

An unfinished didactic novel. Chapter 7: Pergamum

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Even now, as I watch the monitors announce the irregularities and dysrhythmias of what is left of my myocardium, I continue to long for J. The immortal words of Machiavelli — yes Machiavelli — keep going through my sad mind:

*Io spero, e lo sperar cresce 'l tormento;
Io piango, e il pianger ciba il lasso core;
Io rido e il rider mio non passa drento,
Io ardo e l'arsion mia non par di fore;
Io temo ciò che io veggo e ciò che io sento;
Ogni cosa mi dà nuovo dolore;
Cosi sperando, piango rido e ardo,
E paura ho di ciò odo e guardo.**

The general tenor of his works implies that any improvement in the habits of people is not an improvement in human nature itself but a temporary uplifting of behavior under the passing influence of a strong prince. Such an improvement was probably not conceived by Machiavelli as a civilizing influence as Chessick (1999) defined it — more likely he meant an increase in Roman virtue — stoicism and military courage.

Machiavelli's specific theory of human nature can be outlined as follows:

* (I hope, and hope increases my torment:
I weep and weeping feeds the weary heart;
I laugh and my laughter does not touch my soul;
I burn and no one sees my passion,
I fear what I see and what I hear;
everything gives me fresh pain;
thus hoping, I weep and laugh and burn,
and I fear what I hear and see.)

1. The desire to acquire and hold material property is one of the fundamental desires of man. Thus he writes, "...men forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony."

2. "For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their goods, their life, and their children when the necessity is remote; but when the danger approaches they revolt."

3. Men are wicked and they are fools. They are deceived by false glory and false good, and those few who do not agree do not dare to speak up because they are afraid of the majesty of the state and so do not dare to oppose themselves to the many.

4. Men resemble each other. As a group they may be loud and audacious in the denunciation of their rulers, but when punishment stares them in the face, then, distrustful of each other, they rush to obey.

5. Men's hatreds generally spring from fear or envy.

6. As human desires are insatiable (because their nature is to have and to do everything, whilst fortune limits their possessions and capacity of enjoyment), this gives rise to a constant discontent in the human mind and a weariness of the things they possess; and it is this which makes them decry the present, praise the past, and desire the future."

7. Men are cowardly, avaricious, ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful so the prince should choose to be feared rather than loved since fear is a more stable and dependable motive of human action.

8. Fortune rules over men because men cannot change their conduct with the times. The reason men cannot change is due to the impossibility of resisting the natural being of their characters and the difficulty in persuading themselves that a mode of proceeding which has been successful before will not work again.

One might be hard pressed to quarrel directly with these precepts of Machiavelli; in many ways his pessimistic description of men resembles that of Freud. There is a logical fallacy in the doctrine that the end justifies the means, for obviously the means used toward an end profoundly affects the end sought for. This explains the popularity of "hippie" buttons with slogans such as, "Kill for Peace" or "Support Mental Health or I'll Kill You," and so forth.

Perhaps Machiavelli's greatest error was to confuse the good of the leader with the good of the state, or perhaps this doctrine was a form of deliberate flattery — it is hard to say. He believed that the leader could force a change in habits on the people, a belief that involved him in a contradiction, as we have seen in his view of human nature. He offers no other solution to the question of how to work against barbarizing tendencies in groups.

War is the perfect instrument for the tyrant, as Machiavelli points out, because war, regardless of the reason for it, is barbarizing, and forces men to fall into line behind the tyrant or to be considered treasonous. Situations of chronic wars are the worst, since they produce a steady progressive force toward barbarization. A tyrannical, mediocre, or cynical leader also tends to barbarize the group, using the inherent

barbarizing tendency for his own ends. The approach to human nature in the leader seems to be a vital factor — he can bring out the best or the worst in the group as Freud recognized, and the more powerful he is, the more this is true. Shaw's play, *Caesar and Cleopatra* portrayed this with deadly accuracy even before the first World War. Shaw has Caesar announce: "And so, to the end of history, murder shall breed murder always in the name of right and honor and peace, until the gods are tired of blood and create a race that can understand." He shows Caesar in conflict with his mediocre advisors who wish only to destroy those who stand in their way, always justified by sanctimonious arguments.

It seems that a cruel paradox is upon us in our present-day United States. In an age dominated by the enormous barbarizing influence of television and other mass media, either mediocrity or a clever Machiavellian approach are necessary attributes to get elected along with huge sums of money. We are forced to hope that the office will then make the man, and that the awesome responsibility of being the leader of the so-called free world will result in a shift in the personality of the leader to that of a wise idealist with a civilizing influence. There is little psychologic or historical evidence to support the belief that such a shift can take place.

...But I digress. The voice of Sema comes back to me, speaking as we rode in our bus to Bergama, driven by the ever dependable bus driver Ali. She droned on, "This agricultural market town of 50,000 population in the province of Izmir, lies on a site occupied from Trojan times. Eight kilometers from it are the windswept ruins of Pergamum."

I remembered how the marvelous temple of Zeus taken from the weak Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 19th century by German archeologists appeared in the Pergamum museum when we were in Berlin (see chapter 3). This altar of Zeus gives us an idea of how beautiful Pergamum once was.

Sema continued, "The windswept ruins of Pergamum are among the most spectacular in Turkey. Pergamum was one of the ancient world's major powers although its moment of glory was relatively brief. It owes its prosperity to Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals. Because Pergamum seemed to be such an impregnable fortress, Lysimachus stored there the booty that he had accumulated while marching through Asia Minor. However, he was killed in 281 B.C. and a series of maverick rulers took over the city. The first of these was Philetarus, the commander Lysimachus had posted at Pergamum to guard the treasure. He was followed by his nephew Eumenes and then the adopted son of Eumenes, Attalus. The latter person took the title of king and made an alliance with Rome. He was succeeded by his son Eumenes II who really built Pergamum into a great city. Rich and powerful, he is the one who added the altar of Zeus to the hilltop of the city and began a great library there. The reign of Eumenes II was remembered most for this library, which is said to have held more than 200,000 volumes because Eumenes was an almost monomaniacal book collector. Eventually his library came to challenge the world's greatest library in Alexandria, which had allegedly, 700 000 books. The Egyptians were afraid that Pergamum and its library would attract famous scholars away from Alexandria so they cut off the supply of papyrus from the Nile. Eumenes set his scientists to work and they came up with parchment."

However, when Eumenes died he was succeeded by his brother Attilus II and then his son Attilus III under whom the kingdom began falling to pieces. Attilus III had no heir so he willed his kingdom to Rome and the independent kingdom of Pergamum became a Roman province in 129 B.C. In its heyday from about the second half of the second century B.C. until the end of the third century A.D. Pergamum experienced a golden age as a magnificent architectural and artistic center. It increased in prosperity and importance until it became the greatest emporium of its contemporary area. The terraced sides of its Acropolis rock were covered with palaces, temples, gardens, and plantations, while the culture of its citizens was esteemed all over the Greek world. The ornaments of luxury were supplied by the skill of its own craftsmen, whose cloth of gold, for instance, was considered in a class with the embroideries of Phrygia or Alexandrian brocades.”

Why did Attilus III will his empire to Rome, a will which came to be considered one of the most controversial documents of contemporary history? There is no agreement as to the cause; probably he realized the vast impetus which Roman imperialism was gaining and accepted it as irresistible. The inhabitants of Pergamum were not happy with this news and the Romans actually had to put down an armed uprising before they could incorporate Pergamum into their newly incorporated province of Asia”.

By the end of the third century A.D. Pergamum had been essentially destroyed by the innumerable Roman civil wars and the repeated incursions of barbarians, so its reign as a center of the cultural world was relatively brief.”

I remember now how I wondered to myself, while she was talking, if Sema would stay with the tour after J. caught her with Henry. I was sitting in the back of the bus on our way to Pergamum with Gertrude and Pearl on one side of me and Sarah on the other. All our thoughts were stirred up by Sema’s exposition and inevitably we began discussing the problems facing the beleaguered human species today, involving such depressing tangles as pollution, corruption, birth control, poverty, ignorance, and many others. But over-riding all of these is the unspeakable horror called war. In our century the development of science has brought with it as a byproduct the serious danger of the total destruction of our species. In the short space of my lifetime alone this danger became a very real possibility and could now be called a definite probability.

We began discussing human history a bit. Sarah, the English professor, began with quoting Gibbon’s famous statement that history is “indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind,” a comment almost identically made by Voltaire. Gertrude pointed out that historians sharpen our realization that war is insanity, forcing us to wonder why psychiatrists have not been more active in trying to understand the causes of war. She added that even today those who directly protest war are sometimes looked upon as flirting with treason and few if any psychiatrists have devoted themselves to a study of war.

I added, “Even Freud, who had opinions on so many subjects, had little to offer on the subject of war beside his famous correspondence with Einstein. Probably this was a function of his pessimistic outlook about human nature, a view that found adequate

justification in political events after his death.”

Here Sarah could not contain herself because she remembered Shakespeare’s statement in his play *Julius Caesar*: “Beware the leader who bangs the drums of war in order to whip the citizenry into a patriotic fervor, for patriotism is indeed a double-edged sword. It both emboldens the blood, just as it narrows the mind... And when the drums of war have reached a fever pitch and the blood boils with hate and the mind has closed, the leader will have no need of seizing the rights of the citizenry. Rather, the citizenry, infused with fear and blinded with patriotism, will offer up all of their rights unto the leader, and gladly so... How do I know? For this is what I have done. And I am Caesar.”

That quotation caused us to be quiet for a while because it was so pertinent and insightful. There is no question that Shakespeare was the greatest psychologist who ever lived, even greater than Nietzsche or Freud.

Pearl quietly added, “Herodotus demonstrates that customs weigh like a yoke on the thought processes of each nation, so greatly attached is each nation to the customs it practices. A knowledge of customs as a whole, in their infinite and contradictory variety, can become an instrument for the liberation of our minds and a valuable tool for understanding people. This is especially true, as Herodotus points out, because people are so attached to their customs, habits, and preconceptions, that all their thinking remains narrowly bound in the strictures of their prejudices, frequently described by them as absolute truths worth killing for.”

“Thucydides studied what he called the suicide of Greece,” said Gertrude, “The Peloponnesian War produced a serious decline in Western civilization. The circumstances were remarkably similar to those of today and Thucydides showed amazing prescience in predicting that his study would be useful for future ages in a similar predicament. Thucydides’s approach demonstrates a reverence for truth, an acuteness of observation, an impartiality of judgment, an appreciation of the splendor of language and a fascination with style. With a mind both sharp and profound, his ruthless realism is a tonic to our naturally romantic souls. He recognized no guiding gods, no divine plan, and not even progress, and he saw life and history as a tragedy redeemed now and then by great men but always relapsing into superstition and war.”

I agreed. “Thucydides is one of the true forerunners of modern psychology,” I said, “He draws the four or five central characters of his historical tragedy with great care and presents a view of human nature based on the desire to live and to possess. Self-interest and the sense of honor are for him the motives underlying all human action, and this he says is even more true of the behavior of states and nations.”

“Similarly,” added Sarah, “the writings of Titus Livius (Livy), the famous Roman historian, present the endless series of bloody battles and wars that constitute the history of Rome, but he puts a spin on it to make it an artistic epic of Rome’s ‘progress’. Tacitus, a later Roman historian, uses history as a sermon, teaching ethics by horrible examples and attempting to inspire by describing virtuous people. He is a gripping historian, full of irony and melancholy in his essentially pessimistic view of man. In reading Tacitus,” continued Sarah, “one feels the chill of an unrelieved fundamentalist sermon. He is most realistic in his pessimistic appraisal of men and makes a serious

effort to understand the main characters in his historical narrative in the tradition of Thucydides. He takes great pains to delineate the characters involved, for the purpose of investigating men and their motives.”

Ali the resident had been listening to this discussion in the seat in front of us and he turned to me and said, “Are you suggesting that to become a first class psychodynamic psychiatrist one has to steep one’s self in the historical classics? How many psychiatrists have read Herodotus, Gibbon, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus?” “Yes,” I replied, “It is inconceivable to me that anybody can attempt to understand the inner workings of the human mind without standing on the shoulders of giants like these. The classical historians at their best illustrate the importance of approaching human beings and human history by energetic inquiry into their customs and beliefs, focusing on their development and their characters. An objective search for truth based on acute observation, preferably with the author on the scene at that time, and where no detail is considered irrelevant, forms the best underlying historical method.”

Sarah interpolated, “Returning again to Gibbon, the processes that lead to the decay of a country from within are nowhere better described than in Gibbon’s special kind of neo-classical prose, but the wisdom in his narrative goes even deeper. His thesis is that the life of the man of reason in history is tragic by nature, that is to say, this tragedy is the central focus of the predicament of modern man.”

“I want to add,” I said, “that Voltaire visualized human nature already as remaining essentially the same in all ages and lands, and he argued that custom, chance, and accidents determine human history more than human ability, reason, or genius. He also made an interesting and important distinction between ‘academic philosophers and theologians’ who, he said, use a ‘technically philosophic’ method and produce ‘foolish systems,’ and contrasted them with thinkers like himself who used a ‘scientific and pragmatic’ approach to human problems. Like Thucydides, he approached history in a philosophical spirit and altogether excluded the supernatural.”

“Is there no way that the world can be made better?”, asked Ali. “Where are we all going, and what can be rationally done to influence the direction of civilization? Humans seem to have been unable to determine the direction of the series of crimes, follies, and misfortunes that constitute our history; in fact, if anything, with the advent of scientific methods of killing, the scope of these crimes, follies, and misfortunes has become greater, more devastating, and extremely dangerous to us all.”

There was a silence as all of us turned Ali’s question over in our mind. “Well,” began Sarah, “Voltaire hoped that he had discovered some seeds in human nature such as the ‘love of order’ that might prevent history, that series of useless cruelties, from leading to our total destruction.” “But,” retorted Pearl, “in Mommsen’s work on the history of Rome he suggested the inevitability of the fall of successful civilizations. That is to say, he thought that material success for a nation carries automatically within it the seeds of future decay and deterioration. So in his history of Rome he demonstrated that victory and complete supremacy posed the only tests that the Roman republic could not meet.”

Sarah, with her usual phenomenal memory, added, “Here is what Mommsen wrote: (Large disparities of wealth developed, and the produce of the estates of the wealthy patricians undersold and bankrupted the small farms from which Rome had drawn

many of its soldiers. The sturdy self-respecting Roman *pater familias* became increasingly lost in the growing faceless proletariat of the imperial city, which expected to be coddled, flattered, and bribed directly or indirectly by competing demagogues.)”

Pearl’s answer was somewhat different: “Perhaps there are cyclic rhythms in history as suggested by the work of Spengler and Toynbee. Although these historians come up with very different conclusions and prophecies, there is a similarity in their emphasis on inevitable rises and falls. Of course they take us away from the great hope of the Enlightenment — that humans can affect the progress of their civilization — but they reflect a certain desperate frustration with the capacity of reason and science to order the affairs of men, parallel to the various recent anti-rational and pseudo-biological approaches in philosophy and psychiatry.”

“Can any of you tell us a little more about Spengler and Toynbee?” asked Ali. Sarah answered, “Spengler insisted that every great culture is a separate organism and there is ordinarily no influence of one culture upon another, although he does mention certain significant exceptions. Cultures rise and fall out of an inherent tendency that is their unavoidable destiny; there is no progressive stream of civilization but only the periodic growth and decay of unique cultures, determined from within by their own peculiar properties. Each culture passes through age phases that Spengler labeled springtime, summer, autumn, and winter. There is always a crucial turning point beyond which the forces of death are in the ascendancy. There is a similarity here to Freud’s notion of the death instinct. Spengler believed the nineteenth century ushered in the winter of the western world and so we are at the beginning of the end. Nothing can be done about this decline. Toynbee developed an equally arbitrary theory also based on a cyclical rhythm that he said applies to every civilization, a recurrent pattern of genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration. But he added a mental twist that abandons all empirical or scientific methodology. He decided that the hand of the Christian god is behind this pattern. For Toynbee the chariot of history moves with God in the driver’s seat, toward divine purposes by means of the wheels of the cycles of rise and fall.”

“This is certainly not history for the scientifically minded gatherer of the facts,” said Gertrude, “I like the cool and objective voice of reason, as did Freud, the voice of Voltaire and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, of the tradition of British empiricism, and of Bertrand Russell. How can we be so different Sarah?,” she asked, “It’s no wonder we could not remain together.” And she hugged Pearl.

“T.S. Eliot made the excellent point that all thinking persons must choose whether to maintain an open-mindedness in the face of the unknown and the awesome in the heavens and in human events, or to make a leap of faith into some religious explanation,” explained the English professor Sarah, ignoring Gertrude’s provocations, “The advantages of the religious explanation are in the answers to questions and the peace of mind that it brings; the disadvantage is that further scientific exploration is discouraged and rationalistic hope of changing the course of events through science and reason are diminished because the emotional investment is displaced from man to God.”

“Perhaps it is the destiny,” I added, bringing in an unreasonable term borrowed from Nietzsche, “for each culture to decline into a rigid and materialistic civilization characterized by the presence of big cities and big mobs, without any new ideas, and

replete with the preoccupation of *panem et circenses* and, above all, what historians have called the 'money spirit'. As Spengler puts it, 'We cannot help it if we are born as men of the early winter of civilization, instead of on the golden summit of a ripe culture, in a Phidias or a Mozart time.' Such a theory is certainly tenable, and the events of the past few years seem to justify it in many ways. At the same time, the rapid progress of science has led to a vast unpredictable element in our history that seems to me to defy any forecasts of destiny or of inevitable doom or decay. We are still in the midst of a science explosion, and who knows where it will lead us? There is no evidence that the discoveries and explorations of the past two hundred years are in any phase of decline in the Western world."

By this time the bus had reached Pergamum but the discussion was so interesting that the others joined in! "If there is to be any hope of altering our destiny," said Henry, "it lies in utilizing the spirit of Voltaire, in the progress of reason and science. There are two crucial problems that philosophers teach us must be solved if our civilization is to survive and not to follow gloomy predictions. These are:

1. We must develop a mutual tolerance of customs and ideas, always thinking of all humans as forming a single family.

2. We must put a permanent end to the insanity of war.

Historians offer much on these problems, especially giving us perspective on the foolishness of all chauvinism and fanatical convictions of every kind and about the useless scourge of insanity called war."

"In my opinion," I said, "these are both serious medical and psychiatric problems. Hatred, intolerance, prejudice and jingoism can be best understood as character defenses of a pathological nature and the consequence of a serious defect in psychological development. Our attitude toward wars of any kind still remains unscientific. Wars should be looked on as pathological failures in the family of man. In a similar fashion, the psychiatrist sees parents who must resort to beating their children with straps, hair brushes, and other weapons when they are unable to understand or to cope with their children, usually due to shortcomings in their own psychological development. So I insist that the crucial question of the survival of our civilization rests on basically medical and psychological problems involving the prevention of uncontrolled aggression, the cure for hatred and intolerance, and the elimination of war. I do not understand why various world medical and psychiatric associations and corresponding world organizations do not do much more to create and support multidisciplinary study groups to concentrate on these problems of group psychopathology. This creation could be done without insurmountable difficulties.

"My viewpoint of course implies more than the appointment of a committee! These organizations must inform the public that our survival is at basis a public health problem, and attempt to stimulate and organize a massive world-wide effort to deal with the problem in our tradition of mobilizing against virulent international epidemics. We are faced with a public health problem of the first magnitude — the issue of our own survival. We have to understand humankind in terms of understanding thoroughly the customs, habits, and manner of thought of each family and each nation or ethnic group. This is because there is such an enormous influence that such

customs and habits exercise on the very thinking processes of families and nations, as Heidegger pointed out, each of which sets itself as the sole possessor of truth and wisdom for all times.”

Sarah quoted again, this time from Bertrand Russell: “Man in spite of his cleverness, has not learned to think of the human family as one. Although he has abolished the jungle, he still allows himself to be governed by the law of the jungle. He has little sense of the common tasks of humanity, of its achievement in the past and its possible greater achievements in the future. He sees his fellow man not as a collaborator in a common purpose, but as an enemy who will kill if he is not killed. Whatever his sect or party may be, he believes that it embodies ultimate and eternal wisdom, and that the opposite party embodies ultimate and absolute folly. To any person with any historical culture such a view is absurd.”

By this time we had made our way to the ruins of Pergamum, which were impressive mostly in our imagination because there was not really very much left. I could imagine an historian describing the rise and fall of this once magnificent cultural center of the contemporary world in the words of Virgil, as Aeneas enters the underworld:

Gods who rule the ghosts; all silent shades;
And Chaos and infernal Fiery Stream,
And regions of wide night without a sound,
May it be right to tell what I have heard,
May it be right, and fitting, by your will,
That I describe the deep world sunk in darkness
Under the earth.*

Unfortunately, as we were wandering over the ruins, my memory of Virgil’s *Aeneid* from Book 6 went on to how Virgil describes the opening of the underworld:

In the courtyard a shadowy giant elm
Spreads ancient boughs, her ancient arms where dreams,
False dreams, the old tale goes, beneath each leaf
Cling and are numberless.*

Here, I began to muse, lies what apparently is my false dream of somehow reaching a passionate fusion with J., the object of my undying love. Looking around, I noticed that J. was busy traversing the ruins and avoiding my both adoring and lecherous glances because she did not want to raise her husband’s suspicions. Her behavior made perfect sense. But I remembered what had happened the night before, when all this quotation from Virgil first began running through my feverish mind (see Chapter 6).

That evening in the hotel I was rather disappointed to see that Gertrude, Sarah, and Pearl had begun drinking quite a bit. Once more Ali the resident cornered me and asked if I could say more about the relationship of the practice of psychiatry

* Fitzgerald, R. (1983). *The Aeneid of Virgil*. NY: Random House.

and psychoanalysis to these cultural and historical matters. Ali was always trying to get me to talk about what was relevant to his own education and the psychodynamic psychiatric practice that he was hoping to some day establish, and I considered that a merit on his part. So again, Ali and Claire and I went off to a corner of the lobby and I began to speak to them.

“It is very important,” I said, “to understand the significance of both cultural and family background practices and of each person’s unique infantile fantasies in providing a mental set that determines how each of us experiences the world around us and an inarticulate grounding fundamental to every individual’s activities, human relationships, and self-concept. These factors constitute both the analyst and the patient, and subsequently ground the core of the psychoanalytic process, the transference-countertransference interaction.

“The analyst’s beliefs and attitudes, personal style, and characteristic reactions are crucial components of his or her technique. The analyst’s character is the complex organization of stable recurrent traits, behaviors, and attitudes which define him or her. A derivative is the analyst’s style, which denotes more the behavioral components of the analyst’s professional identity. Patients are intimidated by aspects of our style and behavior which they sense are invested with a certain sense of pride and are not open to question; this is often conveyed in nonverbal ways. The sicker and more repressed patients are the most influenced by these factors, which show up especially when it is not clear how to proceed, for example, our the introduction of so-called parameters at that point, or writing prescriptions.

Certain character traits are even designed to evoke particular types of responses in others in order to actualize a wished-for relationship existing in fantasy. These styles and character traits of the analyst have a profound effect in determining the analyst’s day-to-day clinical decisions and interventions and in facilitating or stalemating the treatment, as well as influencing consequent transference-countertransference interactions.

“The precise interweaving and interdetermining of background practices and infantile fantasies in any individual, patient or analyst, remains murky and controversial. As the scope of psychoanalytic treatment has expanded, in our clinical work we see a variety of transference-countertransference interactions that can no longer be accounted for by simply postulating the revival of oedipal wishes now aimed across the repression barrier at the representation of the analyst. In patients with substantial preoedipal damage, other more archaic phenomena manifest themselves, thought by some to represent an ego deficit and by others to be the result of intrapsychic conflict and subsequent compromise formation. These archaic phenomena pose an immediate challenge to the character and style of the analyst. The clinician will have to decide in each case what is the optimal response, using evidence provided by the patient’s history and unfolding transference. In order to do this successfully, an understanding of how transference-countertransference interactions are grounded in background practices and infantile fantasies is essential.

“It follows that all levels of our understanding and interpreting our experiences in the world have some sort of fore-structure. Heidegger (1962) outlined a threefold

fore-structure of interpretation. The first he called fore-having (*Vorhabe*), already having some sense of what you are dealing with, a background that is taken for granted. The second he labeled fore-conception (*Vorgriff*), having a sense of how to approach the problem. The third he named fore-sight (*Vorsicht*), having a sense of what would count as a result.

It follows there can be no presuppositionless understanding, and all understanding and interpretation is circular. This is especially true in the human sciences, a point that is becoming more and more generally accepted. However, even the natural sciences, when viewed as a human activity, have a hermeneutic aspect as Kuhn has carefully explicated. Kuhn's insight is that there are no really neutral facts, for what we call facts are dependent on the presuppositions of the sciences in which they are discovered. Different scientific practices presuppose different worlds. It is not the scientific facts themselves that involve the hermeneutic circle but the implicit interpretation of the world that guides the scientific activity of the scientist, the particular fore-structure of the 'facts,' which is accessible only to hermeneutic investigation. The problem in the human sciences is that, to a much greater extent than in the natural sciences, the theories are attempts to make sense of the activity in question on the background of taken-for-granted practices from which the investigator can never get away. The investigator, as well as the human subjects and behavior he or she investigates, dwells within a horizon of background practices that are so all-pervasive and subtle one can never be entirely clear about them.

"For Heidegger, one simply lives out the culture's version of what it is to be normal. One does not believe or choose or follow autonomous 'desires.' This pessimistic point of view lays very great emphasis on the early cultural background practices inculcated into the baby as it becomes a person. These practices do not necessarily even have specific linguistic articulation but are often learned by imitation and overt or covert reward and punishment. Every person, in order to be a person at all, must grow up and be trained into the routines in a particular culture. Every particular human can only choose its eventual role from what is available in his or her society, although the roles and goals available are not fixed. New technological and social developments are constantly changing the possibilities available, but whatever changes take place always take place on a background of accepted roles and goals. The sociocultural background may change gradually, as does a language, but never as the result of the conscious decisions of groups or individuals as Marxists or other utopians would have it.

"A human being is socialized by other human beings through being trained to comply with norms that are multiple and often not fully available to consciousness at all. Such 'rules' are not fully available to any of the participants nor could they be formulated in an explicit, context-free way. The vast variety of background practices that are imbibed in the early relationship within the family can never be reduced to any kind of theoretical belief system or set of self and object representations.

"The importance of background practices has been repeatedly emphasized by Gedo (1981, 1986, 1988) in the psychoanalytic literature. In an early discussion of the management of archaic transferences, Gedo (1981) wrote in a case example, 'I persisted, in spite of the lengthy rages provoked by this policy, in consistently pointing

out the disavowed magical ideation at the root of the patient's behavior, including the enactments in the analytic situation. Only the cognitive grasp of the actualities of her performances permitted the patient to gain insight into their sources in the identification with her mother' (p. 113). As Gedo explained, somewhere around 18 months of age, the prevalence of the magical ideation in the patient 'will be decisively influenced by the quality of the familial matrix.' He added, 'I think it is entirely likely that grandiose fantasies may not be "endogenous" at all but are entirely learned' (p.112).

"The appearance of archaic demands, said Gedo, constitutes compensatory efforts to patch over developmental deficits, skills that the patient lacks. He called these deficits apraxias, an accumulation of functional handicaps produced by early developmental vicissitudes. Gedo (1981) believed, 'In such cases, psychoanalysis must be attempted to correct the structuralizations of maladaptive patterns' (p. 57), a kind of repair job applied to the early background practices that constitute the fore-understanding of the individual.

"Gedo (1986) pointed out that Freud's structural theory is certainly applicable to our understanding of mental development, but only from the latter half of the second year of life at the earliest. Structural concepts of the id, ego and superego, and self and object representations are a function of the acquisition of imaging capacity in which the mental self and representational intelligence, in Piaget's terms, gradually take over. But underlying these images are the archaic phases of infantile organization with derivatives that are not necessarily ever encoded in linguistic communications. In his discussion of various psychodynamic disorders and psychophysiological dysfunctions characteristic of archaic or borderline states, Gedo (1986) maintained, 'Adequate behavior depends on a variety of psychophysiological skills, beyond those of perception and cognition, for pathology of this kind comes about when primary bodily experiences are not *assimilated* into the individual's set of acknowledged personal aims' (p. 175). Gedo goes so far as to insist that selfobject needs, claimed by Kohut to be present throughout life, 'may well disappear if patients succeed in mastering psychological skills they failed to acquire in childhood' (p. 175), a contention that places him in direct opposition to Kohut. For Gedo, the selfobject transferences described by Kohut really represent an attempt to mask inadequacies at presymbolic levels of functioning through the adaptive use of external assistance.

"Organic damage is not implied in his use of the term *apraxia*, although in my clinical experience, especially in the psychotherapy of patients with epilepsy, this 'apraxia' is especially pronounced in patients with concomitant organic problems or learning disabilities. Essential adaptive skills normally are autonomous and are the same as the background practices emphasized by Heidegger. Whether they are lacking due to maturational lag, constitutional factors, inadequate nurture, or a combination of these, is not the relevant issue in understanding pathology. For patients with apraxia, Gedo (1988) viewed therapy as a 'technology of instruction' (p. 9). People get into difficulty not only from certain behaviors produced by the repetition of fundamental response patterns established in infancy or early childhood but also from maladaptive or troublesome types of conduct that result from apraxia' (p. 17). The demonstration of these skills to patients Gedo called 'beyond interpretation,' and he considered this

remedial education vital since 'even remediable instances of disorders in thought, communication, learning, planning, affectivity, or the regulation of tensions will not respond to the resolution of intrapsychic conflicts — disorders of this type require a variety of interventions that psychoanalysts have hitherto regarded as "nonanalytic" educational measures' (p. 28). So, for Gedo as it was for Heraclitus (see chapter 6), 'Everyone to a large extent determines his own unfavorable destiny' (p. 30) and rationalizations cover the self-restrictive or self-damaging enactments 'that could be stopped if only patients recognized that options are open to them.'

"In a clinically valuable comment, Gedo pointed out that people with overwhelming psychological deficits can reach adulthood and adapt adequately by learning to imitate the behavior of other adults, 'although they usually feel imposturous and fraudulent while doing so' (1988, p. 61). Or they may adapt through a symbiosis to a selfobject; even their use of the couch is primarily also for a holding experience. Interpretations are heard as soothing proof of caring, regardless of their content, which is ignored (see Feinsilver, 1983).

"The identification with a sick parent may produce 'focal disorders' in thinking because the parent identified with suffered from the same handicaps, a common clinical situation. Obsessional thinking for Gedo can be due to an apraxia in planning behavior that comes about when planning behavior 'is drawn into the arena of a toddler's struggles about complying with parental expectations or resisting them' (p. 197). In each case, apparent apraxias appearing in psychoanalytic treatment must be labeled either as a temporary regression, or as an apraxia and ignorance of the rules of communication, or as identification with bizarre caretakers."

I had to break off my talk at this point, which I think was already wearing out Ali and Claire, because the sound of loud voices from the other side of the lobby near the bar became impossible to ignore. Returning there, we found Gertrude, Pearl, and Sarah extremely drunk, and behaving in an egregiously uninhibited fashion. They were singing and dancing with each other and had attracted quite a crowd of onlookers who were muttering about ugly American tourists. Clearly the tension among the three over their homosexual proclivities had become almost unbearable and they had tried to do something about it through the use of alcohol. Something would have to be done or these tensions threatened to disrupt the rest of the trip and to erupt into such phenomena as these drinking bouts, embarrassing all of us. It was with the greatest difficulty that the hotel management and I were able to get them to their rooms to sleep it off.

Claire and Ali had disappeared somewhere and that left J., Henry, and myself sitting alone in the lobby and exhausted. At first I was afraid that Henry was going to confront me about my attention to his wife, but instead, being supremely confident of her loyalty and with very little concern for her needs, he yawned sleepily and said he was wandering off to bed. That left me alone with J. who again began to cry.

Once more I held out my arms to her, hoping to achieve fusion at last. Once more I completely misunderstood her, failed her empathically out of my own intense need. Instead of falling into my arms, she recoiled, and I realized her tears were those of anger, not sadness. "Martin, I have had just about enough of you", she said. "All through this trip I have had to endure your longing, to my embarrassment and discomfort. Everybody on the trip, including Henry, is aware of your thoughts and why you have

invited us to come along.”

“I do not care,” I replied. “I love you desperately, and can not imagine life without you. In my entire life I have never had such a passion, nor have I met anyone with so much beauty in both body and soul. Just looking at you is an intense aesthetic experience for me, very much like tarrying before a great work of art or architecture like the temple of Pergamum.”

“Enough already,” she cried. “Leave me alone! I want to be loyal to my husband even though he does not love me and I do not love him.”

“But isn’t that foolish and self-defeating,” I asked, “which is better, that you stay with a man you do not love and lose your temper at him and make his and your life miserable, or that you allow yourself to bask in the sunshine of our love. If you do, you will have an easier time with him and not feel so guilty and bad about always yelling at him and perhaps driving him to sexual affairs.”

“I feel that you are asking me to do something wrong” she replied, “and I will not do it. And that is that. Leave me alone! Please do not protest your love for me, as I cannot return it. As far as I am concerned we need never see each other again. I will send you an e-mail every once in a while asking how you are, and that is that.”

“I don’t want an e-mail pen-pal”, I retorted, “This is a terrible humiliation and loss for me that I will never get over.” “That is too bad,” she answered, “but that is the way it has to be. So leave me alone! I do not want anything further to do with you except an occasional e-mail, and if you don’t like that, don’t answer it.” She turned her back on me and stalked off, making further conversation or importunity on my part impossible.

Slowly I walked to my room, took my cardiac pills, and prepared for bed. I felt devastated, crushed, bereft and injured beyond repair. Lying in bed in the darkened room, I felt like Herz, the 72 year old protagonist in Anita Brookner’s recent novel *Making Things Better*:

Moreover he was no longer sustained by his dreams, which had a tendency to turn menacing. The past once more made its way into his consciousness, and all the remembered faces — dead or absent, it made no difference—came back to haunt him. They had vanished into their own concerns, thought no more about him, abandoned him to a lonely end. Still he longed for a return of love, for it seemed to him that he had remained faithful. From beginning to end he had been the lover, yet love had let him down. He dreaded coming face-to-face with that thought in the watches of a sleepless night. (p.99)

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