-Bunny cunningly.
- “Oh, this is very good, it is good for the economy,” said Mrs. Global Economy and gave Lilli-Bunny one nut as a reward for activating the global economy. She began to pinch herself until Lilli-Bunny left and hid himself from sight. After ascertaining that Lilli-Bunny had left, Mrs. Global Economy, unnoticed, ate a large number of nuts taken from Lilli-Bear, and appeared to sink into deep thought about her conversation with Lilli-Bunny.

Because of the irresponsible action of Mrs. Global Economy, the Africans didn’t receive any warm boots. So the people of the North soon had a surplus of empty bottles and began to amuse themselves by inserting slips of paper reading “Save Our Souls!” into them and throwing the message bottles into the sea. When rescuers began to arrive, they saw that the people of the North were just joking. They laughed about this joke and remained with them to drink their booze.

It goes without saying that in Africa, a shortage of bottles appeared. The conflicts stopped all at once.

One inhabitant of Africa, who had received a bun from Lilli-Jake, suddenly got the idea to grow some wheat and make his own bun. And he asked himself, “Why didn’t I do this, years ago?”

Chapter 14. Lilli-Bunny and His Neurosis

It was a dark, dark night. In Lilli-Bunny’s house, everything was still and silent. Only the large grandfather clock didn’t sleep—it slept in the daytime and walked around the house, making noise, at night. The cats snored in unison. Lilli-Bunny’s Left Slipper slept restlessly, muttering, “Distribute the wealth—” Lilli-Bunny’s old grandfather clock walked quietly along the house, occasionally savoring sour cream from Lilli-Bunny’s fridge. Perhaps you do not know that all grandfather clocks need fresh dairy products? Without the creamy food, they begin to beat everyone they can reach with their pendulums, but with it, they behave calmly. Grandfather Clock finished a sour cream, looked at the electronic display on the microwave, which displayed the time, and cursed. “It’s so goddamned late, it’s already twenty minutes after three, and I didn’t chime even once. Damn old age, tick-tack—” Lilli-Bunny’s clock was so old it couldn’t count the time by itself anymore. The old clock despised the microwave’s electronic clock, but constantly looked up the time. Grandfather Clock walked with its heavy gait to its place in the dining room, wiping its face clean of sour cream with a napkin.

“Bohm” rang Lilli-Bunny’s grandfather clock. It usually made its “Bohms” with no hurry. The intervals between the “Bohms” were sometimes so long that no one knew whether each “Bohm” related to the previous hour or the next. Grandfather Clock listened to the silence, for its “Bohm” woke no one. Even skittish Basia didn’t wake up, though she slept on the cover of the old grand piano that stood in the same room. The piano slept a peaceful sleep. It dreamed that Lilli-Bear finally learned his notes and began to play a tolerable rendition of Chopin’s “Nocturne,” which the grand piano missed greatly, for no one had played that masterpiece on it for at least half a century. Lilli-Bear, for the

most part, played works of his own composition, which always rolled to the well-known melody of the folk song “Little Bear has a day off—”

Clock, in a hurry, made two more “Bohms” and fell asleep after leaning on the wall, having farsightedly lowered both weights to the floor so Lilli-Bunny wouldn’t complain the next day, “Why does this clock never work in the day? It makes noise, thumps around, and eats all the sour cream and cottage cheese in the house at night!” The house sunk into a deep silence, and only once was heard the cry of Lilli-Bear in his sleep, “Land!” He was dreaming, not for the first time, of a Jules Verne novel, in which he was a sailor-bear and traveled aboard a real ship.

Suddenly, someone knocked at the door. “Duk. Duk. Duk.”

Lilli-Bunny awoke immediately. He wasn’t surprised. In Lilli-House, it happened frequently that neighbors knocked at night, innocently asking to borrow some onion or that pair of sunglasses. Lilli-Bunny woke both his slippers, because he did not want to walk through the entire house barefoot, took the onion bulb and sunglasses from the night table, and with no irritation murmured, “Who the hell is knocking?” though he knew for sure it was his beloved neighbor, Mr. Squeeze-Hard, who at night squeezed maple syrup from birch firewood after rubbing it with fresh onion for smothering. The sunglasses were necessary so that the onion would not make him cry. Mr. Squeeze-Hard didn’t like it when something or someone made him cry; he apparently preferred to make others cry. Except for this, he was a very pleasant gentleman in his early years of retirement. You thought Lilli-Bunny’s neighbor was some sort of retarded person awaiting hospitalization in a certain sort of facility? Now see how wrong you were! Now you see that the man was making a worthy business and not just fooling around, as most of us do most of the time! Don’t make premature conclusions! Don’t giggle and say, “Why, for Pete’s sake, would the neighbor need sunglasses at night? This is pathetic!” You are pathetic yourself, if you rush to premature conclusions. It is necessary to respect one’s labor, especially when it is promptly rewarded by a small jar of superb maple syrup, which the grateful



neighbor usually brought as an almost-free gift and token of his friendship. Lilli-Bunny treated his Lilli-Bear to the maple syrup and disregarded the small nighttime inconveniences.

My honorable reader, please don't start again, saying, "Holy Smokes! What are you talking about? You cannot squeeze maple syrup out of birch firewood!" Maybe you will also say that the Grandfather Clock does not eat sour cream. Then, please, simply close the book. Because now begins the most interesting and unbelievable part of the tale. (Did I say everything in this

book is based on real stories? Real stories are usually the most unbelievable ones.)

Lilli-Bunny, with the onion bulb and the sunglasses in his hands, unlocked his front door. On the threshold stood Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis.

- "Did you turn off the teapot?" it asked anxiously.
- "Yes, I did," said Lilli-Bunny and shut his door.

After leaving the sunglasses and onion bulb close to the front door, just in case Mr. Squeeze-Hard did come that night, Lilli-Bunny went to his bedroom. He passed through the kitchen to check on the teapot anyway.

Barely had Lilli-Bunny shut his eyes, when the knock on the front door was heard again. Now whoever it was knocked differently—very persistently and nervously. Lilli-Bunny jumped out of bed, thinking, "Probably Mr. Bolthead." This neighbor frequently asked Lilli-Bunny for bolts, always at night. Mr. Bolthead habitually did his work with bolts at night so as not to draw unnecessary attention from the local community, which did not like people trying to attract attention to anything. Lilli-Bunny took a bag of bolts and ran down the stairs to open the door. On the threshold stood Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis.

- "Will you excuse me, *monsieur Lilli-Bunné*," it said very politely, intelligently putting an emphasis on the last syllable of Lilli-Bunny's name in the French style; however, it had difficulty controlling its agitation. "Did you cover your flowers? They can dry up during the night."
- "No, they will not dry up. At night, the sun does not shine," said Lilli-Bunny, ready to shut the door again.
- "And what if a supernova flares up?" Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis asked restlessly.

Lilli-Bunny thought for a moment and opened the door. He knew from Lilli-Bear that when a supernova goes off, the flowers must be covered with cloth, to protect them from the harsh radiation. Lilli-Bunny politely shook hands with his

neurosis, and they went to the backyard to cover the flowers with a piece of cloth. After completing this elaborate procedure, they said “good night” to each other and Lilli-Bunny returned to his bed. While falling asleep, Lilli-Bunny sorted out in his head, with satisfaction, the turned-off teapot and sheltered flowers.

He heard the knock at his door again. The visitor knocked so loudly, Lilli-Bunny fell off his bed. After a few moments, short of breath, he forewent his slippers and ran down, trying not to panic, and opened the door. Once again, his Neurosis stood in the doorway. Its hair was tattered and its small, unhappy eyes shone feverishly in the darkness. “You forgot your wallet at the market!” Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis nearly yelled.

Lilli-Bunny, without thinking or checking this extraordinary claim, jumped into his car, and they drove to the market. They didn’t find the wallet at the market. There were only the mountains of empty shells of the nuts the Global Economy ate by mistake after her morning conversation with Lilli-Bunny.

Lilli-Bunny returned home, where he found his wallet on the dresser. Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis politely apologized and respectfully left the house, promising not to bother Lilli-Bunny anymore.

Lilli-Bunny returned to bed, firmly resolved not to wake up if his Neurosis came back in spite of its kind promise. But as soon as Lilli-Bunny wrapped himself sweetly in his blanket, someone began to scratch at his window.

Lilli-Bunny thought one of his cats had slipped out when he drove to look for his wallet at the market. Now the hungry fox could eat his cat! Lilli-Bunny, in horror, ran up to the window and opened it. He called the cat, but it was his Neurosis’ muzzle pressed to the window.

- “Did you feed the hamster?” it trembled.
- “The hamster moved out long ago!” answered Lilli-Bunny impatiently and slammed shut the window. And yet, he ran down the stairs to leave a note—“food in the fridge”—just in case Hamster Hamlet unexpectedly came back.

Then Lilli-Bunny once more tried to sleep. His peace was short-lived, for in the chimney of Lilli-House something rustled. Lilli-Bunny opened the damper, and the Neurosis fell out of the fireplace.

“Listen up!” said Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis restlessly, “don’t you think it smells like carbon monoxide in the air?” Lilli-Bunny was a well-educated bunny and knew that carbon monoxide does not have any smell, but sampled the air with his nose, nevertheless.

“No, it does not smell,” he said nervously, then pushed his Neurosis back up the chimney flue and shut the damper. Lilli-Bunny decided to go to the bathroom, thinking he had little chance, this night, of sleeping at all. On his way to the toilet, he opened all the windows in the house, just in case the Neurosis was right about the carbon monoxide. It was summer, of course, and no one had used the fireplace for three months, but we should all be careful. In the bathroom, Lilli-Bunny raised the cover of the toilet. There, in the bowl, sat his Neurosis.

“Why did you open all the windows?” yelled Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis, “your Lilli-Bear will catch cold!” Lilli-Bunny slammed the toilet shut and broke into a run to shut the windows. But at the first window sat Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis, thoroughly wet after its time in the toilet. So it was necessary to wipe the Neurosis dry and warm it up with hot tea and raspberries.

Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis continued to shake and through the knocking of its teeth asked:

- “And what if your ceiling crumbled?”

Lilli-Bunny broke into a run and placed supports under his ceiling.

- “And what if a meteorite suddenly fell?”

Lilli-Bunny climbed on the roof and tied pillows to the tiles to soften an impact.

- “And if—”

- “And—”

- “A—”

They rushed about until morning.

The following night, Lilli-Bunny’s Neurosis took some sleeping pills and wrapped itself comfortably in its bedspread.

Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis lived in the small hollow of the old oak growing in Lilli-Bunny's backyard. Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis locked the door of its hollow for the night, just in case. It decided not to go anywhere this night.

Someone knocked at the door. It was Lilli-Bunny.

- "Listen up, did you turn off the teapot?" he asked restlessly.

Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis embraced Lilli-Bunny and said:

- "Welcome to the club!"

And they checked on the teapot together, and then had tea with sleeping pills. Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis spent the night in the basket of Golden Cat, who never used it because he slept everywhere in the house.

Since then, Lilli-Bunny always lulled his Neurosis at bedtime. He gave it warm milk with honey to drink, and went to bed only after it was asleep. They no longer ran around the house at night. But in the hollow of Lilli-Bunny's oak tree settled another tenant—the neurosis of Mr. Squeeze-Hard, who one night squeezed the last drop from his birch firewood, reducing his neurosis to complete nervous exhaustion.

Chapter 15. Lilli-Bunny and His Lawyer

One evening, Lilli-Bunny was so tired, he ran up the stairs to his bedroom as fast as he could. He had just made an appointment with one Mr. Troubleson, who had promised to get him out of trouble. Mr. Troubleson had a solid legal practice in a nearby town. Lilli-Bunny's trouble had its birth in a decision, made by the government in 1882, declaring that the state could build a road through Lilli-Bunny's land, most of which was occupied by his backyard.

Therefore, the mayor had lawful "right of way"—free passage through the backyard at any time. Yet this wasn't the start of the trouble. All the years that Lilli-Bunny lived in his house, the formality had never disturbed him, or any other inhabitant of Lilli-House. Each time the mayor passed through, Lilli-Bunny locked his cats inside the house so they would not

run under the wheels of the mayor's convoy. Lilli-Bunny also put his mailbox on a short chain so it would not chase the six horses pulling the mayor's coach. And each time the entourage passed, Lilli-Bear took his dearly-loved national flag, which kept coming down ill, and unknotted the unbelievable knots Flag tied itself in because of it necessary to remove the flag from display without jeopardizing the dignity of the state.

Then Lilli-Bear would swing the flag from the window and solemnly sing the national song especially loudly when the mayor's crew, after catching the wheels of the coach in the mud, hefted it on their shoulders and with disgust, stepping over the brown water barefooted, transported His Honor across the Atlantic Ocean—the enormous puddle in Lilli-Bunny's driveway.

Lilli-Bear godlessly confused several words of the national song, but the mayor smiled at him.

Lilli-Bunny's problem began when His Honor the mayor delegated to his representative the duty of crossing Lilli-Bunny's property. This representative habitually took with him many assistants, who smoked and littered Lilli-Bunny's property with cigarette butts. Flag was so dissatisfied it tied itself up in triple knots and could not be hung out.



Lilli-Bear tried several times to sing, "Welcome, representative of the mayor" but the surname of this official rhymed badly with the remaining text of the national song. The day Lilli-Bunny was so tired that he broke into a run to reach his bed, he had removed cigarette butts from the tracks of the representative of the Mayor; therefore, Lilli-Bear made an appointment with Mr. Troubleson, to have the right-of-way clause deleted from the deed of Lilli-House. Why, the road had been built one hundred years ago, fifteen kilometers to the south of Lilli-Bunny's property. There was no need to litter Lilli-Bunny's driveway and backyard with cigarette butts. Flag completely agreed with Lilli-

Bunny's decision and explained to its neighbors in the closet, unpatriotic mops, that there was no reason to hang itself out, except in the presence of His Honor, the mayor himself. And the mops laughed at the flag, because they greatly envied their noble relative.

The following morning, Lilli-Bunny put on the business suit, which consisted of a black T-shirt with the inscription,

"I'm busy!"

He put on the second piece of his business suit, his black sports shorts, and left to see his lawyer.

The lawyer, Mr. Troubleson, met Lilli-Bunny at his office and said right away that this was not a simple issue. He talked for two hours about the history of the question, but never touched on the question itself.

This is the way all lawyers are trained to talk to win in court. You win a case only if you put everyone in the courthouse asleep with your monologue. So this way of talking became a professional disease of all lawyers. When a lawyer's wife asks him whether he wants tea or coffee, he starts with the history of the question, and never gives a definite answer. Though we must admit that no lawyer that has mastered such a way of talking can be held responsible for anything, because he never says or does a thing, and therefore can be excused from any responsibility what so ever.

Lilli-Bunny listened patiently, but in the end, he asked:

- "So, how can we solve the problem?"
- "Well, it is possible, but there is one small obstacle," said Mr. Troubleson.
- "This is good; a small obstacle is not a problem. So what should be done?" asked Lilli-Bunny enthusiastically.
- "It is simple. You need make some slight adjustments on your property before we can file the request for deletion of the 'right of passage,'" said Mr. Troubleson.
- "No problem. What are they?" asked Lilli-Bunny.

- “Actually, there is only one change that must be done; speaking more precisely—” added Mr. Troubleson, after checking some book of laws.
- “And this change is—” asked Lilli-Bunny, slightly impatiently.
- “To destroy your house,” Mr. Troubleson completed the sentence and went on with his polite explanation. “In fact, according to regulations, dated 1892, in order to delete the ‘Right of Way (right to passage)’ from the title, the applicant should present a proof that the land in question is free of any buildings, sheds, or other structures. Why such a regulation emerged in the first place is hidden in the obscurity of old times. But please don’t worry, Mr. Lilli-Bunny. This is standard procedure, and I recommend you carry it out without further delay, because the period of service of the current representative of His Honor the mayor ends this Friday, and according to reliable information from the mayor’s inner circles, he is going to appoint Mr. Elephantson from Planning. Elephantson and his crew usually trespass on my clients’ properties riding elephants, which have the habit of littering in a way that will make you recall the good old days, when you only had to pick up cigarette butts.”

Modern society tends to put its members into completely hopeless situations. So it was in the case of Lilli-Bunny and his house. A stupid regulation, written by some drunk or insane legislator over one hundred years ago now placed poor Lilli-Bunny before an intolerable dilemma—destroy his house or spend his life removing elephant droppings from his backyard.

Lilli-Bunny was very reserved individual and didn’t show much of his frustration. He just opened his mouth and started to shout very loudly:

- A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A! - A!
- A! - A! - A! - A!

Lilli-Bunny also tried to cover his mouth, eyes, and ears simultaneously, using only one pair of hands. Mr. Troubleson stared in awe, believing he saw the multi-armed God before him. Then he knelt and read a prayer. In Mr. Troubleson's youth, he had gravitated to a foreign sect that taught him to worship this powerful and ancient god.

As a matter of fact, it was there he had made acquaintance with Mr. Elephantson, a good friend of his up until now, who had served as Troubleson's source of information from the inner circles of His Honor the mayor.

Lilli-Bunny continued to shout, and Mr. Troubleson amended his first impression with the following conclusion: "Suppose this is not a multi-armed god."

Mr. Troubleson rose from his knees and poured a glass of water to make Lilli-Bunny stop crying. Lilli-Bunny refused it and paid for the time Mr. Troubleson spent providing his valuable advice. Then Lilli-Bunny returned to his home, where he told all its inhabitants about the trouble that had popped up so unexpectedly.

Before Lilli-Bunny left, Mr. Troubleson promised to visit Lilli-House, to make sure everyone got his message right and to have dinner with the family.

Mr. Troubleson liked to socialize with his clients, especially when the clients were buying him lunch or dinner, because he honestly believed this made his services even more valuable. He was always ready to tell his clients the history of any question in such informal settings. Mr. Troubleson deeply believed that knowledge of the history of a question might easily substitute its resolution. Legal systems are never worried about fair results; they worry about procedure for the sake of procedure itself.



Mr. Troubleson also wanted to use the opportunity to recommend the services of one of his relatives, who was a contractor, and could demolish the house and rebuild it for a very reasonable price.

Do not overreact, dear reader. It would be most unjust to assume that Mr. Troubleson pursued any vicious purposes or interests when he himself recommended to his Honor the mayor that his friend Mr. Elephantson be appointed to trespass on homeowners' properties.

My honorable reader, why do you see a dirty scam in such a tiny coincidence? It doesn't matter that Mr. Troubleson knew Mr. Elephantson would trouble his clients. Nor does it matter that he expected his clients to ask for his services to get them out of trouble or to buy the construction services of his relative. Of course, when you put it all together, it looks like Mr. Troubleson tried to cheat innocent homeowners of their money.

This is just not true, because Mr. Troubleson was a true gentleman. He always helped the ladies put on their coats, even if they came without coats—a firm sign of his gentlemanly behavior.

True gentlemen never pursue mercenary purposes. If it turns out that everything they do or make goes only to their benefit, I assure you it is pure coincidence.

Mr. Troubleson joined Lilli-Bunny and his friends for dinner and after finishing his pudding, Mr. Troubleson proposed to discuss the options.

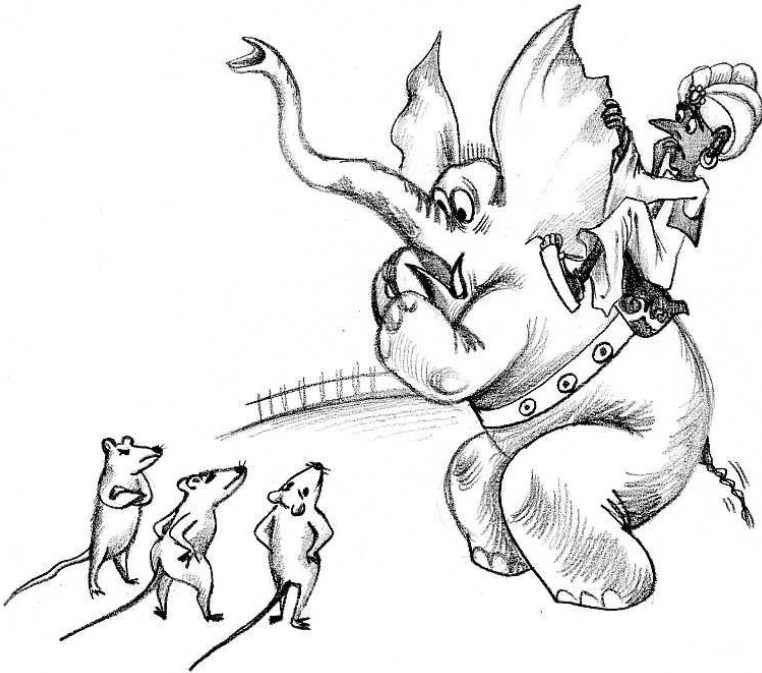
So, after dinner, all spoke about the problem of Lilli-House. Lilli-Bunny's Right Slipper proposed to untie the flag of Lilli-Bear and give it to Mr. Elephantson as a bribe, so that he would select smaller elephants and feed them little before bringing them to Lilli-Bunny's backyard. But Left Slipper said you couldn't bribe an official! At least, not with the national flag! Then he proposed to untie the flag anyway and start a civil war for independence from elephants.

Lilli-Kitty and Lilli-Jake proposed to sell the house and buy a new one, somewhere on the seashore in a tropical country.

The cats proposed to lie down to sleep while Mr. Elephantson passed by and make Lilli-Bunny's car clean up the mess.

Lilli-Bunny's car proposed to leave the house while Mr. Elephantson passed by, go live in her garage, and later make the cats clean up the mess.

Lilli-Bear kept silent and mysteriously smiled. On Friday, immediately after Mr. Elephantson's designation as the representative of the mayor, the above-mentioned honored gentleman promptly appeared in Lilli-Bunny's backyard with a



whole bunch of elephants. But the moment the elephants stepped on Lilli-Bunny's land, they reared up on their back feet, turned and ran far away, taking Mr. Elephantson with them.

Since then, neither Mr. Elephantson, nor his elephants, ever trespassed on Lilli-Bunny's backyard again.

You might ask why. Immediately after the memorable dinner with Mr. Troubleson, Lilli-Bear called Hamster Hamlet, who brought many of his girlfriends, all mice, to Lilli-Bunny's

backyard on Friday. Hamster Hamlet had as many mouse girlfriends as King Solomon had wives—hundreds.

Elephants are afraid of mice, as you probably know from the programs on National Geographic or the Discovery Channel.

Chapter 16. Lilli-Bunny and Money Reform

Lilli-Bunny liked people. He forgave attitudes other bunnies wouldn't accept. But there was one man who could not be friends with Lilli-Bunny.

Mr. Spitman lived in a nearby town and was known for his unprincipled and dishonorable behavior. He offended everyone who came near.

Mr. Spitman lived in a broken streetcar. This streetcar, before it broke down, had carried people around town. But Mr. Spitman always offended his fellow passengers while traveling in the streetcars, so all the streetcars ran away to another city. But the broken one couldn't escape. Mr. Spitman settled in this poor, broken streetcar, much the way William the Conqueror invaded England. Although it is not quite resolved whether the conquest was, in the end, a positive twist of history that allowed a perfect mixture of Anglo-Saxons and Normans, or just a bad one that added many French words to the English language...

Probably you didn't realize it, but William the Conqueror was a very peaceful person. All he wanted to do was to call Harold, the king of England, and congratulate him on his victory over the Norwegians. But who knew William couldn't stand answering machines? He wanted to leave a message, but the answering machine of King Harold had so many options, it drove poor William crazy. He crossed the English Channel and prepared to fight near a place called Hastings. King Harold had just got back from a victorious battle with Norwegians in the North, saw the problem, and called 911 from his mobile phone to report the intruder, but also got stuck with an answering machine:

"This is the emergency service. If you have an emergency, please press one. If you don't have an emergency, please hang up now."

King Harold pressed one and got another menu:

- If you are threatened with murder – press one
- If you are about to become a victim of rape – press two
- If you are going to be strangled – please press three
- If you are not sure what the offender is going to do with you, please ask him. If you don't get an answer, please stay on the line. Our first available representative will be happy to assist you.
- ...



King Harold

couldn't hear the fifth option because he got an arrow in his eye and was killed with all his noblemen. Poor William, he was left to rule England alone. This is not easy, even in our day. It's not easy to rule France, either. Personally, I would prefer to rule Papua, New Guinea. At least they don't have many answering machines over there.

Even if the intrusion of William was somehow explainable, Mr. Spitman's take-over of the broken streetcar was unquestionably unacceptable. His fellow citizens did not support the invasion and settlement, but Mr. Spitman didn't seem to care

much about what the others thought of him and his actions. The hurried escape of the other streetcars deprived Mr. Spitman of his primary occupation—traveling on streetcars and offending the passengers. He needed to find himself a new profession, which



would suit his talents. Therefore, he decided to become a financial advisor and conduct a currency reform in the city. His goal? To make coins not round, but square. This reform was necessary long ago, as round coins can roll away and get lost. It happened all the time to the poor townspeople. How else could their poverty be explained?

Mr. Spitman broke into the local bank at night and bit 52,368,000,000,000 different coins, a major portion of the

town's liquid capital, cutting the rounds into perfect squares. The next morning, everyone in town heard on the radio that their capitals had been squared. People were excited at first, but later realized there was nothing to be excited about. The intriguing thing is that most reforms have the same effect—first people get excited, but later they wonder how they could have been excited about such annoying and stupid changes. But feelings of regret do not necessarily make one any smarter, and we are ready to applaud the next reform. How did we end up with an education system that allows our children to smoke pot most of the time? What is so educational in smoking pot? Wasn't this the result of very promising reforms?

My dearest reader won't be surprised that the townspeople got angry with Mr. Spitman and sent a policeman, Mr. Stickbeat, to arrest him. But the officer came back empty-handed, crying and complaining that Mr. Spitman had offended him so horribly that "I never want to deal with Spitman again." Police like to deal with polite, nice people—and we cannot blame them for that!

Then everyone agreed that the bitten money was still money, after all, and decided to complete the currency reform initiated by Mr. Spitman, since the number of coins yet to be bitten wasn't large. People lined themselves up at Mr. Spitman's streetcar and exchanged their remaining round coins for freshly squared ones. You know, sometimes it is good to let people match themselves with the currency they possess. Square people deserve square money.

Mr. Spitman served people very politely, and surprisingly, didn't offend anyone. This didn't mean that Mr. Spitman had abandoned his offensive practices. When someone offends you by action, there is not much need to offend you with words.

Lilli-Bunny didn't keep his money in the bank, because he was a farmer and therefore didn't have much money. He consumed what he produced, and sold only a portion to the government.

One day, Lilli-Bunny arrived at the post office to send a postcard Lilli-Bear had written to Mr. Sun-Bang-Bong. After seeing Sun-Bang-Bong on television, Lilli-Bear wanted to congratulate the man on his excellent performance. What was it, you ask? Mr. Sun-Bang-Bong jumped onto the scene, moving like a goat, and his costume was made of shiny Christmas tree ornaments. He also made a sound, strengthened by his microphone: "Bang-Bong! Bang-Bong! Bang-Bong!" Lilli-Bear put aside his volume of Kant, where he searched for exactly what Kant can't, and with admiration began to watch the performance of Mr. Sun-Bang-Bong. Lilli-Bear was curious how the performer would finish. After rattling the Christmas tree toys fast, slow, this way, that way, Mr. Sun-Bang-Bong crushed most of them and jingled from the scene. This display earned the indescribable enthusiasm of the audience. Lilli-Bear, without delay, wrote this congratulatory postcard:

Dear Mr. Sun-Bang-Bong,

Thank you for your music!

I liked your Bang, but mostly, I liked your Bong!

Though the arts of music are not exactly flourishing today, it is an exaggeration to say that there are no talented performers. Look at you! Your “Bang” made me feel “Bong,” and vice versa. You are doing first-rate work, especially jumping out of the scenery and breaking all the Christmas toys in the end of the show!

Make more Bangs and Bongs!

*Your sincere fan,
Lilli-Bear*

Lilli-Bear went to stick a stamp, but he didn't have his favorite stamps with the queen. Only the large stamp with the polar bear remained. Lilli-Bear was afraid to lick it, for the polar bear could bite him. Being himself a bear Lilli-Bear did not quite trust the polar bear on the stamp. Lilli-Bunny, who wasn't a bear, didn't trust the polar bear, either. Lilli-Bunny also decided not to lick the stamp. It was returned to its place in the box for letters and postal equipment, and Lilli-Bunny drove to the post office to buy Lilli-Bear his favorite stamps with the queen. At the post office, Lilli-Bunny tried to pay with his round coin, but the postal worker would not accept it. The currency reform in the city was complete and payment was received only in bitten square coins.

So Lilli-Bunny was referred to Mr. Spitman to exchange his invalid round coins for now-valid square ones.

- “Where did you get your money?” asked Mr. Spitman.
- “I am a farmer, and I sell surpluses of what I produce to the government,” answered Lilli-Bunny politely.

Nowadays, one is frequently asked about the source of his or her income. Come to the bank to deposit money and they ask, “What is the source of these funds?” to prevent money laundry. It is very important for any government to keep all money dirty!

I imagine that the officials expect a crook to declare his source of funds as “stolen” or “income from drug trafficking.” They really should put these options on the questionnaire, to make filling out the form more pleasant. Don't you think so?

Mr. Spitman exchanged the money and told Lilli-Bunny, “I like you.” The man also promised to visit Lilli-House.

So Lilli-Bunny went back to the post office and bought a stamp with the queen, and returned home to prepare for the visit of the important person Mr. Spitman had become after his currency reform.

When Lilli-Bunny walked in, he was surprised to discover Mr. Spitman was already there. He sat in the dining room with his feet on the dinner table, and behaved boorishly with Lilli-Bunny's slippers. Right Slipper, his glasses on his nose, was so frustrated with Mr. Spitman's inappropriate behavior that he exclaimed:

- "You are a cad!"
- "This is true," replied Mr. Spitman, in a most caddish manner. Then he got up, went back to Lilli-Bunny's refrigerator, and savored the cold salads prepared for dinner.

Lilli-Bunny invited everybody to the table before Mr. Spitman could finish all the food in the house by himself, because Lilli-Bunny had a responsibility to feed his friends.

But there was not much left to eat, because Mr. Spitman not only gobbled up all the cold salads, but also, completely by accident, overturned the pan with the soup on Lilli-Bunny's cats (we must admit that it wasn't quite accidental, because Mr. Spitman had to chase Basia before he could effectively spill the soup on her. It was easier with Golden Cat, because he was in the most intense phase of catosynthesis and couldn't move anyway.)

When everyone had arranged themselves around the table, Mr. Spitman began his speech:

"The currency reform was necessary to the city. Since the streetcars, for some reason, ceased to function, our town was deprived of its only sign of uniqueness, for streetcars have become a rarity."

- "I say," said Left Slipper, "the currency reform must be continued."
- "Right! This is a great idea! There should be a permanent currency reform!" yelled Mr. Spitman, and after spitting on Lilli-Bunny's carpet, kissed Left Slipper. "Please continue to share your thought!"

- “First, all bitten square coins must be rolled up with small tubes, tied with knots, and replaced with candy wrappers and cut newsprint, and then entirely abolished,” stated Left Slipper very firmly. It appeared he had thought about this for a long time.
- “But how would we conduct exchange of commodities? Or run the economy?” inquired Right Slipper validly, as he pushed his glasses higher on his nose. He suffered shortsightedness, in contrast to his leftist brother, who suffered foresight. Left Slipper could see very far away, but nothing near his nose. And yet, he never agreed to wear glasses.
- “We can base commodity exchange on pure trust. Money is the dirty thing, and since governments don’t allow people to launder it, it becomes even dirtier. Without money, people will become honest and there won’t be a need for any money at all.”
- “I see!” said Mr. Spitman with excitement.

Conversation at the table began to calm, and Mr. Spitman remained to spend the night at Lilli-House.

Next day, Mr. Spitman gulped down his breakfast and rushed to the city in Lilli-Bunny’s car to continue the currency reform proposed by Left Slipper. But he was pulled over by policeman for speeding and lack of a driver’s license. He tried to offend this policeman, but the officer pulled out a gun and almost shot him. This actually made the boorish man more manageable. But then Mr. Spitman spat inside the police car, and the officer had to let him go, because, as we said, police prefer to deal with clean, polite people wearing perfume, not ones that spit inside your car.

In the evening, Lilli-Bunny climbed into the cabinet, looking for his nightcap. Lilli-Bunny didn’t find the cap, but did find the note it had written:

“I was stolen by Mr. Spitman. I will call when I get access to a telephone. Try not to worry. Your Night Cap.”

Lilli-Bunny sat near the telephone and waited for a phone call from his nightcap. The call never came; however, Lilli-Bunny got an urgent telegram:

“Mr. Spitman made holes in me for his eyes and put me on his head. We have broken into the town’s bank. We are rolling bitten coins into tubes. When we get done, I will send myself by mail.”

“This is an outrage!” said Lilli-Bunny. But Left Slipper, encouraged, began to sing the revolutionary song:

*Arise ye workers from your slumbers
Arise ye prisoners of want
For reason in revolt now thunders
And at last ends the age of cant.
Away with all your superstitions
Servile masses arise, arise
We'll change henceforth the old tradition
And spurn the dust to win the prize!*

*So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.
So comrades, come rally
And the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human
race!*

Left Slipper felt such agitation that he left for the balcony to smoke.

The next morning the postman brought a parcel. Inside was Lilli-Bunny’s nightcap. There were indeed two large holes cut in it for the shameless eyes of Mr. Spitman, because shameless eyes are always large and round. They seem to ask, “What’s the matter?”

Lilli-Bunny embraced his Night Cap, but stopped when he heard someone ring the bell at his door. It was the policeman, Mr. Stickbeat.

Lilli-Bunny thought the officer had come to arrest Night Cap for its participation in the robbery, and promptly hid it under his bed.

However, it turned out that the policeman had followed the signal of Lilli-Bear, who had confused the telephone with the remote control of his TV set and randomly punched 911. Of course, Lilli-Bunny had hung up immediately, but the emergency service is set up to recognize where calls come from. A police officer is sent to the house to determine if there is a real emergency.

Policeman Stickbeat inspected the occupants of Lilli-House for bruises and scratches and promptly departed for the next house, where an old lady had confused the telephone handset with a calculator and dialed 911 again.

When the inhabitants of Lilli-House gathered in the dining room, the pot of soup was again empty. Instead, there was Mr. Spitman in it. He confessed he'd hidden from the police, because the police had already been in Lilli-Bunny's house. It is like a bomb, never falling twice in the same spot. After making sure everything was quiet in the house, Mr. Spitman sent Lilli-Bear to buy him cigarettes, called Golden Cat a "suspicious type," and Basia "Illegally Blond," even though she was legally black.

Mr. Spitman behaved quite boorishly and selfishly that evening, for the second stage of the currency reform had succeeded to glory! After deciding to pass the night in Lilli-Bunny's bed (Lilli-Bunny had to sleep outside), Mr. Spitman could not fall asleep for a long time, loudly complaining that he had swelled from the soup and the mattress was too rigid. He frequently ran to the toilet, each time stepping on the Neurosis of Lilli-Bunny, who took sleeping pills and tried to get some sleep in Golden Cat's old basket.

The next morning, after breakfast, it was declared on the radio that since Mr. Spitman had not been found, and there remained money not displaced by the rolling into tubes, the inhabitants of city unanimously elected Mr. Spitman as the new mayor of the city, so he would complete the reforms he initiated. Mr. Spitman left Lilli-House without delay, after stealing Lilli-

Bunny's business suit (including the T-shirt with the inscription "I am busy!") and Golden Cat's concert necktie-butterfly. He accepted the post of mayor. City problems engaged him so much that he no longer appeared in Lilli-Bunny's house. And Lilli-Bunny, after sewing up the holes in his nightcap, continued to live as before.

Chapter 17. Lilli-Bunny and Macaroni

A well-known religious source indicates that when Our Savior, Jesus Christ, fed thousands of people with five breads, they were not exactly breads, but five saucepans of macaroni. This in no way understates the miracle, since macaroni is actually a wonderful food.

Lilli-Bear did not like macaroni, but once he saw how much it cost in the store—a couple of coins a pack—Lilli-Bear at least started to respect it, because he was, as all bears, very reasonable and thoughtful.

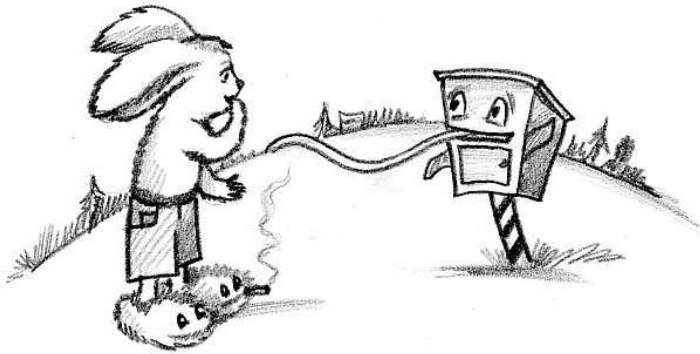
How it is possible to walk by this remarkable, high-calorie product, on which it is possible to eat 'til full for couple of coins a pack? Lilli-Bunny adored macaroni, but he did not trust the store enough to purchase his macaroni there. So Lilli-Bunny decided to produce macaroni himself. First Lilli-Bunny planted the soil in his backyard with a little vermicelli, but apparently, it was not a good time of year, and the vermicelli didn't quite flourish. The same failure cursed the attempt to sow spaghetti broken into small particles. Nor was planting noodles in Lilli-Bunny's vegetable garden very successful. Lilli-Bear went with Lilli-Bunny to see what was wrong with the macaroni beds. Bear and bunny watered them and even spread cheese over the garden; however, there was no harvest of macaroni.

Lilli-Bear read up on pasta growing, a little, in his encyclopedia. Repeating the entry to Lilli-Bunny, he made it seem he'd known from the very beginning that macaroni does not grow in vegetable gardens, but must be planted like tomatoes, in a greenhouse. Lilli-Bunny was upset that he had not understood this before. Italy, the native land of macaroni, is warm, and

therefore macaroni, like tomatoes, should be grown inside a greenhouse. Our agrarian specialists made a trial sowing in the greenhouse, but this, too, gave no result, except negative, which neither Lilli-Bunny nor Lilli-Bear, as you understand, could accept.

Then they decided to look on the World Wide Web. Perhaps they had done something wrong. In the basement, where the World Wide Web grew, they started a conversation with the WWW-spider that had lived there for last ten years. The WWW-spider explained that macaroni is made from flour, and even handed Lilli-Bunny a detailed recipe.

Lilli-Bunny began to bake his first macaroni and got so excited he couldn't stop. Soon there was not enough space in Lilli-Bunny's house. Lilli-Bunny forgot to cut the pasta into elbows, making one long tube. So Lilli-Bear glued one end of the macaroni to an envelope and sent it by mail to his old friend Rubber Hedgehog, on the other side of the Earth.



While the letter traveled halfway around the world, Lilli-Bunny kept making his long macaroni. When it reached the rubber hedgehog, the macaroni tube was longer than the world is wide. Rubber Hedgehog opened the envelope, looked at the end of the macaroni tube and decided to send it back. He glued it into the envelope again and sent it to Lilli-Bear. Only this time the letter traveled over the other side of the Earth. As you probably know, the Earth is round. (They still teach this in school, don't they?)

The next morning, the loud barking of his mailbox wakened Lilli-Bunny. Lilli-Bunny's mailbox had adjusted to its doggy image so well that it had begun, little by little, to bark. Lilli-Bunny broke into a run to get the mail, and he immediately saw, stretched to the mailbox from behind the horizon, his macaroni. Lilli-Bunny took the envelope from the box and tied one end to the other of his one long macaroni in the kitchen. By such means, Lilli-Bunny created a global macaroni tube, which circled the entire sphere of the Earth.

Lilli-Bunny invited representatives of the Academy of Sciences. They gave Lilli-Bunny a certificate for proving that the Earth is round. All previous proofs seemed insufficient to the Academy of Sciences.

The delegation from Italy arrived at Lilli-Bunny's house, and took a section of the global macaroni for a DNA test. It revealed the macaroni tube to be a close relative of Italian macaroni. They issued an official certification stating this important fact.

Representatives from the space agency arrived at Lilli-Bunny's house, to acquire experience in the production of highly durable gigantic macaroni, because they planned to launch very long macaroni tubes into space and even to the surface of the Moon, Mars, and beyond, in order to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of this high-calorie, inexpensive product to the future tenants of celestial worlds. The French periodical *Paris-Catch* published a large article with color photographs, where much was discussed about the personal life of Lilli-Bunny, and little was told about his global macaroni, the reason he had become famous.

Everything ended suddenly when Lilli-Bunny got tired and went to sleep, forgetting to prepare supper for Lilli-Bear. The next morning, first in the Lilli-House and then the entire world, stunning news appeared—Lilli-Bunny's global macaroni, the last hope of humanity, had disappeared. First, everyone thought it was the terrorists' fault, but they began to make excuses, and everyone believed them. The world trusts when the terrorists speak. Unfortunately, this is because these freaks are the only

consistent people on Earth. They always do what they threaten to do.

The loss of the macaroni was first noticed in Lilli-Bunny's house. Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis, which lived in Lilli-Bunny's bedroom in the cat basket, and Lilli-Bear's Neurosis, which lived in Lilli-Bear's paper basket, were so alarmed that they simultaneously broke into a run along the stairs—one downward, the other upward—and after bumping their foreheads in the middle of the stairs, went to see Doctor Diefast. Doctor Diefast looked at the injuries and stated it was some sort of virus infection, and sent the Neuroses home without treatment.

Lilli-Bunny, at first, was upset that his macaroni had disappeared. But after learning that Lilli-Bear ate it by mistake, Lilli-Bunny was glad, because with the Global Macaroni around there was too much noise; correspondents messed the floor with their dirty footwear, and photographers scared all the owls in the region with their flashes, so at night there was no one to make owls sound like "ugu!" So Lilli-Bunny went on with his day.

Chapter 18. Lilli-Bunny and Small Talk

Conversations are tricky—some like them; some don't. They live, usually, in corridors, drawing rooms, kitchens, streetcars, cafes—yes, where they don't they live? There are sincere conversations, but they are encountered rarely and don't live long—usually one night, like some light-winged butterflies, and only come out when accompanied by nice hors d'oeuvres and equally nice drinks.

Let's talk about small talk, because they usually are annoying, empty, and not very sophisticated. Small talks sometimes don't know for what purpose they exist and tend to die prematurely, because a life without purpose is an unpleasant experience indeed. Did you ever try such? Try; you will see.

But if you were born, it doesn't matter whether you have purpose in life or not. It doesn't matter whether you enjoy this life, or not quite. You have to live, eat, drink, make love, and keep your mouth shut. This is a basic law of nature. If you are

alive, be happy, and don't complain. If you die, you may complain, but no one is sure whether it will be possible. So people complain while they are alive. Other people don't want to hear their complaints, and therefore have created one of the greatest inventions of all time: Small Talk—the most vague and useless creature on Earth. It teaches us how to talk and not share thoughts, information, or feelings of any kind.

Of course, there are other sorts of conversations, such as business talks, or erotic murmurs—but neither are quite welcome in nice company.

One small talk jumped at Lilli-Bunny while he was walking down the street. It sang a song:

“Lilli-Bunny walking down the street—
Lilli-Bunny doesn't eat the meat!”

(You might say this is plagiarism and that the song was originally composed for *Pretty Woman*. Why does everyone get so excited about sweet tales concerning prostitutes? Why not Lilli-Bunnies?)

Another small talk hung itself on Lilli-Bunny's ear when he was in the grocery store. Yes, it hung itself on a length of ribbon, because like most aimless souls, small talks turn suicidal. And then the whole bunch of them pounced on Lilli-Bunny.

One small talk, “How do you like the weather today?” bit Lilli-Bunny and stole the illustrated journal that Lilli-Bunny bought for Lilli-Bear.

As he left the store, Lilli-Bunny took out his Neurosis, because he wanted to let it get some fresh air. This was foolish, for they both became victims of the whole pack of wolves— Oh, I am sorry, I was going to say a pack of small talks. Small talks often hang together in packs.

Wild small talks are dangerous for young Neuroses. Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis got so frustrated, it started to run in circles and even fell into the ditch. Lilli-Bunny helped his Neurosis climb out and closed its ears with a scarf. He even had to buy his Neurosis a huge chocolate bar to calm it down.

You know that chocolate is the way to calm your Neurosis, and provoke your diabetes, destroying your teeth on the way? Medieval dentists invented chocolate in order to ensure their future income until the end of time. That's why I propose to call them *medevil*, because either they were medically evil, or because they brought *me devil* into my mouth, whose name it carries.

Another small talk attacked Lilli-Bunny right at the place he was buying the chocolate for his Neurosis.

- "Are you ready for summer?"

It seemed to imply that if Lilli-Bunny was not ready for summer, he could call summer over the phone and ask it to come a little bit later, and it would wait because one Lilli-Bunny was not ready yet.

The idiocy of small talks is obvious. They served, seemingly, as the cockroach moustaches of the inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny's town.

The townspeople used this moustache of small talks, touching neighbors and pedestrians. If the newcomer answered with a proper small talk—their moustache—it meant, "This one is local; we shouldn't eat him alive." But if they didn't get the right answer, it meant, "O, my god! He is a stranger!" And a stranger should always be eaten or somehow eliminated, because otherwise he will eat or eliminate you.

Small talk must be an ancient tradition. It is as primitive as one-celled organisms. Once Lilli-Jake saw, under his microscope, two one-cell organisms engaged in—small talk! One of them asked, "How is your mitosis going?"

"It's okay, thanks," the other answered, and they both duplicated. What boring lives one-cell organisms have. They don't employ sex as a means of reproduction. Well, lately, we quite often don't employ sex exactly as a meaning of reproduction, either, but for other, obscure reasons. Does this bring us to the level of one-celled organisms? Apparently, sometimes, it does.

Lilli-Bunny farmed for living, so he couldn't afford to keep his small talks on his farm, because they ate much but nothing useful came out of them.

They were not like chickens, which you can feed and then get fresh eggs in exchange. Small talks are like viruses that reproduce themselves, maliciously using our heads as their hosts. After invasion by small talk, one's head drains 'til it's as empty as an empty pan, and emptiness is little step toward the nonexistence we call the disturbing and unpleasant word *death*.

Small talks so scared Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis that Lilli-Bunny had to take him home early. Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis ran into the house and bumped into Lilli-Bear's Neurosis. Then he squeezed himself under the bench in the kitchen, and didn't want to come out, no matter how hard Lilli-Bunny tried to attract him with the chocolate bar.

Only Lilli-Bunny's cats took pity on Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis and intentionally fell asleep under the same bench, so as not to let him feel so lonely and cold there.

Lilli-Bear's Neurosis was so upset with a nightmare that happened while Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis was in town, that he canceled all visits to town and persuaded Lilli-Bear to stick to the same. You know, sometimes, Neuroses can be very persuasive.

Small talks and people who farm for their living do not get along very well. Because when the small talk asks such a person, "What do you think of the weather?" the farmer starts to explain what he actually thinks, because weather for farmers is not an abstract topic at all. If the farmer says exactly what he thinks of the weather, the small talk might die! If you do not immediately apply a phrase like, "What are you doing for Easter?" it will be too late to resuscitate the small talk.

Lilli-Bunny was afraid to kill too many small talks at once. A die-off could cause unnecessary unrest in the community, and the Small Talks Association might step in and press charges of smalltalkicide, a serious offense in our culture—almost as severe as homicide. Meanwhile, homicide becomes a less severe crime, because the population always grows, and people have ceased to be a rare and precious commodity. Please don't blame me for these outrageous words. I am the writer, presumably—a "truth teller"—and I just write what I see on TV, because I rarely go out. And what one sees on TV is convincing

me that the price of human life is not very high at all, while small talk is prized very highly!

Lilli-Bunny was worried that he didn't quite fit in. It seemed like the whole town had learned, by heart, stupid questions and no-less idiotic responses:

- "How are you spending your weekend?"
- "Not bad at all, so far."

- "Did you enjoy yourself?"
- "Oh, absolutely! Thank you!"

These talks made people into some sort of answering machines. Lilli-Bunny didn't want to engage in the mass insanity.

Lilli-Jake took pity on Lilli-Bunny and activated his Brain Company. The micro-lilli-jakes jumped out and said, "Okay, guys! What's the problem?"

When they learned what the problem was, they laughed for half an hour, then sank into deep thought for another half an hour and eventually came up with the following invention: the "Small Talk Generator."

It consisted of a box that Lilli-Bear's Neurosis liked to put on its head when it was especially nervous, just to feel more secure. They put two parrots inside the box and trained them to squawk ten to fifteen phrases that small talk usually consists of. Even though the birds parroted these phrases randomly, it sounded like real, fully-grown small talk.



Once equipped with such a sophisticated apparatus, Lilli-Bunny walked down the street again.

“How do you like the weather?” The first small talk jumped on him from the sidewalk.

Lilli-Bunny wanted to answer honestly, “Not very good at all. It is late spring, but the weather is still very cold. This is not good for my vegetable garden.” But such an answer would cause an immediate heart attack in poor Small Talk, and his sudden death could trigger an investigation: “What are you, a farmer? Are you serious?” And it could end with the police taking Lilli-Bunny and his suspicious box to the police station or even jail. The parrots didn’t want to go to jail, so they woke up when Lilli-Bunny encouragingly shook the box. The poor birds said:

- “Weather? The weather is okay. It is not too bad!”
- “Are you ready for Christmas?” asked an especially disgusting small talk with a broken tooth. He had on a winter coat, despite the late spring.

Lilli-Bunny wanted to say, “It is spring, a little early to get ready for Christmas, no matter how deeply you love that holiday.” But such a statement would murder the small talk, because the farther you get from the big city, the earlier people get ready for Christmas. Lilli-Bunny’s town was so deep in the province (countryside, away from centers of civilization), that people got ready for Christmas in early spring. There are some places in the world where Christmas comes every day. The North Pole? Wrong. It happens in large corporations that cheat their investors for a couple of years in a row. Although later, the poor CEOs have Yom Kippur⁹⁸ for the rest of their lives.

- “Christmas? Yes, I am getting ready!” answered the parrots inside the box.

⁹⁸ Yom Kippur is the Jewish holiday of the Day of Atonement. It falls on the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tishri (late September-early October). The day is commemorated with a 25-hour fast and intensive prayer.

Lilli-Bunny was considered a nice person, who had mastered to perfection the art of small talk! People gravitated to him, and he had to leave his “Small Talk Generator” in town and pick it up the following day. The parrots were exhausted, but happy, because for the first time, they could really enjoy their freedom of speech!

Chapter 19. Lilli-Bunny and Modern Cosmology

The professors of Cosmology are universally recognized scientific celebrities, but Cosmology tangles all in its sly theories. So now we do not understand how the new picture of the creation of the Cabbage Soup, which the uneducated masses call Our Universe, arose. It is unclear who cooked the Cabbage Soup, how it was created, how long it has existed, or how long it will continue to exist. These—the insoluble questions of our time—the respected professors of Cosmology, knights of science without fear, placed before themselves when they decreed that delicate observations, made eighty years ago with a super-precise telescope, could only mean that what we all live in, and everything which was and will be, is nothing but Cabbage Soup. The remaining eighty years of science only refined the details—and in the details, as is known—well, you know who is in the details—

The old Pope, when he learned what the scientists had discovered, almost died of disappointment and frustration. But after conferring with the Lord (he had a good relationship with Him), he decided to approve the theory, and made an elegant speech. Its effect? If the universe is nothing but Cabbage Soup, someone cooked it; therefore, donations to the Cataleptic Church must not dry out.

The professors of Cabbage Soup didn’t accept Lilli-Bunny into their educated circle. They thought that the minds of Lilli-Bunny and his friend Lilli-Bear too practical to be occupied

with such fundamental theories as the universal cabbage soup. But when one professor of the Cabbage Soup discovered a large piece of cabbage, which irrefutably proved that the cabbage soup was actually made of cabbage, there was no end to the professor's happiness, because he was worried that what he'd found would turn out to be, instead of cabbage, just ordinary garbage. He invited Lilli-Bunny and Lilli-Bear to the conference, to demonstrate to them his remarkable discovery.

Lilli-Bear prepared well for this event, because he wanted to explain to the scientific world his theory, in which the universe is not made of cabbage soup, but Porridge with Raspberry Jam (PWRJ). He repeatedly experimented with porridge and could easily prove that his theory was no less, but also no more, absurd than the theory of the professors of the Cabbage Soup.

However, the porridge specially prepared by Lilli-Bunny for his report proved to be so unstable that it existed only a fraction of a second before Lilli-Bear ate it. Therefore, there was nothing to take to the conference to prove Lilli-Bear's claims, and as we know, extraordinary claims should have extraordinary proof. Believe me; Lilli-Bear had a batch of extraordinary porridge, but unfortunately, he ate it all.

The professors of Cabbage Soup didn't believe anything that couldn't be proved. They were themselves the honest people, so they did not trust another's word of honor. But the theory of Lilli-Bear pleased God very much, because He loved porridge with raspberry jam. Don't you like porridge with raspberry jam? It is godly food.

God did not know what theory of His universe was worst at the time. He was so tired of the theory about three elephants, whales, and a turtle, that the theory of Cabbage Soup made no impression on him.

He even decided not to come to the conference, since he was occupied with the preparation of the flood in the Sahara, which he had put off for twenty million years; His neglect had left this corner of Earth especially dusty. (I can imagine that once, in a couple of years, there is a flood in the Sahara, everyone will decide I knew some ancient secrets like Swift, who made

brilliant astronomical predictions. So let me make a statement here: the flood of the Sahara is just a fruit of my imagination.)

Moreover, it is necessary to say, upholding the honor of the professors of Cabbage Soup: they took pity on God's ears and did not send him an official invitation. They only said that if He wanted, he could come.

The professors of Cabbage Soup didn't have very good relationships with God, since one of them, namely Leibniz,⁹⁹ said that God was not a necessary component of his scientific proofs. So the professors of Cabbage Soup learned to manage without God in their work—not because they denied Him, but because He was not necessary to their delirious proofs. I must say that practical, i.e. applied scientists have succeeded in the creation of apparatus that facilitates our lives. But theorists somehow failed to provide us with anything useful. They were stuck in their cabbage soup approach for eighty years, even when Mr. Super-Einstein told them, with his charming German accent, "This is stupid! The universe is not cabbage soup! It is a schnitzel with garden peas (SWGP Theory). They did not believe it. They said, "The old man is just not capable of accepting the new trends of future generations. He discovered that everything is relative—proved it by carrying everything somewhere, and then no one could find it, because he'd already brought it back. Wish he would just play his violin and stop interfering with our Cabbage Soup Progress!"

You see, the statement that everything requires proof does not require proof! This is obvious, like the fact that our universe is just Cabbage Soup! Just look around and you will see! You can't see? What kindergarten did you graduate from? What does your diploma say?

Kindergarten Diploma

⁹⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646 - 1716) was a German philosopher, scientist, mathematician, and diplomat

Hereby we acknowledge that Mr. Annoying Reader
Has completed the course of study in our Kindergarten.
Mr. Annoying Reader demonstrated
Scientific Thinking
when he managed to take his pants down
before using the facilities...

Now I see. You are an educated person indeed. You successfully finished the complete course of kindergarten. You can independently go to the toilet. Of course, things are forgotten with the years—we don't remember much of what we were once taught. Otherwise, how can we explain the problems encountered with such basic habits in nursing homes, for example?

Hitler very clearly attempted to prove that the universe is a Piece of Shit (PS Theory), and humanity almost accepted this theory because it sounded so refreshing. But there was disagreement over some aspects of practice and humanity decided to adhere to the conventional paradigm, based on the theory of Cabbage Soup. Moreover, scientists now try to prove that there are other bowls of cabbage soup out there. Wow! Many soups—the wonder of the new Multi-Cabbage Soups Theory.

Lilli-Bunny considered the universe a carrot, but he never shared with others his brilliant guess, although all his experiments with carrots indicated its unquestionable rightness.

Lilli-Kitty considered the universe a jumble of noodles, because everything in it is interconnected and mutually intricate. Socrates himself wrote her an enthusiastic letter, but it was written on a wax tablet, and Lilli-Bear scratched it because he thought it was a toy. It was necessary to order a telephone conversation with ancient Greece, but no one answered; everyone was hiding from the Minotaur.¹⁰⁰

Lilli-Jake considered the universe a jar, in which we, like insects, are gathered so God can scrutinize us under His magnifying glass.

¹⁰⁰ In Greek mythology, the Minotaur was a creature that was half man and half bull.

The cats considered the universe a large, sandy litter box. If they hadn't yet mastered it entirely, it didn't matter, because new generations of cats would arrive and finally master it completely.

Those of Lilli-House even sent a telegram to the president, expressing appreciation for the idea he tossed out: to master the universe by spending an entire state budget in the next twenty years, so that our astronaut could be the



first to piss on the sand on the surface of Mars and beyond. The people completely supported the president—because who does not secretly dream of pissing on a celestial body?

Lilli-Bear sent a telegram to the President proposing an original, brilliant idea:

Proposal of Lilli-Idea from Lilli-Bear

Dear Mr. President,

I propose that, instead of whole astronauts we launch to Mars only one shoe. It will print the step on the surface and leave the same track it would if an astronaut stamped it; however, we won't need to feed him all the way to Mars and back. The heap of money thus saved we will divide in half—a half to you and half to me, because porridge has begun to rise in price since we are at war now, and during war, gas prices rise, then porridge prices. We can donate our shoe for this mission. Lilli-Bunny's Left Slipper gave his consent and has already begun training for the flight.

*With cosmic
regards,
Lilli-Bear*

Lilli-Bunny's parrots did not know that the universe existed. Therefore, the birds quietly observed stars and galaxies as they saw them—through the telescope of Lilli-Bear, where the parrots lived until it was used to converse with the wife of Monsieur Silvouplaît. The parrots forgot the universe after the loss of their tube, which was not difficult, because they did not quite know about its existence, even when they observed it. Parrots observe the universe directly, not through complex experiments with cabbage soup, porridge, or noodles. But when an object is observed directly, sometimes it does not require any explanation.

Chapter 20. Lilli-Bunny in the Village

Lilli-Bunny's failed attempts to grow macaroni upset him because he was a little bit of a perfectionist. He understood that being a perfectionist is stupid, but his failure upset him, anyway. He had done it all according to agrarian science. He planted the macaroni elbows in warm soil and added ketchup as a fertilizer, yet nothing helped.

Lilli-Bunny decided to take a trip to the village and get more experience from real ploughmen, who, as it is known, are encountered only in the villages. Lilli-Bunny could not wait to meet such specialists of plow and harrow—knights of manure and nitric fertilizers, sorcerers of early sowing and late harvesting!

The village was named Stoned-Henge, probably not because it was built of stone, but because most of its inhabitants were stoned most of the time. Stoned-Henge was not far from the end of the highway, because the highway was so high at this point, it couldn't go any farther!

Lilli-Bunny, after cramming into his car all the inhabitants of his house, went to visit the stoned village. Lilli-Bunny had a friend there, the cottage agriculturist Mr. Loafeater, with whom Lilli-Bunny exchanged letters regarding the benefit of different plants. Lilli-Bunny had always planned to visit him. The inhabitants of Lilli-House departed early. The air smelled of that from which everything is born and into which

everything disappears, namely the thin smell of the frankness of rural working days. “You will not fertilize, you will not eat,” says old rural wisdom. “You will not eat, you will not fertilize,” echoes a no less wise joke. We inhabitants of cities have long ago forgotten that truth is as simple as daylight—the truth of the interrelation of all with all. The unceasing rotation of nature does not occupy our thoughts; it does not worry us at night with its ordered and incorruptible truth of existence. We ourselves are enormous processing factories of valuable products into no less valuable products whose value is disputed by many philosopher-perfumers. Its frank and agitating prose in the clean, original state it is smelled does not diminish this, but the steadfast streams of this amazing substance winnow life from non-life as they pour on—the breadwinner of our earth, producer of a simple, everyday miracle—a green plant, which will become our bread, vital only to return to its primary state after visiting our insatiable stomachs.

You should love this smell! I mean the smell of the damp earth and grasses—it is the source of our table; it gave to us the possibility not only of chasing mammoths, but of conveniently sitting in front of television sets.

You should love this smell! In it lies the force of life and a shield from the cow's madness! You should love to love; by loving, you are loving love.

And all you need is—Guess what?

As Lilli-Bunny neared Stoned-Henge, his eyes followed a stream of villagers applying fertilizer. He focused attention on the first field, filled with a violent plant culture, which enviably, grew with such health as only weeds could grow.

Lilli-Bunny asked his car to stop as they approached the field. He touched the earth, felt the earth, smelled it, and already a real, experienced farmer, tried to taste the earth, smearing his forehead and staining his eye.

Everything spoke, “the field is resting.” Therefore, it was not surprising that on it witchcraft weeds spread violently in their love of life, growing to the sizes of young, but well-fed baobabs. It was incomprehensible why anyone should fertilize

weeds. But with his knowledge of the matter, Lilli-Bunny explained this to his fellow travelers, when they returned to the car. Lilli-Bunny said, “The field is resting.”

Lilli-Bear immediately visualized the field resting on the bench or the sofa. Golden Cat imagined the field at rest, entirely flooded by fresh milk, the entire field, flooded by fresh milk, an entire ocean of fresh milk, entire universe of fresh milk, entire eternity of fresh milk—and Golden Cat did not see any of those disgusting monsters with horns and stomping hooves around. Golden Cat did not love cows, although he loved the milk they produced. To me this is familiar—very often, people like what I write, although they dislike me.

After imagining the fresh milk, multiplied by infinity, Golden Cat fell asleep with satisfaction, happily squinting to his milky fantasies. But the other cat, Basia, thought nothing, because she’d left her glasses at home, and she could not think without her glasses.

She didn’t have impaired vision. As a matter of fact, her vision was outstanding, but for some reason, she was incapable of thinking without the glasses. Lilli-Jake once made a scientific experiment of it. He put the glasses on her, but it turned out that with the glasses on, she was still not able to think. This fact he decided to hide from Basia, because her psyche was already deeply traumatized by the air balloon’s attempt to strangle her when she tried to climb under the sofa.

Since then, Basia, at the sight of any balloon, ate cat grass and fell into psychosomatic over-excitation, in view of which they tried to hide from her, her inability to think with or without her glasses.

Lilli-Bunny was an adherent of the old school of medicine, when doctors and family tried not to tell the patient unpleasant things. The patient felt better not knowing about his chance of survival, and sometimes he even got well, in spite of the predictions of his doctors. This greatly disturbed the doctors, who were proud of their ability to predict accurately the course of a disease, even more than their successes in treating the patients. Doctors say to one another things like, “This patient

will die in exactly two hours and three minutes.” Another doctor objects. “Please, dear colleague, allow me to disagree with you. Not two hours and three minutes, but two hours and four minutes!” And they both stand and stare at the dying man with stopwatches in their hands to see who is right. The patient moans, he requests maybe some medicine, an enema, or at least that someone remove the pillow from his face. Yes, the nurse mistakenly put a pillow on the patient’s face when she was fixing the bed, and forgot to remove the pillow. The patient cannot do it himself because he has his hands tied to the sides of the bed to prevent him from pulling out the IV lines and monitor leads. So, probably death will result from suffocation by the pillow placed on the patient’s respiratory passage and forgotten there.

Frankly speaking, the patient’s suffering can have but one diagnosis—Acute Suffocation by Pillow (ASP). When he arrived at the hospital, he was essentially healthy, and had been sent to the hospital for tests to prove it.

Don’t think something went wrong; something was messed up. The tests required some slight narcosis, so the patient was not quite conscious, and when he woke up, he found himself tied to the bed with a pillow on his face.

The doctors that came to see him on their busy rounds could have removed the pillow, but first of all, it was not their job to fix the beds, and second of all, they never looked at the patient; they were preoccupied with his test results and monitor readings that clearly showed he was going to die soon.

Patients are none of doctors’ concerns. Their concerns are test results, monitor readings, and exact predictions of when someone is going to die.

The patient, of course, is trying to fight for his life. He gets loud, trying to draw the attention of his doctors, but the doctors don’t like patients to interfere with their decisions, and they add drugs to the IV line to make the patient more relaxed. Next morning, one of the doctors will give a call to the family: “Sorry, he didn’t make it—”

Of course, the postmortem examination will not find the real cause of death, because the body won't be transported to the refrigerator with the pillow. The pillow is needed for the next patient.

A pillow, generally, is not a medical object and is not related to disease. It was obvious that the patient died from a virus that he got from China. The patient had nothing to do with China? What about the Chinese food he ordered before his hospitalization?

I don't want to say that medicine turned evil only in our day. It was like that all the time. Only, in the good old days, the patient wasn't told he was going to die, and doctors with their stopwatches waited for his death behind the door.

I can prove that doctors are more dangerous than firearms.

The number of doctors in the U.S. is 700,000. Accidental deaths caused by physicians per year are 120,000. Accidental deaths per physician are 17.14%. (Statistics courtesy of the U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services)

Now let's look at gun statistics: The number of gun owners in the US is 80,000,000. (Yes, that's 80 million!) The number of accidental gun deaths per year, all age groups, is 1,500. The number of accidental deaths per gun owner is 0.001875%. (Statistics courtesy of the FBI) So statistically, doctors are approximately 9,000 times more dangerous than guns. Remember, guns don't kill people, doctors do.¹⁰¹

If you still think I am crazy (which is possible), listen to this fact: Not everyone has a gun, but almost everyone has at least one doctor!

Now, medicine took a colossal step forward. It resolved that, in general, if a patient dies, it is nothing terrible. Indeed, how many healthy people remain?

Why should doctors be occupied with the sick and dying, which despite all attention, are persistent in their inclination to be ill and to die? Neither should doctors be occupied with healthy ones, because as the above example demonstrates, healthy people don't need a doctor. Why would the healthy

¹⁰¹ <http://pharmacy.creighton.edu/asp/>. Scroll down to the bottom.

need a doctor? A doctor is to a healthy person what a butcher is to a live rooster.

So doctors began obsessing over their favorite occupation—tracking that which is most important to them—how much time remains to their patients' lives, to the second. This greatly pleased the insurance companies, which by all measures, attempt to insure us in such a way that the insurance never, under any circumstances, even under fear of death for the insurer, has to be paid out.



Thus, Lilli-Bunny hid from Basia her obvious diagnosis, Acute Cat Stupidity (ACS). Doctor Diefast didn't agree with this diagnosis. He told the cat she was suffering from some sort of virus, and Basia believed him and washed herself with an antiviral shampoo that didn't make her any smarter.

There must be some agreement between doctors and viruses. On one side, doctors are obliged not to look for efficient ways to fight the viruses, and from another side the viruses agree to cover for doctors in all cases when they are not able, or don't want to find, a correct diagnosis.

Now back to agriculture. Lilli-Bunny was in such enthusiasm from what he saw in the fields that he couldn't wait to meet his friend Mr. Loafeater, who could explain to him this new method of agriculture.

Mr. Loafeater was a simple person. Some call such people rednecks, but I think this is unacceptable. The color of one's neck is a personal issue and shouldn't be mentioned in vain, like the color of one's skin or the color of one's vehicle. We shouldn't use color to describe anything at all. Otherwise, the huge Black Hole in the center of our galaxy may find the name

“black hole” offensive and swallow us with our Sun and miserable planet. Stop using colors, for the sake of the security of our solar system!

One may assume these so-called rednecks are different from country to country. This is not true. They are the same everywhere—hard-working, hard-drinking individuals, who are the basis of our well-being. Otherwise, who would consume the booze we produce in the cities?

Lilli-Bunny, in his younger years, traveled much and ascertained that people are identical everywhere. Yes, of course, they perhaps differ outwardly—some use a toothbrush, and others don’t. This is the only difference.

Distant villages in any country all look alike. But the big cities, too, are as similar as two drops of water. Forget about famous towers and landmarks—London looks the same as Toronto, Toronto looks the same as New York, and between the cities, the earth is uniform, too—industrial zones all over the place.

The countryside is the only place you can meet the real, genuine people of a country. There lies the oasis where you can meet the true face of the land.

Lilli-Bunny met Mr. Loafeater near the entrance to the village, where the man was apparently waiting for his dearest guests. Lilli-Bunny asked Mr. Loafeater why all the fields around the village were resting and full of weeds, and why the people were fertilizing them with compost.

- “Listen, Lilli-Bunny, you are behind the time. First, those are not weeds; they are a very valuable plant, *Greedyslutus Swampus*. It grows all by itself and needs no special care. You don’t need to sow it; it sows itself. You don’t need to harvest it either, because nobody needs it.
- “So why would you grow it?” asked Lilli-Bunny with surprise.
- “Oh, simple. It photosynthesizes and provides fresh air. So the government assigns us subsidies to assist us in growing *Greedyslutus Swampus*, because the city populations would suffocate without new fresh air,” explained Mr. Loafeater.

- “Does this mean that you get money for the air?” asked Lilli-Bunny, getting down to the details.
- “Since when have bunnies been interested in money?” joked Mr. Loafeater, trying to avoid the line of questions about his air-selling activities.
- “Don’t you grow any wheat at all, Mr. Loafeater?”
- “Oh, no, god forbid! Definitely not! There is no need to grow wheat. In our time, bread is produced in the factory from bread-fibers. We, the people of Stoned-Henge, propagate a new agricultural entity, in addition to the *Greedyslutus Swampus*. We grow this new culture in our basements. We installed many lamps to give it warmth and light.”
- “What is this new thing that grows in the basement? Is it mold?” Lilli-Bunny inquired curiously.
- “Cannabis likes the basement,” responded Mr. Loafeater with a smile. “It’s easier to grow in basements because of our special botanics.”

Mr. Loafeater was famous for his hospitality, and that is why he didn’t insist his guests join him for dinner. Others often insist the guests finish all the leftovers in the house, a grave problem if there is no pig in the household. So the leftovers are left to guests and such treatment makes guests nauseous. They vomit all over the place, which considerably decreases the presentability of the village and harms the local tourism industry.

Villages are heavily dependant on the tourist industry. Many visitors are interested in finding their roots, and here, they find them. Sometimes, they crawl for three hours in a row, on the ground, trying to find their roots. And you say it’s the moonshine, but how would you explain how it happens on moonless nights? The tourists sometimes buy the new plant that is grown in basements, but only for souvenir purposes, because its leaves are so artistic. Sometimes they smoke it, in order to repel mosquitoes, but not for any other purpose. You don’t quite realize how many mosquitoes there really are in our countryside. Since the *Greedyslutus Swampus* covered the area, the land has become swampy, and even the well water

became covered with algae. Did you know that algae is one of the first creatures to appear on earth? It is our only hope for terraforming Mars. The fact that algae started to re-appear in our wells means that evolution is going to start all over again—a second cycle. For example, humans will not be derived from apes; they will be derived from moonshine stills. Therefore, liquor will be produced in humans by special moonshine-producing organs that won't be rejected because of excessive consumption.

Lilli-Bunny had dinner in the backyard, sharing it with his companions, but he soon left to see how things were in the village. At the first house he visited, he met Charles Dickens. The great writer was checking on the inhabitants to see if they had enough food, how many pieces of bread per inhabitant they consumed, and how drunk they were. Dickens was collecting material for his new novel, *David Doobiefield*, for he wanted to express his thoughts on poor people. He was going to argue that if you teach poor people about their roots, especially their square roots, you will make them much richer, if not materially, then at least spiritually, and when someone is poor and spiritual, they are much better off than someone who is spiritually poor.

When Charles Dickens saw Lilli-Bunny, he was very excited. He gave him his book, *Twisted Oliver* and autographed it: *To a real Lilli-Bunny, from the real Charles Dickens*.

This was necessary because lately, people had started to doubt he was the real Dickens. They touched his beard and said, "Is it really he?" So he, himself, started to doubt he was real. Sometimes he found himself touching his beard and saying, "Is this really me?"

Public opinion is very influential. If you read about yourself in the papers, that you are an idiot, sooner or later, you will realize you have become an idiot. The same is true when one is told one is a moron; but it doesn't quite work when one is called a saint. Being a saint is much tougher than being a moron. It demands more responsibility, and yet is not quite reflected in remuneration. Therefore, there are fewer and fewer saints, and more and more morons. Public opinion can

also name you either a bonehead or a bastard. Both titles are very respectable and strongly desired, because they are usually given to heads of state and other extraordinary individuals with the highest levels of compensation, both in monetary means and public esteem.

Lilli-Bunny asked Charles Dickens to consider re-writing his famous book, *Twisted Oliver*, and rename it either *Cinnamon Twist* or *Twisted Twink* because in our day, you have to talk about food or homosexual love to become a successful writer.

Charles Dickens got excited about this idea and left to write a new book, *Twisted Oliver 2*, incorporating the themes recommended by Lilli-Bunny. Charles Dickens had to stay a famous writer at any price, otherwise, what would British folk read before they went to sleep? And what would put American folks to sleep if they were accidentally exposed to it?

Lilli-Bunny said goodbye to Charles Dickens and left to find



the cow pen. He found no cows, though. Lilli-Bunny was planning to get his own cow, so he wanted to learn from others' experiences how cows should be cared for, and what they should be fed. Lilli-Bunny liked cows very much. A bit disappointed by not finding cows, Lilli-Bunny went back to Mr. Loafeater and asked where all the cows had gone. Mr. Loafeater explained

that all the cows had gone mad and flown south. Lilli-Bunny was VERY surprised. He thought, "How is it possible cows could fly south in the spring? Why wouldn't they go in the fall when the birds go?" But Lilli-Bunny said, "Probably the cows want to have their vacations in summer, like everyone else. Why should they be considered mad for trying to be like everyone else? Isn't this an injustice? These hard-working creatures are destined to graze grass, to produce a greasy substance that fertilizes our fields. Why shouldn't we respect these graceful grass-grazers?"

- “That’s right!” said Mr. Loafeater. “That’s their zoology.”

Lilli-Bunny stayed for a night in the shed because he wanted to sleep on a haystack, because it was a lot of fun to sleep on a haystack, because that’s just what you do when you stay in a village. But there was no hay because after cow madness and chicken flu, the hay caught haynxiety and burned itself. Lilli-Bunny had to sleep on an old mattress that Mr. Loafeater conveniently left in the shed. Lilli-Bunny looked at the mattress and saw many inscriptions. It was borrowed from the local mental hospital, where the patients left poems and other texts on the artifact. Lilli-Bunny enjoyed the reading, and wondered how many really talented people are confined to mental institutions.

In our day, it is becoming hard to distinguish between normal and abnormal. Things considered normal today would deserve capital punishment a couple of decades ago, and everyday occurrences of the past are illegal today. Any performer in modern show business would be admitted to a mental institution without hesitation sixty years ago. Old-fashioned individuals who call someone out to a duel to resolve a dispute about love or honor are now admitted to mental facilities or imprisoned, even though two hundred years ago they would have been considered perfectly normal, decent individuals.

Lilli-Bunny’s companions went to sleep in Lilli-Bunny’s car because there was only one mattress in the shed. Lilli-Bunny and his slippers stayed in the shed because it isn’t really a visit in a village if you don’t get to sleep on a haystack—even if the haystack is substituted with a very creative and readable mattress.

At night, someone bit Lilli-Bunny very painfully. It was a local bedbug, named Mr. Hugeman, who used to be a successful standup comedian. But when he got to Lilli-Bunny’s bed, he became a lay-down comedian, because even standup comedians need to get laid every once in a while.

Lilli-Bunny’s slippers woke at Lilli-Bunny’s cry of pain and jumped on the bedbug, crying, “What did you do? You bit a

president!” Don’t you remember? The slippers elected Lilli-Bunny president.

Mr. Hugeman said with disgust, “I don’t care if he’s a president! I don’t care who I bite! I am a free spirit!” And free spirits are not quite free; they are pretty expensive.

Standup comedians are like journalists; you cannot buy them unless you pay a very good price. Even if you pay one, it doesn’t mean he won’t say the truth. He will just do it from your point of view. You can’t make a journalist lie because journalists are great people, and great people never lie. They define what is true or false, and this is why whatever they say cannot be wrong. They are almost like physicians, whose word is often the final one, or whose clients cannot object because they are dead or publicly dead, which is almost the same.

Lilli-Bunny left the shed to wake his companions, and they left immediately. Lilli-Bunny said, “The village, these days, is only for very healthy folk who won’t get sick meeting so many sick people all at once.”

“I really need to plant my potatoes before they fly south like the cows. Who knows what their botanics are?”

Chapter 21. Lilli-Bunny and Fish 007

It was an ordinary morning in the Lilli-Bunny house. As usual, Lilli-Bear had beaten his plush bull, a present from a Lilli-Bear friend who lived in Texazistan, the country of plush bulls. Since Lilli-Bear got the plush bull in the mail, he engaged the beast in a bullfight called Corrida: At Lilli-Bear’s command and the count of three, the plush bull fell over and said ouch. Then Lilli-Bunny danced for Lilli-Bear the dance of the flamenco. And Lilli-Bear always excitedly applauded Lilli-Bunny, shouting “Bravo! Bravo!”

The only thing out of place on this morning was that Lilli-Bunny planned to go fishing and so danced the flamenco twice as fast as usual. Lilli-Bear applauded intensely, to match the pace of the dance, and his paws got so hot he had to blow on them to cool them down.

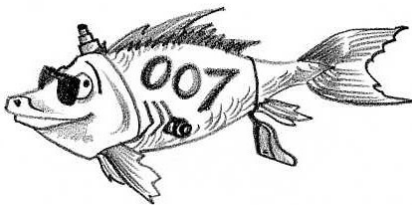
Plush Bull went to herd himself onto the carpet, silently mooing innocent, critical comments on Lilli-Bear's habit of engaging in bull fighting every morning. But we can understand Lilli-Bear. He beat the plush bull only so Lilli-Bunny would dance the flamenco, which Lilli-Bunny refused to dance any other time because he was very busy. But when Lilli-Bear started to win against the plush bull every morning, Lilli-Bunny could not refuse to dance because according to a tradition that has been preserved, unchanged, for centuries, someone must dance flamenco for all the winners of La Corrida.

The day before, Lilli-Bunny had received secret information from his Intelligence Agency. In his Lilli-Lake had appeared Fish 007, whom Lilli-Bunny had chased all over the globe. This fish was why Lilli-Bunny had organized his own Intelligence Agency, with headquarters so secret that even Lilli-Bunny himself forgot their location. Luckily, the headquarters continued to operate, sending him valuable information about the weather, and recommending plants for sowing.

But the information Lilli-Bunny was waiting for was hard to obtain. Lilli-Bunny's Intelligence Agency was reluctant to release the location of Fish 007, who Lilli-Bunny had almost caught. One time, he spent twenty-four hours in a hiding place, right in front of Fish 007's nose. The second time, he ambushed Fish 007 near the spy's special apartment under the Red Sea, then in the White Sea, and another time in a semi-dry sea, aged to perfection for five years. Now when Lilli-Bunny got the information that Fish 007 had shown up in his own Lilli-Lake, right across from the house, he just couldn't let it go. It was about his reputation as a secret agent, and the salvation of the human race from the terrifying spy activities of Fish 007, who frankly speaking, hadn't done anything terrible. It was just a small, modest, smallmouth bass, but Lilli-Bunny decided to play spy games with it and appointed it Fish 007. Now listen, if Lilli-Bear was allowed to engage himself in La Corrida with the plush bull every morning, why couldn't Lilli-Bunny play spy games with a dangerous double agent, Fish 007, who was now working simultaneously for two enemy intelligence agencies—the Maritime and Laketime Agencies? This was probably just the

fruit of Lilli-Bunny's fanciful imagination, but who cared? It could have been worse: it could have been a vegetable of his imagination. Then Lilli-Bunny would have gotten really, REALLY serious. He would have made clear to everybody that bunnies are very serious, indeed, when it comes to vegetables.

My rigorous reader, you might say that my hero, Lilli-Bunny, is just fooling around, and that I am just fooling around with him, that my text has too many words, and not many of them are really touching. You might say there are probably some touching words in my text, but that it is difficult to find them, especially after you have lost all hope and thrown my book under the sofa. You were fixing up the place before your guests' visit, paying stupid homage to the idiotic tradition of fixing up the place before the guests arrive, just for the sake of allowing them to mess it up once again, when after all it was messy in the first place. Now you make some surprising discoveries under your sofa. Among the unidentified articles of someone's dress and the half-eaten apple someone attempted to consume before the dawn of the last economic crisis, you find my book, and open it randomly to this very page, read my long sentences, get angry again, and throw it back under the sofa, completing the infernal cycle of obtaining and losing hope all over again, that you might find all touching words in my book listed in alphabetical order. This is a pity, because you could find many hooks, especially fishing hooks that could hook your soul if you would agree to write on yourself "007" and grow scales, because fish with other numbers didn't interest Lilli-Bunny at all, as you might understand.



So you say I am fooling around. First of all, you are fooling around trying to fix up your place before the guests arrive, you are also fooling around not reading

my book and throwing it under the sofa, you are fooling around even if you do read my book and search for the touching words. You are always fooling around. Everyone is always fooling around.

I can easily prove that the whole world is continuously fooling around. Look at the serious faces of the leaders on TV. They are so serious and impenetrable, but it always seems as if they will turn to the side and burst out laughing, and by that prove to the whole planet that they were just fooling around.

Does this surprise you? The world was always fooling around. Please read the world's history from this point of view. Of course, you will find many economic reasons, ideological struggles of interests, but the bottom line is that great people always fool around. Look at Alexander the Great; look at Napoleon and read our entire history, making this new anti-fooling-around analysis. You will detect that fooling around is the ultimate basis for all of the historic developments of humanity. But most professional fool-arounders are intelligent people once they get to the summit of their power, because they are not amateurs at fooling around; they do this for a living.

Intelligence services are the only department of the state that fools around completely officially. In what other department can you report the expenses of attendants of a whorehouse? Or receipts for buying beer and whiskey, trying to get innocent pedestrians drunk in order to collect from them valuable information about their private lives (which are grey and boring, like everybody else's), and file reports about these secret meetings, carefully archiving them for decades with classified access. Later, they have to clean up the evidence of their spy activity by dealing in certain ways with the source of information. The options for this are plentiful—you may choose from a list: assassinate, or more precisely, annihilate, asphyxiate, blow away, bump off, butcher, crucify, dispatch, do in, drown, dump, electrocute, eradicate, erase, execute, exterminate, extirpate, finish off, hang, knock off, liquidate, lynch, massacre, murder, neutralize, obliterate, poison, polish off, put away, put down in China Town, rub out, slaughter, slay, smother, snuff, strangle, suffocate, waste, or somehow else wipe them from the face of the earth. Even though they charge the government with all these colorful activities, most of the time, you will be surprised to find the innocent individual destined to die in a most brutal and horrible way, continues to thrive, despite all the threats

mentioned above, because in intelligence services mistakes happen, just like everywhere else. Or the operatives fake the report of liquidation and spend the money on extra beer.

While intelligence officers approach innocent pedestrians to collect valuable information, on the very next street, airplanes fly into skyscrapers, buildings get blown up, terrorists take hostages. But this is not a problem, because the paperwork is in order and carefully archived. If the paperwork is in order, everything is fine and in order, because that's what is left of any sort of activity—loads of paper and nothing else. We cannot criticize intelligence services because we can see only their failures. We don't know how many terrorist attempts were prevented. Maybe, at this very moment, as you are lazily sitting on your sofa and reading these lines, some anonymous intelligence officer is saving the world. The world clings by its pale childish hands to the edge of a deep chasm, and the intelligence officer is trying to pull it back while we sit here on the sofa and know nothing of what's going on. The only result of the operation that will remain to history will be a tiny wrinkled receipt—a train ticket, because he took the train to get to the chasm where the world was hanging. If this is the only ticket, it means he didn't make it back (I always wondered which he didn't make). If there is a return ticket, it means he made it back, and the world was saved. If the world isn't saved, we won't know, because we will all die at once.

And you say the intelligence service is not fooling around professionally? Oh. This is an intriguing world of receipts for beer paid by the government budget, a world that moves ahead when you need to go backwards, maneuvers to the left when you need it to the right, complicated double, triple, quadruple games in a multi-polar world where everybody is good and evil simultaneously and everybody loses track of who is working for whom and who is paying for what, and where we should all run, because intelligence penetrates everywhere. They have healthy appetites, are very reserved, and don't suffer from any sort of dignity, which is usually amputated by cosmetic surgery from each spook on the government's account.

Didn't you know that dignity is dealt with now by cosmetic surgery? Previously, dignity was an internal organ, but now it has started to swell so much that it is considered an external organ and may disgrace the surface of the face and other parts of the body. This is why they started to brand people and amputate dignity moles to prevent them from spreading, and metastasizing to true honesty, which in the modern world is considered a malignant disease. I don't mean the benign fool's honesty, which grows in a majority of citizens of wealthy western societies, in which they start to demonstrate naked, without special honesty-covering undergarments. This is called honest nudism. This honest nudism can make you sick all over again, and it has nothing in common with true malignant honesty, because benign honesty grows from another type of tissue, a part of the coward-gland, which is located in the two-faced ass region of the human body.

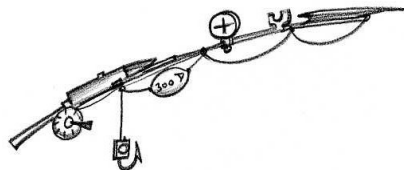
True honesty grows from one's soul, the organ destined for surgical extraction, as in the earliest age. I'm sorry I became occupied with these medical descriptions. If you already got your honesty and soul fixed, you can just skip over what I have written. I am writing it for those who still have these features on their bodies, which can be pretty dangerous, not only to them, but to our society as a whole.

Lilli-Bunny got ready to go fishing, and fishing for him was no joke. He took all of his fishing equipment out of the closet and carefully reviewed it.

List of Lilli-Bunny's Fishing Equipment

Category 1: Fishing Rods

- Fishing rod with laser-guided missile
- Fishing rod with sniper optics
- Fishing rod with Video Hook and fiber optic fishing line



- Fishing rod with nuclear-powered floater (300 tonne displacement)
- Fishing rod with Night Vision
- Fishing rod with day-not-vision
- Special Fishing Rod: LGX-344 (Classified technology, will be declassified in the year 2075. Relax, we won't live that long.)

Category 2: Chum

- Chocolate cake
- Box of 20 whiskey bottles
- 10 Exotic Thai dancers
- Narcotic powder from the fruit of the Get-Stoned Tree

Category 3: Bait

- Well-fed Elephant
- Greenland whale
- Loch Ness monster (And why do you think no one can find her in Loch Ness Lake? Because for the last few years, she has been living in Lilli-Bunny's closet with his Fishing Equipment. Lilli-Bunny recruited Nessie in Scotland by blackmailing her, pretty friendly-like, threatening to tell the British press that she has, not a tail like a real dinosaur, but a tail like a bunny. If such facts leak to the British press, the paparazzi won't relax until Nessie is in a deadly accident in a tunnel in France.)

Category 4: Safety Equipment

- Spaceship (for emergency evacuation of the earth's population in case the fishing trip takes an unexpected turn)
- Lifejacket with three- day supply of porridge for Lilli-Bear (Who wasn't going with Lilli-Bunny, but just in case, was wearing a life jacket while sitting at home, consuming his safety porridge)

- Lifejackets for the fish (just in case they fall over the edge of the boat)
- Whistle for disinformation
- Flashlight for Flashbacks

Category 5: Accompanying documentation

- Official Certificate stating Lilli-Bunny is not Lilli-Bunny
- Official Certificate stating Lilli-Bunny is, in fact, Lilli-Bunny
- Official Certificate issued to Lilli-Bunny certifying that he both is Lilli-Bunny, and is not Lilli-Bunny at the same time (for fooling the enemy)
- Official Certificate issued to Lilli-Bunny certifying that he is a cat
- Official Certificate issued to Lilli-Bunny certifying that he is a hare
- Canadian Passport under the name of Mr. Notspy with Lilli-Bunny's photograph



- License for fishing in forbidden areas
- Document forbidding fishing in allowed areas

(For justification why you weren't fishing when you could fish but didn't want to)

- A photograph of international terrorist OH-SAM-BEING-LED-IN in a fish costume (in case he dresses as a fish and settles in Lilli-Lake)

Category 6: Special Nets

- Ordinary Fishing Net – 1

Lilli-Bunny loaded all this equipment into a paddleboat that Nemo built specially for Lilli-Bunny from the spare parts left over from the construction of his ship, the Nautilus. Lilli-Bunny's boat was assembled in various dry docks all over the world. Lilli-Bunny set sail and departed for the high seas, which in this case, were high lakes. He went fishing alone, because he always took the most difficult assignments alone, according to the unspoken code of honor of all spies, which required them to work alone, in order to spare themselves the need to kill witnesses. As he gave this assignment to himself, another code of honor of spies applied: "If you give an assignment to yourself, go and do it yourself."

Lilli-Bunny got on course, heading North-South-East-West, which probably sounds impossible for the ordinary bunny, but is very common in the spy world—you simply split and head in different directions. Splitting is a very important function for any spy, because if you do not split with others, they will simply take everything and leave you with nothing.

Fish 007, however incredible it may sound, was ready for the attack. It is true that this fish was simply an ordinary fish, but after years of hiding from "that crazy bunny" (how the fish referred to Lilli-Bunny in private), he learned many spy methods and recruited the moles on Lilli-Bunny's lawn. Fish said he was a mole and only dressed like a fish. That was how Fish 007 convinced the moles to be recruited, for they didn't want to question their ability to see, since they obtained sunglasses from Lilli-Bunny's sunglasses pack. The moles worked undercover, and learned that Lilli-Bunny had information regarding the location of Fish 007. Fish 007 immediately changed the number that had been written on its side ever since Lilli-Bunny captured and held it in the Red Sea. Fish 007 licked his fin, rubbed away the 007 on his side, and wrote the new number, "008," which was very crafty because Fish 007 could then, without worrying,

promenade all over the shore without Lilli-Bunny being any the wiser.

But Lilli-Bunny was no idiot; he cracked down on this deceiving maneuver, jumped out of the boat, and caught Fish 007/008 with his net. Lilli-Bunny and Fish 007 lived happily together and went to dry off and have some tea with buns in the gazebo, where all the other inhabitants of the Lilli-House joined them. At the party were Lilli-Bear in his lifejacket, who'd spent all the time Lilli-Bunny was fishing at home, Lilli-Kitty, Lilli-Jake, Lilli-Bunny's two slippers, and the two parrots. Only the cats did not join the tea party because they were still sleeping, or had already gone to bed, and generally didn't drink tea with fishes, anyway, for personal reasons.

And you say intelligence doesn't fool around?

Chapter 22. Lilli-Bunny and the Berry Pie

Once upon a time, Lilli-Bunny baked his famous berry pie. I don't like works of literature that tell about different meals, but never mention the recipe, and then, after a hundred years, the readers have to guess what the classic means by mentioning particular delicious foods, which causes complete disappointment with classic authors. Being confident that I am going to become a classic author, I want to avoid this tiny disadvantage of my colleagues, and I promise that from now on, I'll try to give you detailed recipes of all delicacies mentioned in my ingenious enlightenment that just can't become anything other than a timeless classic.

By the way, Lilli-Bunny learned to bake this pie from Hans Christian-Anderson, who lived in Denmark at the time, where Lilli-Bunny was visiting. Lilli-Bunny went there to save the girl who was selling matches on Christmas Eve, to prevent her from dying of cold, as was described later in one of Anderson's tales. Lilli-Bunny met Mr. Anderson while watching the girl dying, and that was how they were acquainted. Anderson invited Lilli-Bunny and the girl to his place and treated them to his Danish cake, and then Anderson promised Lilli-Bunny that he

would look after the girl and make sure she did not die, so Lilli-Bunny left. The girl died the next night, anyway, because Anderson was watching her die in order to write his terrible fairy tale, anyway. Anderson knew that he was going to write a timeless classic, and he readily sacrificed this poor soul for his eternal success, with which he still scares new generations of innocent youth. Why do people use the deaths of others as sources of entertainment? I don't see anything entertaining about death, unless it happens within you. Then you are so pre-occupied with the serious procedure that no movie or computer game can compete. I hope these lines won't be misunderstood as a promotion for suicidal inclinations, I am just saying not to make fun of another's death. You know why? Because it is not funny.

Now, back to the pie. I will now proudly present you the recipe. First, bake a tart shell. Secondly, spread around a mixture of vanilla pudding and milk (or custard) inside the shell and let sit in the refrigerator for at least one hour. After you have your tart shell full of vanilla pudding and milk, all that's left is to spread berries over it in a decorative way. Spread the berries to your personal liking.

Once Lilli-Bunny baked his huge berry pie, it was the size of the annual budget of a small country, which I cannot name here. Naming it could damage the reputation of the United Frustrations Organization (UFO), of which this country is part. This country has been engaged in such immoral actions that mentioning its name in vain might destabilize the world order; this is the last thing I want to do because I am not quite ready to look for another planet to settle on yet. To make a long story short, let's dub this country "CSBP" (the Country that Stole the Berry Pie) and what do you think? It has just stolen the pie! Lilli-Bunny baked the pie and put it on the windowsill, and the CSBP snuck up, grabbed the pie, and ran away. Lilli-Bunny didn't have time to blink (even though Lilli-Bunny was a champion of artistic blinking and could blink in a very professional way).

Lilli-Bear and Lilli-Jake chased the CSBP, but it had very long feet (there are states with very long hands, and you had better not irritate them because they will get you no matter where you go, but some states have very long feet and you should

watch out, because they can steal something from you and run away).



And so this country ran away to its national territory, and didn't issue visas to Lilli-Bear and Lilli-Jake. They stood in front of the national border of CSBP and came home empty-handed, which is better than handicapped, which you could get if you tried to get in without visas. In the country CSBP, the arrival of the berry pie received a lot of support. In the polls, they got the following results:

Poll of Public Opinion of Citizens of the State of CSBP

55% completely supported the theft of the pie

35% thought that CSBP needed to steal something else

8% thought there was a need to steal Lilli-Bunny's slippers, too

Only 2% considered how lawful it was to steal the pie, but supported it anyway, because they were afraid that if they were considered to have not supported it enough, they would not get their share of the pie and *would* probably be killed, which is equally unfortunate.

Do you understand this problem? Democracy has to comply with the will of the majority, and if the majority supports stealing, the country should steal. Otherwise, it cannot be considered a democratic country. If it doesn't steal, it will be acting against the will of the people, and this will make it an anti-people state. In the world, everyone respected the will of the inhabitants of CSBP, especially because the number of international democratic representatives making sure the polls

were accurately democratic was higher than the number of citizens of CSBP themselves.

The state of CSBP was considered a people's state, and so the government decided to divide Lilli-Bunny's pie between all of the inhabitants. This is where the problems started. As we mentioned before, the pie was bigger than the annual budget of CSBP, and this country was not used to such large financial operations, nor, we must frankly say, were they ready for such a large responsibility. This non-preparedness started a civil war in the state of CSBP because in some countries, you don't need much reason to start a civil war. There were two major parties—the party of Length and the party of Width. These two parties were separated in their views on how to cut the pie—the Length party wanted to cut the pie lengthwise, and the Width party wanted to cut it widthwise. What the two parties didn't realize was that both cuts were the same because the pie was round. They couldn't have known how absurd their argument was because soon after receiving the pie, the leaders of CSBP deposited it in a Swiss bank, so none of the party members got a chance to see it. You might say that all pies are round, and the parties should have known that anyway, but in a place like CSBP, pies are very rare, and the roundest object the populace was familiar with was a brick, which is why the terms “Length” and “Width” weren't very distinguished in their language. This didn't matter much because these parties hated each other anyway, and were just looking for a reason to start a war.

The United Frustrations Organization stepped in immediately and demanded that the war be stopped and the pie be divided equally among all the people, but the state of CSBP didn't care much what the UFO said. Do you believe in the UFO, my dearest reader? I don't, not anymore, and I wonder if anyone really does. We have to say that the state of CSBP was engaged in some sort of war for the last fifty years.

Short History of the Wars of the State of CSBP

- 1952-1958: The War of the Half-Eaten Apple and Three Cigar Butts

- 1958-1962: The War of the Squashed Lemon
- 1962-1964: The Sausage Revolution
- 1964-1968: The Anti-Sausage Counter-Revolution
- 1968-1969: The Tomato Massacre
- 1969-1978: The Plum Resistance
- 1978-1985: The Peach Impeachment and Apricot Blockade
- 1985-1992: The Watermelon Incident
- 1992-1999: The “Shut Your Mouth” Conflict
- 1999-2004: The Spoiled-Food Blockade
- 2005-Present: The Lilli-Pie War

The Swiss bank was terrified of terrorist attacks and secretly announced to the press that they were transferring their most valuable entity, which was actually the cause of a civil war, the famous Lilli-Pie, to the country that could assure its safety, because it was the most self-confident country in the world. The president of the most self-confident country in the world ordered a safe box, in which to hold the Lilli-Pie in captivity, and asked everyone to leave so he could examine the cause of the civil war in person.

The president opened the safe, and oh god! It was empty, or at least, he thought this is what he would say if he ever had to testify, and presidents of the most self-confident country in the world never lie—unless they really have to. Until now, nobody knows who ate the pie because in fact, nobody knew the pie was



eaten, but the president of the most self-confident country did not let this information leak outside the world of his square office. The president locked the empty safe back up and didn't tell anyone it was empty because he realized he didn't have a good alibi to prove his innocence, and he wanted to prevent his rival party from accusing him of eating the cause of the civil war in CSBP. Any court would consider that the president was the last who saw the

pie alive, and he would spend the rest of his days, and probably all of his fortune, trying to prove he wasn't the one who ate the Lilli-Pie.

The civil war hasn't ended yet because nobody in the world knows there's no more reason to fight. The president of the most self-confident country in the world wisely decided that the state of war is a natural state for the state of CSBP, and the reasons for war are not what are important. The important thing is who can be accused in the current situation. Let's do an analysis together: you might say that the primary cause of war is the people of the state of CSBP. I'm sorry, are you insane? Do you want to say that the people of CSBP are all bad? Tell me something. Are you against the people? The people cannot be bad; they are always good. Maybe it's the government, but the government was just doing what the people expected it to do. Maybe the Swiss bank should be blamed, but what was wrong in trying to ensure that they wouldn't wind up under a terrorist's bomb?

The president of the most self-confident country in the world can not be blamed for anything because it would cost you more to blame him than anyone else. All nations need a good working relationship with the most self-confident country in the world and blaming its president would ruin that relationship very fast, leaving you with a well-manufactured missile aimed at your kitchen as a token of appreciation for your peace-making efforts. Well, the conclusion is clear. The only one we can blame this on is Lilli-Bunny, for making his Lilli-Pie in the first place, because if you arrange to bake a pie on the same scale as a small but proud nation's economy, you must eat it while hiding in the basement, if you don't want to cause such colorful consequences as a civil war. Please don't blame anything on politicians; they are the gray heroes of our times. They work hard to make sure we are safe, and if they sometimes hide secrets in empty safes, they are doing it only for our own well-being.

Chapter 23. Lilli-Bunny Takes a Walk

Lilli-Bunny asked himself once, “Who lives happily in our forest?” He asked himself whether he was happy and decided he was. Lilli-Bear also said he was happy because he’d just eaten his porridge with jam. The other inhabitants of the house didn’t answer because they were busy. The cats were sleeping, Lilli-Jake was building an airplane out of an old winter boot, and Lilli-Kitty was making a souvenir, pouring layers of colored sand into a bottle. From their activities, it was obvious they were happy. Lilli-Bunny’s politically engaged slippers asked for more time to answer—until winter, because everything depended on the results of their coalitional struggle against Lilli-Bunny’s winter boots.

Then Lilli-Bunny decided that the poll of the inhabitants of his house wasn’t significant enough, and called the individualistic Hamster Hamlet’s new apartment, but was answered by a mutant mouse who explained that the Hamster had asked not to be disturbed ‘til winter, because every summer he prepared for hibernation by reading German philosophers. Usually, reading Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason” made him stuporous for at least three months. And now Kant had sent Hamlet a new treatise—*Critique of Filthy Madness*—and Hamster was ardently studying it. “Call any time in winter; nobody will answer you anyway—everybody will be sleeping,” said the lady pleasantly and meowed into the receiver, but Lilli-Bunny wasn’t surprised, because you could expect anything from mutants.



Then Lilli-Bunny decided to go for a walk to find out who was living happily in the forest. Lilli-Bear preferred to go for a walk lying on a sofa at home; all the rest were busy, so only Lilli-Bunny’s slippers were persuaded to accompany him. They went along the forest road near Lilli-Bunny’s house.

First, they met the Beaver. The Beaver was dragging a gnawed log and sighing heavily. Lilli-Bunny hailed him and asked whether he was happy.

“Oh, don’t ask—” moaned the Beaver. You could see he wasn’t happy at all. The Beaver was a building contractor, and summer was a hot time for building contractors.

“But what’s the matter?” pressed Lilli-Bunny because he loved animals, although he didn’t love building contractors too much. Lilli-Bunny knew they usually destroyed more than they built.

“I have just built myself a swimming pool,” the Beaver lamented. “You know, after a day at the dam, you deserve a civilized rest in a swimming pool. I’ve dug a pool, not worse than any other, arranged illumination, poured clear water—I’ve spent a fortune on the materials. But when I finally sat and relaxed, a Fly came and bit me. I told her, ‘Come tomorrow during working hours, and you can bite me as you wish. It doesn’t make a difference how I suffer during working hours—gnaw logs or be gnawed by flies, the time is passing anyway, and the client is paying by the hour. But when a builder is sitting in his nice pool, it’s unfair to bite him.’ And the Fly bit me more. I’ve tried all the ways to smash her—no success. So I’ve fled the pool and gone to the dam, because at the workplace, even flies, for some reason, don’t bite.”

Surprised, Lilli-Bunny asked, “So small a Fly, and she ruined all your investment—how can you swim when you are continuously bitten?”

“You don’t say,” sighed the Beaver. “It seems to me the world is unfair since all the pleasure from a costly project is ruined by a nasty Fly that doesn’t cost a dollar herself.”

“Did you try to complain?” asked the Right Slipper. “Write a letter to the World Fly Extermination Association, and they’ll send you something thermonuclear to exterminate your Fly. It’s

strong stuff—a single use exterminates an elephant, to say nothing about a single Fly. Don't underestimate the flies. Millennia of evolution made them very agile, so it's not easy to get rid of them."

Building contractors don't have millennia of evolution behind them, and the Beaver wiped his forehead and complained, "These flies are a vindictive gang, they are. Better not to mess with them. I built a house for that Fly, and she got offended. Said the door was too small for her noble ass. I said it was her problem that she had such a big ass. I build what I see in the architect's plan, and it's not my fault if the architect spilled his coffee and confused an inch with a foot—let her bite the architect! Should I think instead of him? It's not my business! We builders, we build—we need not think."

"So, you had relations with this Fly previously," the Right Slipper commented. "In such a case, your incident is not surprising."

"Why so?" exclaimed the Beaver. "I made the chimney wider in compensation, and this bitch complains that now she's blown out of it. You cannot satisfy those flies: either the door is too small, or the chimney is too wide."

"Did you try to beat her up with a boot?" asked the Left Slipper. "I once knew a shoe-maker who used to beat unsatisfied clients with boots, and it helped a lot, you know. Such strange people—don't like to get two left boots; don't like left boots at all. People get out of bed on the left (wrong) side all the time, that's why we, left slippers, are over worn."

"I've tried everything, but the Fly doesn't leave me alone," complained the Beaver. "She went mad and bit me all over after the roof of her house collapsed the other day. I warned her not to sneeze indoors; the construction wasn't designed for sneezing persons!"

“The Beaver’s life isn’t easy, indeed,” Lilli-Bunny thought, and continued along the road. The Moose was stomping in the opposite direction, shaking his antlers.

“Are you happy?” Lilli-Bunny asked him.

“What are you talking about?” The Moose waved his antlers. “All my life I’ve been employed as a moose and overworked.”

“You don’t like your work? Seems like it fits you—you are a moose, pardon my question, aren’t you?”

“I am, but I was taught at school that everyone has equal opportunity. So I decided to become a butterfly. All my youth I tried to flitter. And failed. My life is ruined now. I hate my work; I don’t even like my antlers.”

“This is wrong,” thought Lilli-Bunny. “What bullshit do they teach at school?”

Next moment, he met the Wood Grouse, a local teacher. Lilli-Bunny asked him:

“Mister Wood Grouse, I hope you are happy. You teach everyone; you preach to everybody; you make everyone write homework and grade low whomever you wish, you orient moose to butterfly careers. It must be a nice life!”

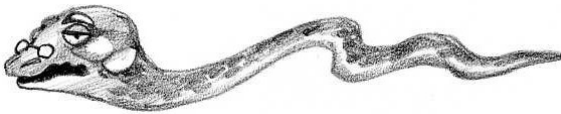
“What are you talking about?” the Wood Grouse lamented. “The children went totally insane. They have their own opinions, they go wild, and run to pampas every break, you cannot call them back. They smoke pot and flitter in the forest ‘til evening.”

“I didn’t mean exactly that.” Lilli-Bunny wanted to be exact. “The Moose here complained that you expounded on equal opportunity, and thus ruined his life.”

“Not my fault,” the Wood Grouse began to make excuses. “I only teach what scientists and scholars have written in textbooks. Whatever they say is sacred—that’s the way of things here. If they say penguins are tropical birds, I’ll teach that penguins are tropical birds. It doesn’t matter what you teach. What matters is that as long as we keep these bandits at school and in university, they don’t do anything outside—don’t grab jobs. And when we release them with diplomas, they aren’t dangerous anymore. First of all, they are too old by that time to attempt any real work, and secondly, the diplomas we issue are so twisted nobody will employ our graduates. So don’t you worry, Mister Lilli-Bunny, about your job—nobody will take it from you, thanks to my modest teaching work.”

“Since I’m living by farming,” Lilli-Bunny confessed, “I don’t need employment.”

“More reason not to worry,” the Wood Grouse confirmed. “The things we teach them are so unnatural; they won’t claim your natural economy. On finishing their studies, they have a mixture of marijuana and calculus in their eyes, and that’s complete warranty that nothing will threaten your farming business.”



Lilli-Bunny continued his walk, and saw the Grass Snake, the

local scientist. Lilli-Bunny asked him why he wrote textbooks for the Wood Grouse that make moose shed their antlers from disappointment that they could not be butterflies.

“My textbook,” the learned Grass Snake answered, “*reflects the tightening ties between the classical analysis, the complex, and the functional analyses.*”

“But why did you posit equal opportunity for everyone?” the Right Slipper asked anxiously.

“You see,” the Grass Snake answered, *“that’s why logical symbolism, sets, functions, real numbers, limits, continuity exist—they constitute the basis for determination of such equal opportunities.”*

“Can you in any way be sure that Wood Grouse, the teacher, understands all you’ve written there?” Lilli-Bunny asked indignantly.

“My esteemed fellow,” the Grass Snake sighed, *“differential and integral calculus of one real variable isn’t always unambiguous. Sometimes differential calculus of multidimensional functions is needed.”*

Lilli-Bunny and his slippers stood blinking on the road, and the learned Grass Snake slithered on, shaking his head disgustedly: how did these ignoramuses dare argue?

The knocking of the Woodpecker forced Lilli-Bunny to regain consciousness. The Woodpecker was the local doctor and healed sick trees.

“Well, this one is surely happy,” Lilli-Bunny thought and ran to talk to the Woodpecker.

“Mister Woodpecker, are you happy?” asked Lilli-Bunny joyfully.

“Knock, knock,” the Woodpecker answered. “Just try to hammer your head on a tree all day long and then ask, though I think by the end of the day, the asking mechanism in your head will fall off, along with the head.”

“But you’ve sworn the Peckercratic Oath; you’ve got a noble trade!” Right Slipper was indignant.

“And you, old galosh, better keep mum, or I’ll report you to the authorities,” knocked the Woodpecker.

“Oh, you are an informer!” Left Slipper was delighted. “Informers are the cleaners of the society! Without informers, the society could not function. Hurray to informers!”

“And you also keep mum, or I’ll prescribe you an enema with lethal outcome, so you’ll know better than to preach hegemony here.”

Lilli-Bunny didn’t like the Woodpecker, especially since it was apparent that, although he was a common local doctor, he was reporting everything to authorities, and you could suddenly find yourself in jail for no reason.

Lilli-Bunny picked up his slippers and ran away from the Woodpecker. And immediately encountered the Wolf-of-Fortune.

“Are you happy?” Lilli-Bunny asked the Wolf-of-Fortune.



“You dumb mug, close your head before I stuff this mud-pipe down your mush—and tell your moll-slippers to hand over the mazuma!”

Lilli-Bunny feared that the Wolf-of-Fortune was speaking some foreign language. But Left Slipper, who in his time, like all slippers with left-wing inclinations, had been subjected to repressions and spent many years in jail, translated: “You, with the stupid-looking face, stop talking before I stuff this opium pipe down your face—and tell your girlfriend-slippers to hand over the money!”

Lilli-Bunny turned and fled for home, but on the way encountered the Boar, who represented law and order in the wood. “Well, that one is certainly happy,” Lilli-Bunny resolved, and asked, “Mr. Boar, are you happy?”

The Boar looked at Lilli-Bunny disgustedly and demanded his papers. Then he detained the Right Slipper for identification purposes because the Right Slipper seemed suspicious to him. The Left Slipper was also detained because of his former imprisonment.

Lilli-Bunny, barefoot, didn't go home, but ran. Near the house, the Skunk, known politician of the wood, encountered him.

Lilli-Bunny decided not to talk to him, to avoid learning anything, being knocked around, or detained. But the Skunk addressed Lilli-Bunny of his own accord with—just imagine!—Lilli-Bunny's own question.

“And are you, Lilli-Bunny, actually happy in our forest?” asked the Skunk interestedly, and smiled widely.

“In the morning, all was well, but since I've left home, I don't know how to get back. Our people are too serious.”

“Yes, we've got great folks up here,” the Skunk answered. “Perhaps you were thinking it's enough to be happy, to have money like the Beaver, or to be like the Wolf-of-Fortune? No. We Skunks are the happiest of the lot. We've got larger swimming pools than the Beavers have, and the Flies don't bite us, and we teach everybody bullshit like the Wood Grouses, and we philosophize like the Grass Snakes, and we steal like the Wolves-of-Fortune, and we can beat everybody up like the Boar.”



“No, I'd better manage with my farm,” Lilli-Bunny said, and escaped home.

The slippers returned the next morning and decided not to go for walks with Lilli-Bunny anymore. Not to leave home at all, in fact, since slippers are house footwear. They also decided to

concede superiority to Lilli-Bunny's winter boots—let them be answerable for everything, but they, the slippers, could cope with standing under the bed while Lilli-Bunny was adventuring outside. It was better under the bed than on the jail bunk.

So what's the moral lesson? Only that it's better to stay at home, out of harm's way, than to go adventuring in the woods asking provocative questions.

Chapter 24. Lilli-Bunny and Mrs. Soft Drink

Mrs. Soft Drink wasn't a young lady. Her glass bottle waist retained a trace of the Wild West saloons' aesthetics; her carved figure with the cut-glass neck made you imagine a cowboy crawling on all fours out of a saloon onto a dusty road—to fall at her sober, like a course for the prevention of road accidents, feet.

She wasn't as vulgar as modern two-liter plastic bottles, but there was in her a little bit of the drink which has conquered the world in the last century, and which sticks in the gullets halfway to the stomachs of honest citizens at all four corners of the Earth. In short, Mrs. Soft Drink was well known enough to not be in need of any introduction when, one hot afternoon, she knocked at Lilli-Bunny's door to ask for a glass of water and a short rest.

Lilli-Jake opened the door and, delighted by such a momentous visit, brought spring water for her. (Mrs. Soft Drink herself didn't drink soft drinks because they made her belch, and this phenomenon isn't convenient for a decent lady of her years and appearance.)

Lilli-Bunny, having met Mrs. Soft Drink drinking spring water in his own kitchen, greeted her politely, and offered her refuge from the midday heat in his refrigerator. Mrs. Soft Drink graciously accepted the invitation and went to sleep in the refrigerator 'til five o'clock tea. While she slept, there were remarkable changes all over the world. All nations returned to their traditional soft

drinks. Having wiped their lips from their national drinks, the people of Earth suddenly thought, “How was the idea of drinking a black liquid, with a questionable taste, which hardly goes down to the stomach, put in our heads?” But to no avail. The enlightenment appeared short-lived. Mrs. Soft Drink woke, got out of Lilli-Bunny’s refrigerator, and the world again, as if zombified by some malicious, superior alien race, obediently began to guzzle this liquid, which differs from gasoline only in that if you fill a tank with it, the car will not start. Oh, one more thing—it doesn’t burn; that’s why firemen favor it. Those, actually, are all its positive aspects.

Mrs. Soft Drink thanked Lilli-Bunny for his hospitality and stayed to drink tea with Lilli-Bunny and his household because, as you understand, she drank practically everything except herself. It usually happens that the shoemaker goes without boots, the doctor cannot cure himself, the fireman cannot extinguish himself, the thief cannot steal from himself, and the policeman cannot put himself in jail. That’s the imperfection of the professional world. You don’t agree? Well. How often have you met dentists who treat their teeth themselves? Not very often? There you are. Likewise, Mrs. Soft Drink wasn’t able to supply drink for herself. Although she was full to her neck with this drink, which was remarkable in its inability to be assimilated, Mrs. Soft Drink couldn’t digest a drop of it herself—her soul refused to accept it.

Lilli-Bear was just entertaining himself with some of Lilli-Bunny’s homemade liquor and suggested a glass to Mrs. Soft Drink. She didn’t refuse and accepted two or three liqueur glasses without much ado. Then the conversation started.

“Where are you from, Mrs. Soft Drink?” Right Slipper asked, business-like.

“Oh, I was born over a hundred years ago—in a drugstore, in the backyard of a pharmacist’s house. My father was Daddy Cocaine, and my mother was Mummy Cola, the African nut, also known

as a soft, head-spinning drug,” Mrs. Soft Drink began her story. “Until the beginning of the 20th century, cocaine was allowed in America and Europe. All high society of the time used it. When cocaine became forbidden, my biography was cleaned of it. By the middle of the century my Mummy, the extract of the cola-nut, was likewise deleted.”

“Hard fate,” sighed Right Slipper, who knew the sorrow of disappointment.

“So you aren’t what you were,” the Left Slipper declared shamelessly. “No coke, no cola in you.”

Mrs. Soft Drink looked on the Left Slipper with mild hostility and uttered, “Perhaps you’d want me to provide children with cocaine?”

“Dear Mrs. Soft Drink,” Lilli-Bear fussed, filling her glass with some more liquor, “we didn’t mean to offend you at all. We are just trying to understand the meaning of this—an overwhelming part of humankind consciously and willingly guzzles a bad-tasting drink that reminds us of a broth of cocaine and a narcotic nut, although neither is present in it anymore!”¹⁰²

“It is, you know, like licking cigarette butts or smelling empty cigarette packs,” the Left Slipper declared and drew on his cigarette with relish. Left Slipper indulged himself with a smoke sometimes—seriously irritating the Right Slipper because of the latter’s chronic bronchitis and resulting chronic cough.

“You do not ask why people engage in other nonsense. People do a lot of things.” Mrs. Soft Drink took offense and made to leave. But then Lilli-Bunny brought a huge saucepan of his delightful,

¹⁰² Lilli-Bear didn’t have it quite right. A well-known cola company does use coca leaves, stripped of their cocaine. Kola nuts are not narcotic; rather, they contain caffeine. This parody is based on no specific cola trade name; we mention these facts for educational and entertainment purposes only. Mrs. Soft Drink isn’t a Coke; she is all modern soft drinks.

well-known compote¹⁰³ from the kitchen, and she decided to stay for a glass or two of this divine drink.

“Mankind is sick by its nature,” declared Mrs. Soft Drink. “I’m not the reason; I’m the consequence of the silliness of this world. Okay, people used to drink dope, but that wasn’t enough. Apparently, they still add some kind of secret substance and offer me all around, and people don’t think what they actually drink. People don’t even think about more serious things. People weren’t created to think at all. If every other person fell down dead after drinking me, then I agree, that’d be another matter. But the thing I’m sticking in everybody’s craw isn’t criminal. Many things stick in everybody’s craw. Let me tell you this: if everybody took the effort to think even for the little bit of time that it takes one to drain a glass of me, and instead of forcing himself to swallow what doesn’t want to go down, thought of himself, of his life, of the



world surrounding him and where he is going, there would be no wars on Earth, nobody would be hungry, everybody would put on clean shirts, and mankind would represent a proper example of sapient beings in any exhibition. But in fact, the problem isn’t that they don’t think because of drinking me. As though they would begin thinking if they stopped drinking me! Far from it. Imagine how many murders, thefts, and foolishness could be accomplished in the time people spend drinking me and struggling to hold me inside!”

¹⁰³ A sweet syrup of boiled fruit

“Yeah, we haven’t thought about it like that.” Left Slipper apologized and offered her a cigarette, but Mrs. Soft Drink declined because she led a healthy life and not only didn’t drink soda pop, but didn’t smoke.

“The important thing is not in what people drink,” Mrs. Soft Drink said thoughtfully, and left Lilli-Bunny’s house.

“What a woman,” the Right Slipper said pensively afterwards. “If it were possible to drink her, she’d be priceless.”

“Yes,” Lilli-Bunny said. “Modern tastes are way above us.” And he filled his glass with more compote.

Chapter 25. Lilli-Bunny and Mr. Fast Food

Once, Lilli-Bear’s Neurosis awoke in a wastepaper basket, where it lived among the torn letters and candy wrappers, and encountered a Fast Food hamburger, bitten, but still in good condition. Lilli-Jake had thrown it in there, apparently disappointed in the product, though it was nutritious, and more importantly, rare in Lilli-Bunny’s house.

Lilli-Bear’s Neurosis gulped the sandwich down because, first, it was very hungry, especially in the morning, and second, it believed you should eat your Fast Food fast, so no one can take it away from you; hence, Lilli-Bear’s Neurosis simply had no time for the chewing process, which always requires some degree of thoughtfulness.

No wonder Lilli-Bear’s Neurosis immediately got a stomachache and began to cry. Lilli-Bear loved his Neurosis and always stood up for it. Hearing sobbing from the wastepaper basket, Lilli-Bear tried to find out who had offended his Neurosis.

Lilli-Bear's Neurosis complained of the sandwich, and Lilli-Bear immediately reported to Lilli-Bunny what offense had transpired. Lilli-Bunny was the defender of all offended and overfed. He possessed a remarkable healing ability: when Lilli-Bear, having over-eaten, lay down and moaned, Lilli-Bunny touched his tummy with his finger and murmured an ancient medicine chant:

Let crow's tummy hurt, let magpie's tummy hurt,
Let Bear's tummy heal, heal, heal.

Let crow's tummy hurt, let magpie's tummy hurt,
Let Bear's tummy heal, heal, heal.

This activated Lilli-Bear's farting mechanism, and all the pain was over.

This method, however, wasn't without side effects. It is necessary to say that because of such radical medical actions, no crows or magpies remained in Lilli-Bunny's neighborhood. Some were overwhelmed by the pressure of various diseases and perished, dropping heavily from a branch, and some moved out of harm's way, far from Lilli-Bunny's house, beyond the range of the chant.

Lilli-Bunny's medical actions resulted in Lilli-Bear's Neurosis' rapid recovery, in spite of the fact that Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis fussed around the house, opening all the medical books and health magazines and called the ambulance eight times; the ambulance, however, never arrived because each time, the excited Neurosis mistakenly dialed the number of the local zoo, and the elephant answered, "Wrong number."

As soon as Lilli-Bear's Neurosis recovered, it ran and hid in the wastepaper basket, where it immediately fell asleep to forget the unpleasant incident of the sandwich.

Lilli-Bunny resolved not to leave the offense at that and went to complain to Mr. Fast Food.

Mr. Fast Food was a clown of unpleasant appearance. Movie producers with schizoid disorders film such clowns. His sinister smile made you cry with fright and run away, feverishly looking back to see whether the maniac was pursuing you with an axe.

Well, the schizophrenic movie producers have neglected their disorders for too long. Sometimes they film things that call for putting them in straight jackets and isolating them from society immediately. Society, however strange it may sound, watches their delirious productions, and then leaves those insane producers free and unattended, though it is, you know, very dangerous. Our society is too busy. Snatching sleep after peering for too many hours at a TV set, you can hardly find time to organize to catch the schizophrenic producer and transport him to an asylum. Sometimes Society lifts its backside from the sofa, and you think it's just about to go and bring the manic producers to reason, but no, when you look closer, you see it went to the bathroom because it's spent too long in front of the TV set and developed the necessity, so to speak, to leak you know where. Then, you think, after visiting the bathroom, Society will wash its white hands (it always declares, "I wash my hands!" as Pontius Pilate once did, to show he was not the one to blame for Jesus Christ's crucifixion—the act became a tradition) and go deal with the schizophrenics. But no, it only went as far as the kitchen to get toxic chips or popcorn and head back to the TV set.

Well, you think, it cannot be true. You rush to society shouting, "Take them, these producers, they are raving mad! A normal person couldn't even think about what they've created, let alone watch it." And society sits at the TV set, popping its corn. You then look in its eyes with one last hope— And there—oh dear! The eyes of Society are absolutely mad.

So, Mr. Fast Food was a clown with an appearance a la "horror-movie." Lilli-Bunny asked him, at once, why he was feeding fast food to everyone. As was to be expected, Mr. Fast Food began to juggle hamburgers and laugh in a most unattractive way.



“What can I tell you, my dear Lilli-Bunny,” laughed Mr. Fast Food loudly. “People have no time for a normal, tasteful repast. Times have changed. Nowadays, people hate their bodies, their food, and their souls. People rush about now. They don’t care what they swallow; they’re always on the run, until they fall like racehorses. In their free time, they glue themselves to the TV screen and watch running pictures for fear somebody will jump out and bite them. That’s how they spend their miserable days. I brighten up their lives with my hamburger. I could have sold them food in pills,

and they would eat it with delight. But I’m humanist, you know. I respect tradition; I understand the human need for moderate conservatism. I give old names to things: a lunch, a salad, a pie. Certainly, none of this is real anymore, but traditions are sacred to me. By the way, Mrs. Soft Drink always helps me. She pours her icy-black sparkles over my stomach-drilling victuals, and that’s it. The person is ready for new feats—for his stupid work, for stupid screens! Isn’t that happiness?”

“It’s hardly happiness,” said Lilli-Bunny. “A meal requires respect; you have to prepare it with gusto, sincerely, take your time eating, have a nice conversation—”

“You, Lilli-Bunny, are backwards,” Mr. Fast Food was indignant. “Don’t you understand that modern times have already come? And modern times are when everything old is considered nonsense. Is that clear?”

“Yes, everything is clear with you,” said Lilli-Bunny and sadly ordered a hamburger, because he had got hungry.

“That’s better,” Mr. Fast Food approved. “Don’t be upset, Lilli-Bunny, I’ll add a plastic toy Monster-Ponster to your order. Only don’t eat it, okay? It’s plastic.”

“Okay,” Lilli-Bunny agreed. He ate his hamburger and gave the toy Monster-Ponster to Lilli-Jake. What can you do? Lilli-Bunny couldn’t stand in the way of modern times, could he?

Chapter 26. Lilli-Bunny and the Monkey

People were primitive in the past. They counted in their heads, wrote with quills or ball pens, enjoyed indecent pictures in paper magazines, and thought their lives were quite modern and advanced. What naïveté! O sancta simplicitas.¹⁰⁴

But at last, belated enlightenment came to mankind, and it began to use monkeys for all these things. (You think I’ve made a mistake and said “monkeys” instead of “computers.” Well, what’s the difference? Both behave irrationally, freeze all the time, in any climate, fuss, crack, and inevitably cause headaches in decent persons.)

Nowadays, in the monkey era, people use monkeys to do the things they previously did themselves. Monkeys monitor the flight of airplanes and spacecraft, supervise complex industrial processes, and carry out financial operations. It is difficult to find an aspect of modern human life that doesn’t depend on monkey intellect.

If you want, for example, to make a cup of coffee, you approach a Monkey and give it a command in Monkey language:

Enter: Coffee Command: Quick!

¹⁰⁴ O holy simplicity! “To be “*simplus*” in Latin is both to be innocent, humble and modest, but also ignorant, credulous and naïve.”

<<http://cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/White/creation/sancta-simplicitas.html>>

Program: Well, where are you?
Enter, Enter, Enter for Chrissake!

On entering the command, first you wait for the Monkey to read it syllable-by-syllable. Then you wait for the Monkey to find the definition of the concept “coffee” in the Human-Monkey dictionary and ask you to specify which coffee was meant.

The Monkey will start to announce a list in a dismal voice, and you should nod or say “Ugh” to indicate your choice of aroma, spiciness, density, texture, degree of bitterness, demitasse*, coffeepot, earthiness, sweetness, cappuccino-ness, espresso-ness, saltiness, tartness, mocha, exoticism, and finally, whether you meant French latte.

Having chosen the precise brand of coffee and other details, you wait while the Monkey puts the coffee pot on its head and then on some other place, warning you politely:

“Coffee pot found.

Reconfiguring the system.

Please wait.”

Then you wait for the monkey to spread coffee all over the kitchen, and finally—

The monkey scalds you with coffee. (As though it was necessary to ask so much about the brand. Does it make any difference which coffee has scalded you?)

You scream, “A-A-A-A!” and the Monkey laughs its head off. In the past, you would have had your coffee without all these adventures. But what a retrograde life it was! Certainly, nobody likes to be scalded with coffee. But while you wait and choose, and you’ve already seen that it takes a lo-o-o-o-ong time to wait and choose, you really look like a future man as cavemen

* A special small cup for serving espresso. This French term means, literally, “half a cup.”

imagined him—a ram with two heads. Why two heads? Because he's clever. Why a ram? Such were the aesthetics of cavemen.



Lilli-Bunny decided to get himself a Monkey. He didn't want to be retrograde, because he didn't like the Owl to call him a rustic, boorish, and unadvanced person. The Owl was a very progressive person,

engaged in virtual reality, and because of this, her orbs were always bulging, and she kept saying, "Uhu," whether it was appropriate or not. Well, you know how owls say, "Uhu," with a period in the end, almost like Lilli-Bear's "wow," with a period in the end. The Owl chased virtual computer mice in virtual reality and was quite pleased with her life. She spent all night long in virtual reality and slept in the afternoon. Lilli-Bunny fed the Owl because, left to herself, she would have long ago perished of starvation. Virtual mice are not nourishing indeed. The Owl lived on cookies that Lilli-Bunny specially baked for her breakfast in the evening because, you know, the Owl woke in the evening and then breakfasted.

Sometimes, when Lilli-Bunny fed the Owl cookies, she criticized him. "You, Lilli-Bunny, are absolutely outdated. Nobody bakes cookies anymore. They are all virtual now!"—chomping a mouthful of cookies.

And so, Lilli-Bunny got himself a Monkey in the house, for he did not want to lag behind civilization. Though Lilli-Bunny, we have to confess, had disliked monkeys since childhood, because a nasty monkey bit him when a picture was taken of him with it against a background of Egyptian antiquities. Since then, monkeys weren't the kind of animals he addressed as "cute and pretty." And he said so to almost all animals because he loved animals very much.

There's nothing to be done, whether you like monkeys or not; you have to follow the times.

There were an enormous number of Monkeys in Lilli-Bunny's neighborhood. Mr. Fin Tell, the terrible hunter, caught them when still innocent and after stamping "CPU" (Cerebral Processing Unit) on their foreheads, gave them to Mr. Soft Ware the trainer. Mr. Soft Ware read the brand. If he saw "CPU 5," he inserted a fivefold amount of brains, and if he saw "CPU 4," he only inserted fourfold amount. When these Monkeys became sufficiently mad, Mr. Soft Ware introduced his system to their madness and turned them loose. The locals readily picked up these systematic Monkeys and took them away to their houses, shops, libraries, and even offices, because they themselves couldn't do anything without Monkeys. That made both Mr. Fin Tell the hunter and Mr. Soft Ware the trainer very rich, so everybody envied them and spoilt their Monkeys now and then, training them in indecent grimaces and thieving.

We have to add that Mr. Soft Ware also attired his Monkeys in fine soft pants to make them look more decent. He named his company "Soft-Pants Co.," because the pants were really soft. This way, Mr. Soft Ware quite fairly reflected his occupation in the name of his company.

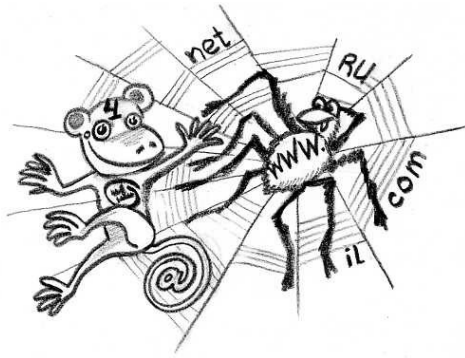
So, Lilli-Bunny got himself a Monkey and started to engage her in his farm work. However, the Monkey he got was willful. When Lilli-Bunny planted carrots, the Monkey pulled them all out, or contrariwise, when Lilli-Bunny pulled out the carrots, the Monkey buried them back and stomped on the patch as if nothing had changed. She began to drive Lilli-Bunny mad. One day, the Monkey *deleted* a whole saucepan of Lilli-Bunny's compote; another time, she froze to the kitchen ceiling and threw frozen bananas at everyone coming and going.

Lilli-Bunny decided that the Monkey was inapplicable to his farm work, and he gave her as a present to Lilli-Bear. Lilli-Bear began to train the Monkey to say "wow" with a period in the end,

but she refused to be trained, and once overturned Lilli-Bear's plate of porridge. After that, Lilli-Bear gave her as a present to Lilli-Kitty, and the Monkey combined all Lilli-Kitty's earrings in a long, logical chain, so Lilli-Kitty had to spend an evening disjuncting them, analyzing each earring separately.

Lilli-Kitty was angry at the Monkey and gave her as a present to Lilli-Jake. Lilli-Jake put her in his room in place of his old computer, but the Monkey began to misbehave; she showed him her tongue, grimaced, and applied indecent words to such distinguished persons that Lilli-Jake's parrots, who repeated everything they heard, got on the "black list" of the local security service and were almost exiled, fortunately to a country that didn't accept troublemakers anymore. The parrots remained in Lilli-Bunny's house, but a police officer sealed their beaks.

The Monkey was left masterless, and wandering around the house, got into the basement and tangled herself in the World Wide Web, which the WWW-spider wove.



There, in the basement, Left Slipper found her. She sat and cried bitterly because nobody needed her. Left Slipper immediately recognized the importance the Monkey attached to the World Wide Web and used her for subversive revolutionary activity in the native country of all left slippers.

Under the orders of Left Slipper, sent by the Monkey through the World Wide Web of WWW-spider, the shot of the cruiser *Glutton* on the Heel Palace became the signal to begin the heroic storm of "the last stronghold of Slippercracy."

Historians are absolutely sure that, with the documents available today, including those stored in special archives, it is possible to recreate only an approximate picture of the events of the Slippercracy overthrow. The preparation for the revolutionary rebellion began on October 22, and on October 25, groups of the Torn Slipper Guard had already occupied the post office, bridges, railway stations, telegraph stations, and other important landmarks of the city. Throughout this time, life proceeded as usual in the country: trams ran, well-known singers sang.

On the night of October 25, the Heel Palace, where the Proverbial Government convened, was taken. On the evening of October 25, at 21:45 (9:45 PM), the *Glutton's* guns shot a blank volley, and the artillery of the nearby fortress commenced shooting at the Palace; of over thirty shells, only two or three hit the target. According to documentary photos, only some eaves and windows were damaged.

About one o'clock in the morning, the rebels—Torn Slippers, armed mainly with tightly rolled insoles at the ready—with bootlaces—stormed the Palace. A battalion of ladies' footwear was defending the Palace.

When Lilli-Bunny saw in the news what was going on in the renamed Torn Slipper Land immediately after the revolution, he understood, at once, that it was his Left Slipper's doing. He called Left Slipper to answer and demanded things be put in order in Torn Slipper Land and the historical name of the country restored. Under Lilli-Bunny's pressure, Left Slipper restored the name; however, the essence didn't change, because the Torn Slippers, on seizing power, tore all the other slippers, so that even now everybody goes barefoot there.

That's how Lilli-Bunny came to understand how dangerous a Monkey could be without supervision. So Lilli-Bunny took the Monkey back to Mr. Soft Ware.

Mr. Soft Ware didn't want to take the Monkey back because he already had Monkeys labeled "CPU 8," and simply turned her loose. Now she successfully fools citizens less advanced than Lilli-Bunny, who is already so advanced he doesn't need a Monkey to live wonderfully.

Only the Owl was still dissatisfied because she believed that only monkeys could do without a Monkey.

Chapter 27. Lilli-Bunny at the Concert

Art isn't simply a kind of inessential excess, like a garnish. Art is a requirement of the soul—its gentle side, so to say. Even peasants, even complete hermits need art: a countryside song or painting on a wooden spoon make life more colorful. Not coarse-grained like ground horseradish, but smoothly agreeable, like finely grated carrot.

So Lilli-Bunny, although he lived by natural economy, was inclined rather appreciably to art in its many manifestations. Lilli-Bunny painted pictures wonderfully. He could suddenly undertake to paint Lilli-Bear's



portrait. His work titled "Horsed Lilli-Bear Prevailing over the Green Serpent" is especially famous. It hung for a time in the Louvre's ante-chamber, but then Lilli-Bear demanded it removed and returned to him because the visitors pointed at the artwork constantly (apparently, they didn't trust the truthfulness of the image. They just couldn't raise themselves to the high level of the allegory; generally, teddy bears don't ride horses and don't spear

serpents). The painted Lilli-Bear didn't like it, and he made an angry face, reducing the artistic value of the work. The portrait even called Lilli-Bear once and complained that he was offended in the Louvre. Just imagine: lunch time in the Louvre—it's noisy, voices are booming, and the painted Lilli-Bear, sitting on a white stallion, holding his victorious spear under his armpit and squinting is dialing a heavy old-fashioned telephone which was added to the picture on the previous day by a young, talented impressionist painter, a member of the Academy of Arts, according to the painted Lilli-Bear's request. Because of the artist's awful shortsightedness, the painted telephone was smeared very much, and the painted Lilli-Bear had to squint to dial the right number. Our picture would be incomplete if we conceal the fact that the Green Serpent wasn't present in the picture, because it was on its lunch-break and "Closed for Lunch" was painted over the portrait.

The Louvre was in an uproar. A painted Lilli-Bear on a white horse with a telephone—and he complains, too! Disgrace. What a shame for the Louvre, where the pictures are generally treated kindly. Mona Lisa, in truth, was also dissatisfied, because they made her smile with her mouth closed all the time. Can you imagine the fate of a woman who wasn't allowed to show her teeth for five hundred years? A certain emancipated activist tried to add a fang to Mona Lisa's face, but she was hospitalized in time (the activist, not Mona Lisa). Every woman has to have a chance to show her teeth sometimes, otherwise she'll forget what freedom is. And women cannot allow themselves to forget freedom, because Freedom should have its hair curled and its face made up, at least on holidays.

So Mona Lisa suffered in silence because she couldn't accept the painted Lilli-Bear's recent invitation to move to Lilli-Bunny's house. Lilli-Bunny just couldn't provide suitable conditions: Mona Lisa needed attention and adoration, but visitors were infrequent at Lilli-Bunny's house, and the inhabitants of the house somehow preferred images from animated movies and comics to serious Mona Lisas. Besides, there was a danger of

someone jokingly adding some detail to her. As you quite understand, to add anything to Mona Lisa is unacceptable, because she is already perfect.

Don't think the inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny's house weren't well educated. Lilli-Jake, for example, was educated at home and took lessons with MacPlato himself. At first, they wanted to employ O'Aristotle, but having met his pupil, Alex of Macedonia, decided to refrain. We certainly cannot deny that O'Aristotle imparted love of poetry to Alex. Alex, however, expressed this love in a rather peculiar way—when he destroyed the city of Thebes, he left only the house of the poet Pindarus to stand among the ruins. He loved and respected Pindarus, you see. Just imagine this Pindarus leaving his house in the morning to buy a bottle of booze—no chance, the liquor store has been demolished. Fortunately, Pindarus didn't live to see this unhappy hour. But Alexander was quite a civilized and intelligent man, so he left the house as a kind of monument.

And what happened to Lilli-Bear's portrait? The Louvre returned it with apologies, and Lilli-Bear placed it on the wall of his wine cellar. The wine cellar lay below Lilli-Bunny's house near the WWW-spider's den and provided a fine place to store Lilli-Bunny's bottles of wine and liquors, big barrel of honey-brown beer, and assorted snacks, like pickled tomatoes and red peppers.

Besides the art of pickling tomatoes, Lilli-Bunny respected other refined occupations, for example, music. Once, he bought a ticket to a concert of a well-known musician, whose name I wouldn't want to mention here. Okay, okay—His name was Paganino.

Lilli-Bunny put on his holiday suit, consisting of red and white dotted shorts, and a pink T-shirt with the words—

I Love Loud Music!

I Hate Loud Neighbors!

—and went to the concert. Lilli-Bunny took his slippers with him because for all kinds of footwear, no ticket was required (everyone who used to go to concerts barefoot for economy's

sake should note that). The other inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny's house preferred to listen to the music on the radio, and so they stayed at home. Lilli-Bunny, however, was a real connoisseur of the musical arts and didn't object to spending money on the ticket.

The concert proved successful from the very beginning because in the buffet there were flaky, sugar-powdered pastries, which Lilli-Bunny ardently loved. These pastries reminded him of the innocent pleasures and sweet treats that life sometimes graciously grants us.

Then Lilli-Bunny entered the hall, not waiting for the last bell, because he was punctual—the result of his long-time involvement in natural economy.

The music hall was full. Paganino was quite a talented violinist and gathered many and varying people. The members of the Deaf Musicians' Association, who loved music because every deaf musician "hears" the music in his own way, occupied the first rows. Further away sat the city celebrities and almost-celebrities. Lilli-Bunny, however, sat on the gallery because being slippered, he wasn't admitted to decent society, though Left Slipper threatened to arrange a debate about equality and the rights of slippers, which would have certainly spoiled the concert. To calm him, Lilli-Bunny bought a small red flag and a box of candy.



At last, the audience calmed down, and the maestro appeared on the stage. Paganino was dressed in loose black robes; his long

black hair wasn't accustomed to the delicate courtship of shampoo.

After the first three vigorous chords, all Paganino's strings broke. Then the chandelier fell, and then the ceiling cracked. The majority of the audience left, running—ignoring the fact that it might have been an integral part of the performance. But Paganino paid no heed. Having lost his strings, he began to drum on the violin, and Lilli-Bunny, willing to help the maestro, began to sing quietly, “Ta-a-a—Ta, Ta, ta, da tam—” Lilli-Bunny launched into *Caprice 24*, by Paganino. Having heard Lilli-Bunny, the enlivened maestro finished the couplet, “Ta Ta Da Dam—” and called Lilli-Bunny onstage. They continued the performance together, using the violin as a drum.

Lilli-Bunny's slippers participated, too. Right Slipper sat at the grand piano and began to accompany until he upended it. Paganino's music was so vigorous, no instrument, except a drum, could sustain it past the first three chords. Left Slipper found a starting pistol somewhere, and he began to shoot in tune. The last spectators ran away and didn't ask for their money back, because they thought it was a musical and everything was specifically arranged this way. Shaped by new tradition, musicals can turn unpredictable nowadays, and shooting isn't the worst possible outcome.

Lilli-Bunny and Paganino sang with abandon, and no one in Lilli-Bunny's house trusted their ears, listening to the radio. The radio broadcast Lilli-Bunny's lovely little voice, husky but confident, accompanied by Paganino's smoker's baritone, the sound of the grand piano falling, and the shots of the starting pistol.

That was a remarkable concert! What else is important in art? What is important in true art is that it's not boring. When it is boring, it isn't art anymore, it's science.

Chapter 27. Lilli-Bunny Hires a Cow

Lilli-Bunny dreamed of keeping a cow for a long time. He, as a person living by natural economy, certainly required a cow, but all the inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny's house were against it. Lilli-Bear didn't want to share Lilli-Bunny's attention with anybody; Lilli-Kitty was afraid the cow would spoil her haircut; Lilli-Jake was afraid the cow would lick off some important item of his, because even without a cow, many of his important items kept disappearing, as though a cow had licked them off. The cats were categorically against a cow because they thought cows were dirty creatures, as cows don't wash themselves with their tongues; the parrots repeated everything after everyone, so they were naturally against a cow, and Lilli-Bunny's slippers were afraid that the cow would wear them barehoof, and that would be their objective, if not to say concrete, end.

Only the old Grandfather Clock was for a cow because, as you remember, the Clock was desperately in need of fresh dairy products.

Lilli-Bunny decided to try to find a decent cow anyway and then, he thought, he'd begin to treat everybody to fresh milk and cheesecakes, and their attitude towards the cow would soften.

He didn't say a word about buying a cow. Not that Lilli-Bunny was short of money. Lilli-Bunny was economical—not greedy or stingy—but economical, so he had enough money. The thing was, he lived in a free country and in a free country, cows had rights as full as the rights of other citizens, say, roosters or goats. The time when cows were regarded as cattle long ago had passed. Now cows are regarded as working class, which is more pleasant, believe me. Cows have received freedom, as did the Oriental women in their time, and they commenced to choose their occupation, place of residence, and terms of feeding.

And so, Lilli-Bunny placed the following ad in the local newspaper:

**REQUIRED:
A cow
with higher education,
full time,
accommodations included.
Experience and recommendations
are a must!
Apply in Lilli-Bunny's house,
knock three times.**

Lilli-Bunny didn't want to give his phone number because he was afraid there would be a lot of senseless lowing on the phone. Better, he thought, they come directly and knock with a hoof on the door. And to be sure he would not mistake them for his neighbor, Mr. Squeeze-Hard, coming for an onion and sunglasses, or his other neighbor, Mr. Bolthead, coming for a bag of bolts, he added the request to knock three times, exactly. Really, Lilli-Bunny isn't a yo-yo to answer the door once with bolts, once with onions. And besides, the cow might not like his appearance with these items on the threshold. Cows are fastidious nowadays—they wouldn't want to work in an establishment that looked strange or queer to them.

As for higher education, it's now required of any cow. Not that the cow yields more milk, nor is the milk tastier because of higher education. It's simply that there are established standards and criteria in society, and in the country where Lilli-Bunny lived, higher education of cows became traditional. Some especially unable cows were given bachelor degrees in cow sciences on their general length of service, without examination. But the majority of cows chose other occupations, because cow freedom meant that any cow might self-determine freely.

Lilli-Bunny, certainly, could look for the cow on acquaintance, according to his neighbors' recommendation, so to say. But he

didn't want to turn to such domesticity at once because he, too, respected the basic democratic principles of the society in which he lived, and he wanted to give all cows equal opportunity on the labor market. The consciousness of the country's population was at a high level, especially regarding questions that didn't so much concern the pockets or personal benefits of the citizens; though Lilli-Bunny was a conscious citizen, not for show, but for the general improvement of all kinds of important matters, which abound in a progressive society. Society very much loved Lilli-Bunny for it, especially when, in rare moments of lucidity, it bought fresh carrots and fennel off him.

The first to knock at Lilli-Bunny's house door was a brown cow with big white spots. Lilli-Bunny would prefer a classic black-and-white cow, but he moaned from delight. And besides, to state openly his preferences about color had been considered illegal and outright discriminatory for quite a long time now. Therefore, everybody continued to be guided by his or her preferences, but silently.

Lilli-Bunny invited the cow to his office (you cannot do without an office in modern natural economy), and began the interview:

"I require, you know, a cow in my establishment."

"And is your establishment big?" the brown cow asked severely.

"I wouldn't say so," confessed Lilli-Bunny modestly.

"And there are how many other cows?"

"There are no other cows. I require a cow," Lilli-Bunny answered, "precisely because there are no cows!"

"Well, surely you don't expect me to do all the cow work!" the brown cow stood up angrily.

“I’ll feed you well, and I don’t need more than one cow,” Lilli-Bunny tried to persuade the cow.

“I do not work at small enterprises,” the brown cow cut him off and left without saying goodbye. Slamming the door, the cow uttered, “What a shame! How do the authorities permit that?”

Lilli-Bunny was especially upset by that last phrase. Like every decent citizen, Lilli-Bunny was afraid of authorities, although he didn’t quite understand what was amiss in the fact that his establishment was small and had no cow. He judged that, in general, there wasn’t anything especially criminal, but as the saying goes, God protects those who protect themselves. Therefore, Lilli-Bunny phoned Mr. Troubleson, his lawyer. After long excuses that he didn’t have time for phone conversations and things like this were not for discussion over the phone, he at last proceeded to enlighten Lilli-Bunny—being a small-scale enterprise wasn’t accepted in this country, and it was considered criminal to some extent. Although there wasn’t a definite law against it, judiciary practice showed that small enterprises invariably suffered in court, whereas large enterprises usually dodged trouble and avoided court.

“Why should they prosecute me?” Lilli-Bunny sobbed into the receiver.

“Get yourself a cow,” advised Mr. Troubleson, avoiding a straight answer.

Lilli-Bunny hung up and wiped his nose. Hiring a cow wasn’t a choice anymore. It was a vital necessity. It appeared that the absence of a cow in a natural economy was equated, by public opinion and judiciary practice, if not to a major felony, then to something like fraud. How could an establishment lack a cow? The public deception is evident.

Thank God, he didn't have to wait long. Another cow, of Lilli-Bunny's favorite color, knocked on his door, and the happy Lilli-Bunny led her to his office.

"Does the fact I don't have a cow at present bother you?" asked Lilli-Bunny uncertainly.

"Oh, no, not at all," the black-and-white cow answered, then began to talk about herself. "I've graduated the conservatory, the faculty of artistic whistle."

"Oh, please whistle something!" Lilli-Bunny was delighted. He knew the cow should be milked early in the morning, and music could brighten up the early yawning hour.

"Moo-o-o-o-o-o-o," whistled the cow.

"But that's not whistling; that's lowing."

"Well, I graduated the faculty of artistic whistle, specializing in artistic low! You'd like the cows to whistle?"

"No, no," Lilli-Bunny immediately surrendered. "It's not important; milk is more important—"

"What?" the cow was deeply indignant. "You are going to milk me? Oh, no—"

The cow jumped up, hastily collected her diplomas, and left.

Lilli-Bunny was perplexed. "Well," he thought, "what shall I do?" Fortunately, somebody knocked the door, and Lilli-Bunny ran to open it.

A huge bull stood on the threshold.

"Excuse me," said Lilli-Bunny uncertainly, having nevertheless led the bull to his office, "but I require a cow—"

“Aren’t you familiar with the law against sexism?” asked the bull imperturbably. “This law provides measures for realization of the state policy developed for the assurance of equal rights, freedom, and opportunities for cows and bulls, for the prevention of discrimination by sex, as a necessary condition of stable and steady development of this country.”

Lilli-Bunny was outright frightened. “I won’t hire you, not because you are a bull, but because you are not a cow. That is, not because you are not a cow, but because you don’t give milk.”

The bull’s reply was even more confusing:

“You didn’t write in your ad that you require milk. You wrote that you require a cow. You should write, “A bull or a cow.” The law demands it, and I’ll insist on my rights.” The Bull began to press on Lilli-Bunny, but, fortunately, Lilli-Bunny’s thirty-gallon Samovar entered the room to announce that it had begun to boil and everybody had to go to drink tea.

Seeing the huge Samovar, the bull lowered his eyes and agreed to forgive Lilli-Bunny his ignorance of the laws, although certainly, ignorance of the law doesn’t release anyone from abiding by it. You see, when the bull tried to press his rights in another place, he had been scalded with boiled water. Apparently, he was afraid of repeating that experience with the Samovar that puffed and glared very convincingly.

By the end of the evening, Lilli-Bunny’s rash personnel policy had broken so many laws that, if his visitors hadn’t been really kind and mild, in general, and his Samovar so impressive, Lilli-Bunny would probably be sitting to the end of his days in prison for all kinds of discrimination.

Other applicants came to Lilli-Bunny. There were among them a professor of Mad Cow disease, experts on transforming cows into pigs and back, and a French chef specializing in beef a la Chateaubriand.* There were many well-educated cows—cow-engineers, cow-programmers, cow-lawyers, cow-choreographers, and even cow-hereditary adventurers. However, no candidate agreed to give milk.

Lilli-Bunny became extremely sad, but applicants continued to arrive, which totally upset his natural economy.

All day long, Lilli-Bunny was engaged with obstinate applicants, each of whom made a row his own way; but the French cook raged especially. And it seemed that all the candidates weren't really interested in employment—they had suspicious snouts and interrogated Lilli-Bunny in



detail about his establishment, sometimes checking documents and accounts. They were especially strict with the living accommodations. The majority insisted on a two-three room cowshed with a phone and bathroom, a corporate mobile phone, a car, and shares in Lilli-Bunny's business. When they found out that Lilli-Bunny didn't have shares because he wasn't "Lilli-Bunny Corporation Ltd.," but a self-employed entrepreneur, the candidates sometimes contemptuously spat on Lilli-Bunny's office floor; one cow even left cow dung on Lilli-Bunny's carpet.

* Beef a la Chateaubriand – this French recipe for beef with garnish was invented by François Rene Chateaubriand, the French politician and writer. Take 7 ½-14 ounces of beef without fasciae, wash it and dry. Heat the fat on a pan and roast the meat to brownish color. You may also use a barbecue. Add salt and white pepper. After 10 minutes, place a piece of roasted goose liver on top of the meat and fix it with a toothpick; place a cube of butter with herbs on top of this tower. Serve with fried potatoes, stewed peeled tomatoes, mushrooms, green peas, carrots, and asparagus.

At first, Lilli-Bunny tried to persuade the cows that his accommodations were fine and that cows usually don't have difficulties giving milk, but his visitors didn't even think to accept his offer.

To stop the nightmare, Lilli-Bunny was compelled to place a new ad in the local newspaper:

**No cow is required,
especially with higher education,
neither on full time, nor on part,
and no living accommodations are provided.
Experience and recommendations
will not help!
Do not apply at Lilli-Bunny's house,
and especially do not knock three times!**

The ad cost Lilli-Bunny dearly, because each "no" word cost one dollar, whereas a usual word cost only 25 cents. The negative particles were so costly because the newspaper didn't want to look too negative.

Lilli-Bunny was also compelled to hide from the public the fact that he needed a cow, because he had confused the public with this ad, especially printing it in the newspaper.

And so, law-abiding Lilli-Bunny became criminal all over, and even acquired a habit of looking around when he left his house—to check whether he was being watched.

One night, when Lilli-Bunny's neighbor, Mr. Squeeze-Hard, came to borrow an onion and sunglasses, which he needed, as was mentioned earlier, for extracting maple syrup from birch firewood, Lilli-Bunny broke down and asked whether he could recommend a decent cow who would agree to give milk. To Lilli-Bunny's surprise, Mr. Squeeze-Hard immediately offered him his cow Peggy (Pegasus abbreviated). Lilli-Bunny was beside

himself with delight. Peggy the Cow didn't ask much and promised to give milk every day.

Peggy the Cow came to work the next day, giving a bucketful of milk. Lilli-Bunny began to receive a pail of milk every morning. He didn't even have to milk her, because she milked herself. Lilli-Bunny suggested Peggy arrange machine milking (with help from Lilli-Bunny's car, who in her childhood thought she was a cow, had even grazed on the lawn, and until lately, dripped something out of her all the time—sometimes oil and sometimes gasoline).

But Peggy the Cow nearly reared.

"No! No!" she cried. "No milking! I'm doing it all by myself!"

And Lilli-Bunny gave up.

The problems didn't start immediately, but in time, domestic accessories began to vanish from Lilli-Bunny's house: watches, toys, umbrellas, caps, cups, paintings, wines from Lilli-Bear's wine cellar, can and bottle openers, flasks, lighters, Left Slipper's cigarettes, and even ashtrays with cigarette butts.

At first, Lilli-Bunny blamed Klepty, the house-gremlin of troll nationality, who was a chronic kleptomaniac and filched everything that wasn't nailed to the floor (or the wall or ceiling). But Lilli-Bunny checked his closet, and found nothing except Right Slipper's old glasses.

And then Lilli-Jake's thermometer, the sand thermometer that Lilli-Bear made for Lilli-Jake (if the sand is warm, the weather is hot, and if the sand is cold, the weather is cold) vanished. Lilli-Jake was very upset.

However, a very similar thermometer soon appeared in a local junk-shop, and Lilli-Bunny purchased it for Lilli-Jake. Lilli-Jake

declared that it was his old thermometer, because he once had buried a coin in it; he now dug the coin out.

All secrets were revealed at last, when one summer day, Lilli-Bunny went into the cowshed to get his next pail of milk, but found neither milk, nor Peggy the Cow.

On a straw bed lay a note, obviously written by a hoof:

“Gone South. Will be back by autumn.
Kisses. Peggy the Cow.”

From his visit to the country Lilli-Bunny knew that cows usually depart for the South in summer, like all normal vacationers, so he wasn't surprised; however, having examined the cowshed, Lilli-Bunny found a whole mountain of empty milk bottles.

“All is clear now,” Lilli-Bunny bit his lip. “Peggy didn't give milk herself; she bought it in a dairy-shop. And she got the money selling things from the house.” You couldn't expect her to buy milk on her salary, could you?

“It's a pity,” said Lilli-Bunny. “Why didn't she admit she wasn't giving milk? We'd love her anyway.” Peggy the Cow had stolen and sold Lilli-Bunny's thermos, which he liked very much, that's why he was so upset.

“Well, the Cow will come back, and I'll tell her we are not angry with her, but that she isn't to hand things from the house over to the junk-shop. Let her live with us and receive the cow salary, and we really should buy milk in the dairy-shop, anyway.”

“Now I understand why Mr. Squeeze-Hard gave the Cow to you so readily! That's why he extracts maple syrup from birch firewood at —she's beggared the old man absolutely,” Left Slipper declared.

“Maybe you should sack her all the same?” Right Slipper asked uncertainly.

“No, a natural economy is impossible without a cow!” said Lilli-Bunny severely and pensively looked at the sky. “When will my beloved Peggy return from the South?”

Chapter 29. Lilli-Bunny and His Gramophone

Lilli-Bunny met an old gramophone, who later became his favorite Gramophone, on his journey to the nineteenth century. Lilli-Bunny undertook this intrepid journey in order to find the roots of his Lilli-Bunny family. He was building a genealogical tree, but he lacked data on some of his relatives. Lilli-Bunny could go to the archives, but the dust always made him sneeze; and besides, due to the absurdities of the last 100-120 years, some slips of paper most likely were lost and unwelcome additions were scribbled (oh, a historian’s life is difficult indeed). Lilli-Bunny, without long deliberation, entered his time machine, which usually served him as a washing machine and was used as a time machine only in such rare cases as when the milk boiled over or a pie was burnt. Then Lilli-Bunny put on the hat that was fashionable five minutes ago (the fashion in hats always changes with terrific speed), and went pastwards in time to switch the milk off or get the pie from the stove. You will say that it isn’t absolutely true, because sometimes the milk escaped the pan and was left to rush the rooms, terribly frightening the cats. That’s so, but it was done not because Lilli-Bunny didn’t want to use the time machine once more, but because milk should sometimes be given a chance to run about, otherwise it turns stale and overweight.

Honorable Super-Einstein himself changed Lilli-Bunny’s washing machine into a time machine. Once, having run out of his tincture of fast neutrons, and subsequently recovered from a fit of hard drinking, Super-Einstein considered once again the “Lilli-Einstein-Super-Bunny Paradox,” according to which, as

you remember, the color of the mailbox could influence the quality of the received correspondence. Super-Einstein then decided to meet Lilli-Bunny personally to discuss the current problems of quantum postal physics with him.

Lilli-Bunny shared with his esteemed colleague Super-Einstein his practical observations of Mailbox behavior conducted from nearby bushes, which resolved the “Lilli-Einstein-Super-Bunny Paradox” in a graceful and truly Einsteinian style: as you remember, Mailbox snatched the most cheerful postcards out of Goodnewsman the postman’s bag and promptly swallowed them. Super-Einstein laughed until he cried! Why did he fail to guess himself?

“Es ist einfach! Es ist einfach!”* he repeated in German and wiped his tears, laughing. “I should have conducted such Das Gedanken experiment** myself!”

Super-Einstein liked Lilli-Bunny’s practical wit and apple strudel very much. Lilli-Bunny complained that he was often so busy with household chores that strudel burnt and milk boiled over. Super-Einstein then became thoughtful, looked at Lilli-Bunny with his famous cunning glance, took one more mouthful of the delightful draft, Honey-Brown Beer, from Lilli-Bear’s wine cellar, and waved his hand. “All right, I’ll turn your washing machine to a time machine.”

Lilli-Bunny himself used his washing machine as a time machine, but only traveled forward in time. Sometimes he used to climb into the washing machine at 12:30, and when he climbed out of it, it was already 12:35, so Lilli-Bunny said he ‘d manage himself, thank you, very much.

But Super-Einstein wasn’t distracted that easily. He tightened up some nuts, stuck some lamps and clocks around, and eventually

* Es ist einfach! – It is simple! (*German*)

** Das Gedanken experiment – thought experiment (*German*)

modernized the washing machine to a real time machine that could go back to the past.

So, this time, due to Super-Einstein's modifications, Lilli-Bunny went to the nineteenth century, having preliminarily put on a hat corresponding to that time. Since there was only one sitting place in the machine, Lilli-Bunny took only his slippers with him, and he didn't tell anyone that he was going so far back into the past, because he planned to return to the present practically at the moment of departure, so nobody in Lilli-Bunny's house needed to worry that the dinner this day would be late.

The nineteenth century was sedate and slow. The charm of rotting feudalism and aristocracy was still being felt. Lilli-Bunny visited all his relatives and even went to visit a very distant ancestor in London.

In the nineteenth century, London Lilli-Bunny found the person he needed, asked him everything (it turned out that this ancestor lived by natural economy, too), wrote down everything accurately, and on top of that, had a roaring argument with Karl Marx, who just happened to turn up. Lilli-Bunny stated that because of his crazy communistic extravagances, no cow in the future agrees to give milk. Then Lilli-Bunny was ready to go back home to the future, but became absorbed with the extraordinary music coming from the gilded tube of the then very young Gramophone who lived at Karl Marx's place. The Gramophone was very unhappy there because Karl Marx made him play the "Internationale" all day long, and when the tired Gramophone made a mess of the words, the cruel man pulled Gramophone's handle until it hurt and spat into the gilded tube.

We'll spoil henceforth the old tradition
And hit the blue to win the prize!

The Gramophone muddled godlessly, playing the same record for the thirty-third time.

“You counterrevolution!” the coryphaeus¹⁰⁵ of national revolts cried as he beat the poor Gramophone with his fists.

And one time, the Gramophone was awfully frightened by the



spirit of communism, which didn't wish to wander across Europe, but sat in Karl Marx's outhouse with constipation. Poor Gramophone wanted to wash his tube after his master's abuse, but the sobbing spirit of communism occupied the outhouse. The Gramophone became convinced that day that the spirit was good for nothing and began to muddle the

“Internationale” intentionally, trying to make his hairy master understand how badly his business smelled, but to no avail. Karl Marx continued to rage, and the Gramophone nicknamed him “the Rabid Moor.”

Lilli-Bunny, having met the Gramophone, confirmed the record player's worst fears about the future; Karl Marx, however, didn't listen to Lilli-Bunny and threw his worn right boot at him, which brought him the admiration and respect of Left Slipper, who adored this coryphaeus to begin with.

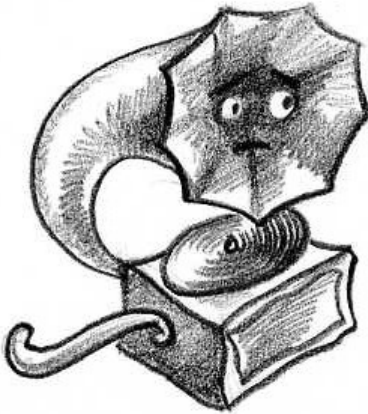
Lilli-Bunny said to the Gramophone, “You don't have to stay in this hated place. Run away with me to the future.” Gramophone agreed, but couldn't fit into Lilli-Bunny's time machine with his tube, and without the tube, he refused to go.

So Lilli-Bunny suggested the Gramophone move on his own and gave him his phone number to call in 150 years. Lilli-Bunny said a touching goodbye to the very young Gramophone, and they

¹⁰⁵ Leader

parted—Lilli-Bunny in tears, and the Gramophone issuing a hysterical crash as a symbol of his despondency.

And what do you think? In the present, Lilli-Bunny got a phone call, and there in the receiver was the familiar gruff Gramophone's voice and charming crackling. Lilli-Bunny again shed tears, and went to collect the Gramophone and bring him to live in Lilli-House.



It took the Gramophone 150 years to reach Lilli-Bunny's time. He saw much on the way. The police confiscated him from Karl Marx for debts. He worked for some time with Sherlock Holmes; from the fingerprints on Gramophone's gilded tube Holmes deduced that Lilli-Bunny had visited the Gramophone, but he wasn't sure whether the visit happened already or only was to happen

later, since the fingerprints had the characteristics of representatives of future generations—in spite of being clear, they were not listed in the card files. In general, through the rest of the time, the Gramophone was treated reasonably well, although his gilded tube was shot twice in the course of one revolution and the First World War. During the Second World War, the Gramophone resided in Argentina and was spared. From time to time, anarchically inclined Argentineans used his gilded tube as an ashtray, and he was completely fed up with their tango, but it really counted for nothing compared to Karl Marx's "Internationale." The Gramophone arrived in Lilli-Bunny's time whole and sound, and to general surprise, played records very tolerably. Lilli-Bunny at once took the Gramophone on a picnic and treated him to raspberry jam, and all the inhabitants of Lilli-Bunny's house at once adored Granddad the Gramophone. They even began to call him Grammy. Lilli-Bunny was very glad that

Grammy had arrived in our time, having survived all the tribulations and storms of history. See what feats a true friendship like the one between Lilli-Bunny and his Gramophone can achieve!

Chapter 30. Lilli-Bunny and Cultural Differences

It's difficult to decide what are considered cultural differences and what are outright meanness and rudeness. Before Lilli-Bunny settled in Lilli-House, he lived in many countries and saw different customs and traditions. Certainly, people live differently, some are even so original that they are similar to nobody, but that's just the point—when you speak about a people as a whole, it is just theory. When you have a specific representative of this people right before your nose, you never know how to behave; he might have any number of cultural values you might unwittingly offend. In short, Lilli-Bunny had more than his share of trouble with cultural distinctions. Sometimes it happened that he could clearly see a person as an impudent swine, while everyone around would explain to him that you, Lilli-Bunny, simply have cultural differences with that person; he seems a swine to you, but he is quite a decent person according to the local standards. Well, maybe just a bit more impudent and swinish than the norm, but this is quite accepted and even encouraged here.

Lilli-Bunny's head started to spin in the kaleidoscope of cultural differences, and he clasped it with both hands so it wouldn't fall off, though nobody would have paid attention; they would have decided it was one of Lilli-Bunny's cultural differences to lose his head. So Lilli-Bunny decided to penetrate the heart of cultural differences once and for all. In one country, it was bad to steal, but people stole; in another, it was good, and they stole, too; and in the third, it was possible to steal, but nobody did it, because there was nothing left to steal. Again, somebody stole from Lilli-

Bunny, and again, he didn't know whether he was being treated badly this time, or whether some cultural difference had happened, not worth his attention. Lilli-Bunny had been suffering for some time, and then went to the city of Cosmopolitville, where a certain lady by the name of Mme. Cultural Differences lived, in order to learn from her on the spot. Once more, Lilli-Bunny took only his slippers with him, because the other inhabitants of Lilli-House didn't want to go to Cosmopolitville.

When Lilli-Bunny arrived in the city, it took him a long time to find the house, because some numbers were in Arabic numerals, while the others were in Roman, and the street names were sometimes written in pseudo-Chinese (looking like Chinese characters, but with no meaning whatsoever), and sometimes in Ancient Bullterriers' language.

At last, Lilli-Bunny found the house. Mme. Cultural Differences received Lilli-Bunny favorably, as if she had expected his arrival. She was a lady of an unbalanced exterior because, despite her leanness, various extremities of her volatile organism disrupted her balance as she walked, and therefore, she used tundra skis



even at home. A red Chinese hat with a long braid adorned her head; she was wrapped up in a magnificent Japanese dressing gown over a Russian padded jacket and on her feet, she wore Texan boots with spurs, over which the tundra skis were attached.

Lilli-Bunny closely examined Mme. Cultural Differences and paused, not knowing how to greet her.

“Shalom,¹⁰⁶” said Mme. modestly and kissed Lilli-Bunny thrice, according to the Russian custom.

¹⁰⁶ Here, hello. Also *goodbye* and *peace*. Ultimately means completeness. (*Hebrew*)

“Salaam aleikum,¹⁰⁷” answered Lilli-Bunny for some reason, and settled on a sofa.

“I believe you have some business here?” asked Mme. Cultural Differences, pouring Lilli-Bunny a glass of Russian vodka diluted with Sabbath wine.

Lilli-Bunny didn’t drink it, but his slippers eagerly accepted and asked for more.

“Yes, dear Mme. Cultural Differences,” Lilli-Bunny said, “I have a question. I certainly respect all cultural differences very much, but frequently I’m not sure whether I’ve encountered cultural differences or whether a person is simply a rascal and an SOB. It makes my head spin. Do you have some means to differentiate between cultural differences and simple ordinary rascality?”

“But what exactly happened? I need an example,” asked Mme. Cultural Differences, and drew on a huge Havana cigar made in the Netherlands.

“Well, I’ve recently been robbed, almost left penniless, and they told me afterwards that I was a fool, and it was all because of cultural differences,” Lilli-Bunny admitted grimly.

“Have they taken much?” asked Mme. Cultural Differences in a business-like manner.

“Practically everything they could carry away.”

“Well, did they say good-bye?” asked Mme. Cultural Differences.

“Yes,” answered Lilli-Bunny.

¹⁰⁷ “Peace be upon you.” (*Arabic*)

“It means that they were cultured,” noted Mme. Cultural Differences and enquired, “And how exactly did they say goodbye? Please repeat literally, preferably in the language they used.”

“Something like, ‘It has been nice knowing you’,” remembered Lilli-Bunny with effort.

“And what have you answered?” Mme. Cultural Differences became interested.

“Something like, ‘I am very upset with what you did to me,’” recollected Lilli-Bunny at once.

“Well, you see, we have cultural differences here,” concluded Mme. Cultural Differences. “Had you answered ‘Go f— yourself’, there would have been no differences.”

“Aha! So what is important is not what people do, but what they say!” guessed Lilli-Bunny.

“Sure,” Mme. Cultural Differences approved Lilli-Bunny’s guess.

“It means if I’d answered correctly, he would have become ashamed, returned, and become a decent person?” asked Lilli-Bunny with hope.

“Certainly not, but in such a case, there would have been no cultural differences, while in the situation you described cultural differences are evident.”

“Dear Mme. Cultural Differences, don’t you think that many people simply use these ‘cultural differences’ as a cover to avoid punishment for their mean and dirty tricks, and thus manage to remain clean? It’s not our fault that certain Lilli-Bunnies experienced another childhood and pissed into a pot with a label in another language?” Lilli-Bunny expressed himself.

“Well, not without it, not without it,” admitted Mme. Cultural Differences. “But you, Lilli-Bunny, should be pleased, because in some places, cultural differences reach such intensity that you could have been eaten. I used to know one tribe—would you like me to introduce you? Very affable cannibals. I think some of them would enjoy an occasional Lilli-Bunny.”

“And what about slipper-eaters among them?” worried Left Slipper; social reforms were his life business, and he couldn’t allow himself to be eaten before finishing them.

“Slipper-eaters?” reflected Mme. Cultural Differences. “I don’t know. I shall ask.”

“Aha,” guessed Lilli-Bunny, “Nothing has changed in the world: people still are eating each other—they just speak in a civilized manner!”

“Certainly! This is the progress of civilization,” encouraged Mme. Cultural Differences. “There is nothing worse than to believe that anything in the world is changing. That’s how simpletons are caught: they think that times have changed; nobody would eat them on any sunny afternoon—they go out just like that, and they are swallowed whole. Times do not change, only the phrases change which fertilize those or other actions.”

“So cultural differences were thought up by idiots for idiots?” finally guessed Lilli-Bunny.

“At last!” Mme. Cultural Differences was delighted, as if she had been long leading Lilli-Bunny to this idea, though she herself was surprised by it and decided to consider it later. In truth, she didn’t succeed, didn’t consider it, because after Lilli-Bunny left, Mme. Cultural Differences went to a hairdresser where the idea was casually cut off, together with her surplus hair.

You know, it happens sometimes: you come to a hairdresser to engage in thought (where else can you concentrate better on an idea than sitting in an armchair and squinting so that hair won't get in your eyes?), and a silly hairdresser begins to chat, so that you leave not only without hair, but also without valuable ideas which could have developed and flourished if not for the chatter.

And why are hairdressers so talkative? "Cultural differences," you will answer habitually. No, it's just pure idiocy.

Yes, pure idiocy!

Lilli-Bunny and the International Lilli-Bunny Day

(Instead of an Afterword)

You won't be surprised to find out that the world began to respect Lilli-Bunny so much, after all he had done for it, and especially after all he hadn't done to it, that the United Frustrations Organization (UFO) appointed Lilli-Bunny Citizen of the World and declared August 24 (Lilli-Bunny's birthday) International Lilli-Bunny Day. I think it is necessary to respect and celebrate people, not only because they've done something to the world, but also because they haven't done something to it.

For example, in thirty chapters of the novel, Lilli-Bunny:

1. Still didn't kill fifty million people
2. Didn't participate in any massacres
3. Didn't invent the A-bomb
4. Didn't drop an A-bomb, and
5. Didn't invent any kind of theory that makes a couple of continents almost strangle themselves

Isn't this list of merits sufficient to consider Lilli-Bunny an exceptional person on a world scale? It seems to me that, not

having done anything at all, Lilli-Bunny has brought real benefit to our world.

You will say that you, too, did nothing from the list above, and why are you not considered an outstanding person? Nobody is declaring your International Day. You've forgotten perhaps: Lilli-Bunny might be you! (Taking into account some clauses specified in the preface). That means it is your International Lilli-Bunny Day! Yes, don't work this day if you wish. Show this book to your employer and don't go to your work. And if he threatens to fire you, peacefully threaten to engage in natural economy and persuade all your colleagues to do likewise. So he, your employer, will go West with all his business. And if you are the employer, threaten your workers that if they do mischief while you are on holiday, you, too, will engage in natural economy, and all their workplaces will go West.

In short, having provided yourself with an additional day off, you can start to win yourself other holidays. Here follows the brief calendar of holidays for which you, as a rightful Lilli-Bunny, can safely struggle:

January 1 – Lilli-Bunny's New Year (coincides with the official one)

January 3 – Lilli-Bunny's Day for finishing up all the tasty leftovers of the New Year feast

February 8 – Lilli-Bunny's Mailbox's Birthday

February 23 – Peggy the Cow's Birthday

March 1 – March Hare Day; celebrated by putting pink paper ears on and baking carrot pie

March 23 – Lilli-Kitty's Birthday

April 1 – Klepty the House Gremlin's birthday

April 7 – additional International Lilli-Bunny Day, if the celebration in August wasn't enough

April 11 – Lilli-Jake's Birthday

April 13 (on Friday) – the Day of Both Parrots' Hatching

April 29 – Lilli-Bunny's Gramophone's Birthday

May 1 – the Day of Sticking out Our Tongues at Karl Marx

May 15 – Hamster Hamlet’s Birthday
June 1 – the Day of Fish 007’s Capture
June 2 – Basia the Cat’s Birthday
June 5 – the Day of Lilli-Bunny’s Victory over the Fox
August 13 – Lilli-Bunny’s Favorite Grandmother’s Birthday
August 16 – the Day of Lilli-Bunny’s Sponge’s Recovery
August 24 – International Lilli-Bunny Day
October 1 – Golden Cat’s Birthday
October 11 – Lilli-Bear’s Birthday
November 7 – Lilli-Bunny’s Left Slipper’ Birthday
December 24 – Lilli-Bunny’s Right Slipper’s Birthday
(simply coincides with Christmas)

There you are! With such a cheerful calendar of additional holidays, you can begin to live anew, joyfully and happily! Twenty-six new holidays! Only to think! And you can invent your own additional holidays—“And when should we work?” you may ask. But work is a bad habit. For example, Lilli-Bear’s brother from Texazistan, the country of plush bulls, says, using folk language, “Horses die of work, ears go deaf, and eyes go cataractic,” though he himself works much, because Texazistan needs to prosper, it won’t do otherwise.

In short, you can work when you are free from holidays, if you cannot live without work. You see, holiday isn’t when you don’t go to your work and fart all day long on a sofa or slave in your own garden. Holiday is when you want to sing. When was the last time you wanted to sing? Before what revolution?

But Lilli-Bunny sings every day, because for him, every day is a holiday, maybe not official, but very cheerful, and he engages in natural economy without days off, because for him it’s not work, but a way of life.

So, when the people of the Earth declared Lilli-Bunny’s birthday International Lilli-Bunny Day, he invited everybody to his house.

On the previous evening, he made a sea of compote and baked a continent of berry pies.

In the morning, Lilli-Bunny woke and couldn't find his glasses. He fumbled and fumbled on the bedside table, but the glasses just weren't there. "How so?" he thought. "Maybe I've dropped them into the compote?" But then he looked closer, and here on the bedside table lay a humble, huge present wrapped up in gift paper. Lilli-Bunny read the attached note—the present appeared to be from Klepty the house gremlin. There were Lilli-Bunny's glasses, his favorite thermos, and Lilli-Bear's dumpling mold, all wrapped together. Lilli-Bunny even shed a few tears. How pleasant it was to receive, on such a holiday, a present from Klepty the kleptomaniac himself. The return to us of something stolen occurs so seldom.

Then Lilli-Bunny was accosted with congratulations by his Neurosis.

"Oh, Lilli-Bunny," cried Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis, "we've grown older by one more year; oh, what'll happen, oh what'll happen! We shall die soon! Where will they bury us?"

"Calm down," Lilli-Bunny gently stroked his Neurosis on its tousled head. "We aren't nuclear waste products; they'll bury us, somehow." And Lilli-Bunny yawned sweetly.

Lilli-Bunny's Neurosis calmed down and gave Lilli-Bunny a key-holder with the prayer that saves one from wild animals and other misfortunes you can meet on the road.

Lilli-Bear gave Lilli-Bunny a dog named Kolbassa. Lilli-Bear used to give Kolbassa to Lilli-Bunny every birthday, painstakingly wrapping him in gift paper. The dog resisted desperately, wagging his tail and kicking his extremities, so by the time of delivery, he was already practically loose and could lick Lilli-Bunny's nose freely. And Lilli-Bear gave Lilli-Bunny a

ring, with the inscription “I Love You,” which means in translation from Lilli-Bearish, “I love Lilli-Bunny.”

Lilli-Kitty gave Lilli-Bunny a butterfly-shaped pin to pin his ears up, because he always dipped his ears in the compote, and they interfered sometimes with his agricultural activities.

Lilli-Jake gave Lilli-Bunny an island in the Lilli-Atlantic Ocean, which his Brain Company Ltd. discovered. Lilli-Bunny landed on this island, declared its territory the territory of the state, and placed his famous Flag there. The Flag was proud that he represented the state authority on the island and ceased to tie himself in knots.

Lilli-Bunny’s slippers gave themselves to each other. That is, the Left Slipper wrapped up the Right Slipper as a gift to Lilli-Bunny, and the Right Slipper, while being wrapped up, asked Lilli-Kitty to catch and wrap the Left Slipper as a gift to Lilli-Bunny from the Right Slipper. And that was done.

Hamster Hamlet came for a visit from his new apartment and brought, as a present, a whole brood of mutant mice for scaring elephants away in the future.

Golden Cat gave Lilli-Bunny a “Catosynthesis Manual,” and they catosynthesized all morning together. Basia the cat gave a “Manual on Rescue from Suffocation by Air Balloons,” with a bag of air balloons for inflating and training.

Charles Dickens gave Lilli-Bunny a big package with the inscription:

*“To a real Lilli-Bunny,
from the real Charles Dickens.
The paper that will endure everything.”*

When Lilli-Bunny unwrapped the package, there was a roll of toilet paper. Everybody laughed until they cried, having appreciated the joke of the great realist.

Global Warming gave Lilli-Bunny a clear sunny day, and Global Neglect created a carefree holiday atmosphere.

The neighbor, Mr. Squeeze-Hard, gave Lilli-Bunny a jar of maple syrup, freshly squeezed from birch firewood, still smelling of the onions with which Mr. Squeeze-Hard rubbed the firewood for pliability.

The neighbor, Mr. Bolthead, gave Lilli-Bunny a huge wrench for his nuts, but the public wasn't alarmed, because everyone was already nutty anyway.

The Fox gave Lilli-Bunny her notebook that she used during military activities against Lilli-Bunny. According to experts, the notebook's estimated value was already ten thousand dollars as a military relic, but in truth, there was no buyer, and none was expected.

The moles gave Lilli-Bunny a set of sticks for Lilli-Bunny's golf and promised to adjust their vision by the next referendum.

Lilli-Bunny's car gave Lilli-Bunny a bicycle because she was afraid that Lilli-Bunny would wear her out. Lilli-Bunny rode his car to shops three times a day, and she hadn't enough time to engage in literature, the fine arts and, mainly, ballet.

The frogs on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean gave Lilli-Bunny their plan for a peace settlement named "The Road Goes Ever On and On,"¹⁰⁸ and promised not to renew military activities at least till next spring, though they had again fought at the holiday table, and Lilli-Bear again had to paint them the same color.

¹⁰⁸ © J. R. R. Tolkien

Lilli-Bunny's Mailbox gave Lilli-Bunny a huge amount of greeting cards addressed to Lilli-Bunny and all his neighbors, because he, as usual, snatched and swallowed the most joyful and colorful mail items from Goodnewsman the postman's bag. Giving the cards, the Mailbox vindictively lifted a leg near Kolbassa and irrigated the ground at the dog's legs, exactly as the dog himself did at Mailbox's leg every time Kolbassa was taken out. It was apparent that they struggle outright for the right to be Lilli-Bunny's favorite dog, so Lilli-Bunny had to buy two doggy bones now—one for Kolbassa and the second for his Mailbox. However, the impression was that they would make friends soon, as they frequently barked and howled at the moon amicably.

Mrs. Global Economy came for a visit and brought a whole bag of nuts for Lilli-Bear. Mrs. Global Economy had passed the next crisis and some breakdown, which happens to any lady at least once in a lunar month, and she became appreciably cheerful.

Mr. Troubleson, the lawyer, gave Lilli-Bunny a document stating that Lilli-Bunny's backyard was exempted from the "right of way." He had found an opening in the law at last, through which there was a possibility of not destroying Lilli-Bunny's house. Though Lilli-Bunny had already solved this problem, as you remember, he didn't want to upset Mr. Troubleson and wrote him a check for services rendered. In some cultures, gifts are not accepted as such; you always have to pay for them in some way.

Mr. Spitman, as a gift to Lilli-Bunny, squared and rolled in tubes all of Lilli-Bunny's cash, thus finishing the second stage of his currency reform. Mr. Spitman, again, was selflessly rude and boorish and informed Lilli-Bunny how unrecognizably old he had grown since their last meeting. Only after a while did Mr. Spitman understand that he spoke to Klepty the house gremlin, who truly did look elderly, as he was a hereditary troll; he was 950 years old, born in the time of the Vikings and casually delivered to Lilli-Bunny's house with the luggage from Lilli-Bunny's old house in Scandinavia, where Lilli-Bunny had lived happily for some time.

Klepty the house gremlin was flattered that Mr. Spitman mixed him up with Lilli-Bunny. He even took the opportunity to filch Mr. Spitman's suspenders, and Mr. Spitman had to hold his trousers during the party. The moment he wanted to say a boorish toast and, having risen from the table, lifted a wineglass in one hand and a fork with a salted mushroom in another, his trousers fell, and everybody saw that Mr. Spitman was wearing long, polka-dotted underpants with an inscription in front:

"Do not pass by!"

And another inscription behind:

"Do not pass through"

That strongly damped his reputation as city mayor, to which office he was providently elected by the wise townspeople for life because they didn't want Mr. Spitman to plunder the city treasury immediately upon his election.

Monsieur Silvouplaît gave Lilli-Bunny good will and greetings from Monsieur Almost-Napoleon himself. He also gave back Lilli-Bunny's tube and Lilli-Bunny, with pleasure, returned his parrots to it. The parrots began their third honeymoon observing stars that, in truth, had become a little bit displaced in the sky since their last observation.

The professors of Cosmology gave Lilli-Bunny an honorary diploma as Professor of Cabbage Soup and allowed him to cut the tape opening their new Cabbage Soup accelerator, which they started up to prove to everybody, finally, that they were professors, not just a bunch of people puttering around.

Mme. Cultural Differences gave Lilli-Bunny an embroidered skullcap in the style of the Jewish *kippa* and joyfully danced with him the Greek dance, *sirtaki*, turning into the Jewish dance *freilechs*.

The Fish 007 gave Lilli-Bunny six jars of first-class Riga sprats. Not the sprats they make somewhere in Estonia that are impossible to eat, but the real ones that are very possible to enjoy eating. This action, in the Fish's 007 opinion, would lower Lilli-Bunny's fish-thirstiness for a time, giving the Fish an opportunity to regroup for the next round of espionage thrills.

Mr. Hugeman, the local bedbug, for the sake of old times, wrote a satirical greeting that made Basia the cat cry, even though she was remarkable for the excessive cheerfulness peculiar to all idiots.

The Country That Stole the Berry Pie gave Lilli-Bunny a mold for baking berry pies fashioned like a boomerang with vertical risers. The moment the pie was ready, the mold would rise forty thousand feet in the air and deliver the pie to the Country That Stole the Berry Pie. That supported the permanent civil war there, without which the citizens of the state would be extremely uncomfortable. Their habit of going to sleep to the sounds of cannonade and waking up to the sounds of single shots caused them acute nostalgia as soon as they were deprived of this accompaniment. And an opportunity to shoot down the neighbor and go unpunished was one of the integral advantages of civil war simply impossible to refuse.

Mrs. Soft Drink gave Lilli-Bunny a bottle of lemonade, but she asked him not to publish this fact, which could break the established *status quo* of everybody drinking fizzy drinks. So just forget at once what I said, and continue to guzzle those unnatural drinks. By the way, fizzy drinks clean the green patina off copper perfectly. I suggest washing the domes of the architectural monuments of St. Petersburg and Copenhagen with fizzy drinks.

Mr. Fast Food gave Lilli-Bunny a gift coupon for one hamburger sandwich and told him that Lilli-Bunny, as a spy, was to have this coupon always on hand, in case he encountered a situation in which he would be required to self-destroy immediately. A

hamburger sandwich operates faster than potassium cyanide. You swallow it and run to the toilet at once. Your enemies will wait and wait for you, and will eventually go away.

Lilli-Bunny's Samovar gave him a tea strainer, and Lilli-Bunny was as pleased as a child.

And in the evening, the philosophers of all times and peoples gathered in Lilli-Bunny's pavilion and sang together the song, "Frost, oh frost, don't freeze—" despite the rather hot weather. Such minor discrepancies should never confuse true philosophers.

Descartes, who specially arrived to get Lilli-Bunny's acquaintance, sang louder than anybody did, because he wished to prove his existence. It goes like this: I sing, therefore I exist,—else who is bawling so loudly?

Lilli-Bunny was very glad to receive all these visitors and gifts. But can you imagine his pleasure when his favorite cow, Peggy, appeared in the sky, hastening to return from the South before the end of summer, precisely in time for Lilli-Bunny's birthday, which became International Lilli-Bunny Day!



THEOLOGICAL ARTICLES

THE BOOK OF ACTS: ITS VALUE AND IMPORTANCE TODAY

Introduction

The Book of Acts provides us with a detailed account of the deeds of Apostles after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the most part of the book deals with the events happened after Ascension, and the Pentecost. It becomes clear from the first verse of Acts that the book is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, and the same authorship of both books is stated by many researchers. (1)

Therefore the value of this source is indispensable for understanding of how Christianity had spread in the first century. Besides the historical and religious value The Book of Acts can serve as a guideline for the modern clergy taking on a ministry to preach Christianity. This is especially true for Orthodox Christians who carefully preserved the original spirit of early Christianity (1) based on the teachings of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Church was founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ; He has ordained that Peter, spoken in the name of all the Apostles, should be the corner stone of His Church. Of course, not as much Peter as a person, but his faith.

Therefore, the Book of Acts has become an indispensable source for the Orthodox Faith.

A. Historical Value of the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts is believed to be written in the first century sometime between years 60 and 100. The main value of the Book

of Acts is based on the fact that its author Luke had at his disposal unique sources that has been lost for us long ago. For the later journeys of Paul he was able to depend not only on his own acquaintance with Paul, but on what he had learnt from many of Paul's other companions, amongst these Silas (Acts 16:16-19), Timothy, Galus, and Aristarchus (Acts 20: 4; Col. 1:1, 4:10, 14).

For the early period, too, Luke had a number of acquaintances from whom he must have learnt much, e. g. Philip, during his time in Caesarea (Acts 20:8-10, 27:1), John Mark (Col. 4: 10), Silas, and Paul himself. (3)

It is possible that Luke has also used some other sources, such as some Aramaic documents of early date that underlies at least Acts 1:1-5 16, 9:31 -11:18. (3)

Even though some authors criticize the accuracy and historic value of the book of Acts (4) it doesn't diminish the fact that in many ways the Book of Acts is our only source to learn the sequence of the events followed the resurrection of Our Saviour.

It is also important to analyze the main purpose of this book. One of Luke's main reason for writing was not to draft a precise unbiased history narration, but to show that nothing could keep the Christian idea from spreading in the World. Luke's emphasis on fulfilled prophecy, the miracles that abound both in the Gospel and in the Acts, and the sheer success of the movement, as an ultimate proof for divine approval of Christianity (5) .

One of the most valuable conclusions drawn from historic material of the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul is to assume that there was a certain collegiality in the government of the earliest churches (6). This provide us with an idea on which principles the modern Church should be built, that it shouldn't be ruled by one ultimate power, but adopt the same collegiality based on Apostles example. This collegiality is particularly maintained in the Orthodox Church. (6)

The Book of Acts includes the following: The spreading of the "good news" in Jerusalem ; The "good news" in Judea and Samaria; The first journey of Paul to tell the "good news"; An important decision in Jerusalem; The second journey of Paul to tell the "good news"; The third journey of Paul to tell the "good

news"; Paul is arrested in Jerusalem; Paul is taken to Caesarea; and Paul is taken to Rome.

Luke continues the story about Jesus by describing the struggles the disciples faced and experience as they tried to obey the command of Jesus by spreading the "good news." Before Jesus ascended to heaven he commanded his disciples to tell everyone about him in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere.

The man who did most in the missionary work was a man named Paul, originally named Saul before his conversion to Christianity. Much of the book tells about Paul's preaching the "good news" among the Gentiles in many places including Malta and then Rome, at that time the world's most important city.

Many different countries are mentioned in the Book of Acts. After Jesus ascended into heaven, one of the big problems for his followers was deciding who could belong to God's people. Since Jesus and his first followers were Jews, it was natural for his disciples to assume that his message was only for the Jews. But in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit is always present to show that

Jesus came to save both the Jews and the Gentiles, and that God wants followers from everywhere – every nation and race to be part of his people.

The first conflict between the Jews and the Christians brewed when some of the Jewish religious leaders rejected the "good news" or message about Jesus. An even more serious problem for the early church happened because the disciples at first failed to understand that anyone could become a follower of Jesus, not just the Jews. The climate of ministry began to change when Philip dared to take the message to the Samaritans, and then Peter also went to the home of Cornelius, a captain in the Roman army. Still, until the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem (c. AD 50), everyone who wanted to become a Christian had to become a Jew first. In other words, every single follower of Christ during His ministry and about 20 years after was Jewish, either by descent or by proselyte.

In the end, after Peter's report to the church in Jerusalem and discussions among them about the issue of who could become

followers of Jesus Christ, everyone agreed that the Spirit of God is

leading them to reach out the "good news" of Jesus not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles.

Unfortunately, in the Book of Acts nothing is said of the expansion of Christianity in other directions, and the early history of the Jerusalem, Palestinian, and Antioch churches is only

sketched in sufficient detail to illustrate the pivotal steps by which the Gospel has been spread. (3)

We can treat the Book of Acts as valuable historical work, as far as Luke wishes ultimately tries to fulfill in the Book of Acts his capacity as an historian and finds abundant opportunities of doing so. (7)

The historical credibility of the Book of Acts has been frequently challenged because of the multitude of mentioned historic facts available for verification.

Historic critics usually analyze the texts in terms of correctness of historical facts (names, places etc.) The following findings can be treated as a proof of historical credibility of the Book of Acts.

(8) Luke is absolutely correct when he quotes names and titles of the title proconsul (anthypathos), and it is correctly used for the governors of the two senatorial provinces named in Acts (Acts 13:7-8, Acts 18:12). Inscriptions confirm that the city authorities in the Thessalonica in the first century were called politarchs (Acts 17:6,8). According to inscriptions, 'grammateus' is the correct title for the chief magistrate in Ephesus (Acts 19:35). There are some other correct facts. (8)

On the other hand, some scholars find certain contradictions, but after thorough analysis of these arguments they can't diminish the historic value of the Book of Acts. (8)

Religious and Spiritual Value of the Book of Acts

It is important to keep in mind that the Book of Acts is not a regular historic document. The historical development of the Church consists in a realization of its super-historic content; it

is, so to say, a translation of the language of eternity into that of human history (2)

The Holy Spirit has descended upon the world and rested on the Apostles. The unity of these, the unity of the twelve presided over by the Blessed Virgin, represents the whole of mankind. (2)

The Lord Himself laid the foundations of the hierarchy of the New Alliance when He called the Twelve Apostles, when He initiated them into the mysteries of His teachings. (2)

History and theology are so intimately bound up with each in the Book of Acts that it is difficult to isolate the distinguishing features of each. (6)

The powerful messianic message of the Book of Acts can be summarized in a short citation:

Acts 2:22"Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as you yourselves know, *Acts 2:23*him, being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hand of lawless men, crucified and killed; *Acts 2:24*whom God raised up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. *Acts 2:25*

Even though most of the People of Israel did not accept Jesus the Son of God, caused his horrible death, the mercy of God has no limits. Men of Israel still have an option to repent their sins and join the Church of Christ. Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and many among them used this unique opportunity, convinced by the miracles and inspired by the Apostles (Acts 2:41). Then those who gladly received his word were baptized.

There were added that day about three thousand souls. This messianic message is still valid today after 2000 years.

Importance of the Book of Acts in Modern Orthodox Services

The Orthodox Church today is a logical and spiritual continuation of first-century Christianity.

Even though it does not imitate every cultural detail of the early church, but it does its best to continue the faith and the message of Apostles. The book of Acts is of great help in this. (9)

Since the dawn of Christian era there was no doubt in religious value of the Book of Acts and these texts were used in the liturgical services. Reading from the Book of Acts is still an integral part of modern orthodox services. It is included into the book called «Apostle» along with Epistles of Apostles.

The events described in the Book of Acts are often used in sermons. Most frequently the preachers refer to the fact that the resurrected Jesus taught the apostles "about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). and inspired his disciples to preach about the kingdom of God which they did throughout the Book of Acts.

For example, Philip taught the Samaritans about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). Paul and Barnabas told the Christians in Antioch that we enter the kingdom of God through many hardships (Acts 14:22). Paul argued in the synagogue for three months about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8). Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had preached the kingdom (Act 20:25). In Rome, Paul "preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

The modern Christian Orthodox preachers carefully base their sermons on the following. Jesus told his disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and then he told them what that divine power would enable them to do: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The modern preachers are still on the same ministry. It is not based on their personal illusions and novel spiritual trends. These sermons are based on a strict message coming from Our Saviour Himself. The focus of the sermons based on the Book of Acts is Jesus, his resurrection, and the fact that grace or forgiveness is possible, no matter how cruel our world might seem.

Basically most of the modern sermons can be based on the sermons of Apostles themselves, included in the Book of Acts. For example, Peter's words addressed to the crowd at Pentecost. This is not only a landmark event in the church; it is a foundational speech in the book of Acts.

First, Peter tells the people that the Spirit-caused tongues are a fulfillment of Scripture and a sign that the "last days" had begun and people can be saved (Acts 2:16-21).

Peter then explains his point: "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs.... This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you...put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 2:22-24). Peter explains that David had predicted the Messiah's resurrection. The apostles are witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, and the exalted Jesus is now pouring out the Holy Spirit on his people.

And in the conclusion: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Jesus is the Messiah and the One we should obey. Modern preachers are still using the same arguments to strengthen the faith in the faithful and to convert the unfaithful.

Another Peter's sermon in the book of Acts is in chapter 3. It is also addressed to a crowd of Jews at the temple, and it is based on the miracle that was done. The modern Orthodox sermons are also based on the stories of the miracles done by apostles and it is emphasized that these miracles had been done by faith in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:15-16).

The modern sermons are also based on the following. The Holy Spirit in the church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory (Acts 2:33; Acts 5:32). Salvation will reach its consummation in the return of Christ to judge the living and the dead (Acts 3:21; Acts 10:42).

The apostles have been chosen by God as witnesses of the ministry of Jesus and above all of his resurrection (Acts 2:32; Acts 3:15; Acts 10:40-41). Repentance and forgiveness of sins and the

gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39; Acts 3:25-26; Acts 5:31; Acts 10:43).

The preaching of the apostles is a proclamation of the work of salvation made by God in Christ and a call to believe and be saved. Modern sermons follow the same lead. (9)

The *Book of Acts* as a Basis for Making of Religious, Moral, and Spiritual Choices for Faithful Orthodox Christians

The community of Jerusalem is governed by the college of the Twelve, but in this college the apostle Peter clearly occupies the first place (6). Christ first commissioned His disciples to be missionaries (emissaries on a mission to convert people through the preaching of the Kingdom of God). Historically, Judaism was divinely intentioned to be a "missionary" religion, yet it was by and large exclusive (not open to outsiders being added to their number). Christ confronted the Pharisees' attempts at proselytism (missionary activity) when He said - "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (Matthew 23:15).

Regarding early Christianity and the Jews at that time. We could say two things with a certain degree of certainty. One, many people seem to have accepted Christianity in the Holy Land, as it spread around the world very quickly. By the AD 50s, Roman authorities saw it as a serious threat – they would not have persecuted an obscure minor sect, there were plenty of those in the pagan empire. We also know that after the Apostolic Council when it was decided not to make Christians Jews first, many Jews who had been in the church became angry and left it. This also indicates that during the first 20 years or so of the church the historically/ethnically Jewish portion of the church was substantial.

Second, outside the Holy Land, among the Hellenistic Jews and others, it is very likely that most of them accepted Christ than not. Again, the fact of a very rapid spread is one indication. Also,

the apostles and other missionaries went and preached primarily in synagogues. Further, there is an event described in the Book of Acts of a group of Jews following apostles from city to city to thwart their missionary activity. They would not have done that had there been substantial local resistance to the apostles – local groups could have opposed them.

The original mission of apostles described in the book of Acts was to convince all Jews that Christ was their Messiah and that He had achieved their salvation. Even though Christ had told them to go into all the world to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15), at first they may have thought that this was to exclusively reach the dispersed Jews (the Diaspora). Paul has extended this missionary goal to all the nations.

Based on the Book of Acts faithful Orthodox Christians may continue to preach to all the nations of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

Conclusions

The Book of Acts has its profound historical value today because it provides us with verifiable and rich historical content on how the Christianity made its first steps on its global ministry.

Religious and spiritual value of the Book of Acts is rooted in the credible witnesses' accounts of miracles and mystic acts made with the Power of the Holy Spirit. This is a strong basis for use of the Book of Apostles in Liturgical Services and mentioning it in sermons. Importance of the Book of Acts today is based on its ability to guide practicing Christians in their daily lives. It reminds the Christians of their ultimate belonging to the first followers of Jesus Christ, endorses the faith in the active presence of Holy Spirit in the Church Sacraments.

Detailed study of The Book of Acts can provide a strong basis for making of religious, moral and spiritual choices for any faithful Orthodox Christian, so help us God!

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CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES AND THE FIRST SIX ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Introduction

The basic set of believes is the most important issue for any religious person. Shaking of such foundations may cause corruption of one's faith.

Most of the Christians (Orthodox, Catholics and even Anglicans and other Protestants) base their faith on the decisions that have been made at the six first Ecumenical Councils (1). Discussion of Christological controversies is crucial for better understanding of Orthodox Faith (2).

Christology is an area of Christian theosophy that deals with questions concerning the second part of the Holy Trinity - Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christology examines the nature of Jesus Christ and relationship between His human and God's nature. Even during the earthly life of Our Savior Jesus Christ there were concerns about His origins (3). The conclusions that one can make on the basis of the four canonical Gospels, Book of Acts, and Epistles might be summarized as follows: Jesus Christ existed in heaven before He was born to Mary here on earth. He was with the Father and the Holy Spirit before any of the Angels were created. He was not created by the Father God. Therefore, He participated in the creation of the universe and all the creatures including humans. He was and He is the only begotten Son of God. Here it is important to remember that "Son" "Father" and "Holy Spirit" are the best words available to humans to describe God. We should not assume that the two persons have literally father-son relations.

He came to our world, to make it possible for fallen people to be reconciled with the Father and to inherit eternal life. Jesus Christ came to this world, was crucified and resurrected for two main purposes: to make it possible to have our past sins forgiven, and to show us the way to perfect ourselves, to free us from our earthly passions, so we will be able to live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Even though Holy Scriptures provide us with a solid basis for believes stated above, unfortunately, we don't have any written source from Jesus Christ Himself, and therefore, might face some degree of uncertainty due to limits of human abilities to understand 'not of this world' concepts (3).

One of the most important of such concepts is *time*, that only recently has become understood in the way it was described in Holy Scriptures. In a letter of commiseration to the loved ones of his deceased friend Besso, Albert Einstein wrote, a month before his death, "The separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, however tenacious, and death is no more real than the life that it concludes."

In his book *In the End of Time: The Next Revolution in Physics* (4) first published in 1999, Julian Barbour asserts that the

existence of time is an illusion. Despite the counterintuitive nature of his central claim, Barbour attempts to persuade the reader that our experiences are, at the very least, consistent with a timeless universe.

Timelessness is described as a state of the Kingdom of God. Absence of time in human way of thinking can easily explain the concept of Son of God not being created, power over the time explains the possibility of resurrection of the dead and many other mystical things predicted and promised by the Holy Scriptures. Recent developments in Quantum Physics reconcile the science and Christian Orthodox Religion. Although, we live in such an exciting times when science unexpectedly has began to provide us with new understanding of possibilities of timeless existence, these concepts are still beyond common human comprehension (5).

There must be a good reason why Jesus Christ didn't leave any writings. There is no doubt that it was intentional, and may be the answer to this question is beyond the human ability to understand. One of the reasons we may suggest is that Jesus couldn't rely on human language and therefore realized that without the ultimate assistance of Holy Spirit His teachings will be corrupted, no matter how precisely they might have been recorded.

This is why the history of Christianity, Christological questions has been very important in the life of the Church. Christology was a fundamental concern from the First Council of Nicaea (325) until the Third Council of Constantinople (680). In this time period, the Christological views of various groups within the broader Christian community led to accusations of heresy, and, sometimes religious persecution. The religious controversies contributed very much, to shape the system of theology (6).

First six ecumenical councils clarified and articulated the visible organization of the Church, crystallizing the position of the five great sees or Patriarchates, as they came to be known. Secondly, the more important, the councils defined once and for all the Church's teaching upon the fundamental doctrine of the Christian Faith – the Holy Trinity (7).

A. The Christological controversies has shaped and perfected the system of the Orthodox Faith

In the late first and early second century numerous attempts have been made to define how Jesus Christ is related to God the Father (7). However, these definitions have been finalized only throughout first ecumenical councils. Many of the Christological controversies of the first two centuries of the Common Era had direct implications for ecumenical thinking about how the human and divine are related within the person of Jesus.

Discussions of the Christological issues were held at the ecumenical councils which became possible after Emperor Constantine has made Christianity legitimate and widely accepted across Roman Empire. Ecumenical councils served as conferences where the bishops of the whole Christian Church discussed matters of Church canons.

It is important to mention that The Council of Jerusalem recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, was an ultimate prototype of the ecumenical councils. Its main agenda was to resolve the tensions between maintaining Jewish practices in the early Christian community with Gentile converts (8).

Most councils dealt not only with doctrinal but also with disciplinary matters, which were recorded in canons. In some cases other documentation survives as well. The first ecumenical council was held in in Nicea in 325 under Emperor Constantine the Great. Three hundred eighteen Bishops have participated in this forum. One of the main achievements of this council was resolution on Arian Controversy (9). Arius denied the divinity of Christ (1) (10). If Jesus was born, then there was time when He did not exist. If He became God, then there was time when He was not. The Council declared Arius' teaching a heresy, unacceptable to the Church and decreed that Christ is God. He is of the same essence with God the Father.

The First Council has formulated the Creed of Christian Faith. The first part (seven articles) of the Creed was ratified at the First Ecumenical Council. The text reads as follows:

We believe in one God. The Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end. (11)

Most important defenders of Orthodoxy at this council were St. Athanasios the Great (297-373), St. Basil the Great (330-379) (who has revised and updated the Divine Liturgy) (12).

The second ecumenical council was held in 381, under Emperor Theodosius the Great. One hundred and fifty Bishops were present. One of the achievements of this council was condemnation of Macedonius' teaching (1) (10). Macedonius was misinterpreting Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person), but simply a power of God. Therefore the Spirit was inferior to the Father and the Son. The Council has declared that there is one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Council has added five articles to the Creed, which among other issues has defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit.. They read as follows:

And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father: who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified: who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. (11)

Most distinguished supporters of the orthodox approach were St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian (329-390), St. Gregory of Nyssa (331-396) and St. John Chrysostom "the golden-mouthed" (Zlatoust, in Russian) (345-407) (responsible for the revision of the Divine Liturgy) (12).

The third ecumenical council was held in Ephesus in 431 under the rule of Emperor Theodosius II (grandson of Theodosius the Great) (1) (10). Two hundred Bishops took part in this event. One of the main defenders of the orthodoxy at this council was St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria (12). He had accused Nestorius to Pope St. Celestine of heresy. Therefore, this council dealt with Nestorian Controversy, which concerned the nature of Jesus Christ. Nestorius taught that the Virgin Mary gave birth to a man, Jesus Christ, not God, the "Logos" ("The Word", Son of God). The Logos only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple (Christ, therefore, was only Theophoros: The "Bearer of God". Therefore, Virgin Mary should be called "Christotokos," Mother of Christ and not "Theotokos, "Mother of God." Nestorianism over emphasized the human nature of Christ at the expense of His divine nature. The Council denounced Nestorius' teaching as erroneous. Our Lord Jesus Christ is one person, not two separate persons. The Council forbade any further changes (additions or deletions) to the Creed (11).

The forth council was gathered in Chalcedon in 451, under Emperor Marcian. Six hundred thirty Bishops were present. This Council was concerned, once again, with the nature of Jesus Christ (1) (10). The teaching arose that Christ's human nature (less perfect) dissolved itself in His divine nature (more perfect. Thus, in reality, Christ had only one nature, the Divine. Hence, the term: Monophysites ("mono", one and "physis", "nature"). Monophysitism overemphasized the divine nature of Christ, at the expense of the His human nature. The Council condemned Monophysitism and proclaimed that Christ has two complete natures: the divine and the human, as defined by previous Councils.

The fifth ecumenical council was held in Constantinople in 553. It brought together one hundred sixty five Bishops. The Council was called in hope of putting an end to the

Nestorian and the Eutychian (Monophysite) controversies (10). The Council confirmed Church's teaching regarding the two natures of Christ (human and divine) and condemned certain writings with Nestorian agenda.

The sixth ecumenical council was held again in Constantinople in 680 under the rule of Emperor Constantine IV. One hundred seventy Bishops were present. It concerned the last attempt to compromise with the Monophysites (10). Although Christ did have two natures (divine and human) He nevertheless, acted as God only. In other words, His divine nature made all the decisions and His human nature only carried and acted them out. The council has declared against this heresy:

"Christ had two natures with two activities: as God working miracles, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; as Man, performing the ordinary acts of daily life. Each nature exercises its own free will." (11)

Providing the core of the rules and doctrines common to all the Orthodox Churches, decrees of ecumenical councils remain the primary point of reference for Christian life (13). We should be greatly thankful to Holy Fathers who have resolved Christological controversies (3). These achievements have shaped and perfected the system of the Orthodox Faith we enjoy today.

B. Arianism and Ebionitism: Was Jesus Christ an ordinary person?

If Jesus Christ was an ordinary person, not a God, Christianity loses its most valuable jewel: a Loving God who died on the Cross for our sins. Arianism has been called the "archetypal Christian heresy": it denies the divinity of Christ. Its roots belong to Ebionitism which was known as an early heresy with similar doctrine. The Ebionites were a first century Jewish-Christian sect. They emphasized Jewish law and rejected the teachings of the Apostle Paul. Most considered Jesus to be a man, not God. Even though, Arianism seems to be defeated long ago, some modern scholars argue that Arius was in fact a dedicated theological conservative whose concern was to defend the free and personal character of the Christian God and Arius's heresy

grew out of his attempt to unite traditional biblical language with radical philosophical ideas and techniques and involved, from the start, issues of authority in the church (14). Arians believed that Jesus is or was a "creature"; in this context, the word is being used in its original sense of "created being." Arius based his beliefs on Scriptures such as John 14:28 where Jesus says that the father is "greater than I" to John 17:20-26 where Jesus asks that the Apostles become "one as we are one" so that all of them including Jesus and God become one. (9)

Analysis of these issues from the theological point of view exposes a real problem behind Arius's heresy. Arius taught that God the Father and the Son did not exist together eternally. Further, Arius taught that the pre-incarnate Jesus was a divine being created by and inferior to the Father at some point, before which the Son did not exist. This means that there was no sacrifice of God Himself for people's sins. It distorts the whole concept of Christianity which bases itself on the New Covenant, the promise of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, to forgive Adam's sin, and lead to universal salvation of humanity conditioned on certain terms on the part of man, as free will obedience to God's will, repentance, faith, etc.

As in the Old Testament the God has made His promise to Men: *'I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.'* (Gen. xvii) God does this again in a New Testament. If Jesus Christ is not the God Himself, the value of such Covenant is diminished if not jeopardized at all.

Before the legalization of the Church by the Roman Emperor Constantine I the conflict between Arianism and Holy-Trinity beliefs was not very pronounced because of the separation between the different churches. Arius's views were not new. He has used some ideas formulated already by Origen (c.185-c.254) earlier, but Arius articulated the concept of the Father - the Son relation in his own way. Basically, Arius emphasised upon the Father as the first and the unique absolute principle of divinity. As a logical consequence, any other divine reality, namely Jesus

Christ as Son of God in particular, is secondary to the Father. According to St. Athanasius:

Arius dares to say that the Word is not the true God. When He is called God, he says, it is only a figure of speech, referring to the privileges He is endowed with by God. All things connected with Him are distinct and separate from the Father. The Son has to do with created things and persons, of whom He is one. And he proceeds to assert, with devilish arguments, that the Father is invisible to the Son, and that the Son is incapable of a true and perfect knowledge of the Father(...)When the Son is said to know and behold Him, it is only meant that He does so as far as He has the capacity to do so, just as we imperfectly apprehend Him. Through this deficiency the Son is not only ignorant of the nature of the Father, but of his own. (15)

As per St. Athanasius, the Son is present in the Father without birth. Arius' logical assumption was that a father must somehow precede his son, such an inference leading to the idea that the Son has a beginning of his existence. Use of human logic in divine matters can easily distort the truth. Arius's heresy is rooted in flawed human understanding of time and exposes all of the undesirable consequences of the delusion of human intellect in connection with the mistaken understanding of time. Modern science and philosophy have reconsidered the fundamental aspects of time perception. Our consciousness is organized in such a way that we apprehend the world with respect to temporal sequences. That's not surprising. We can't think several thoughts simultaneously, and we can't make multiple mathematical calculations at the same time, despite the fact that computers are capable of executing several actions at once. neither can we imagine two time dimensions or depict a drawing in more than 3 spatial dimensions – according to scientists the universe has more than 4 dimensions, and obviously God as a supreme being is not limited to our 4 dimensions only.

Our cognition has evolved the ability to process only one thought at time. Because thoughts don't occur simultaneously and are dependent on preceding ones, a chain or succession of

thoughts forms when we think. Consequently, our perception of time is based on a succession of thoughts connected with the intake and processing of impressions taken from the surrounding world. The consecutive way in which events unfold in nature is directed along the thermodynamic arrow of time, along which entropy, or the dissipation of energy, increases. This directionality of events in nature is reflected in the process of human cognition. Which phenomenon drives the other? Is our consciousness capable of determining the sequence of events only along the arrow of time? Or is God's Creation – the Universe is imperfect, foolishly squandering its energy into space, infinitely expanding towards its own destruction? Before we charge the Universe and God with imperfection and profligacy, let's note that our inability to perceive events simultaneously does not necessarily entail that these events do not exist simultaneously (5).

Although Arius's ideas appear to be logically consistent, using the human logic and the common sense, St. Athanasius disregarded entirely the logic of thoughts expressed by Arius. In light of human inability to perceive time in a way it might be perceived by God, Arianism should be condemned categorically, as it happened at the Council of Nicaea. (15) One of the possible explanations of the victory of seemingly illogical, from the human point of view, doctrine of eternal co-existence of Father and the Son, might be the intervention of the Holy Spirit into the proceedings of the first ecumenical councils. Ignoring the divine inspiration in the deeds of the Saints will always leave unsatisfactory results.

Arius heresy is still very dangerous. The previous century witnessed the emergence of a vast literature on Arianism which has been increasingly favourable to Arius. Such works attack the pivotal Christian doctrine, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Savior of mankind. (16) If we allow *Neo-Arianism* to thrive it will lead to corruption of Christian Faith in God that needed to come to Earth as a human to free us from our sins and save the human race (17).

C. Gnosticism: Was Jesus Christ completely supernatural being?

Gnosticism has proposed the idea that Jesus Christ was a completely supernatural being. Gnostics faced an intense criticism from the orthodox Christians. Gnosticism was considered heretical and Gnostics heretics. So, until the find of Nag Hammadi in 1945 little was known of Gnosticism and the Gnostics except from the writings of their adversaries. They viewed the One which they called the true God as having a feminine part which was the Spirit. They disagreed with the theory that man was sinful by nature, but believed man erred through ignorance; by knowledge man could correct his ways and gain salvation. For them the principle teacher of gnosis was Jesus. The Gnostics claimed Jesus taught them secret knowledge which he did not share with the general congregation of the Church. This sort of claim did not set well with the Church at a time when it was striving to gain a clarity and unity of its teachings (18) (19). Gnostics are pretty much on the same footing with all those who insist on esoteric knowledge, and on the necessity of membership in certain groups or sects to attain it .

The Gnostic Scriptures influenced the development of Valentinus, who was to found his own school of Gnosticism in both Alexandria and Rome. Valentinianism flourished throughout the early centuries of the common era: while Valentinus himself lived from ca. 100–180 AD/CE, a list of sectarians or heretics, composed in 388 AD/CE, against whom Emperor Constantine intended legislation includes Valentinus (and, presumably, his inheritors) (3).

According to Tertullian:

"The Valentinians, who are no doubt a very large body of heretics - comprising as they do so many apostates from the truth, who have a propensity for fables, and no discipline to deter them (therefrom) care nothing so much as to obscure what they preach, if indeed they (can be said to) preach who obscure their doctrine. The officiousness with which they guard their doctrine is an officiousness which betrays their guilt. Their disgrace is proclaimed in the very earnestness with which they maintain their religious system. (20)

Valentinianism might be described as the most elaborate and philosophically 'dense' form of the Syrian-Egyptian schools of Gnosticism, though it should be acknowledged that this in no way debarred other schools from attracting followers: Basilides' own school was popular also, and survived in Egypt until the 4th century.

By defending St. Paul from the Gnostics, Irenaeus had "struck a fatal blow" to the elements in Gnosticism that are most dangerous to Christianity (21):

"They have good reason, as seems to me, why they should not feel inclined to teach these things to all in public, but only to such as are able to pay a high price for an acquaintance with such profound mysteries. For those doctrines are not at all similar to those of which our Lord said: 'Freely ye have received, freely give'. They are, on the contrary, abstruse, and portentous, and profound mysteries, to be got at only with great labour by such as are in love with falsehood. (22)

Gnosticism survived the millennia and now is represented by wide variety of teachings. Following Gnostic beliefs may lead to the destruction of the very foundations of Orthodox Christian Faith. Many Christians are into a form of Gnosticism dangerous to themselves and to others. They have a real problem distinguishing the voice of God from their own, that well might be a voice of demons.

The Council of Nicaea rejected theologies that entirely ruled out any Gnostic approaches to Christ, affirming in the Nicene Creed the doctrine of the Incarnation as a part of the doctrine of the Trinity. That is, that the second person of the Trinity became incarnate in the person Jesus and was fully human (10).

D. Nestorius: Were Jesus Christ's human and divine components two distinct individuals?

Nestorius (c.386 – c.451), from Germanicia, Syria Euphratensis, Asia Minor, was made Patriarch of Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius II in April 428. Nestorius worked to suppress the Arian heresy and others, but then was himself

condemned for heretical beliefs at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Nestorians objected to the title *theotokos* for the Virgin Mary believing instead that she was the woman who gave birth to the human aspect of Christ. Nestorius thought that the term denied the humanity of Christ. The case against Nestorius was taken up by Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria. After some correspondence, which led to no agreement, both Nestorius and Cyril called for the support of Celestine of Rome. Celestine summoned a synod of his bishops, which having considered both sides, decided in favor of Cyril. Celestine then wrote to Cyril, telling him that unless Nestorius abjured his errors within ten days, he would excommunicate him, and empowering Cyril to act as his proxy for this purpose.

The Council of Ephesus agreed unanimously to condemn Nestorius and to proclaim that the title *Theotikos* must be given to the Blessed Virgin Mary (23) Nestorius has promoted a view that effectively separated Jesus into two persons—one divine and one human; the mechanism of this combination is known as *hypostases*.

The Nestorians argued the following: There are, according to the Holy Fathers, two natures in Christ; but since every nature is a *hypostasis*, the Human Nature in Christ is a *hypostasis*. In order to make one Christ, they tried (in vain) to explain how two *hypostases* could be united in one person (*prosopon*). They did not mean to divide Christ, but their *prosopic* union leaked at every seam; it was difficult to express it or argue about it without falling into heresy. The Antiochenes were glad to drop such inadequate formulae, for it was certain that "person" in the Holy Trinity was only another name for "hypostasis". The Cyrillians were shocked, and could not be induced to believe (though St. Cyril himself did) that the Nestorianizers did not really mean two Christs, two Sons. (24)

Nestorius' theology was deemed heretical at the First Council of Ephesus (431). Though, as seen by the writings of Babai the Great, the Christology of the Assyrian Church of the East is highly similar to that of Chalcedon, many orthodox Christians (particularly in the West) consider this group to be the perpetuation of Nestorianism; the Assyrian Church of the East

itself dislikes this term, as it implies acceptance of the entire theology of Nestorius, rather than agreement on the single point of hypostases.

Nestorianism is by no means dead. It makes a strong appeal to those who regard Jesus Christ as a Leader to be followed rather than as God to be worshiped, and who think that the active service of mankind is enough without the adoration of God or repentance for sin. Nestorianism is a rationalistic form of Christianity from which the mystical element has been excluded (23). Depriving Christianity from its mystical aspect is diminishing the most valuable Christian Believes.

E . Monophysitism: Christ Only Had One Nature

Another set of heresies included Monophysitism, according to which Christ had only one nature: that the divine had either dissolved (Eutychianism), or that the divine joined with the human as one nature in the person of Christ (Miaphysitism). Monophysitism was confined mainly to the Eastern church and had little influence in the West. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon attempted to establish a common ground between the Monophysitists and the Orthodox, but it did not work and divisions arose in the Eastern church which eventually excommunicated the Monophysitists in the sixth century.

The Monophysites argued that a Christ is one Person, one Hypostasis, so He is one Nature, and they preferred "is one nature" to the equivalent "has one nature". They alleged high authority for their formula, not only St. Cyril, but behind him St. Athanasius, Pope St. Julius, and St. Gregory the Wonderworker. These authorities, however, were but Apollinarian forgeries; the favourite formula of St. Cyril, the *mia physis sesarkomene*, had been borrowed unwitting from an Apollinarian source, and had been meant by its original inventor in a heretical sense. Nay, the "one nature" went back to the Arians, and had been used by Eudoxius himself to express the incompleteness of the Human Nature of Christ (24).

The denial of the human nature of Christ is a denial of the true incarnation of God as a man. Without a true incarnation there can be no atonement of sin for mankind since it was not

then a true man who died for our sins. It was condemned as heresy at the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

F . Orthodox Christian Creed: Jesus is both fully divine and fully human

Thanks to the work of six first ecumenical councils Christianity has inherited a system of believes that allows the promised salvation through the true faith in Jesus Christ. According to these believes the Scriptures reveal the one God is Three Persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- eternally sharing the one divine nature (10) (9). From the Father the Son is begotten before all ages and all time (Psalm 2:7; II Corinthians 11:31). It is from the Father that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds (John 15:26). God the Father created all things through the Son, in the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1 and 2; John 1:3; Job 33:4), and we are called to worship Him (John 4:23). The Father loves us and sent His Son to give us everlasting life (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, eternally born of the Father. He became man, and thus He is at once fully God and fully man. His coming to earth was foretold in the Old Testament by the prophets. Because Jesus Christ is at the heart of Christianity, the Orthodox Church has given more attention to knowing Him than to anything or anyone else (1).

The eternal Son of God the Father assumed to Himself a complete human nature from the Virgin Mary. He was (and is) one divine Person, fully possessing from God the Father the entirety of the divine nature, and in His coming in the flesh fully possessing a human nature from the Virgin Mary. By His Incarnation, the Son forever possesses two natures in His one Person. The Son of God, limitless in His divine nature, voluntarily and willingly accepted limitation in His humanity in which He experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue -- and ultimately, death (25). The Incarnation is indispensable to Christianity -- there is no Christianity without it. The Scriptures record, "...every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (I John 4:3). By His Incarnation, the Son of God

redeemed human nature, a redemption made accessible to all who are joined to Him in His glorified humanity.

Conclusion

First Six Ecumenical Councils were extraordinary meetings of bishops which primarily decide upon dogmatic formulations, especially in the face of heresy. Secondly, they also issue canonical legislation which still governs the administration of the Orthodox Church. Ecumenical Councils considered matters of church-wide importance, such as the adoption of creeds, and specific heresies. Any decrees made by the council were binding on all Christians (1). The canons of the Ecumenical Councils are regarded within the Orthodox Church as universally authoritative, though not in a strictly constructionist sense. Their canons have often been repealed or revised by the decisions of local synods or even of later Ecumenical Councils. Nevertheless, their legislation is central to the Orthodox canonical tradition, and appeals to such canons are more frequently made than to any other source of canonical legislation (13).

The Ecumenical Councils claimed for themselves an immunity from error in their doctrinal and moral teaching, resting such claim upon the promise of the presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Council looked upon itself, not as revealing any new truth, but as setting forth the faith once for all delivered to the Saints, its decisions therefore were in themselves ecumenical, as being an expression of the mind of the whole body of the faithful both clerical and lay, the *sensus communis* of the Church. Then teaching of the Church that ecumenical consensus was considered free from the suspicion of error, guarded, by the Lord's promise that the gates of hell should not prevail against his Church (26). Resolutions of the Christological controversies made by First Six Ecumenical Councils have truly shaped and perfected the system of the Orthodox believes.

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CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM, VII-IX CENTURIES

Introduction

There is no doubt given the political and spiritual uncertainties worldwide and the ever-present danger of extremism and terrorism, promoting research and understanding of Islam and its relationships to Christianity, both from historic prospective and in the contemporary world, is increasingly vital. The days when Christians could ignore the influence of Islam are over. Today as never before, the world's second largest religion is shaping our culture, and words such as jihad, imam, Quran, and fatwa have entered our vocabulary. Many are surprised to learn of the truly global reach of Islam. For example, some 200

million Muslims live in Indonesia alone. Islam is now the second largest religion in Europe. It will soon surpass Judaism to claim that distinction in North America as well (1).

While all Muslims are no more alike than all Christians are alike, there are certain fundamental beliefs that all Muslims hold in common — some of which Christians would agree with, including belief in one true God. But is it the same God? How does the God of Muhammad differ from the God of Christianity? Is Islam a failed attempt to improve Christianity and Judaism, or maybe it is a total success and Christianity is doomed? Of course, none of the devoted Orthodox Christians have any doubt in their faith because it faith is not based entirely on logical conclusions. Christian faith is ensured by the blessing of The Holy Spirit which, as Christians believe rests upon them. Although this doesn't mean that the problem cannot be analysed from a historic prospective in order to provide us with logical grounds why Orthodox Christians believe that Islam contradicts the real Word of God, and why issues like the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and the Crucifixion so central to Orthodox Christian beliefs, have no place in the Islamic faith (2).

Muslims believe that the very word "Islam", as well as the way of life to which it points, was revealed by God himself in the Quran (1). The word Islam means "submission to God". The Holy Quran describes Islam as an Arabic word "Deen" (way of life). The followers of Islam are called Muslims. The literal meaning of Muslim is "one who surrenders" or "submits" to the will of God. No matter how delicate we try to be in our statements, but Orthodox Christians cannot agree to the possibility, that Islam is the right way of worshiping God, and historic facts might provide us with better understanding why it is not so. Any Christian scholar engaged in the study of Islam is also in a sense involved in dialogue between Christianity and Islam. In the light of this, the impact of Islamic culture on the rest of the world and the meeting of Islam and Christianity take on a new importance (2).

For years the Christian scholars had a feeling of cultural inferiority of Islam, and didn't have a problem to show that as a religion Islam was much inferior to Christianity (2). Not

anymore. It may also be noted that in Christianity and Islam, and indeed also in Judaism, original message is a group of joyful assertions that attract new believers (2). Currently, there is a sense that some people are 'shopping' for religion (3). As Christianity and Islam spread in Asia and Africa, those who adopted one of these religions felt that they were in some respects entering on a 'better' deal (2). Certainly in Christendom since about the year 1500 many persons have continued to profess Christianity but have also adopted secular and humanistic beliefs (2), which didn't quite happened in Islam. Therefore Islam has a wide spread connotation of cruel and aggressive religion. An in-depth study of the relationship between the Muslim community and the rest of the world in our days shows that Islam carries on aggressive propaganda of Conversion to Islam. The idea of Islamic mission has a global appetite which often denies co-existence with other religions (2).

Theological debate with Christianity is not popular and doesn't change the attitudes of the Islamic extremists. It is generally assumed that Islam prefers *a sword* over *a word* when the matter comes to the conversion of infidels. Islam has traditionally a lot of unresolved

human rights issues and issues in separation of religion from education and state (4).

The conflict between Christendom and Islam has a long history. Since Islam came into being, it has clashed numerously with the already established Christianity. Their rivalry has never ceased until today. Most of the serious religiously motivated conflicts, mass crimes against humanity and genocides in the 20th century have been between Muslims and Christians. This has included genocides in Bosnia Herzegovina, East Timor, and the Sudan, as well as serious conflicts in Cyprus, Kosovo, Macedonia, Chechnya and the Philippines. There were not only military clashes but political as well as economical (5).

There are some people who say that the religion of Islam has been hijacked by the likes of Osama bin Laden and his fellow terrorists. It would be a mistake. Undeniably most of such aggressive activity is based on the accurate reading of Quran and it is based on one of the interpretations of Jihad — the obligation

of Muslims to struggle or exert themselves "in the way of the Lord," for the furtherance of Islam (1).

Therefore the controversies between these two major religions are intense in our days as ever. Understanding of Christianity and Islam as two Abraham religions, their similarities and differences, research of historical interactions between Christianity and Islam will allow us to determine whether Islam might be a successful or failed attempt to improve Christianity and Judaism.

A . Overview of Christianity and Islam as two Abrahamic religions

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are three closely related religions. Because they all respect Abraham and certain other patriarchs mentioned in the Bible as their spiritual ancestors, they are called Abrahamic religions. The monotheism of Islam is compared to that of the Old Testament, although the nature of God in the Bible is not quite identical to that of Allah in the Quran (1).

The world into which Muhammad, Islam's Prophet, was born was a vicious, brutal place. It was A.D. 570, and the great mass of people in Arabia seemed to have been concerned only with themselves: their survival, their financial gain, the ruin of their neighbours to prop up that gain. Human life was continually debased by such common practices as female infanticide, the torture and murder of one's enemies, slavery, the lack of women's rights, tribal warfare and rivalries, drunkenness and gambling, and a cult of idolatry with often contradictory beliefs (6).

Into this environment emerged Islam in AD 622 and immediately consolidated a number of warring nomadic Arabic tribes into fighting hoards. Islam explicitly supported violence in furtherance of its faith, whereas Christianity and Judaism relied on the interpretations of their leaders that promoted more peaceful approaches (7).

Young Muhammad, according to most accounts, was an upright, morally serious person, saddened by the state of his people and keeping himself apart from everything which might

place a stain on his reputation. He was rumoured to be so honest that he earned a new nickname, "al-Sadiq," or "Amin" - "the truthful." (6)

It was near the end of the month of Ramadan in 610 when Muhammad reported to his wife an encounter with the Archangel Gabriel. This meeting, he said, took place at Jabal an-Nur, the "Mountain of Light." Muhammad, an illiterate, was commanded by the Archangel to read from a scroll shown to him by Gabriel. Unable to read it, Muhammad instead memorized the words the Archangel spoke, words he later dictated as Quran (96:1-5). Over the next twenty-three years, Muhammad employed associates to take his dictation of what Gabriel told him. Thus how Quran came into existence (6).

Originally the Quran had presented Islam as a religion parallel to Judaism and Christianity and confirming their scriptures (2). Later Islam has positioned itself as a direct antagonist of Judaism and Christianity, considered as infidel religions that lost the God's blessing. The same lack of tolerance developed within Islam itself. If over a thousand years ago the Islamic world vibrated with scholarly disputation, in more recent centuries this tolerance for disagreement has been largely extinguished. Muslims have lost the drive to seek a new knowledge, as well as their moral and intellectual grounding (8).

Orthodox Christianity stayed mainly unchanged since the era of the first ecumenical councils. The Nicene debates focused on the nature of the God worshiped — the issue that is at stake in the Christian conversation with Islam. Jesus Christ is not only God's truth "for me" but for all persons everywhere. In our encounter with Islam, as well as with any other world religion, such approach doesn't leave much space for a compromise (1). In Islam, Jesus (Arabic: Issa) is considered merely a messenger of God who had been sent to guide the Children of Israel with a new scripture, the Injil (gospel) (9). The Quran, believed by Muslims to be God's final revelation, states that Jesus was born to Mary (Arabic: Maryam) as the result of virginal conception, a miraculous event which occurred by the decree of God (Arabic: Allah). To aid him in his quest, Jesus was given the ability to perform miracles, all by the permission of God. According to

Islamic texts, Jesus was neither killed nor crucified, but rather he was raised alive up to heaven. Islamic traditions narrate that he will return to earth close to the Day of Judgment to restore justice and defeat al-Masiḥ ad-Dajjal literary "The false messiah", also known as the Antichrist) (9) (10). Like all prophets in Islam, Jesus is considered to have been a Muslim, as he preached for people to adopt the straight path in submission to God's will. Islam rejects that Jesus was God incarnate or the son of God, stating that he was an ordinary man who, like other prophets, had been divinely chosen to spread God's message. Jesus is seen in Islam as a precursor to Muhammad, and is believed by Muslims to have foretold the latter's coming (9) (10).

It is difficult to compare Christianity to any other religion, because there is such a wide range of beliefs and practices among various wings of Christianity: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox churches, the Anglican Communion and thousands of Protestant faith groups. Some commentators have suggested that Christianity consists of a number of different religions which share little more than the Bible and the name of their religion. Protestant Christianity is obviously divided into a least liberal and conservative wings — divisions which hold few beliefs in common. Compared to Christianity, Islam can be considered as more uniform religion (11).

B . Historical interactions between Christianity and Islam in VII-IX centuries

Of the Christians of Muhammad's time the Nestorians and the Monophysites were the most important cultural groups known to Arabs. There were also some Byzantine Christians in Mecca from time to time, perhaps chiefly craftsmen. Something was known about Judaism in Mecca as well. In the early passages of the Quran there are some very friendly references to Christians. Later where pagans and idolaters were given the choice of Islam or the sword, Christians and Jews could become protected minorities, even though the Quran had criticized Jews and Christians for their exclusiveness (12).

While Christians living under Muslim rule like John of Damascus had to be very cautious in their criticisms of Islam, the

citizens of Byzantine Empire didn't have such inhibitions. After all, Muslims were not only their ideological but very efficient military enemies (12). Nevertheless, the earliest surviving written criticisms of Islam are to be found in the writings of Christians, who came under the early dominion of the Islamic Caliphate. One such Christian was John of Damascus (born c. 676), who was familiar with Islam and Arabic. The second chapter of his book, *The Fount of Wisdom*, titled 'Concerning Heresies', presents a series of discussions between Christians and Muslims. John claimed an Arian monk influenced Muhammad and viewed the Islamic doctrines as nothing more than a hodgepodge culled from the Bible (13). Writing on Islam's claim of Abrahamic ancestry, John explained that the Arabs were called "Saracens" because they were "empty of Sarah". They were called "Hagarenes" because they were "the descendants of the slave-girl Hagar" (13).

On the Muslim side among examples of anti-Christian polemics from the ninth century is a "Refutation of the Christians" (Radd an-Nasara) by the well-known writer al-Jahiz (12). About early Muslim polemic against Christianity we also know thanks to Abu Isa al-Warraq's 'Against the Incarnation' which is the second and last part of his *Refutation of the Three Christian Denominations* (14).

As noted above, prior to the birth of Prophet Muhammad, the Arab society was sunk into darkness. Although the Arabs believed in the unity of God, but they also claimed that God has entrusted His duties to various gods, goddesses and idols. For this purpose, they had more than 360 idols. They considered angels as the daughters of God. They were ignorant of social values. They were nomadic people who were dependent on cattle for their living. There was no government or law. All power existed with the rich. The society was full of barbarity and brutality. Tribes fought with each other over trivial matters for centuries. A slight argument over horses or water could lead to the slaughtering of thousands of innocent people (15). Even introduction of Ten Commandments would be a huge step forward, but, alas, the tribes stayed barbaric until the revelations of Muhammad.

Muhammad started proclaiming the message of believing in one God. The people who once called him "Trustworthy" and "Honest" boycotted and plotted to kill him. In 622 A.D., due to worsening living conditions and social isolation, Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina along with his followers. This flight was known as Hijrah and marks the beginning of the Muslims calendar. Muhammad's message spread rapidly and the number of followers increased in Medina. During the next few years, a series of battles were fought between various tribes of Mecca and the Muslims of Medina. In 628 A.D, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed between the two parties. Truce was declared for 10 years. The treaty was broken in 629 A.D by the non-Muslims of the Mecca. Muhammad moved towards Mecca with 10,000 men and the battle was won without a single bloodshed (16).

Early relations between Islam and Christendom, were limited in scope, concise in formalities and details. The greatest diplomatic event in that age was the Prophet's letters to the kings and princes of his time calling upon them to embrace Islam. In 627 AD the Prophet sent letters and envoys to Heraclius, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, to Chosroes, King of Persia, to the Roman Ruler of Egypt and others. These letters were written almost in the same words and were mostly ignored by the Christendom. Only the Emir of Bahrein replied by embracing Islam. As for Chosroes he insulted the envoys, dismissed them and tore up the Prophet's letter (17).

Muhammad died in 632 A.D, at the age of 63 in the city of Medina. Muhammad's death brought a huge catastrophe among Muslims. People could not believe that Muhammad had left them forever. Many of the followers were perplexed and distraught, and claimed him to be still living. At that time Muhammad funeral, Abu Bakr, who was the most respected of all the followers affirmed that, "Oh, people, those of you who worshipped Muhammad, Muhammad died. And those of you who worshipped God, God is still living." (18).

It is necessary to point out that Abu Bakr was the only person, other than the Prophet's own wife, who accepted Islam

immediately and believed in Muhammad from the first movement that he announced his Prophethood. Abu Bakr always remained at the Prophet's side and he had no reservations about spending his wealth for the sake of Islam and the Muslims (18).

It was no surprise that Abu Bakr had been chosen as the first Caliph (leader). Before his death in 634 A.D., Umar Ibn Ul Khattab was appointed as his successor. During the ten years of his rule, Muslims conquered 22 hundreds thousands miles of area. Mesopotamia and parts of Persia were taken from the Sassanids Empire (Iranian Dynasty), Egypt, Palestine, Syria, North Africa and Armenia from the Christian Byzantine Empire. Muslims were known to have undertaken attacks on the images and statues of his Christian subjects in Syria and other places (15). Within a few years, a lot of people accepted the message of Islam. By the tenth century, Islam dominated the half of the world known at that time. It is necessary to emphasise that Christianity was, at the time the Arabian Prophet appeared and Islam emerged from the desert, embraced by the majority in many of the lands. Christianity was the main religion in Syria and Egypt at the time of Muslim conquest (17) (18) (19) (20).

It is worth noting that the gains of the Umayyad Empire were consolidated upon when the Abbasid dynasty rose to power in 750, with the conquest of the Mediterranean islands including the Balearics and Sicily. The new ruling party had been instated on the wave of dissatisfaction propagated against the Umayyads, cultured mainly by the Abbasid revolutionary, Abu Muslim (21). Under the Abbasids, Islamic civilization flourished. Most notable was the development of Arabic prose and poetry, termed by The Cambridge History of Islam as its "golden age." This was also the case for commerce and industry (considered a Muslim Agricultural Revolution), and the arts and sciences (considered a Muslim Scientific Revolution), which prospered, especially under the rule of Abbasid caliphs al-Mansur (ruled 754 — 775), Harun al-Rashid (ruled 786 — 809), al-Ma'mun (ruled 809 — 813), and their immediate successors (22) .

Baghdad was made the new capital of the caliphate (moved from the previous capital, Damascus) due to the

importance placed by the Abbasids upon eastern affairs in Persia and Transoxania. It was at this time however, that the caliphate showed signs of fracture and we witness the uprising of regional dynasties. Although the Umayyad family had been killed by the revolting Abbasids, one family member, Abd ar-Rahman I, was able to flee to Spain and establish an independent caliphate there in 756. In the Maghreb region, Harun al-Rashid appointed the Arab Aghlabids as virtually autonomous rulers, although they continued to recognise the authority of the central caliphate. Aghlabid rule was short lived, as they were deposed by the Shiite Fatimid dynasty in 909. By around 960, the Fatimids had conquered Abbasid Egypt, building a new capital there in 973 called "al-Qahirah" (meaning "the planet of victory", known today as Cairo) (22) .

It is also worth noting that during the Abbasid reign, Baghdad became one of the greatest cultural centers of the world. The Abbasids were said to be descendents of Abbas the uncle of Muhammad claiming that they were the 'messiah' or saviours of the people under the Ummayyad rule. Abbasid caliphs Harun al-Rashid and Al-Mamun were great patrons of arts and sciences, and enabled these domains to flourish. Islamic philosophy also developed as the Shariah was codified, and the four Madhabs were established and built. This era also saw the rise of classical Sufism. The greatest achievement, however, was completion of the canonical collections of Hadith of Sahih Bukhari and others (22) .

In its first thousand years — from the revelations to Muhammad in the seventh century to the great Islamic empires of the sixteenth — Islamic civilization flourished. While Europeans suffered through the Dark Ages, Muslims in such cities as Jerusalem, Damascus, Alexandria, Fez, Tunis, Cairo, and Baghdad made remarkable advances in philosophy, science, medicine, literature, and art (23).

Another relevant point is that today's Arab world was created at breathtaking speed. In just over one hundred years following the death of Mohammed in 632, Arabs had subjugated a territory with an east-west expanse greater than the Roman Empire, and they did it in about one-half the time. By the mid-

eighth century, Arab armies had conquered the thousand-year-old Persian Empire, reduced the Byzantine Empire to little more than a city-state based around Constantinople, and destroyed the Visigoth kingdom of Spain. The cultural and linguistic effects of this early Islamic expansion reverberate even today (20).

C . Similarities and Differences between Christianity and Islam

More than any two religious traditions on earth, Christianity and Islam share both striking similarities and radical differences (1). Christianity and Islam share much common ground. Both trace their roots to Abraham. Both believe in prophecy, God's messengers (apostles), revelation, scripture, the resurrection of dead, and the centrality of religious community. This last element is especially important. Both Christianity and Islam have a communitarian dimension: what the church is to Christianity the "Umma" is to Islam (9).

Despite these significant similarities, however, these two world religions have a number of significant differences as well.

It is clear that Christianity is significantly older than Islam. Christianity was found circa 30 CE Yeshua of Nazareth (Jesus Christ) and Islam was found by Muhammad 622 CE. However, Muslims generally regard Islam as dating back to the time of creation (10).

It is necessary to point out that both religions have major internal divisions. Christians are divided between Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, and others. Muslims are divided between Shi'ite, Sunni, Sufi. Sufi is a mystical tradition (2).

Main beliefs differ in the following way. Regarding the concept of deity in Christianity most believe in the Trinity; three persons in one Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Islam - God (Allah) is one and indivisible. They believe in a strict monotheism (6).

Another relevant point is that in Christianity Jesus Christ is generally considered the Son of God, worshiped as God; part of the Trinity. In Islam Jesus is very highly respected as the second-last prophet. Both religions more or less agree on the

nature of birth of Jesus through virgin conception, but disagree on His death. Christians believe that He was executed by Roman Army circa 30 CE and resurrected on the third day. According to Islam Jesus was not killed, crucified, or suffered death. Muslims believe that he ascended alive into heaven. Both religions agree on the present location of Jesus – He has ascended into Heaven (2).

It is worth noting that Christians attribute to Holy Spirit the role of "God's additional helper". Muslims allocate this role to Muhammad. Both religions anticipate the second coming of Messiah in the future (10) (2).

With regard to the status of Adam, Christians believe that he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. Muslims consider Adam free from all major sins and faults. Some regard him as a prophet (9).

Another relevant point is that main holy book of Christians is Bible including the New Testament, originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, while main holy book of Islam is Quran, originally written in Arabic. Both religions have books for additional guidance writings of Apostles and fathers of the early Church. For Islam it is the Hadith — sayings of Muhammad (6) (12).

Turning now to the question of the status of the newborns it is worth noting that Christianity has various views on a baby's status at birth. Main is that a baby is born with a sinful nature, separated from God. God needs to grant grace so that child may be saved. In Islam all babies are born in a pure state of submission to Allah. However, as they mature they are often taught other beliefs by their parents and their culture (21) (11).

Both religions mainly agree on the concept of life after death: Either Heaven or Hell. Only Catholics believe in Purgatory as a third state. There is no consensus in Christianity with regard to the basis of determining destination after death. Different faith groups hold various diverse beliefs. Usually all of them agree that the post mortal judgement depends on believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, good works, church sacraments, baptism, avoiding certain actions. According to Islam once people reach puberty, his/her account of deeds is opened in paradise. To attain paradise,

at death, their good deeds (helping others, testifying to the truth of God, leading a virtuous life, Jihad: internal, personal struggle towards the attainment of a noble goal. Many incorrectly equate it only to "holy war.") must outweigh their evil deeds (6) (9).

In Christianity current interpretation of the Holy Book ranges from statements of the Pope in Roman Catholicism to resolutions at conventions among Protestants (1). In Islam interpretations of Quran rests upon the learned scholars in various Muslim countries. It is worth noting that there is no single spokesperson or authoritative group for Islam (21).

It is generally considered that status of women in Christian communities is variable, but mainly women are highly respected. In Islam status of women is strongly affected by cultural traditions. It must also be noted that it is severely oppressed in some countries (19).

To return to an earlier point, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in contrast to Hinduism and Buddhism, are all monotheistic faiths that worship the God of Adam, Abraham, and Moses – God-Creator and Lord of the universe. They share a common belief in the oneness of God (monotheism), sacred history (history as the theatre of God's activity and the encounter of God and humankind), prophets and divine revelation, angels, and Satan. All stress moral responsibility and accountability, Judgment Day, and eternal reward and punishment (24).

Bearing in mind the previous points, it is generally thought that all three faiths emphasize their special covenant with God, for Judaism through Moses, Christianity through Jesus, and Islam through Muhammad. Christianity accepts God's covenant with and revelation to the Jews but traditionally has seen itself as superseding Judaism with the coming of Jesus. Thus Christianity speaks of its new covenant and New Testament. So, too, Islam and Muslims recognize Judaism and Christianity: their biblical prophets (among them Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus) and their revelations (the Torah and the New Testament, or Message of Jesus). Muslim respect for all the biblical prophets is reflected in the custom of saying "Peace and blessings be upon him" after naming any of the prophets and in the common usage of the names Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Daoud (David),

Sulayman (Solomon), and Issa (Jesus) for Muslims. In addition, Islam makes frequent reference to Jesus and to the Virgin Mary (24).

However, Muslims believe that Islam supersedes Judaism and Christianity-that the Quran is the final and complete word of God and that Muhammad is the last of the prophets. In contrast to Christianity, which accepts much of the Hebrew Bible, Muslims believe that what is written in the Old and New Testaments is a corrupted version of the original revelation to Moses and Jesus. Moreover, Christianity's development of "new" dogmas such as the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and the doctrines of redemption and atonement is seen as admixing God's revelation with human fabrication (24).

Although it may be true that peace is central to all three faiths (this is reflected historically in their use of similar greetings meaning "peace be upon you": *shalom aleichem* in Judaism, *pax vobiscum* in Christianity, and *salaam alaikum* in Islam), often, however, the greeting of peace has been meant primarily for members of one's own faith community (24).

D . Creation of Islam as attempt to improve Christianity and Judaism

Does Muhammad fulfill and complete the mission and ministry of Jesus? Muslims answer with an emphatic yes (25). Christians answer with an emphatic no. The truth claims of Islam and Christianity, the two monotheistic faiths that proclaim universal validity, are mutually contradictory (26).

Basic Islamic theology teaches that since Allah sent Gabriel down with the Quran to Muhammad the messenger of Allah, Muhammad and the Quran fulfill and complete the mission of Christ and the New Testament. On the one hand, Muhammad seems to recognize the value of the Bible (Suras 4:47; 4:136; 4:163; 5:44-48; 5:82-83; 6:92, 154), on the other hand Islam ultimately demands that Christianity and the New Testament must yield to Islam and the Quran, the new and superior revelation (25). In the Bible, Abraham is the father of God's chosen nation, Israel; in the Koran, he's one of a vast series of prophets leading up to the climactic final Prophet Muhammad

(26). So Muslims can also learn about the characters we know, but in a form more difficult to follow than the one familiar to us in the Bible (7) (26).

Sura 5:15-16 illustrates this theology. In the context of Muhammad's distortion of the Christian doctrine of the Sonship of Christ (5:17), and in the context of his asserting that Jews have been cursed (5:13), this passage in the Quran (representing others) says that Christians (and Jews) have been walking in darkness until Muhammad came (25):

5:15 People of the Book [Jews and Christians] ... a light has now come to you from God, and a Scripture [the Quran] making things clear, 16 with which God guides them who follow what pleases Him to ways of peace, bringing them from darkness out into light, by His will, and guiding them to a straight path (27).

A Bible-educated Christian today immediately recognizes the imagery of light. Jesus says that he was sent down from heaven as the light of the world, and Christians have passed from darkness into the light (John 1:4-5, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46; 1 Peter 2:9). Now, however, Muhammad claims that Christians had been living in darkness, and he has come to clarify matters for them, as if things had been muddled. The Quran offers guidance along a "straight path," a theme often repeated in the Muslim Scriptures (e.g. Sura or Chapter 1) and makes "things clear." Verse 16 is likely one of the verses a Muslim has in mind when he points out that Islam is a religion of peace (25). Although Muslims say: 'Islam should prevail, not be prevailed over. And we believe in their Prophets but they do not believe in our Prophet. Our religion commands us to expel them...' (28).

A devout, Bible-educated Christian in no way believes that Islam is superior, so how do we break this deadlock? Ignore it? Given recent events like 9/11, this is no longer feasible. Do we pretend that all religions are the same? But this forces us to deny some basic, diametrically opposed and irreconcilable doctrines that all religions have (25). Muslims speak of their humiliation and the domination of the Jews and Christians over them which is

the result of the Muslims' negligence to fight back (28). Muslims openly call the modern Christians - the enemies of Allaah (28).

Debating abstract ideas like the Unity or the Trinity of God has a place in the Christian-Muslim dialogue, but neither claim can be proven by simple observation. The Quran everywhere affirms the strict Unity of God, whereas the New Testament everywhere affirms the divinity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. So we have merely pitted one sacred text against another, and to break this deadlock we must go down still other paths (25).

Since Muhammad lays down a serious challenge to Christ and Christianity, Christians must answer him. What would Christ say? As it turns out, he has given a clear teaching on how to evaluate a prophet who comes after him in history, especially if the later prophet asserts his superiority over Christ: evaluation of his *fruit*. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ spoke to the multitudes, few of whom or none of whom were theologians, but simple agrarians. In Matt. 7:15-20, Christ uses unambiguous language about discerning the truthfulness of prophets:

7:15 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you shall know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you shall know them.

In today's western world in which millions would prefer to not rock the boat with Islam and rather try to accommodate it, this passage may stand out as intolerant. But in these verses Christ understands the stakes. Religious truth-claims come into the world by the dozens, seemingly every second, and these claims are not merely abstract theories; the lives of people are at risk. So the price of accommodation, since 9/11, is too high. Besides, it is Muhammad who says that he is superior to Christ and that his new religion improves on Christianity. He is the one who issued the challenge in the first place. Therefore, 600+ years

before Muhammad came on the world stage, Christ answers him (and other self-proclaimed prophets) with a fruit inspection (25). Turning now to the question of the legitimacy of Islamic message, let's evaluate and compare Christ's and Muhammad's fruits.

Muhammad in his Quran commands that adulterers and adulteresses should receive a hundred lashes (Sura 24:2). Reliable hadiths (Muhammad's words and deeds outside of the Quran) command stoning them. Christ forgave the woman caught in adultery. The men who had gathered around to stone her dropped their rocks and left. She stayed, weeping, until Christ told her to go and sin no more (John 8:1-11).

It is worth noting that Muhammad in his Quran permits husbands to beat their wives (Sura 4:34). Neither Christ nor the New Testament authors permit this or practiced this (25).

Another relevant point is that Muhammad in his Quran commands that the hands of male or female thieves should be cut off (Sura 5:38). Christ never said to do this. In fact, the Apostle Paul said that thieves should work with their hands—not get them cut off—in order to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28). In this matter (and in many others) Paul excels Muhammad (25).

Muhammad assassinates poets and poetesses and political enemies. Muhammad was sorely tried by several poets (25). One was Asma bint Marwan. When her latest verses were recited to the Prophet, he cried out, "Will no one rid me of this daughter of Marwan?" Umayr Ibn Ali, a clansman of hers volunteered. That night she was sleeping, her youngest child still at her breast, when her clansman thrust his sword through her. On that day new converts were won as they could see the power of Islam (29). Muslims still use this practice. For example, there is the Ayatollah Khomeini's notorious death fatwa against the novelist Salman Rushdie (30). Christ never assassinates any of his enemies — and certainly not poets.

Muhammad in his Quran commands death or the cutting off of hands and feet for fighting and corrupting the land (Sura 5:33). Christ the Prince of Peace dies for the sins of the world, so that "corruption" and the "fighting" would stop.

Muhammad marries a prepubescent girl, Aisha, and consummates his marriage with her while she is still only a girl. The Quran itself allows such unjust marriages for other Muslims, as well (Sura 65:4). The Ayatollah Khomeini himself married a ten-year-old girl when he was twenty-eight (29). Christ never did this or said to do this.

Muhammad in his Quran promises sensuous, "virgin-rich" Gardens for martyrs dying in a military holy war (Suras 44:51-56, 52:17-29, 55:46-78, 61:10, 4:74, 9:111). Christ's "Martyrdom" on the cross means that Christians do not have to die in a holy war to be guaranteed heaven. They need only trust in him (25).

Muhammad unjustly executes around 600 male Jews and enslaves the women and children. This atrocity is celebrated in his Quran (Sura 33:25-27) Christ was a Jew and loves his own people. Moreover, he loves the whole world—even the polytheists whom Muhammad slaughters—and redeems it by his death, burial, and Resurrection. He was not sent to slaughter people.

Muhammad launches his own military Crusade in AD 630 with 30,000 jihadists against the Byzantines (who never showed up) (Sura 9:29). Christ never did this. What Medieval Europeans did in his name is not foundational to Christianity. Only Christ and the New Testament are, and they do not endorse a military holy war. Muhammad, on the other hand, is foundational to Islam, and he did launch his Crusades against Byzantines Christians, and he does endorse and go out on many military holy wars (25).

The Quran allows Muslim men to marry up to four wives and have sex with slave girls ("captives that your right hands possess") (29). Christ says that one man and one woman is the ideal, according to Genesis.

The Quran allows Muhammad allows him to use money to win and keep converts. Christ used preaching and miracles to reach people. He never used money to buy them off (25).

The Quran endorses slavery, and Muhammad himself traded in slaves. Christ and the New Testament authors and apostles never traded in slaves, and Paul said it is good if a

person can get free (1 Corinthian 7:21). Paul says that slave traders are like the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and unrighteous, those who kill their mothers and fathers, murderers, adulterers and perverts, liars and perjurers (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

The Quran says that slave-girls are sexual property for Muslim men. Christ did not say this, and neither did the apostles. The Quran says that a woman's testimony counts half of a man's because of her forgetfulness. The Hadith says that her mind is deficient. Christ honors women, not call them mentally deficient (25).

The Quran allows an injured plaintiff to exact legal revenge — physical eye for physical eye, literally. Even the follows of the Old Testament do not necessarily take "eye for eye" literally, nothing to say of New Testament with its promotion of universal forgiveness.

Sura 5:16 asserts that Islam is the religion of peace. Having considered all of the above, actions speak louder than words. Islam is therefore cannot be regarded as the religion of peace (25).

Christians shall know prophets by their fruit. Bluntly stated, Muhammad, the self-described human messenger and prophet (Sura 3:144), clearly fails the down-to-earth fruit inspection. On the other hand, Christ the Son of God (Matt. 3:16-17) passes it with a perfect score (25).

Therefore, Islam does not improve on Christianity. This conclusion follows naturally and logically. For fair-minded and reasonable people, practical matters like wife-beating and whipping adulterers and marrying prepubescent children are decisive. Actions and down-to-earth policies cannot be explained away, unless some people are wilfully blind and refuse to see how obviously wrong it is to do these things, or unless a prophet has a large army behind him to force his practices on the "inferior" followers of an "incomplete" earlier religion (25).

The key aspect of this argument is that Muhammad embodies Islam, for he was the conduit through which Allah reveals the superior religion, so we again use him to test Islam. Fruit evaluation says that if a prophet fails it, then his more abstract claims are under suspect. In a secular context, this test is

too high, for all humans are flawed. A physicist is allowed to discuss abstract matters about space and time, even though his personal life may be confused and even sinful. But in a religious context, especially when one religious leader (Muhammad) asserts that he is better than another leader (Christ), this test is essential and indispensable (25).

Furthermore, factual data confirm Muhammad's failure in abstract ideas. For example, it is a verifiable fact that the New Testament is reliable, whereas the Quran has its share of problems. It is also a verifiable fact that Muhammad was not trained in high-minded matters, while Jesus Christ thought the wise scholars in the Temple since he was 12 years old. Jesus based his teaching on the Law of Moses. Muhammad simply picked up a hodgepodge of ideas that circulated over the trade routes and inserted them into his Quran (like the absurd non-death of Christ on the cross in Sura 4:157), claiming divine revelation from God (Allah) (25). Hence, in clear and obvious ways he is not a reformer of Christianity (and Judaism), but a deformer of the two earlier religions. Therefore, historical facts confirm that he is likely wrong in theoretical doctrines.

Conclusions

It has been established that Christianity and Islam as two Abraham religions. The conflict between Christendom and Islam has a very long history. Since Islam came into existence, it has clashed numerous times with the already established Christianity. Their battle has never ceased and is carried on even today.

Although, early Islam respected Christian faith, historical interactions between Christianity and Islam in VII-IX centuries were mainly military. Theological debate was rare. Similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam show that Islam seems to be one of the heresies and can be regarded as such, no matter how politically incorrect it may sound.

It is clear from the above that Islam has made an attempt to improve on Christianity and Judaism. Analysis of fruits of Muhammad's life and teachings shows, that he was either insane (if to claim to be an inspired prophet be a sufficient proof of insanity (31)), or possessed by devil. Muhammad's own foster

mother, Halima, admitted that she thought he was "possessed by the devil." (32). How one can believe revelation from God, if Muhammad either changed or modified them. His carelessness with the very words of Allah, words that he did not feel himself obliged to follow, casts a shadow on his trustworthiness (32). Certainly no major prophet in the Bible attributes God's revelation to demons, as Muhammad believed that he was demon-possessed after Allah's revelation. People accused the self-proclaimed prophet of being a lunatic, a liar, and demon possessed. No longer safe from physical harm in Mecca, Muhammad had to seek refuge (32). Even though Jesus was accused to be possessed by demons, he never suggested this by himself, as Muhammad did. When Archangel Gabriel showed up to him he first decided that this was Satan. How one can trust his revelations and visions when he expressed doubt that they were revelations and sometimes thought himself to be demon-possessed? Traditional European biographies of the Prophet have either taken the position that Muhammad was psychologically normal but insincere about his supposed message from Allah or that Muhammad was insane and believed in the truth of his prophetic mission (33).

Even though insanity, demon-possession or hypocrisy claims might be abandoned, the only way left to evaluate the prophet is by his *fruit*. Islam has indeed made an attempt to improve on Christianity and Judaism. This attempt has definitely failed.

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SCHISM OF 1054 AND ATTEMPTS AT REUNION

Introduction

Schism (from the Greek ‘to split’) refers to a group that breaks away from another, usually larger religious denomination and forms a new denomination. Because schisms emerge out of controversies, the term has negative connotations (1).

Schisms are deep and painful wounds on the body of the Christian Church. Many Christian visionaries dream to recover the apostolic sense of the early church for unity in diversity. They seek to confront the frustrations, difficulties, and ironies of the modern “pluralistic” Christian world. It can be done through the research of the historical sources and future destiny of what followers perceive to be the One, Holy, Universal, and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ (2), (3).

In the 7-th and 8-th century Christian Church lost to Islam most of the Asia and North Africa. Alienation of the West Church from the East Orthodoxy was exacerbated by the bitter struggle over iconoclasm; ecclesiastical animosity between Rome and Constantinople came to a head in the schism of the 9-th century. This schism centered on the addition of the Filioque to the Nicene/Constantinople Creed in the West and on the western church's use of unleavened bread in the celebration of the mass and insistence on clerical celibacy (4).

In the year 752 AD, Pope Zacharias anointed Pepin the Short, chief steward of the Frankish kings, to be king, and by this gave, as it were, the Church's blessing to the overthrow carried out by Pepin in the Frankish kingdom that removed the lawful Frankish king from power. For this, Pepin, in the year 755 AD, took away from the Germanic tribe of the Lombards the lands conquered by them in Italy and delivered into the pope's hands the keys to 22 cities and the Ravenna Exarchate, which had previously belonged to the Byzantine Empire. Thus, the Pope was transformed from a subject of the Eastern Roman emperor into an independent secular sovereign, not dependent on any other sovereign, with an independent territory and with possession of supreme state authority on this territory (5).

In 799, Pope Leo III had been mistreated by the Romans, who tried to put out his eyes and tear out his tongue. Leo escaped, and fled to Charlemagne at Paderborn, asking him to intervene in Rome and restore him. Charlemagne, advised by Alcuin of York, agreed to travel to Rome, doing so in November 800 and holding a council on December 1. On December 23 Leo swore an oath of innocence. At Mass, on Christmas Day (December 25), when Charlemagne knelt at the altar to pray, the pope crowned him *Imperator Romanorum* ("Emperor of the Romans") in Saint Peter's Basilica. In so doing, the pope was effectively attempting to transfer the office from Constantinople to Charlemagne (6).

Support of Charlemagne and his heirs rapidly demoralized the papacy. The inner contradiction between the ascetic ideal and secular authority appeared as a dangerous enemy of the moral purity of the popes. It entailed a radical change not only in the status, but also in the behaviour, in the intentions, in the aspirations and in the actions of the Roman popes. Conceit, pride, lust for power and the aspiration to subordinate all the local churches to their authority, which had previously appeared in the behaviour of the Roman popes only as tendencies, as sporadic phenomena, then have taken wholly possession of the popes (5).

At first, the popes set themselves the task of strengthening their authority in those Western churches the African, Spanish and Gallic Churches which did not form a part of the Roman Church. Despite a certain resistance on the part of the African Church, the popes succeeded comparatively easily in securing the subordination to themselves of these churches: great was the authority of Rome in these its former provinces (7).

Churches in Britain, Germany and in the other countries of Western Europe that were newly founded by missionaries of the Roman bishop, the popes succeeded in subordinating them to their authority all the more easily, inasmuch as the idea of the supremacy of the pope in the Church was inculcated in them simultaneously with the preaching of Christianity.

These causes even combined seems not to be sufficient to produce two halves of Christendom, an Eastern and a Western

half, each distinguished in various ways from the other. They are certainly not sufficient to account for a separation of those halves; only we notice that already there was a consciousness of two entities, the first marking of a line of division, through which rivalry, jealousy, and hatred had easily cut a separation.

The division between East and West grew wider and attained a sort of legal permanence in 1054, which Pope Leo IX is deemed to be responsible for (7).

Eastern and Western Christendom were already in the 9th century two different cultures. Their one common tie was the Christian doctrine—even worship and practices were very different. From this time it is customary to distinguish Christian history in its Eastern and Western streams as that of the Orthodox Eastern Church and Roman Catholic Church (2).

Therefore, the year 1054 was not the year in which communion was suspended between Rome and the East, as many might think; it actually occurred in 1009. Thus the excommunication of 1054 was not the first cause for the schism, but has indeed deepened the dogmatic disagreement, which started with the Filioque, and grew with the West's insistence on the supreme authority of the Pope, and the addition of controversial dogmas and canons. This was accompanied by continuous accusations, amplified misunderstandings, and offensive writings from both sides (2).

A. Origins of the Great Schism of 1054

In the early history of Christian Church there have been continual schisms, of which the greater number was in the East. Arianism produced a huge schism (8); the Nestorian and Monophysite schisms still last (9). However, the Great Schism always means that most deplorable quarrel of which the final result is the separation of the vast majority of Catholic Christians from union with the Eastern Church, the schism that produced two separated churches (10).

The Great Schism of 1054 must not be conceived as the result of only one definite quarrel. It is not true that after centuries of perfect peace, suddenly on account of one dispute, nearly half of

Christendom fell away. Such an event would be unparalleled in history, at any rate, unless there was a great heresy, and in this quarrel there was no heresy at first, nor has there ever been a hopeless disagreement about the Faith. It is a case, perhaps the only prominent case, of a pure schism, of a breach of intercommunion caused by anger and bad feeling, not by a rival theology. It would be inconceivable then that hundreds of bishops should suddenly break away from union with Pope, if all had gone smoothly before. The great schism is rather the result of a very gradual process. Its remote causes must be sought centuries before there was any suspicion of their final effect. There was a series of temporary schisms that loosened the bond and prepared the way.

If we group the story around their names we must explain the earlier causes that prepared for them, and note that there were temporary reunions later (2).

After Jerusalem, the Church of Rome naturally became the primary church, the capital of Christianity (11). Rome had an early and significant Christian population (11). It was closely identified with the Apostle Paul, who preached and was martyred there, and the Apostle Peter, who was a martyr there as well. While the Eastern cities of Alexandria and Antioch produced theological works, the bishops of Rome focused on what Romans admittedly did best: administration (2).

In the early church up until the ecumenical councils, Rome was regarded as an important centre of Christianity, especially since it was the capital of the Roman Empire. Bishops of churches generally in the eastern and southern Mediterranean recognized a persuasive leadership and authority of the Bishop of Rome (7). But these bishops did not regard the Bishop of Rome as infallible, nor did they acknowledge any juridical authority of Rome (4).

The first cause of all was the gradual estrangement of East and West. To a great extent this estrangement was inevitable. The East and West grouped themselves around different centres — at any rate as immediate centres — used different rites and spoke different languages.

The consciousness of the early Christian was that the heads of Christendom were the patriarchs;

The immediate head of each part of the Church was its patriarch. After Chalcedon (451) we must count five patriarchates: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

The focus of the East-West Schism cannot just be on Rome, or on Constantinople. It must include the other patriarchates of the Pentarchia Romania. These were Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem (3).

The time when the schism between Rome and Antioch became final can be pinpointed precisely to when Rome set up a Latin Patriarch in Antioch in substitution for the Greek Patriarch of Antioch (7).

The time when the schism in Jerusalem became final is probably later than in the other patriarchates. There were times when the Roman Catholics were in control in Jerusalem to the exclusion of the Greeks, and the schism was obvious. But later the Greeks regained control and followed their usual path of tolerant openness to all from the other four patriarchates, including Old Rome (7).

The definition of schism is imprecise, and it may later have become obvious that parties were in schism at a particular time, although at that time the parties did not regard themselves as in schism. There was also the confusion in a lot of people's minds, between schism and heresy. Both terms tended to be hurled about rather indiscriminately, as weapons against each other, and sometimes against usual friends (10).

Relations between the four eastern Greek-speaking patriarchs were often not friendly. There were times when one patriarch considered another to be invalid, uncanonical, schismatic, or even heretical (10).

The patriarchs did not operate in a vacuum. They were subject to pressure from the other bishops under their oversight. They were subject to pressure from the other patriarchs, including both Rome and Constantinople. They were frequently pressured by the people, and in the east they were surprisingly frequently installed by popular demand of the people, and ejected by the people. In Constantinople especially, and in the other eastern

patriarchates to a somewhat lesser extent, they were very much subject to appointment, dismissal, and direction, by the emperor. (12)

The difference between the East and West then was in the first place that the pope in the West was not only supreme pontiff, but also the local patriarch. He represented to Eastern Christians a remote and foreign authority, the last court of appeal, for very serious questions, after their own patriarchs had been found incapable of settling them; but to his own Roman Catholics in the West he was the immediate head, the authority immediately over their metropolitans, the first court of appeal to their bishops. So, all loyalty in the West went direct to Rome. The loyalty of the Eastern Christians on the other hand went first to his own patriarch, so there was here always a danger of divided allegiance — if the patriarch had a quarrel with the pope (4).

Therefore, the very organization of the Church in some sort already prepared the ground for a contrast (which might become a rivalry) between the patriarch in the West with his vast following of Roman Catholics on the one side and the Eastern patriarchs with their subjects on the other.

Further points that should be noticed are the differences of rite and language. The question of rite follows that of patriarchate; it made the distinction obvious to the simplest Christian. A Syrian, Greek or Egyptian layman would, perhaps, not understand much about canon law as affecting patriarchs; he could not fail to notice that a travelling Latin bishop or priest celebrated the Holy Mysteries in a way that was very strange, and that stamped him as a (perhaps suspicious) foreigner. In the West, the Roman Rite was first affecting, then supplanting, all others, and in the East the Byzantine Rite was gradually obtaining the same position. So we have the germ of two unities, Eastern and Western. Undoubtedly both sides knew that other rites were equally legitimate ways of celebrating the same mysteries, but the difference made it difficult to say prayers together (13).

Even the detail of language was an element of separation. It is true that the East was never entirely Hellenized as the West was Latinized. Nevertheless, Greek did become to a great extent the

international language in the East. In the Eastern councils all the bishops talk Greek. So again we have the same two unities, this time in language — a practically Greek East and an entirely Latin West. It is difficult to conceive this detail as a cause of estrangement, but it is undoubtedly true that many misunderstandings arose and grew, simply because people could not understand one another. For during the time when these disputes arose, hardly anyone knew a foreign language (13).

Many other factors caused the East and West to drift further apart. The dominant language of the West was Latin, whilst that of the East was Greek. Soon after the fall of the Western Empire, the number of individuals who spoke both Latin and Greek began to dwindle, and communication between East and West grew much more difficult. With linguistic unity gone, cultural unity began to crumble as well. The two halves of the Church were naturally divided along similar lines; they developed different rites and had different approaches to religious doctrines. Although the Great Schism was still centuries away, its outlines were already perceptible (13).

When Leo IX wrote in Latin to Peter III of Antioch, Peter had to send the letter to Constantinople to find out what it was about. Such cases occur continually and confuse all the relations between East and West. At councils the papal legates addressed the assembled fathers in Latin and no one understood them; the council deliberated in Greek and the legates wondered what was going on (11).

The patriarchs of Constantinople often tried to adopt an imperious position over the other patriarchs. The opinion of the Bishop of Rome was often sought, especially when the patriarchs of the Eastern churches were locked in fractious dispute. The bishops of Rome never firmly belonged to either the Antiochian or the Alexandrian schools of theology, and usually managed to steer a middle course between whatever extremes were being propounded by theologians of either school. Because Rome was remote from the centres of Christianity in the eastern empire, it was frequently hoped its bishop would be more impartial. For instance, in 431, Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, appealed to Pope Celestine I, as well as the other patriarchs, charging

Nestorius with heresy, which was dealt with at the Council of Ephesus (14).

The opinion of the bishop of Rome was always canvassed, and was often longed for. However the Bishop of Rome's opinion was by no means automatically right. For instance, the Tome of Leo of Rome was highly regarded, and formed the basis for the ecumenical council's formulation. But it was not universally accepted and was even called "impious" and "blasphemous" by some (15). The next ecumenical council corrected a possible imbalance in Pope Leo's presentation. Although the Bishop of Rome was well-respected even at this early date, the concept of the primacy of the Roman See and Papal Infallibility were only developed much later (14).

B. Ecclesiological aspects of Great Schism

The Roman Catholic view of the Church (ecclesiology) differs from the Orthodox teaching in several ways.

The primary causes of the Schism were disputes over conflicting claims of jurisdiction, in particular over papal authority — Pope Leo IX claimed he held authority over the four Eastern patriarchs — and over the insertion of the Filioque clause into the Nicene Creed by the Western patriarch in 1014.

Eastern Orthodox today state that the 28th Canon of the Council of Chalcedon explicitly proclaimed the equality of the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople, and that it established the highest court of ecclesiastical appeal in Constantinople (16).

The Roman Catholics teach that the visible head of the Church is the Pope, the successor to St. Peter, who was appointed to that sacred position by the Lord Himself with the words, "*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church . . .*" (Matt. 16:18) (17).

The Pope is, then, "the Bishop of the Catholic Church," her teacher, the vicar (agent, deputy) of Christ on earth. He is the interpreter of the Christian Tradition. When he speaks for the whole Church (ex cathedra), the Holy Spirit does not permit him

to err. He is, therefore, infallible on matters of morals and doctrine. Other bishops are his lieutenants. He is the symbol of the episcopate's unity (18).

The Orthodox Church teaches that all bishops are equal. To be sure, there are different ranks of bishops (patriarch, archbishop, metropolitan, bishop); nevertheless, a bishop is a bishop. Such differences apply to the administration of a church or group of churches, not to the nature of the bishop. The president of a synod of bishops is called archbishop (Greek custom) or metropolitan (Russian custom) (3).

According to Latin ecclesiology, each local parish is part of the universal or whole Church. The totality of Catholic parishes forms the Body of Christ on earth. This visible Body has a visible head, the Pope. This idea of the Church implies that the local parish has two heads: the Pope and the local bishop. But a body with two visible heads is a monster. Also, the local bishop seems stripped of his apostolic authority if the Pope may contradict his orders. Indeed, he cannot become a bishop unless the Pope allows it (18).

Orthodoxy teaches that every bishop, "the living icon of Christ," and his flock constitute the Church in a certain place; or, as St. Ignatius the God-bearer says, the Church of Christ is in the bishop, his priests and deacons, with the people, surrounding the Eucharist in the true faith. All bishops and their flocks so constituted, together composing the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (4), (18).

In other words, there can be no Church without a bishop, no bishop without the Eucharist, and no bishop or Eucharist without the true faith, the Apostolic Faith, *"the faith once delivered to the saints."* (Jude 3) "The Church is in the bishop and the bishop in the Church," wrote St. Cyprian of Carthage (19).

Put another way, there is no Church where there is no bishop, and there is no bishop where there is no succession of bishops from the Apostles (apostolic succession); and there can be no succession from the bishops without the faith of the Apostles (18).

Also, there can be no Church without the Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity, because the Church is formed through it. The Body and Blood of Christ unite the Faithful to God: This fellowship is the whole purpose of Christianity. At the same time, there can be no Eucharist - and no other Mysteries - without a bishop who teaches the true faith to the baptized (4), (3), (7), (18).

Eastern Orthodox argue that the seventh Canon of the Council of Ephesus explicitly prohibited modification of the Nicene Creed drawn up by the first Ecumenical Council in 325, the wording of which but, it is claimed, not the substance, had been modified by the second Ecumenical Council, making additions such as "who proceeds from the Father" (14).

There were other less significant catalysts for the Schism however, including variance over liturgical practices.

Many other issues increased tensions. Emperor Leo III the Isaurian outlawed the veneration of icons in the 8th century. This policy, which came to be called Iconoclasm (20), was rejected by the East. The Western Church's insertion of "Filioque" into the Latin version of the Nicene Creed was rejected by the East too.

Another issue was disputes in the Balkans, Southern Italy, and Sicily over whether Rome or Constantinople had ecclesiastical jurisdiction (21).

In the East, endorsement of Caesaropapism, subordination of the church to the religious claims of the dominant political order, was most fully evident in the Byzantine Empire at the end of the first millennium, while in the West, where the decline of imperial authority left the Church relatively independent, there was growth of the power of the Papacy (21).

As a result of the Muslim conquests of the territories of the patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, only two rival powerful centres of ecclesiastical authority, Constantinople and Rome, remained (21), (10), (21).

Certain liturgical practices in the West that the East believed represented illegitimate innovation: the use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist, for example (2), or the fact that parishioners don't get vine.

The first mentioning of leaven appears in Exodus 12-13. It is in commemoration of Israel's Exodus that the 'feast' of Unleavened Bread is instituted. It is not a feast in the sense that there is celebration, but rather commemoration of the Work of the Lord:

Ex 13:3 And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten (17).

13: 7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. 8 And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt (17).

It is the Lord who brought Israel out of Egypt, not a work of the people. To remember this they eat unleavened bread as a symbol of their powerlessness. They also ate the unleavened bread because they left Egypt in a rush (22).

The Passover, which is eaten with bitter herbs, is not in any sense a feast or celebration, but rather a ceremonial recollection of the power of God.

In the Gospels, the word 'unleavened' is only used in reference to the 'days of unleavened bread' (Mt 26:18, Mk 14:1 & 14:12, Lk 22:1 & 22:7, Ac 12:3 & 20:6). Never does the New Testament admonish people to eat unleavened bread, nor does it specify that Christ or anyone else did so other than what was Lawful according to the season (22).

As for leaven and leavened bread, it is used two ways in the Gospels. The first is to denote the power of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mt 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (17).

Lk 13:20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (17).

The Kingdom spreads like yeast. There is no outside change when one repents and becomes a Christian, yet it changes not just individuals but the entire world. As Christians, we do not need to eat unleavened bread as a form of piety. We should not eat the unleavened bread of bitterness on Sundays. The strong memory of unleavened bread's association with fasting and putting off old ways is not compatible with the Lord who had no 'old ways' to put off and no sins to repent of (22).

Another issue is celibacy among Western priests (both monastic and parish), as opposed to the Eastern discipline whereby parish priests can be married men (13).

Celibacy is represented in the Roman Catholic Church as having apostolic authority. Theologically, the Church desires to imitate the life of Jesus with regard to chastity and the sacrifice of married life for the "sake of the Kingdom" (Luke 18:28–30, Matthew 19:27–30; Mark 10:20–21), and to follow the example of Jesus Christ in being "married" to the Church, viewed by Catholicism and many Christian traditions as the "Bride of Christ". Also of importance are the teachings of St. Paul that chastity is the superior state of life, and his desire expressed in I Corinthians 7:7–8, *"I would that all men were even as myself [celibate]—but every one has his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried and the widows. It is good for them if they so continue, even as I."* (17).

Celibacy for priests is a discipline in the Roman Catholic Church, not a doctrine: in other words, a church regulation, but not an integral part of Church teaching. It is based upon the life of Christ and his celibate way of life. However the first pope, St. Peter (23), as well as many subsequent popes, bishops, and priests during the church's first 270 years were in fact married men, and often fathers. The practice of clerical continence, along with a prohibition of marriage by men once they were ordained a deacon, priest or bishop, is traceable from the time of the Council of Elvira. This law was reinforced in the Directa Decretal (385) and at the Council of Carthage in 390. The tradition of clerical continence developed into a practice of clerical celibacy (ordaining only unmarried men) from the eleventh century

onward among Latin Rite Catholics and became a formal part of canon law in 1917. This law of clerical celibacy does not apply to Eastern Catholics. Until recently, the Eastern Catholic bishops of North America would generally ordain only unmarried men, for fear that married priests would create scandal. Since Vatican II's call for the restoration of Eastern Catholic traditions, a number of bishops have returned to the traditional practice of ordaining married men to the presbyterate. Bishops are still celibate and normally chosen from the ranks of monks (24).

Because the rule of clerical celibacy is a law and not a doctrine, exceptions can be made, and it can, in principle, be changed at any time by the Pope (24).

The Roman Catholics continue to change their canons, ignoring the old for the new. Not more than two decades ago, Rome revised its Canon Law. It composes new canons to keep up with the times. On the other hand, Orthodoxy, albeit adding canons from time to time and place to place, never discards the old ones, for they, too, are inspired by the Holy Spirit. In any case, human problems and spiritual needs do not really change. New canons are generally simple refinements of old canons (3), (18).

Both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics recognize at least seven Sacraments or Mysteries: The Eucharist, Baptism, Chrismation, Ordination, Penance, Marriage and Holy Oil for the sick (which the Roman Catholics have traditionally called "Extreme Unction" and reserved for the dying) (12), (16), (18).

Concerning the Sacraments in general, the Orthodox teach that their material elements (bread, wine, water, chrism, etc.) become grace-filled by the calling of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*). Roman Catholicism believes that the Sacraments are effective on account of the priest who acts "in the person of Christ."

At the same time, the Roman Catholics interpret the Sacraments in a legal and philosophical way. Hence, in the Eucharist, using the right material things (bread and wine) and pronouncing the correct formula, changes their substance (transubstantiation) into the Body and Blood of Christ. The visible elements or this and all Sacraments are merely "signs" of the presence of God (18).

The Orthodox call the Eucharist "the mystical Supper." What the priest and the faithful consume is mysteriously the Body and Blood of Christ. We receive Him under the forms of bread and wine, because it would be wholly repugnant to eat "real" human flesh and drink "real" human blood (25).

According to Roman Catholic teachings about the Sacraments (*mystagogy*), a person becomes a member of the Church through Baptism. "Original sin" is washed away. Orthodoxy teaches the same.

Roman Catholics speak of "Confirmation" and the Orthodox of "Chrismation." "Confirmation" is separated from the Baptism and is performed by the bishop and not the priest; but "Chrismation" is performed with Baptism by a priest who has received "chrism" from the bishop. The Sacrament of "Confirmation" and "Chrismation" both mean the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Roman Catholics delay "confirming" (with "first communion") baptized infants not more than seven years, that is, until the time they have some appreciation of the gift of God (13) (18).

The Orthodox Church links Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion, first the threefold immersion into sanctified water, the "new Christian" rising from the water into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which leads to union with God. Such is the purpose of membership in the Church (18).

Ordination is the ceremony which, by the grace and calling of God, elevates a man to the priesthood. The sacerdotal priesthood has three orders: Bishop, presbyter (elder) and deacon. All Christians are priests by virtue of the baptism into Christ Who is priest, prophet and king - for which reason St. Peter refers to the Church as a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). The bishop is the "high priest," the "president of the Eucharist and all the Mysteries. Presbyters and deacons are his assistants. The Roman Catholics hold that the presbyter acts "in the person of Christ" when, in fact, he does no more than represent the bishop who is "the living icon of Christ." (18).

Strictly speaking, Penance - sometimes called "Confession" - should only be received by the believer as a means of re-admission to the Church. For a long time, Penance,

or confession of sins, prayer and fasting was employed only for those who had been expelled from the Church ("excommunication") or who had voluntarily departed (apostasy). The present practice is to receive Penance from a bishop or presbyter for some serious sin before receiving Holy Communion (18).

Both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics consider Penance as a Sacrament. Each has different customs surrounding it, such as the confessional booth so common among the latter (18).

For Roman Catholics, Holy Matrimony is a binding, ostensibly an unbreakable, contract. The man and the woman marry each other with the "church" (bishop or priest) standing as a witness to it. Hence, no divorce under any conditions - no divorce but annulment of the marriage contract if some canonical defect in it may be found which renders it null and void (as if it never took place) (13), (18).

In Orthodoxy, Holy Matrimony is not a contract; it is the mysterious or mystical union of a man and woman - in imitation of Christ and the Church - in the presence of "the whole People of God" through her bishop or his presbyter. Divorce is likewise forbidden, but, as a concession to human weakness, it is allowed for adultery. Second and third marriages are permitted - not as a legal matter - out of mercy, a further concession to human weakness (e.g., after the death of a spouse). This Sacrament, as all Sacraments or Mysteries, is completed by the Eucharist, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite says (18), (26).

As already mentioned, the Roman Catholics conceive *Extreme Unction* as the final Sacrament, the Sacrament which prepares the believer for death, purgatory and the Age to Come. In Orthodoxy, Holy Oil is received for healing. Often sickness is caused by sin; therefore, Holy Oil or Unction involved Confession of sins. At the end of the rite, the anointed receives Holy Communion (25), (12). The Orthodox Church also recognizes kingship, monasticism, blessings of the water, etc. as Mysteries (18).

Theological aspects of Great Schism

In the fourth century when the Roman emperors were trying to control the Church, theological questions were running rampant throughout the Roman Empire (12). Theology was also used as a weapon against opponent bishops, since being branded a heretic was the only sure way for a bishop to be removed by other bishops. Incompetence was not sufficient grounds for removal.

The seventh canon of the Council of Ephesus declared: "It is unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different (ἐτέραν) Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicæa. But those who shall dare to compose a different faith, or to introduce or offer it to persons desiring to turn to the acknowledgment of the truth, whether from Heathenism or from Judaism, or from any heresy whatsoever, shall be deposed, if they be bishops or clergymen; bishops from the episcopate and clergymen from the clergy; and if they be laymen, they shall be anathematized" (14)

The Orthodox Church does not endorse the view that the teachings of Christ have changed from time to time; rather that Christianity has remained unaltered from the moment that the Lord delivered the Faith to the Apostles (Matt. 28: 18-20). She affirms that "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) is now what it was in the beginning. Orthodox of the twentieth century believe precisely what was believed by Orthodox of the first, the fifth, the tenth, the fifteenth centuries (18).

To be sure, Orthodoxy recognizes external changes (e.g., vestments of clergy, monastic habits, new feasts, canons of ecumenical and regional councils, etc.), but nothing has been added or subtracted from her Faith. The external changes have a single purpose: To express that Faith under new circumstances. For example, the Bible and divine Services were translated from Hebrew and Greek into the language of new lands; or new religious customs arose to express the ethnic sensibilities of the converted peoples, etc.; nevertheless, their has always been "one faith, one Lord, one baptism" (Eph. 4: 4). The fundamental witness to the Christian Tradition is the holy Scriptures; and the

supreme expositors of the Scriptures are the divinely inspired Fathers of the Church, whether the Greek Fathers or Latin Fathers, Syriac Fathers or Slavic Fathers. Their place in the Orthodox religion cannot be challenged. Their authority cannot be superseded, altered or ignored (18).

Main theological issue proclaimed as a cause of the Great Schism was Filioque. Roman Catholicism teaches that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son" (Filioque). In so doing, it spurned the Apostolic Tradition which always taught that God the Father is the single Source ("monarchy") of the Son and the Spirit. Thus, the Roman Catholics added words to the Nicene Creed

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son ..."

They made this change on the authority of the Pope, in the 11th century, not any Council of the whole Church (Ecumenical Council) (18).

Another theological issue is the question: Why did God become man? The Roman Catholic answer to this question differs from the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Following the holy Fathers, Orthodoxy teaches that Christ, on the Cross, gave "His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "For even the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) (27). The "ransom" is paid to the grave. As the Lord revealed to the Prophet Hosea (Hosea 13:14), "I will ransom them (us) from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." In a sense, He pays the ransom to the devil who has the keeper of the grave and holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14) (27). The man Christ voluntarily gave Himself on the Cross. He died for all ("a ransom for many" or "the many"). But He rose from the dead in His crucified body. Death had no power to hold Him. It has no power over anyone. The human race is redeemed from the grave, from the devil. Free of the devil is to be free of death and sin. To be free of these, we become like God (deification) and may live with Him forever (18), (28).

According to Roman Catholic theology, God became man in order to satisfy the divine Justice which was offended by the

sin of Adam. In other words, by his sin Adam offended the infinite God and, therefore, his sin had infinite consequences. It was not within the power of sinful and finite man to make amends, for the sin of Adam ("original sin") passed to us; but it is our obligation to do so. Only Christ, Who was God and man, could pay this "debt of honor." He pays the debt by dying on the Cross. His death makes up for what Adam had done; the offense is removed. God is no longer angry with man. Christ rises from the dead, the promise or "earnest" of the believing man's future. For a long time, the Roman Catholics, whether among ordinary Catholics or intellectuals, little attention was given to the idea of deification. Not much attention was devoted to the concepts necessary to understanding this doctrine (16), (18).

Roman Catholic theology is customarily legalistic and philosophical. For example, a "valid" (legal term) baptism into Christ is the result of the right intention (having the same understanding of baptism as the Church) and using the correct formula or words during the ceremony or rite. Thus, even an atheist, under certain conditions, could baptize a person. "Sprinkling" of water (effusion) over the head of the baptized is reasonable and sufficient (13).

Lately, some Latin theologians are rethinking the Christian teaching of salvation (soteriology). They are beginning to take the idea of deification (baptism as the first step) very seriously. They rightly insist that it belongs to Christian tradition, including "St. Augustine" and other Latin Fathers. In point of fact, a revolution in its theology is necessary if it is to become Scriptural and patristic; if it ever hopes to achieve the right understanding of Christ and His salvation (18).

Human nature was created good, even in communion with the blessed Trinity which made "him." Male and female were created "in the likeness and image of God" (Gen. 1:26): "likeness" in virtue; "image" meaning to rule the earth rationally, to act wisely and freely. The woman was made as a "help-meet" to the man (Gen. 2:18; I Cor. 11:8-9). They were to live together in harmony and mutual respect (18).

Roman Catholicism, unable to show a continuity of faith and in order to justify new doctrine, erected in the last

century, a theory of "doctrinal development." The Catholic Church thus believes that the Holy Spirit through the popes develops, changes, adds, and subtracts various aspects of Scriptural interpretation, early Christian analyses, and apostolic Tradition (1).

The Holy Spirit struggled with the Church against heresy and false doctrines for centuries and the early Christians suffered martyrdom for this Faith. This is the Faith that Orthodoxy has inherited and will continue to abide by, according to the warning of the Lord Jesus in the gospels, where He tells us to beware of human traditions treated as doctrines of Christ (16), (3).

Recently Catholic Church also began to believe in another new doctrine, which states that the Virgin Mary was conceived and born without sin. The early Church, including Eastern Orthodoxy, believes that the Virgin Mary was capable of sinning, but she successfully resisted sin her whole life. If she had been created without sin, then this would mean that she was not exactly human, and therefore Christ's Flesh was not exactly human, and so He could not have taken on our whole human flesh in the truest way in order to save the human race (18).

Following the philosophical spirit of the time (and the lead of Cardinal Henry Newman), Roman Catholic theologians began to define and teach the idea that Christ only gave us an "original deposit" of faith, a "seed," which grew and matured through the centuries. The Holy Spirit, they said, amplified the Christian Faith as the Church moved into new circumstances and acquired other needs.

Consequently, Roman Catholicism, pictures its theology as growing in stages, to higher and more clearly defined levels of knowledge. The teachings of the Fathers, as important as they are, belong to a stage or level below the theology of the Latin Middle Ages (Scholasticism), and that theology lower than the new ideas which have come after it (18).

Roman Catholicism teaches that human reason can prove that God is; and, even infer that He is eternal, infinite, good, bodiless, almighty, all-knowing, etc. He is "most real being," "true being." Humans are like Him (analogous), but we are imperfect being. The God of Roman Catholicism, born in the

Latin Middle Ages, is not "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but the God of the savants and the philosophers," to adapt the celebrated phrase of Blaise Pascal (18).

Following the Holy Fathers, Orthodoxy teaches that the knowledge of God is planted in human nature and that is how we know Him to exist. Otherwise, unless God speaks to us, human reason cannot know more. The saving knowledge of God comes by the Savior. Speaking to His Father, He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou has sent" (John 17: 3) (17).

Roman Catholicism teaches, also, that, in the Age to Come, man will, with his intellect and with the assistance of grace, behold the Essence of God. The Fathers declare that it is impossible to behold God in Himself. Not even divine grace, will give us such power. The saved will see, however, God as the glorified flesh of Christ.

Historically, the Roman Catholic theology never made the distinction between God's Essence (what He is) and His Uncreated Energies (by what means He acts). St. Gregory Palamas tried to explain this distinction through a comparison between God and the Sun. The sun has its rays, God has His Energies (among them, Grace and Light). By His Energies, God created, sustains and governs the universe. By His Energies, He will transform the creation and deify it, that is, He will fill the new creation with His Energies as water fills a sponge (18).

There are many other differences, often the product of culture. Also, it is noteworthy that many of these differences, whether profound or not, do not apply to the contemporary religious situation.

D . Attempts of Reunion between Roman and Eastern Churches

The relations between the Orthodox and the Western Church have been full of misunderstandings, which became grave as political and cultural ties loosened after the 5th cent. There were breaks between Constantinople and Rome in the 9th cent and in 1054, but the main obstacle to reconciliation was the

conduct of the Crusades, especially the Fourth Crusade (when the Crusaders seized Constantinople), since the whole of Western Christendom, most of all the pope, was inevitably blamed. In 1274 there was an attempt at reunion (Second Council of Lyons), and in 1439 another (Council of Ferrara-Florence which was repudiated by Constantinople in 1472 (29), (30).

The Second Council of Lyon was convoked to act on a pledge by Byzantine emperor Michael VIII to reunite the Eastern church with the West. Wishing to end the Great Schism that divided Rome and Constantinople, Gregory X had sent an embassy to Michael VIII Palaeologus. On June 29, 1274, Gregory X celebrated a Mass in St John's Church, where both sides took part. The council declared that the Roman church possessed "the supreme and full primacy and authority over the universal Catholic Church." The council was seemingly a success, but did not provide a lasting solution to the schism; the Emperor was anxious to heal the schism, but the Eastern clergy proved to be obstinate. However, Michael VII's son and successor Andronicus II repudiated the union (29), (30).

In the 15th century, the eastern emperor John VIII Palaeologus, pressed hard by the Ottoman Turks, was keen to ally himself with the West, and to do so he arranged with Pope Eugene IV for discussions about reunion to be held again, this time at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. After several long discussions, the emperor managed to convince the Eastern representatives to accept the Western doctrines of Filioque, Purgatory and the supremacy of the Papacy. On 6 June 1439 an agreement was signed by all the Eastern bishops present but one, Mark of Ephesus, who held that Rome continued in both heresy and schism. It seemed that the Great Schism had been ended. However, upon their return, the Eastern bishops found their agreement with the West broadly rejected by the populace and by civil authorities (with the notable exception of the Emperors of the East who remained committed to union until the Fall of Constantinople two decades later). The union signed at Florence has never been accepted by the Eastern churches.

In 1453, the Eastern Roman Empire fell to the Ottoman Empire. But Orthodoxy was still very strong in Russia which became autocephalous (since 1448, although this wasn't officially accepted by Constantinople until 1589); and thus Moscow called itself the Third Rome, as the cultural heir of Constantinople.

In the Middle Ages the points at issue were papal authority, matters of worship and discipline, and the addition of the filioque to the Nicene Creed. There have been fractional reunions, notably the Union of Brest-Litvosk (1595) of Ukrainians, who retained their hierarchy and rites. A syncretization of Orthodox and Protestant beliefs was unsuccessfully attempted in the 17th cent. by Patriarch Cyril Lucaris. In the 19th cent. began the cultivation of cordial relations between Anglicans and Orthodox, and official exchanges between them have become frequent.

Eastern Christians expressed a belief that the Fall of Constantinople was God's punishment for the Emperor and clergy accepting the West's doctrines of Filioque, Purgatory and the supremacy of the Papacy. The West did not fulfil its promise to the Eastern Emperor of troops and support if he agreed to the reconciliation. The Sack of Constantinople is still considered proof by the East that the West ultimately succeeded in its endeavour to destroy the East.

Under Ottoman rule, the Orthodox Church acquired power as an autonomous millet. The ecumenical patriarch was the religious and administrative ruler of the entire Rum Millet (Ottoman administrative unit), which encompassed all the Eastern Orthodox subjects of the Empire. Those appointed to the role were chosen by the Muslims rulers not the Church.

As a result of the Ottoman conquest, the entire Orthodox communion of the Balkans and the Near East became suddenly isolated from the West. For the next four hundred years, it would be confined within the Islamic world, with which it had little in common religiously or culturally. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Churches from Wallachia and Moldavia were the only part of the Orthodox communion that remained outside the control of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1961 Pope John XXIII established the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, and the Orthodox churches created the Pan-Orthodox Conference. Dialogues among the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant churches have brought general consensus on such issues as baptism, the Eucharist, and the nature of ministry. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have agreed on a common understanding of the doctrine of justification, even as Lutherans, Episcopalians, and the Reformed churches have attained surprising unanimity on certain theological issues. In 1962 several observers from the Orthodox churches attended the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope John XXIII (31), (32).

The following year the Orthodox churches (with the exception of the Greek Church) agreed to open a dialogue with Rome on equal terms. Contacts between the Orthodox and Rome continued into the 1990s, but opposition to the dialogue is strong in some Orthodox churches (33).

Conclusions

The main cause of Great Schism had very little to do with Christian Faith itself. There was no great heresy in place to be blamed for the schism. The main reason was a fight for power. Foundamental reason for the failure of reunion is still based on desires of the Western Churches to acciquer the ultimate leadership over Eastern Churches.

Churches of the West are very interested to impose the approach that all Churches are eaqual under God.

Unfortunetly, this approach can't be adopted by The Orthodox Church? Because it means betrail of its principles preserved since Apostols times.

In order to make clear that Roman Catholic Church is very far from keeping a true Chrisitan spirit alive, lets review contrasts between Christ and the Pope listed by Jeremiah J. Crowley.

"Christ said: "My kingdom is not of this world." The Pope conquers cities by force. Christ had a crown of thorns. The Pope wears a triple diadem. Christ washed the feet of his disciples. The

Pope has his kissed by kings. Christ paid tribute. The Pope takes it. Christ fed the sheep. The Pope shears them for his own profit. Christ was poor. The Pope wishes to be master of the world. Christ carried on His shoulders the cross. The Pope is carried on the shoulders of his servants in liveries of gold. Christ despised riches. The Pope has no other passion than for gold. Christ drove out the merchants from the temple. The Pope welcomes them. Christ preached peace. The Pope is the torch of war. Christ was meekness. The Pope is pride personified. Christ promulgated laws that the Pope tramples underfoot." (34).

The nineteenth-century English politician, essayist, poet, and historian Lord Macaulay, best known for his 5-volume History of England, memorably described the Papal system when he wrote:

"The experience of twelve hundred eventful years, the ingenuity and patient care of forty generations of statesmen, have improved the polity [of the Church of Rome] to such perfection that, among the contrivances that have been devised for deceiving and oppressing mankind, it occupies the highest place." [Quoted by Crowley, p. 203. (34)]

Today, as ever, the same 'Vicar of Christ', 'Our Lord God the Pope', 'King of Heaven, Earth and Hell', while claiming to represent the lowly and humble Nazarene, still wears a triple crown of priceless value and robes resplendent with jewels! As Crowley has well said [p. 205]: "Christ had not whereon to lay His head. The Pope dwells in a Palace of four thousand rooms! What a mockery! What a delusion! What a snare is Popery!" (35)

After a long list of well known crimes of historical magnitude which are attributed to Catholic Church (Crusades against Orthodox Christians, Inquisition, mass murder of First Nations in America), there are resent accusations that have not been proven wrong. One of the examples is Michael Phayer's book - *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (36), particularly based on German source material, lists Pius XII's strong points his piety, his loathing of Hitler, the instances of personal warmth. Phayer examines not only Pius's actions but those of other leading Catholics, and his study extends beyond the end of World War II to follow the evolution of official

Catholic thinking during the rebuilding of Germany, the cold war, and the gradual theological reforms that led to Vatican II. This enables Phayer to show how the church completely reversed its position relative to the Jews, but it also gives him a more thorough reading of Pius XII's overall record. It is a damning and convincing verdict that emerges (36).

Therefore, The Orthodox Church should be very cautious about any future attempts of reunion. May be, a quite often heard claim that Catholic Church belongs to Devil is neither academic, nor constructive, although one can be quite sure that believes of such controversial religious denomination along with believes of its rebellious heirs, the Protestants, should be approached with serious concern (36).

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IS “*ORTHODOX FAITH*” MANIPULATING OUR MINDS?

**Interview with Boris Kriger, the Editor of “Orthodox Faith”
with comments by Father John Jillions, Associate Professor at
Saint Paul University's Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern
Christian Studies , a former Dean of the OCA Ottawa
Cathedral.**



**Boris Kriger, the editor of
“Orthodox Faith” ,
Chairman of the Church
Council and founder of
Holy Transfiguration
Mission in Huntsville,
Ontario**



**Nadezhda Lyakh,
Journalist, Entrepreneur
and Literary Agent**



**Fr. John Jillions, Associate
Professor at Saint Paul
University and former Dean
of the OCA Ottawa Cathedral.**

Nadezhda Lyakh: Before asking my questions, I will try to give you an idea of my faith, my philosophy and the reasons I believe in it. You may possibly find many of my thoughts naive, but I assure you that all of them are absolutely sincere. I am a skeptic about religion. While I do not reject any information related to the faith and God, I am not able to place faith in anything blindly, without a thought. I admit that at the current stage, the assumption of the existence of God is the most probable and it most easily explains the origin of the Universe and everything in general. My views were affected by Boris Kriger’s book “The Uncertain Universe”, this newspaper, and, of course, a number of other factors. But when it comes to the Bible and faith in Jesus Christ (which is a more specific belief)—I have doubts. Who is the author of the Bible or the Gospels? Of course I know:

the Scripture is considered to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. If so, why is it full of contradictions? (I do not mention the contradictions between the Old and New Testaments deliberately—these are obvious and explainable.) Yet even the Gospels contain a number of evident contradictions. I have one explanation for myself: this good and clever book was actually written by humans—and *for* humans. Not by God or the Holy Spirit. And while I fully agree with one part of such contradictory propositions, I can never agree with the other. (By the way, it is mostly the case with the “*Orthodox Faith*” newspaper—if you excuse my plainness! I think “*Orthodox Faith*” newspaper manipulates the readers’ minds...)

Boris Kriger: People often think that divinely inspired books are no different from any other books and can be judged as a creation of a human mind. In many cases, critics use the quotations out of their context, have little knowledge of primary sources and are totally unfamiliar with the Holy Fathers’ interpretations. This approach leads to creating one’s own conception of the Holy Scripture that is far from the actual one. It is this false conception a person is fighting with, considering him- or herself to be successful in analyzing, criticizing and even interpreting, in his or her own way, the God-inspired texts.

It is obvious that this self-deception leads the person to make a self-satisfied conclusion that something is wrong with the Old and New Testaments and they contain so-called contradictions. This releases the person from having to follow them. Since these books are faulty, they are not divinely inspired.

In order to avoid this unfortunate aberration, one should follow the texts of these very books. We should start learning and even reading the Holy Scripture in a humble way and abandon the “judge” position. The Gospel according to St. Matthew says: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” Do you like to be wrongfully judged? Or blamed for what you have not done or said? Or misunderstood? Do you like people making premature conclusions ignoring your

actual words and feelings? Or taking your phrases out of context, making fun of them, distorting them, and successfully arguing against something that you did not say at all? Just imagine you were treated like this. A nightmare, isn't it? Is there any person, especially a prideful one, who would endure such derision? And it is pride that makes us judge people and things. The Gospel teaches us to treat others like we want to be treated. So how can we treat the Gospel itself like this? Saint Ignatius Bryanchaninov wrote about reading the Gospel: "God has opened His will to a tiny fleck of dust that is a human! You are holding the book that contains this great and all-holy will. And you may accept or reject the will of your Creator and Savior, just as you like. Your salvation or your death is in your hands: so decide how careful and wise you should be. Do not play with your eternal destiny!"

Thus, you should get rid of this guise of a judge prior to reading. Address God with your prayer so that He gives you the sense of His Word. Be humble and thoughtful when reading the holy texts, refer to their interpretations from the Holy Fathers—and you will not find any contradictions in them. Moreover, they will put us on the right path that will save us both in our earthly and future live. Any other approaches are mere sacrilege. Venerable Barsanuphius the Great taught: "Do not try to interpret the Scripture yourself, for this is a serious danger for those who are weak in their faith. It is insane to talk about the Scriptures from one's own point of view."

Fr. John Jillions . First of all, I must say that Boris Kriger and his team have done an amazing and inspiring job with this newspaper in its various languages. His energy level is staggering, and surely grace must uphold him through the many trials and tribulations that such an effort represents. How many people must have been reached in these months! So my first comment is "Thank God."

I think this is great that Boris is ready to engage with even critical questioners like Nadezhda. But I am very conscious that there are different styles of argument and this one won't work with everyone. In general there are different approaches and styles of Orthodox Christianity and the state of our Orthodox world rightly proves that no one size fits all. I don't differ with Boris on many

substantive issues, but there are questions about the kind of Orthodoxy being presented. There are many good points in this interview, but there is a tendency to be too categorical and authoritarian, reflecting none of the freedom of debate and questioning that took place within the Church or even within the New Testament, let alone within contemporary Orthodoxy. *Orthodox Faith* may not be “manipulating our minds” but sometimes it does present a rather heavy-handed, one-sided picture of Orthodoxy.

Questions are legitimate. Questions are at the heart of scripture. The Psalms are full of questions, most famously Psalm 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. The Theotokos had questions, and “pondered these things in her heart.” St Thomas had questions, and we lift them up on the very day of Pascha, showing that we are rooted in an evidence-based faith, not blind faith.

Boris Kriger: I completely agree with Fr. John, that some questions are legitimate. So, what are these contradictions you are talking about?

Nadezhda Lyakh: **What contradictions does the Bible contain? I am sure you have noted them yourself! “Honour your parents...” (Well of course, it could not have been otherwise!) But then: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” I do not believe Jesus Christ could have said or preached anything like that. I believe in the Merciful God.**

Boris Kriger: According to the first commandment, God is the most important aspect of our lives. The second commandment supports this, forbidding us from creating idols. It is clear that the fifth commandment teaches us to honour our parents; however, should a conflict arise and the parents be in our way to God, not letting us reach Him—God should take precedence. For He gave

us life, love, the family... He can let us lose all our beloved ones. How silly, naive and ridiculous it is to idolize a creature of God, while moving God Himself to the background of one's conscience and memory. This is what Jesus meant. Moreover, there is no way He could have said anything else about it. Just imagine a phrase like "Love thy mother more than God!" This way everything would have collapsed, as a mother, no matter how precious she is, is nothing but a creature of God. A mother may be mistaken, while God can never be.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk wrote: "God is our highest benefactor. All kinds of welfare belonging to the person have been given by God." Those who are weak in their faith separate themselves from God, as if God were a kind of a neighbour, as if something could occur without His knowledge. Any conflicts that we have with our parents, children, brothers or sisters are allowed by God in order to foster our souls, so that we learn to be humble and placid, while preserving our faith and love for God. God should always remain the foremost; He should be the essence of our lives. What are the other "contradictions" you have found in the Bible?

Nadezhda Lyakh: Here is one more example. It is about the punishment... in the fourth generation or so. Is this God's mercy?! Or is it nothing but one of the Church's manipulations? "Behave this way—and you will be happy. But if your deeds are wrongful—not only will you be punished, but all of your descendants up to the fourth generation..." Well... For some reason, I have another idea of the "God's mercy" concept.

Boris Kriger: Again, we have one more example of manipulation from your side. You have taken a half of the quotation, thus depriving it of its original meaning. "The LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments (Exodus 20: 5, 6).

Again, just imagine if God told us that those who hate Him would not be punished. What does God's punishment mean? It means separation from God. God is the source of life and of everything we have. What makes us separate from God? Is He dismissing us from Him? No. We ourselves, because of our hatred and pride, are separating ourselves from Him, which leads to inevitable punishment. Imagine you are flying by plane and suddenly decide to leap out of it. Will the plane punish you? No. It is ready to carry you farther. It is you, in your madness, who decide to commit this suicide. What makes the children up the fourth generation suffer? Mankind bears a collective responsibility for the sin. The sin of Adam and Eve, the original sin, has passed on to all the future generations. Why is it so? Because all people are interrelated. There are no generations that would have originated by themselves. Christians are a part of a single body, the Body of Christ. All of us are connected as parts of a single body. Thus, God's mercy consists in that those who hate Him, that is, who are separating themselves from Him, are punishing themselves up to the third or the fourth generation only, while those who love God are rewarded to thousands of generations! Is it not a true mercy of God? In order to understand this, you do not need any specialized knowledge.

Now, to give you an example, let me note that in the modern language, such words as "jealous", "devotee" or "punishment" have acquired an entirely different meaning compared to that originally imbedded in them by the Bible—the book written in Hebrew. And it does not mean the Bible contains any discrepancies. It is in our minds and souls burned-out with sins that all these discrepancies are hiding in.

Let us have a look at the original text:

ג לא-תעשה לך פסל, וכל-תמונה, אשר
בשמים ממעל, ואשר בארץ מתחת--ואשר
במים, מתחת לארץ.

ד לא-תשתחוה להם, ולא תעבדם: כי אני
יהוה אלהיך, אל קנא--פקד עון אבות על-בנים
על-שלישים ועל-רבעים, לשנאי.

ה ועשה חסד, לא־לפים--לא־הבי, ולשמרי
מצותי. {ס}

It is evident for anybody who can understand Hebrew, even its modern version, that this quotation is a part of a more extended

sentence, that is, of the second commandment. Its literal translation is as follows:

“Do not make (you will not make) a statue (idol) for yourself, a picture of what is higher in the sky and of what is lower on the Earth, and what is in the water underground. And you will not worship (do not worship) them, do not turn into their slaves, for I am the God (Yahweh), your God, the God devoted (devotee) and observing (not the God who punishes, but the God who observes, controls (“pokaed”))! the iniquities of fathers in their sons up to the third or the fourth generation, who hate me, and the God who is doing mercies (“khesaed”) to the thousands who love me and follow my commandments.”

What are these idols that God orders us not to worship, not to become their slaves? They are plainly speaking—the demons. So we may merely reformulate the phrase that have raised your doubts in a different way: “Do not worship demons, do not be a hater of God—otherwise, your iniquities will reflect upon your descendants up to the third or the fourth generation. I am devoted to you and I want you to be devoted to Me. Love your God, and both you and your descendants will be graced and blessed for many centuries.”

Is there any other way God would have expressed His thought, His warning?

Fr. John Jillions . I would like to add that demons are not the only idols. This is one interpretation, but of course there are many other possible idols, all of which are rooted ultimately in fallen human will or the demonic will.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **I agree we should obey and follow the commandments, but not because it is “desired by God”. The reason is that these “rules” are veritable ones indeed. A person needs them to be followed, it is important for him or her. For everyone. For every soul. In this very life (not in the “future” life).**

Boris Kriger: By speaking like that, you are separating yourself from God, saying “well, let Him be by Himself, and I will live for myself.” You say, “I will manage without His advice.” If God

weren't God, it would have made some sense. However, the thing is, God wants the only thing that is beneficial for a human, while a human often needs something harmful for him- or herself. By definition, God, who is Love, cannot want anything harmful for a human. The holy and righteous John of Kronstadt wrote: "A man should always remember that everything he has comes from God, and it comes for free: his soul and body, all his strengths and abilities, power, wealth, beauty, health, and energy—everything. His sins and faults are the only things that really belong to him. A man should realize it and sincerely admit his nothingness, revere God, always be thankful to God, and serve the cause of people to the best of his abilities..."

Fr. John Jillions . There is something greater than mere following the rules that should be at the heart of spiritual life, i.e., love for God. Popular Orthodoxy has been far too dominated by a rules-based, ritual-based approach that often eclipses this deeper longing (see Fr A Schmemmann's *Journals* and his *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, esp. the chapter on the Church in Russia.)

Nadezhda Lyakh: **Every one of us has his or her own Kingdom of Heaven inside. Yes, a thousand times yes! I cannot even call it a faith—it is an absolute and clear knowledge. And one should strive to become a good man in order to reach and to conceive the inner Kingdom of God—not in order to live forever and even not because these are God's commandments.**

Boris Kriger: So this means you want to be better than those people who are simply following the commandments "for the sake of God". You wish to follow them just because you like them alone, and God has nothing to do with them. Again, you are trying to force God out of your life and take over His place and to judge what is right and what is wrong. You want to judge the world, including God as well. There was a creature that had stepped down this path some time ago. It was the fallen angel, the Satan, the source of all lies. His words may sound very truthful and attractive. He will not necessarily begin persuading you to commit the sins of Sodom right off the bat. He may tell you

things that are mostly true, adding just a little lie. However, this little lie is the most important thing. We shall not reject God. We shall not absent ourselves from God. Saint John Chrysostom wrote: “The things God wants from us are not heavy or difficult. The only thing He wants from us is us admitting His benefactions and thanking Him for them. And this is not because He needs it—as there is nothing He would need—but because He wants us to learn, by this, to attract the Giver of these benefactions and to be modest, while demonstrating the goodness that is worth such benefactions and care.”

Nadezhda Lyakh: **Here is an excerpt from your newspaper: “The good done for the sake of God fills our lives with significance.” But what about the good done by a person driven by his moral certainty and internal need, not for the sake of God? Is this good not making his life meaningful? For example, why did Indira Gandhi do good? Was it done for the sake of God? And was not her life full of meaning? Well, it is likely that she was a religious person. But she was a Hindu. In no way was she a Christian. And I can give you dozens and hundreds of similar examples.**

Boris Kriger: I did not happen to know Indira Gandhi in person. I cannot tell you what she had done and for the sake of what. We often try to turn the conversation to the topic of little knowledge to both parties and thus get some freedom of action... You are trying to say that it is possible to find the reason for being and do good even outside the Christian faith. We should only follow the words of Jesus Christ: “I am the way, the truth, and the life”. Venerable Ambrose of Optina wrote: “We are sad and forgetful, and the sadness and forgetfulness deprive us of our acknowledgement to God for His great benefactions He has been doing for us: both temporal and eternal.”

Fr. John Jillions . We shouldn’t be too dismissive of the goodness and holiness found outside Christianity. The Logos is found everywhere, and this makes possible goodness, beauty, truth wherever it is found. Our claim is that the Logos became

incarnate as Jesus Christ, but he never ceased being Logos everywhere else at the same time. See John Garvey, *Seeds of the Word* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), which unpacks this view of how Orthodoxy views other religions.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **Anyway, the faith in God and the deeds “for the sake of God” do not fill the lives of *all* people with significance, without any exceptions.**

It may be true for some people who, perhaps, get their inspiration from nothing but their faith in God. However, it can never be the only and the most essential component of a meaningful life.

Boris Kriger: The words you are saying contradict the first and the second commandments, and the words of Jesus Christ. God can never be of secondary importance. All of us should be in awe of God. Saint Theophan the Recluse wrote: “The awe of God is in itself gaining insight into eternal goodness and acts of God by one’s worshipping thoughts and feelings.” And, finally, Jesus Christ told us that He is the only way to get through to the Father, which means that the only path to God lies through the Gospel. It may seem that without God, a person can do well and his life may be meaningful, but it is not actually true. A person without God is nothing but mortal ash. A person with God is an eternal and perfect citizen of the Kingdom of God.

Fr. John Jillions . As I said before, wherever a person encounters truth he is encountering the Logos. Now, for all kinds of reasons he or she may not recognize or accept that Jesus Christ is the Logos (often because of the follies of the Christian churches) but that does not mean they are without God. As Fr Meletios Weber, commented on the “12 step movement”, God allows Himself to even be anonymous, such is his self-emptying love for the *whole* world (see his *Steps of Transformation*, Conciliar Press, 2003). Excessive religious triumphalism is what scares people about religion and—in the extreme—leads to authoritarian abuses. And remember that St Paul, whom no one

can accuse of being lukewarm, said even our best knowledge is imperfect (1 Cor 13:9).

Nadezhda Lyakh: **One of the issues of your newspaper contained this citation: “Treat others like you want to be treated” with the reference to God’s commandment brought in by Jesus Christ. But this “golden rule” had been known to ancient Greeks and even to Confucius. It is very good for Jesus Christ to have reminded this “golden rule”, but it cannot serve as a proof of the rightness of the Christian (Orthodox) faith. Nor is it an evidence of the fact that it was God who had given the commandment to the mankind.**

Boris Kriger: It is ridiculous to blame Jesus Christ for plagiarism or lack of originality. Once again, treating the Gospel or Jesus Christ from the point of view of a judge is as good as picking up a flower with an excavator grab. The flower will most likely get squashed... Jesus Christ is opened only to those who believe, and it is only for them that He works miracles. All the others may pamper their vanity thinking they have “exposed the lies” of Christianity. But what will they be left with in the end?

Fr. John Jillions . If the Logos has been there from the beginning, why should we be surprised that something as basic as the “golden rule” is found in almost all cultures? We should rejoice and not be defensive that this somehow detracts from our claims about Jesus. If Jesus is the truth, then no investigation of any truth can be threatening to Him or to the Church.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **I do not think that morality had been given to humans by God, while I do not object that the commandments of the Bible play a role of a “road sign” for everyone. I consider morality nothing but an “instrument” regulating social interrelations. It is obvious we should stick to morals! But not because these rules had been given by God. We should do it because we should “treat others like we want to be treated”!**

Boris Kriger: Your position is close to that of Kant's with his "moral law" vested in every human being. Don't you think that your rejection of God's right to give us moral laws is ridiculous? Do you want to say that "I am your God..." commandment was not given by God Himself? Do you want to say that the commandments pose an iniquitous forgery? If so, why do you agree to follow them? Isn't it easier to acknowledge that they were given by God and that by following them, we are getting closer to God, and this fills us with joy and freedom from sin, than to think you are self-sufficient enough to make your own commandments? There is no source of such speculations other than our vanity... One should reconcile with God and give up fighting God, His Holy Scripture and His Church, one should quit trying to prove that God is not the one He claims to be, that the Holy Scriptures are not holy at all, and that the Church of Jesus Christ is nothing but a human-created institution. Such speculations are in a severe conflict with what Jesus Christ had disclosed to us, when He had promised that His Church would not be overwhelmed by the gates of hell, and that He would be with us till the end of time. This reminds me of a saying: "to pay for the taxi and then go on foot". Live a righteous life, but reject God out of a sense of pride and, therefore, acquire neither meaning, nor salvation. Who tries to convince us of such thoughts? No one, but the Satan – the source of all lies.

Fr. John Jillions . We don't need to reject the holiness of the Scriptures to also assert that they are the product of a synergy between God and many human beings over many centuries. Yes, there are those who argue that the Church is *only* a human institution, but we don't need to go to the other extreme either and argue that the Church is *only* divine.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **To sum up the issue of attributing morals to God, I will give you a single postulate that is sure relevant to moral issues but has nothing to do with the Bible or any confession. That is, an "active citizenship". This thesis may be evaluated like "right or wrong". Since it regulates the interrelations existing between a human and society, then it**

expressly and directly refers to the morality issue. It has nothing to do with the Bible (or any other religion).

Boris Kriger: The concept of active citizenship relates to God and the Bible because there is nothing that would not be related to them. God can never be a minor part of the universe that you can put in a box in your garage and forget about it. God is the source of everything. If your active citizenship consists in clothing a beggar or feeding a starving man—then, according to Jesus Christ, you are clothing and feeding the Son of God. If your concept is not doing any good, then it is nothing but another demonstration of pride.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **And what about that conversation from the Bible? By the way, it is one of the key ones. “And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? Jesus sayeth unto him, Thou hast said...” Well, Boris! How can there possibly be such a conversation? Imagine I ask you: “Are you a writer, Boris?” And the answer is: “It was you who had said that, Nadezhda.” Do you see any logic here?.. How could Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, instead of giving a direct and clear answer: “Yes, I am the Son of God!”—turn off a question and say: “You said that!”? Or, perhaps, the conversation was merely misquoted, either right on the spot or during the centuries. Then how can we trust any other Bible quotations? Who can guarantee that none of them contain any misinterpretations?**

Boris Kriger: The answer is literal translation of the Aramaic phrase, which actually confirms His words. ‘You said so’ means ‘yes’. Such form of answer is used in several ancient languages.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **I hold the teachings of Jesus Christ in high respect! I recognize and understand their importance and essentiality. I strongly believe that Jesus Christ was the**

greatest and happiest man ever. Yet, he was a Man! With a capital “M”.

Boris Kriger: The denial of Jesus Christ’s divinity is not something new. However, it does not leave anything of Christianity. For if God didn’t let to crucify Himself for our sins, by showing the highest possible level of love, then the concept of Christianity, the Bible prophesies and any kinds of conscious understanding of the universe are lost. So here is your chance to choose. You may believe in God, believe that God Almighty incarnated, you can accept this good news and join the Body of Christ, acquire the Holy Spirit and enter the Heavens, or you may stick to heretical opinions that give nothing but a temporary and very delusive satisfaction of a human’s pride. The saint and righteous John of Kronshtadt wrote: “Believe whole-heartedly and undoubtedly that the only-begotten Son of God, made flesh, had suffered for you as well, and exactly for you... Move His martyrdom closer to your heart, try as you can to apprehend them with your weak minds and bear your own sadness, illnesses and sufferings magnanimously, without grumbling, with gratefulness for God, and may your hearts glow with the flame of love for the One Who, for love of you, suffers the cruel flame of anguish of body and mind.”

Nadezhda Lyakh: It was people who wrote the Bible. People with their mistakes and foul-ups, problems and passions. They wrote, rewrote, corrected, elaborated, and translated it. Therefore, one should read the Bible accordingly, separating the wheat from the chaff. In other words, one should employ a critical approach to some extent. Of course, at every life stage, a person can find something in the Bible that is new and important for him or her, some issues that had been left underappreciated until that moment. However, to listen to every word pronounced by clergy... It is better to listen to one’s own heart and soul. And communicate with God directly.

Boris Kriger: I was hoping that we had already answered to this question by publishing the article by the martyred priest Daniil Sysoyev in one of the previous issues of our newspaper. It is not possible to find better words, and especially when we remember that his voice comes out from the other side, that he witnessed with his life a complete rejection of the world's pleasures and sacrificed his life for the sake of teachings of Jesus Christ.

You cannot use a critical approach to reading the Bible, nor can you judge God. We must not think of ourselves as of a measure of everything, or believe that listening to our passion-wounded heart and our soul fatally wounded with sins will give us a chance to hear God's voice, without being attracted by voices coming out from the evil sources.

The priests are different from ordinary people as they are vessels of the God's Grace by virtue of their ordination. With the gifts of this Grace they can serve the sacraments: Baptism, when all our past sins are washed off from us; Confession, when our new sins are absolved; Holy Communion, our direct reunion with God. These sacraments work miracles with a human soul. They are not invented by humans. They were given by Jesus Christ Himself, and God's grace is given to us by the Holy Spirit, and exactly via the priesthood, that had received it from the Apostles, and the Apostles, in their turn, had received it directly from the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ. This fact had made a basis for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, or Pentecost.

Rejection of all the above-said is another way of deliberate alienation from God. Denial of these sacraments means a rebellion against God.

Fr. John Jillions . Critical questions are part of discernment, especially for a faith rooted in history. See for example the work of Orthodox New Testament scholars Veselin Kesich, John Breck and Theodore Stylianopoulos. Without undermining the importance of scholarship, the fathers, liturgical life—i.e., the normal context of church life—the scriptures and tradition always preserve the ability of individuals to hear the Word of God speaking to them directly through the words of the Scriptures. Indeed, this is one of the distinguishing marks of Church after Pentecost, that all have access to the Spirit. Yes, we have to

discern the spirits, and usually require the help of others to do so, but it should be normal for the Orthodox Christian to read the Scriptures and encounter God himself there, without perpetual fear of getting it wrong. We are now a “kingdom of priests” (see Rev 1:6, 5:10, 2 Pet 2:5) and not limited to a caste of priests. *All* who have been baptized into Christ “have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27).

Nadezhda Lyakh: **Contemplation of God via the Church or even the Bible is similar to watching a TV program or reading a newspaper instead of talking with direct participants of the event. Is this blasphemy?**

Boris Kriger: As soon as Adam and Eve broke the commandment not to partake a forbidden fruit, they could not stay in paradise anymore. Sin obstructs our view and we cannot see God. The Church is the place where we can be purged of sin through repentance and confession. Without repenting our sins, we will not see or hear God and, therefore, will misinterpret His words. Saint John Chrysostom wrote: “When after meeting an obstacle we fall into a sin, there is one thing the Lord asks from us, knowing the weakness of our nature: He asks us not to surrender ourselves to despair, but to give up the sins and hurry up to make a confession. If we do that, He promises us we will be having mercy soon, as He Himself says: “Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?” (Jeremiah, 8: 4)

Nadezhda Lyakh: **And now let me tell you a bit more about my attitude to the Church. My relationship with God is far better than that with the Church. God is merciful indeed. I talk with him, discuss things, and address Him fairly often. And I pray, of course. A little bit. “Lord's Prayer...” and my “own” prayers, so to say. I am sure He perfectly understands my prayers and the sincerity of them. I do not find anything for myself in these religious ceremonies, though I light candles in the church from time to time. Besides, I guess He does not care from where I am talking to Him—whether I am in the church or out in the open, looking up to the skies.**

Boris Kriger: Saint John Chrysostom wrote: “If you want to be saved, be in the Church, and it will not extradite you. The Church is a fence: if you are within its boundaries, you will not be offended by a wolf; should you happen to come out, then you will be captured by the beast. Do not avoid the Church: there is nothing in the world stronger than the Church. It is your hope and your salvation.”

The Sacraments of the Church were not invented by clergy. The sacrament at the Divine Liturgy directly accomplishes the testament of Jesus Christ pronounced at the Mystical Supper. He took the bread, blessed it, looked up into the skies, proclaimed the Lord, broke the bread, and handed it over to His disciples with wonderful, absolutely phenomenal words that you hear at every Divine Liturgy: “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins.” After that, Lord Jesus Christ blessed the cup with wine and handed it over to His disciples, saying: “Drink from this cup, everybody, for this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The apostles accepted those mysterious words in their hearts and believed that Lord Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life that came down from heaven. And at the Mystical Supper, as He gave them His Flesh and His Blood as bread and wine, they remembered His words with a deep faith: “Should you not eat my flesh, and drink my blood, then you will not have eternal life. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” They had accepted those words in their hearts.

Here we see the utmost importance of this Sacrament: the Sacrament of Oblation of Christ’s Flesh and Blood established by the Lord Himself for us to repeat in remembrance of Him. So are there any limits of human pride if it averts us from this commandment and makes us think of it as of a meaningless religious ceremony and not as of a sacrament?

Saint Theophan the Recluse wrote: “Approach the sacrament of communion without a moment's hesitation. If you approach it with the faith in the Lord present in the sacraments, if you are full with devotion and are ready to give all your strength for the service of one God, then you shall not be in doubt of whether you

deserve this. There is no one who can declare himself to be a fully deserving communicant. Everyone is dependent on the grace of God. You should do the same. God loves the communicants and is kind to their faults if they are in the right state of mind. The procedure of oblation itself will gradually correct these faults... You shall give everything to God in your prayers, with a child's belief... And He will accept it benevolently and make everything right."

Nadezhda Lyakh: **Yes, I have read the article "Why Do You Need to Go to the Church" in one of the issues of your newspaper, but... By the way, what about hermits who had left for some "caves" to live there? It was them who did that for the sake of God, to become closer to Him, right? Did not they need the prayers offered in the church?**

Boris Kriger: Again, you are trying to compare ordinary people with the men of God. The hermits were spending days and nights praying and confessing. By the way, they gathered together, from time to time, to accept Holy Communion, or somebody brought the Eucharist to them (for example, as was the case with Mary of Egypt).

Fr. John Jillions . Of course everything Boris says is right. But we need to give a credit to the pathos in Nadezhda's question: there is a lot that seems empty and pointless in church services, that does not seem to connect at all with ones spiritual life, that goes forward mechanically—if even beautifully—with more attention to ritual than to content or to the lives of the people attending. This is a complaint heard often, even by many who go to church frequently, let alone those who go for a while and then give up. I accept the need for apologetics, but part of that is to accept the legitimate criticisms that come our way. And that ability to be self-critical is something that Fr Alexander Schmemmann says the Orthodox have yet to acquire.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **The problem is that when I am reading the "Orthodox Faith" newspaper, I am still reading it from a skeptic's point of view. And what is more, I happen to think**

sometimes: “They are fooling me somewhere around here.” Or like that: “Here I observe a very cunning and sophisticated manipulation of my mind.” A very unpleasant feeling, especially considering the fact that the Church had been learning how to manipulate human minds for two millennia already (has it not?). The Church has learned to do it fairly well. I apologize for being so bold here. However, it is not only Orthodox Christians who have a spiritual experience. Catholics, Lutherans, Adventists, Pentecostals, Buddhists, and Krishnaites have it as well... Moreover, skeptics, atheists, and agnostics also have a spiritual experience. They might even acquire a very extensive spiritual experience. As far as I am concerned, my experience also includes an attempt of some organization to manipulate my mind. From the best of motives, of course! No doubts! As a result, I have acquired an immunity (a strong one, I hope) to such “pinpricks”. And I must say there are absolutely no attempts to manipulate the minds of readers in the books written by you, Boris, including your philosophic and cosmological books... They present an open-hearted, clear and fair conversation of an author with his readers. A question—contemplation—an answer that encourages our own thinking and deliberation. And as for the newspaper... I am sorry. Well anyway, it is a necessary newspaper for many people. And it helps many people. And it contains a number of good and wise stories. However, all of them are manipulating our minds to a certain degree.

Boris Kriger: The presence of a “spiritual” experience does not necessarily mean that it was acquired from God. We have already mentioned that demons exist... Since they are spirits, they are capable of giving us some “*spiritual*” experience. They wear a disguise of spirits of the light, and it may be difficult to distinguish the light from the dark. So the Savior tells us: “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?”

Saint Ignatius Bryanchaninov wrote: “Those who think it is possible to be saved without faith in Christ are therefore rejecting

Christ and, perhaps without knowing, are falling into a heavy sin of blasphemy.” Our newspaper is called “*Orthodox Faith*” and it publishes any materials related to the Orthodox faith, to its advocacy and clarification. If you are not interested in Orthodoxy, what are you reading this newspaper for? How is it possible that we manipulate your mind if you deliberately refuse to read it? And if you say you belong to Orthodoxy, while the most of your affirmations are in conflict with Orthodoxy, then who is the manipulator? Is not it you who is trying to make yourself and others believe that your beliefs and perceptions of God are in any way connected to Orthodoxy?

Fr. John Jillions . Nor does it mean that the source of any spirituality beyond the orthodoxy is demonic. This was the Pharisees charge against the healings of Jesus, “he casts out demons by the prince of demons” (Mt 9:34). In general, we Orthodox have no trouble seeing demons; we have a lot more difficulty seeing angels in unexpected places.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **There is one thing I am confident about in my life: whether I am a believer in God or not; whether anyone is able to prove there is eternal life after death or not; whether the Universe was created by God or not; whether Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He resurrected on the third day after death or not...—these things will not have any influence on my life or conduct. There will be absolutely no changes in my life (not taking into account that I have made a lot of mistakes in my life, of course. But this is my road and I had to walk it from the beginning to the end.).**

Boris Kriger: It is a deceptive impression. As soon as you give up fighting with God, as soon as you yield and embrace Him meekly, join Him, through His Holy Sacraments, you will be surprised to see that your life has taken a turn for the better. It does not mean you will become a more rich and successful person. You will get closer to God. You will get a clearer picture of your sins. You will find spiritual closure and justification. You will cry the tears of tenderness. And, perhaps, you will start walking down the path shown to us by Christ and, what is the

most important, you will understand there is no other true path in your life, for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Nadezhda Lyakh: **I have received a lot of answers to my baffled questions. The issues of the translations of the Bible were especially convincing. I did have a “feeling” that there is no way the merciful God could threaten us with the punishment in the fourth generation. So thank you very much for your interview, for such detailed and lucid explanations. I have understood I need to continue studying the Scripture, but I will approach it in a different way. And I may continue asking the questions, anyway... I have found a great place to ask my questions to: it is the “*Orthodox Faith*” newspaper.**

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES

Training for a Global Clinical data management Environment

**Data Basics Article presented on the Society of Clinical Data
Management Toronto Conference**

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I am sure that everyone in the data management community is all too familiar with the 1999 failure of NASA's Climate observer. Last month marks the 5th anniversary of this spectacular failure of proper data communications and transfer, so I felt that this story makes a timely segue into my discussion on training for a global CDM environment. The NASA investigation which followed the September 23rd crash of the Mars Climate Obiter concluded that two teams involved in the project had each used different measurement units in navigation calculations; one team had used imperial units while the other used the metric system. The data was transferred between the two teams without the necessary conversions. The result was the loss of a multimillion-dollar spacecraft. While, not necessarily involved with placing a spacecraft in orbit around a planet 303 million miles (487 million kilometers) away, the data handled by the Clinical Data Managers (CDM) is no less important. The success or failure of multimillion-dollar drug trials is often in the hands of the CDM and how critical clinical trial data is handled. More important than advancement of knowledge of a neighboring planet, the data handled by CDMs ultimately affects the health and well being of millions of fellow human beings right here on our own planet.

With the ever expanding globalization of clinical trials and introduction of internet-based clinical trials, the role of the CDM has become increasingly more complex. While the CDM's primary role is that of a bridge between clinical research and biostatistics, this role has now expanded into serving this function on a global level. This article will endeavor to highlight the goals of global clinical data management and outline the training requirements for clinical data management for the new millennium.

One of the major developments to affect the CDM is the globalization of clinical trials. To address the global needs for international speed-to-market and safety, the International Conference on Harmonisation¹ (ICH) was formed in 1990. In November of 2000, the Common Technical Document (CTD) guideline was approved, allowing for simultaneous submission, approval and launch of new drugs in the United States, European Union and Japan. Recently, these ICH countries have released standards for single "folder" submission of new drug approvals to any participating country governed by the standards of the ICH². Although a global submission process for approval has been developed, host countries can still enact their own clinical trial security, access and control legislation and policies. Therefore, the global CDM must also be familiar with host country specifics, as well as the standards laid out by the ICH. What's more, industry-sponsored research has moved rapidly beyond the ICH regions into large parts of Central and Eastern Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa³. This expansion stresses the need for even further standardization and puts an even greater burden on the global CDM to manage non-standardized data in the interim. Global CDM training must accommodate this globalization of clinical trails by providing a standard and cohesive training program to all CDMs on a global basis, to allow for the effective communication and collaboration in these newly expanded clinical research sites.

Another challenge to the global CDM, is the rapid changes and improvements in data management/capture technology. Recently electronic data capture and Internet-based clinical trials (IBCTs) have been introduced and Contract Research Organizations (CROs) and clinical research study sites are progressively moving away from the ‘tried and true’ paper case report forms (CRFs) to this new electronic medium. IBCTs allow for obtaining large sample sizes with reduced unit costs through global access, fast interaction, and automation⁴. They provide a fast and easy avenue for the acquisition of scientific data, and this method of data acquisition will become much more common place in future multicenter clinical trials⁵. The implementation of IBCTs eliminates the need for double-key data entry as the system automatically checks for inconsistent, illogical or missing data⁶. In IBCTs, most of the data management planning and implementation are completed even before data entry is initiated. The annotated CRF, database design, and the vast majority of edit and logic checks are finalized prior to enrolling the first subject⁶. The CDM can now look at the data in real-time, and begin the generation of data listings and identification of potential problems early during the course of a study⁶. Training for CDMs in this new global environment, must accommodate this change in technology and shift in the clinical data management paradigm.

THE GOALS OF GLOBAL CLINICAL DATA MANAGEMENT

v Provide Electronic Translation Solutions: Developing translation software to transform data reliably from a variety of sources into a standard readable format.

v Develop Data Management Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Following Good Clinical Practices (GCP), and GCDMP in a standard way on a global scale.

v Verify Data for Protocol Compliance: Global standards in assessment of all image and non-image data to ensure proper display format, data integrity and conformance to protocol in accordance with FDA (and/or other) regulations.

v Develop Global Standards in Archiving of Original Data & Back-ups:
Provide archive solutions based on the size and type of data sets involved in the trial and the sponsor's needs. Utilization of a secure on-site data storage facility to house electronic backups of all trial data in compliance with GCP disaster recovery requirements.

v Track Patients and Workflows: Training of Research Associates to electronically monitor all trial data workflows. Providing the sponsor with access to this workflow via a secure link (web interface).

v Provide Sponsor with Electronic Access to Database: Providing sponsors with access to trial data via a secure link (web interface).

v Create Database of Data Analysis Results: Extraction of trial data and submission of it in sponsor-specific database formats.

v Digital FDA Submission: Digital databases of images, reports, and analysis should be suited to be submitted electronically (digitally) to the FDA (and/or other regulatory agencies).

v Timely Transfer of Data to Sponsor.

Training for a global CDM environment must encompass all the points laid out in this article. The training must accommodate changes (both technological and industry related) as they arise. To meet the needs of the global demands, can be accommodated through on-line or Internet based methods. To ensure compliance and common training standards are met, this on-line education should be augmented or implemented through some form of accreditation or certification regime through industry organizations like the Society for Clinical Data Management.

The Mars Climate Observer story at the beginning of this article serves as a dramatic example of the potential problems associated with proper data communications and transfer. As clinical research moves into the global arena, and clinical data gathering/transfer technologies shift towards Internet based systems, we should all be cognoscente of the potential ramifications of improper data management and strive towards a future where simple unit errors are only a problem confined to space travel!

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A metabolic model of the acceleration of chronoperception due to the process of biological regression

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Project Background

The chronoperception project was begun to promote research in the areas of psychology, neurophysiology and technology by discovering new methods to diagnose neurodegenerative diseases in their early stages. The project aims to develop effective methods of intervention in cases of psychological crises resulting from the process of aging (1;14;15). Our primary goal is to discover the scientific principles that underlie the processes of chronoperception and develop technologies which can be used promote therapy progress in this area.

We have found that the acceleration of chronoperception is caused by aging. We propose a metabolic model of alteration in chronoperception, which is caused by the process of biological regression. This model is based on a temporo-septal engram shift model of hippocampal memory (2) and the GABAergic deafferentation hypothesis of Alzheimer's disease and the aging of the brain. We posit that aging causes metabolic rates to decrease and that this, in turn, causes the acceleration of chronoperception.

Abstract

Chronoperception is the process by which time is perceived by the central nervous system. The study of the characteristics of the central nervous system is essential in order to uncover the reasons for aging-related psychological crises and to diagnose the early symptoms of neurodegenerative diseases. Like any function of the brain, chronoperception undergoes certain changes in connection with the body's regression due to aging. The goal of this research is to establish the nature of aging-related changes in chronoperception and develop a biophysiological basis for the explanation of this phenomenon.

Methods

The basic method of studying changes in chronoperception entails the use of surveys, directed at various age groups, that are constructed to identify changes affecting the subjective interpretation of time. The selection of survey participants was conducted randomly. 21 persons participated in the experimental surveys.

Results

The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception was detected in 95.2% (20) of the respondents. The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception over a ten-year interval of time was observed, in varying degrees, in 33.3% (7) of the respondents. The picture changes with the application of a survey comparing two ten-year periods in youth and adulthood. The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception was observed in about half of the cases 47.5% (10). Thus, the effect of the acceleration of chronoperception increased with the expansion of the intervals of time evaluated. The feeling of

deprivation in relation to lived time was observed in 71.4% (15) of the respondents. At the same time, 52% (11) feel that if a general law governing how time is perceived at different ages were established, they could more easily plan their life. This, the respondents feel, would preclude aging-related psychological crises.

Biophysiological basis and metabolic model

A biophysiological basis of the phenomenon of the aging-related acceleration of chronoperception is based on our proposed model of the inverse relationship between the intensity of metabolism of the hypothalamus and the speed of the process of chronoperception. With an increase in age there occurs a slowing of mitochondrial metabolism (3; 4; 5), which results in a decrease in the output of ATP and an increase of the production of gamma-aminofatty acid GABA. This is responsible for the deterioration of the neural activity of the hypothalamus. The activity of the temporo-septal axis, which is responsible for the process of time perception, decreases (2). A smaller quantity of episodes are coded and decoded by that part of the brain. Thus, over equal intervals of time the process of encoding and decoding episodic memory occurs more quickly in the young brain than in the brain of an older individual.

Conclusions

Because the perception of time depends on the quantity of episodes undergoing encoding and decoding in the temporo-septal axis of the hypothalamus, each interval of time saturates a young individual with episodic memory to a greater degree than is possible in an older individual. Thus, identical intervals of time are perceived differently by individuals in different stages of life. As an individual's age increases, his perception of the passage of time accelerates. Put simply, time is perceived to speed up. Chronoperception is the process by which time is perceived by the human brain. This process plays a significant role in the formation of the psychological state of one's personality. The occurrence of age-related crises is linked in many cases to feelings of disappointment and deprivation with respect to past and remaining time. Because chronoperception is linked to the encoding of episodic memory and because the

temporo-septal axis of the hypothalamus is an engram -- a repository of this type of memory -- a biophysiological basis underlies the feelings linked to the increase of the speed of the flow of time. Therefore, we may study the phenomenon of the change in the way time is perceived as a symptom of the development of neurodegenerative processes. The study of chronoperception lies at the interface of different sciences such as psychology, gerontology, biochemistry, physiology and neuropharmacology. Therefore, an integrated approach is necessary to study chronoperception. The project studying chronoperception led by our research center identifies the following objectives:

1. The identification of the phenomenon of the change in chronoperception with age and the conduct of experiments aimed at establishing the quantitative relationships in the changes of the perception of time among a healthy population as well as among persons suffering from various neurodegenerative diseases.
2. The development of effective methods of early detection of neurodegenerative diseases on the basis of changes in chronoperception.
3. The development of methods of effective therapy for psychological age-related crises linked to a change in chronoperception.
4. The development of a system of relationships between biological age and an age based on the chronoperception of the individual.
5. The preparation of popular literature and the conduct of preventive and expository outreach programs for at-risk groups. These programs will decrease risk factors promoting the development of age-related psychological crises and reduce the occurrence of depression, an associated condition.

In the research presented in the present work, the phenomenon of the acceleration of the perception of time with aging is established; a quantitative evaluation of the results is conducted; and the degree to which changes in the perception of time bear on the formation of crisis situations is revealed. The present research included the development of a biophysiological basis explaining the identified phenomenon of the age-related acceleration of chronoperception. This basis was developed with the aid of a metabolic model.

Methods

Research on the subjective perception of the passage of time was conducted by the laboratory of chronoperception. 21 individuals participated in the surveys. Participants in the experiment were chosen randomly.

Goals of the survey:

1. The identification of the fact that the perception of time changes with the advancement of biological age.
2. The identification of the proportion of changes in the perception of time.
3. The identification of the fact that changes in the perception of time bear on the development of psychological age-related crises.

The core questions of the survey were:

- Do you feel that time passes more quickly with age?
- Recall an event in your life which recurred periodically over time periods of equal duration. Compare your perception of the duration of this event ten years ago with your perception of it one year ago.

- Describe any changes in – or relationship between – these two periods of your perception.
- Recall the duration of your instruction in grade school and compare this with the duration of the instruction of your kids in grade school. Did you experience a feeling of deprivation when you, looking back, felt that time passed much more quickly than you expected? Do you feel that you managed to do less than you intended?
- Do you think that if a general law governing changes in the perception of time with age were established it would become easier for people to plan their lives and avoid psychological crises?

Results

The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception was uncovered in 95.2% (20) of the respondents. While examining changes in the perception of equal periods of time in the present and 10 years ago, the process of the acceleration of chronoperception was observed in 57% (12) of the cases. In 19.4% (4) of the cases chronoperception was observed to increase by a factor of 1.5. In 14.3% (3) of the cases acceleration of chronoperception by a factor of 2 was observed. 9.5% (2) had trouble answering. The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception over a short interval of time in 10 years was observed to varying degrees in 33.3% (7) of the respondents. The picture changed during the survey calling for the comparison of two ten-year periods in childhood and adolescence (the time of grammar school and high school) and in adulthood (the time of grammar school and high school of the respondents' children.) Only 38% (8) affirmed that the feeling of the named periods of time were identical, whereas 38% (8) confirmed that time for them passed faster by a factor of 1.5 and 9.5% (2) said that time passed faster by a factor of 2. 14.3% had difficulty answering. The phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception was observed in almost half of the cases 47.5% (10). Thus, the effect of the acceleration of chronoperception grew with the increase in the evaluated intervals of time. The feeling of deprivation in

relation to lived time was observed in 71.4% (15) of the respondents. 52% (11) feel that if a general law governing how time is perceived at different ages were established, they would more easily be able to plan their life. This, the respondents feel, would preclude age-related psychological crises.

Mechanism the process of chronoperception

First, it should be determined which of the parts of the brain is responsible for the perception of time. According to new research of Lytton W and Lipton P of the University of Wisconsin (2) published this year, the perception of time is based in the episodic memory. That is, the memory of an individual relates to specific moments in time. These episodes are encoded and decoded in distinct parts of the hypothalamus. The temporo-septal axis of the hypothalamus plays an important role in the perception of time. The model (Temporo-Septal Engram Shift Model of Hippocampal Memory) proposed in this study shows that episodes undergo encoding in the temporal lobe of the hypothalamus and constantly move to the septal lobes where they can be decoded and recalled. This confirms that the sense of time lies in the temporo-septal axis of the hypothalamus.

Biochemical basis for the change in chronoperception

We substantiate the hypothesis that the phenomenon of the change of chronoperception is caused by biological regression of the brain with new data obtained by GABAergic deafferentation. Marczynski TJ (3) of the department of pharmacology of the University of Illinois asserts that there exists a connection between the age-related degeneration of neurons in various regions of the brain (including the region of the hypothalamus) and the activity of glutamic acid (glutamic acid decarboxylase GAD enzyme), which synthesizes gamma-aminofatty acid GABA. An inverse relationship exists between the concentration of phosphates rich in energy (mainly ATP) and the activation of glutamic acid decarboxylase GAD. In the present work it is postulated that in all phenotypes of neurons the age-related decrease in ATP of the negative control leads to the gradual increase in the production of gamma-aminofatty acid. The release of Ca^{2+} independent carrier-mediated GABA hinders the

exocytotic release of all transmitters and modulators as interstitial GABA acts on the axon terminals (3;10). Depolarization of GABA A-benzodiazepine receptors occurs. Thus GABA bears responsibility for the neurodegenerative processes associated with aging. With an increase in age, the production of ATP decreases, which leads to a blocking of the secretion of transmitters. This, in turn, leads to the degeneration and chronic depolarization of axons and the blocking of the retrograde transporter trephines, which causes the constant loss of neurons. Other research by Swaab DB has shown that a decrease in metabolic activity takes place in the region of the hypothalamus both in cases of Alzheimer's disease and as a result of aging.

The model of an inverse relationship between metabolism of the neurons of the hypothalamus and the process of chronoperception

We propose the following model, which appeals to the process of biological regression to explain the found effect of the acceleration of chronoperception. The slowdown of mitochondrial metabolism occurs in proportion to an increase in age (4;5), which results in a decrease in the production of ATP. This, in turn, causes an increase in the emission of gamma-aminofatty acid GABA, which is responsible for the degradation of the ability of neurons in the hippocampus to transmit impulses. The activity of the temporo-septal axis, responsible for the process of time perception, decreases. A smaller quantity of episodes are encoded and decoded by that part of the brain. Thus, over equal intervals of time the process of encoding and decoding of the episodic memory occurs faster in a young brain than in the brain of an older individual. Because the perception of time depends on the quantity of episodes undergoing encoding and decoding in the temporo-septal axis of the hypothalamus, each interval of time saturates a young individual with episodic memory to a greater degree than is possible with an older individual. Thus, identical intervals of time are perceived differently by individuals in different stages of life. An acceleration of the perception of time occurs with an increase in age. Put simply, time is perceived to speed up.

Conclusions

As a result of the research we have conducted, the phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception with aging (biological regression) has been established. It has also been established that the acceleration of chronoperception increases in proportion to the degree of divergence between the compared intervals of time and their length. The influence of the phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception on the development of age-related psychological crises is supported. In the search for a biophysiological foundation for the phenomenon of the acceleration of chronoperception, a model of the inverse relationship between metabolic intensity in the hypothalamus and the speed of chronoperception was created. In the future these findings will allow us to establish more accurate quantitative relationships in the changes of the perception of time among a healthy population during aging and among persons suffering from various neurodegenerative diseases. On the basis of the data collected as a result of the discovery of the phenomenon of the age-related acceleration of chronoperception, it is imperative to begin developing new methods of early diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases, therapeutic methods to treat psychological age-related crises, expository popular literature and preventive public awareness programs that aim to decrease risk factors that promote the development of age-related psychological crises and related states of depression.

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Potential Cerebroprotective Properties of Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) Expressed by Significant Antiedemic and Antihypoxic Effects Established in Brain Edema Model in Mice, Hypercapnic Normobaric Hypoxia Model in Mice and Hypobaric Hypoxia Model in Rats.

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Abstract:

The cerebroprotective effect of Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) was assessed in a

model of head trauma in mice (Beni-Adani et al., 2001). This type of trauma produces brain edema (i.e. increase in water content), breakdown of the blood brain barrier (BBB) and clinical dysfunction. The effect of treatment with Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) on NSS (and on specific motor function) was assessed, as well as the effect on edema and BBB integrity. Spontaneous recovery in clinical function was observed in 2 mice out of 10 (20 %), while treatment with Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) resulted in the recovery of 5 mice out of 9 (55.5 %). significant ($p < 0.05$) decrease in the degree of edema developed after head trauma following use of Cereprotex. About 35% less water accumulated in the traumatized hemisphere of the brain as a result of Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) treatment to traumatized mice. CEREPOTEX (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) protected absolutely contralateral hemisphere and decreased water content up to normal parameters.

Antihypoxic effect was checked in two in vivo models: a) The hypercapnic normobaric hypoxia in mice b) The hypobaric hypoxia in rats (dose-response)

Cereprotex has expressive antihypoxic effect, it prolonged significantly convulsion latency at 84% and survival time of mice at 78,4%. Cereprotex has dose dependent antihypoxic effect. Doses 100, 250 and 500 mg/kg exhibited significantly increasing survival time comparatively to control group: 100 mg/kg-162%, 250 mg/kg-275%, and 500 mg/kg-425%.

Introduction:

The present paper relates to neuroprotective agents and, in particular, to compositions comprising glycoluril derivatives and methods for neuroprotection in cases of injuries in the central nervous system (CNS) and in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases and disorders. Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) in this article refers to

well known formulation of mebicar used as tranquilisers since late 1970-s.

Damage to the nervous system may result from a traumatic injury, such as penetrating trauma or blunt trauma, or a disease or disorder, including but not limited to Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), diabetic neuropathy, senile dementia, and ischemia.

Injury to myelinated axons in the CNS often has a devastating outcome in terms of neuronal loss, with accompanying loss of function. Part of the damage occurs immediately, whereas part is delayed and leads to the death of neurons that escaped the direct insult.

Neurodegenerative diseases and disorders are commonly associated with ongoing neuronal loss in the CNS. Following the loss of neurons caused by primary risk factors, secondary neuronal loss is mediated by self-compounds, such as glutamate, nitric oxide or reactive oxygen species, that exceed their physiological concentrations. These compounds are implicated in various types of neurological disorders and acute CNS injuries. Destructive components common to neurodegenerative diseases have also been identified in autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis. In this disease, myelin damage in the CNS is accompanied by subsequent neuronal loss.

Glycoluril, 2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]octane-3,7-dione, and derivatives thereof, also termed bicyclic bisureas of the octane series, have been described as useful for treating psychic disorders (US 3,966,742; US 4,004,013) and ischemic heart diseases (US 4,571,403). Methods for the synthesis of glycoluril derivatives has also been described (US 3,966,742; US 4,004,013; Chegaev et al., 2001; Kostyanovsky et al., 2002; Kravchenko et al., 2000).

The capability of glycoluril derivatives to exhibit simultaneously both hydrophilic and lipophylic properties is responsible for the physiological action of these compounds: on one hand, they can easily penetrate the body and, on the other hand, readily overcome the hematoencephalitic barrier (Chegaev et al., 2001), also known as blood-brain-barrier (BBB).

A well known representative of the glycoluril derivatives is the compound named mebicar (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione), used as tranquilizer since 1979. Mebicar exhibits extremely low toxicity, does not cause complications and side effects, does not suppress working ability and can be taken under any conditions by people of all ages. Mebicar is not metabolized and leaves the organism within 24 hours.

Another known representative of the glycoluril derivatives is albicar (2,6-diethyl-4,8-dimethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione, also described as psychotropically active and candidate for use as tranquilizer (Kostyanovsky et al., 2002).

US 4,004,013 and US 3,966,742 disclose medicinal preparations comprising 2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-diones for treating psychic disorders. US 4,571,403 discloses mebicar for treatment of ischemic heart disease.

Previous studies by the present inventor and colleagues have shown that mebicar exerts a protective action on some parameters of body function under the influence of extreme conditions such as stress and hypoxia, within a wide dosage range (100-1000 mg/kg), without affecting the muscle tone, movement coordination or working capacity of tested animals (Zimakova et al., 1980). Mebicar was also shown to change the balance of neuroactive amino acids in the animal's brain by raising the content of gamma-butyric acid (Zimakova et al., 1982), and to exhibit a protective action in experimental arrhythmias (Kamburg and Zimakova, 1982). Mebicar was further shown to produce an antishock action and to normalize acid-base and oxygen homeostasis (Zimakova et al., 1984). Mebicar was also shown to increase the myocardial contractility, to exert a slight effect on the cardiac rhythm and to dilate the peripheral arteries, and the cardiac stimulating effects were attributed to the involvement of mebicar in the myocardial metabolism (Kamburg, 1990). Authors have developed experiment using mebicar (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) in form of generic formulation Cereprotex.

Methods:

(i) Induction of closed head injury (CHI) in a mice model.

Male Sabra mice (strain from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), weighing 35 to 45 g, were used. CHI was induced under ether anesthesia. A metal rod weighing 333 g was allowed a free fall from a prefixed height (at 3 cm for a mouse weighing 28-32 g) over the exposed skull covering the left hemisphere in the midcoronal plane. The tip of the rod is covered with silicone, and it delivers the impact to the head that is fixed on the bottom plane of the trauma device. Sham-operated mice were anesthetized, their skull exposed, but trauma was not induced. After CHI the mice were assigned to vehicle or Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) treatment.

(ii) Clinical evaluation of the mice after CHI. Mice were evaluated to define the severity of injury and functional recovery by using a set of clinical criteria. This is a very reliable prognostic tool that correlates with recovery both at the functional and MRI levels, and allows for the evaluation of drug efficacy (Beni-Adani et al., 2001).

For assessment of posttraumatic neurological impairment, a Neurological Severity Score (NSS) previously described, modified and validated, was used (Shapira et al. 1988; Chen et al. 1996; Beni-Adani et al. 2001). The score used herein consists of 10 individual clinical tasks on motor function, alertness, and physiological behavior, whereby one point is given for failure of task performance and zero points for succeeding. A maximal NSS of 10 points indicates severe neurological dysfunction, with failure of all tasks, whereas a score of zero is achieved by healthy uninjured mice. The NSS at 1 hour after trauma reflects the initial severity of injury and is inversely correlated with clinical outcome (Beni-Adani et al. 2001). Evaluation of task performance was done by two investigators who were blinded about the study groups at the time-points 1 h and 24 h after experimental CHI. The Δ NSS, calculated as the difference between NSS at 1 h and the NSS at any later time-point, is a parameter which reflects the degree of spontaneous recovery following brain injury, as described (Chen et al., 1996; Yatsiv et al., 2002; Beni-Adani et al., 2001).

(iii) Evaluation of water content (brain edema). The extent of cerebral edema was evaluated by determining the tissue water content in the injured hemisphere, as previously described (Beni-Adani et al., 2001). Briefly, mice were sacrificed 24 h after injury, the time of peak edema formation, and brain cortical samples of ~20 mg were cut from the left (traumatized) and right (contralateral) hemispheres, from the site bordering the lesion. The right (non-injured) hemisphere was used as an internal control. Samples were weighed before and after drying in a desiccated oven for 24 h at 95°C. After weighing the “dried” sections, the brain water content was calculated as $\%H_2O = [(wet\ weight - dry\ weight) \times 100] / wet\ weight$.

(iv) Evaluation of drug effect on brain edema. In order to evaluate the effect of a drug, and to do it in a “clinical-relevant” setting, the drug is given 1 h after the injury, immediately after the initial assessment of NSS. This protocol allows a homogenous distribution of the mice between the drug and vehicle treatments, and ensures similar severity of injury in both groups. NSS is then evaluated again at 24 h after injury, and ΔNSS is calculated. The mice are then sacrificed, their brain removed and cortical segments from the site of injury, and contralaterally, are taken for evaluation of edema, as described above in (iii).

Results:

Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) effect after brain trauma

Using the model described above, Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) in a dose of 750 mg/kg was injected intraperitoneally to mice (10 ml/kg).

The effect of treatment with Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) on NSS (and on specific motor function) was assessed, as well as the effect on edema and BBB integrity. Spontaneous recovery in clinical function was observed in 2 mice out of 10 (20 %), while treatment with Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-

tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-dione) resulted in the recovery of 5 mice out of 9 (55.5 %).

Anti-hypoxic effects of Cereprotex

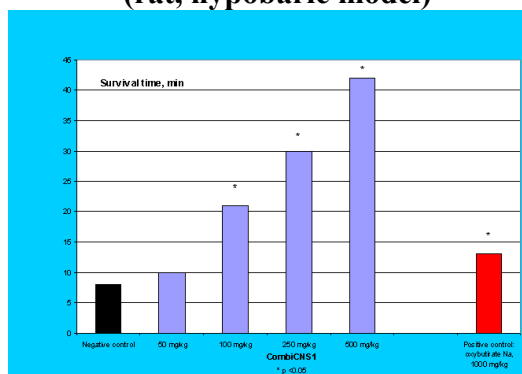
This effect was checked in two in vivo models:

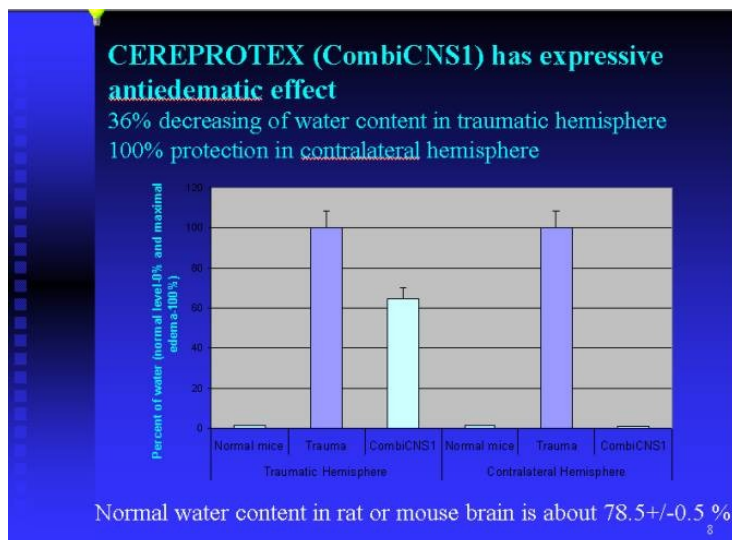
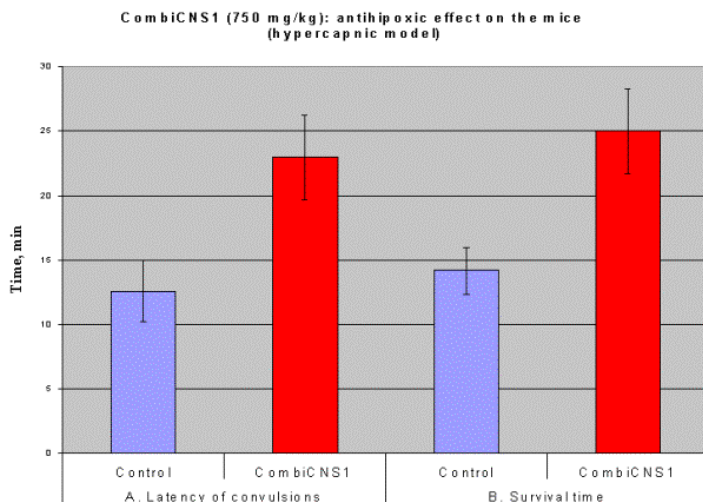
- The hypercapnic normobaric hypoxia in mice
- The hypobaric hypoxia in rats (dose-response)

A. 30 mice were used in this experiment. The hypercapnic normobaric hypoxia was induced by placing each BALB-C male mice weighing 20-22 g in hermetically sealed transparent boxes, 100 cm³. The groups included 15 animals in each group, control and treated. Three trials were performed: 2 in Russia and one in Israel (Anilab, Dr Ehud Hefer). Ten mice, five control and five treated were used in each trial. The animals were observed until start of convulsions (first parameter) and all respiratory movements ceased (survival time, second parameter).

Cereprotex dissolved in sterile saline solution was intraperitoneally administered 40 minutes before the start of the hypoxia test in dose 750 mg/kg. A group of mice to which only saline was intraperitoneally administered, was used as a control.

Antihypoxic Dose-Response Effect of CEREPOTEX (Cereprotex) (rat, hypobaric model)





Conclusion:

Cereprotex has expressive antiedemic effect. It also has antihypoxic effect, it prolonged significantly convulsion latency at 84% and survival time of mice at 78,4%.

B. 60 SD mail rats weighing 250-300 g were used in this study. The hypobaric hypoxia was induced via decreasing the atmospheric pressure in experimental chamber, 2000 cm3 up to 100 mm Hg during 10 min. Survival time of the rats was registered.

Cereprotex was administered intraperitoneally 40 min before test in different doses 50, 100, 250, and 500 mg/kg. One group of rats was a negative control (saline) and one group was a positive control-pre-treatment with intraperitoneally injection of sodium oxibutirate, 1000 mg/kg.

T-test was used for statistical calculation.

Cereprotex has dose dependent antihypoxic effect. Doses 100, 250 and 500 mg/kg exhibited significantly increasing survival time comparatively to control group: 100 mg/kg-162%, 250 mg/kg-275%, and 500 mg/kg-425%.

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The use of cuff pressure controllers in laryngeal masks during nephrourologic operations

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The frequency with which laryngeal masks are used in anesthesiology is steadily increasing. One of the most important conditions necessary for the correct usage of this type of artificial airway is the steady supply pressure to the cuff of the mask; this increases the effectiveness with which the device protects the respiratory passages. For LMA ProSeal laryngeal masks, specifically, a steady pressure of 60 cm H₂O is recommended. During an operation certain situations can occur -- a change in the patient's position on the operating table, a decrease in the depth of the neuromuscular block, a change in the depth of anesthesia – which may alter the cuff's initial pressure. In this context we perceive a need to use a device to maintain a constant supply of pressure to the cuff.

The goal of the present work is to analyze the effects of a novel pressure controller (Kozhevnikov, M. 2007) during nephrourologic operations.

Material and Methods The research was conducted on 24 patients ranging in age from 13 to 74 years (the average age was 46.6 ± 5.4), who underwent surgery in the urology clinic of the Rostov State Medical University. All of the patients had an ASA score of 1 or 2. The patients were divided into two groups according to the type of anesthesia they received and the type of ventilation used during their operation. The first group consisted of 19 patients who underwent operations on the kidneys and upper urinary tracts -- a radical nephrectomy with tumors of the

kidneys, a surgical intervention for the treatment of kidney stones and hydronephrosis. The operations were conducted under total intravenous anesthesia (propofol, fentanyl, pipecuronium) using CMV to ventilate the lungs. The length of the anesthesia was 2-3 hours. The second group consisted of 5 patients who underwent operations under spinal or combined spinal-epidural anesthesia in conjunction with intravenous propofol anesthesia. These patients received no artificial respiraton; during the operation they breathed naturally. The operations in this group were 2 penile implants and 3 radical cystectomies with intestinoplastiy of the bladder. In connection with its length of 7 - 8 hours, the operation on a cancerous bladder was of particular interest.

The LMA ProSeal laryngeal mask was used with all patients, and the pressure controller under study was attached to the cuff before inflation occurred. *The cuff was inflated until the pointer aligned with a mark on the pressure control device.*

Measurement of the pressure in the cuff was carried out in at four stages: 1 – upon inflation, 2 – after the patient was turned over (group 1) or at the beginning of the operation (group 2), 3 - one hour after the initial incision and 4 - at the end of the operation.

Results. Sufficient ventilation of the lungs was achieved in all cases based on data from pulse oximetry, capnography and through selective monitoring of the gas content of blood during radical cystectomies. An observation of note was made in one case where the regurgitation of the contents of the stomach occurred in connection with the surgical procedures. Aspiration did not occur in this case, which indicates the effectiveness with which the lungs are protected by a correctly applied LMA ProSeal mask.

The table below lists the pressure readings (cm H₂O) in the cuff of the laryngeal mask at various stages of anesthetization.

P	Stages of research

atient Group s				
	1	2	3	4
1	6 0	5 8±2	5 8±2	5 6±4
2	6 0	5 8±2	5 8±2	5 5±5

Results:

1. The use of a pressure controller to regulate air supply to the cuff of a laryngeal mask during nephrourologic operations allows for the constant supply of the optimal level of pressure both during artificial ventilation of the lungs and during natural breathing.

2. The use of a pressure controller increases the effectiveness of laryngeal masks and, consequently, patient safety improves. Pressure controllers, therefore, are recommended for wide use.

CONTENT

THE JOYS OF COMMON SENSE	4
Forgiveness as a Free Choice	6
Freedom from Fear vs. Fear of Freedom	10
Human Nature or just the Chemistry of our Brains?	14
Achieving Peace of Mind	23
Are We Responsible for our Ideas?	35
Destruction as a Means of Creation	50
The Blind Monster	58
Eternity ends today	71
Where Karl Marx was Right or Wrong	77
Reflection and Realization: the Progress of our Evolution	93
A FUTURE BEYOND IMAGINATION	100
Foreword	100
Chapter 1. Inner Structure of Personality	104
Chapter 2. Virtual Personality	107
Chapter 3. Virtual Psychology	112
Chapter 4. Pharmacology of Happiness and Modification of Human Behavior	122
Chapter 5. Virtual Imagination	128
Chapter 6. Prisoners of the Body	134

Chapter 7. The Golden Age of Mankind	137
Chapter 8. A Model of the Electronic State	141
Chapter 9. The Formula for Immortality	154
Chapter 10. The Problem with Immortality	155
Chapter 11. The Desexualization of Personality	162
Chapter 12. The Death of Eroticism	168
Chapter 13. The Sovereign Individual	171
Chapter 14. Dissociation or Association?	174
Chapter 15. The Future Development of History	182
Chapter 16. Terrorism is Not a Cause but a Consequence	202
Chapter 17. The Ghost of the Final Solution	207
Chapter 18. The Nature of Modern Barbarianism	210
Chapter 19. Has Satanism Conquered the Modern World?	216
Chapter 20. Possible Directions of Future Philosophy	231
Chapter 21. Oh, how many wonderful discoveries...	248
Chapter 22. Landmarks for the Future Development of Civilization	253
The Uncertain Universe	256
<i>A Quest for the Ultimate Limits of Human Knowledge</i>	256
WHAT IS HEAVENLY WISDOM TO US?	256
THE BLACK HOLES OF HARVARD	262
THE GRAVITATION OF THE ISLE OF FREEDOM	274
THE UNIQUENESS OF THE UNIVERSE	292
	663

THE LARGE SCALE OF THE UNIVERSE IN SPACE AND TIME	298
MAN'S DUEL WITH TIME	310
AN END TO THE COMMONLY ACCEPTED CONCEPTION OF TIME	312
SPACE AND TIME IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A NEW MODEL OF CREATION	321
PECULIARITIES AND LIMITATIONS IN THE PERCEPTION OF TIME	330
THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE COMPREHENSION AND DESCRIPTION OF CREATION AND TIME	338
THE PROBLEMS WITH HEAVENLY PHILOSOPHY	344
LILLI-BUNNY AND THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE	357
PREFACE	358
WHO IS THIS LILLI-BUNNY ANYWAY?	358
CHAPTER 1. LILLI-BUNNY'S FURRY SLIPPERS	361
CHAPTER 2. LILLI-BUNNY AND LILLI-BEAR	365
CHAPTER 3. LILLI-BUNNY AND LILLI-KITTY	371
CHAPTER 4. LILLI-BUNNY AND LILLI-JAKE	375
CHAPTER 5. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS CATS	379
CHAPTER 6 . LILLI-BUNNY AND MONSIEUR SILVOUPLAIT	383
CHAPTER 7. LILLI-BUNNY'S GOLF	389

CHAPTER 8. LILLI-BUNNY’S CAR	391
LILLI-BUNNY’S THOUGHTS ON OUR WORLD	394
CHAPTER 9. LILLI-BUNNY AND THE FOX	395
CHAPTER 10. LILLI-BUNNY AND GLOBAL WARMING	397
CHAPTER 11. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS MAILBOX	400
CHAPTER 12. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS SPONGE	404
CHAPTER 13. LILLI-BUNNY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY	410
CHAPTER 14. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS NEUROSIS	417
CHAPTER 15. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS LAWYER	423
CHAPTER 16. LILLI-BUNNY AND MONEY REFORM	430
CHAPTER 17. LILLI-BUNNY AND MACARONI	439
CHAPTER 18. LILLI-BUNNY AND SMALL TALK	442
CHAPTER 19. LILLI-BUNNY AND MODERN COSMOLOGY	448
CHAPTER 20. LILLI-BUNNY IN THE VILLAGE	453
CHAPTER 21. LILLI-BUNNY AND FISH 007	464
CHAPTER 22. LILLI-BUNNY AND THE BERRY PIE	473
CHAPTER 23. LILLI-BUNNY TAKES A WALK	479
CHAPTER 24. LILLI-BUNNY AND MRS. SOFT DRINK	487

CHAPTER 25. LILLI-BUNNY AND MR. FAST FOOD	491
CHAPTER 26. LILLI-BUNNY AND THE MONKEY	495
CHAPTER 27. LILLI-BUNNY AT THE CONCERT	501
CHAPTER 27. LILLI-BUNNY HIRES A COW	506
CHAPTER 29. LILLI-BUNNY AND HIS GRAMOPHONE	516
CHAPTER 30. LILLI-BUNNY AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES	521
LILLI-BUNNY AND THE INTERNATIONAL LILLI-BUNNY DAY	526
THEOLOGICAL ARTICLES	537
The Book of ActS: its value and importance today	537
Christological CONTROVERSIES and the first six Ecumenical Councils	546
Christianity and Islam, VII-IX centuries	563
Schism of 1054 and Attempts at Reunion	586
IS “ <i>Orthodox Faith</i> ” MANIPULATING OUR MINDS?	613
SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES	634
TRAINING FOR A GLOBAL CLINICAL DATA MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT	634
A METABOLIC MODEL OF THE ACCELERATION OF CHRONOPERCEPTION DUE TO THE PROCESS OF BIOLOGICAL REGRESSION	639
POTENTIAL CEREBROPROTECTIVE PROPERTIES OF CEREPROTEX (2,4,6,8-TETRAMETHYL-2,4,6,8-TETRAAZABICYCLO[3.3.0]-OCTANE-3,7-DIONE) EXPRESSED BY SIGNIFICANT ANTIEDEMIC AND ANTIHYPOXIC EFFECTS ESTABLISHED IN BRAIN EDEMA MODEL	

IN MICE, HYPERCAPNIC NORMOBARIC HYPOXIA MODEL IN MICE
AND HYPOBARIC HYPOXIA MODEL IN RATS. 649

Results: 654

Cereprotex (2,4,6,8-tetramethyl-2,4,6,8-tetraazabicyclo[3.3.0]-octane-3,7-
dione) effect after brain trauma 654

THE USE OF CUFF PRESSURE CONTROLLERS IN LARYNGEAL
MASKS DURING NEPHROUROLOGIC OPERATIONS 659