



"You Can't Win A Bad Game"

Part II

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Chapter 6

"The moral environment"

Early definition and the first principle: appreciation

In a "moral psychology", the "moral environment", put simply, is the context in which we must be sane⁷³. In a purely physical and psychologically facile sense, this "place" must be regarded as our planet, for it is the only location which every human being inhabits. In the West, we are heard to say colloquially, "I'm in a good place right now"; or, "Mary and John have been in a bad place since their cat died". This sort of terminology⁷⁴ suggests that people readily embrace psychological analogues of physical locations as valid representations of the complex and diffuse instances and episodes of subjective experience - we might say "mind" - that pervade if not constitute all of our waking and sleeping moments (including our dreams). When we are happy, or feel sane or "together", we are apt to agree that the world is a beautiful place, that we can't get enough of living, that we are grateful for our lives and that we don't want to die. We may even concede (subject in some cases to certain arm's length or behavioural conditions) that its other human inhabitants, with whom we must share the world's fresh air, are agreeable enough for the exchanging of pleasantries. Although we all have "bad hair" days, and sometimes days that are worse, this kind of sanity is "easy" because it requires no special effort on our part to acquire. All we have to do is wait till we appreciate. It is true that we can short-circuit that waiting, "wake up and smell the coffee", but this diverts our attention; after all, the world and its incommensurable occupants can be demanding. Seemingly there is a multitude of tedious matters to which we must attend, not the least among them being where we will sleep tonight - without an empty stomach to keep us awake.

The second principle: accepting that "it's an inside job"

But there is another level and quality of appreciation of our "moral environment" that makes the difference between life as a struggle interspersed with moments of relief and pleasure (assuming we make it to a "threescore years and ten"⁷⁵ finishing line); and life as a peaceful and satisfying undertaking (for we have all undertaken it no matter whether we dwell on having chosen to be born). Another way in which we can "wake up" is to realise - as a permanently assimilated proposition - that no matter what happens or doesn't happen, and notwithstanding any and all of our expectations - when life seems rotten and we feel lousy about it, the source of our dissatisfaction lies within our personal psychology, rather than in a flawed or perverse universe (including its Creator should you believe in such)

⁷³ Pre-empting the next chapter - and as an indulgence to those readers whose personal construct of "sanity" is confined to its dearth in certain psychiatric syndromes, particularly those of a serious ("psychotic") nature and, as we know, catalogued in certain medical diagnostic systems - the usage of "sane" and "sanity" here is broad and hinged on its Greek and Latin origins where the suggestions are health and wholeness as distinct from disintegration. Everyone wants this kind of sanity: it is a universal human hunger - it is for you and your patients as well as a lay readership!

⁷⁴ "Being in a good place" is probably just hippy slang; however, there are more formal and specific versions in modern psychology, amongst which is Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's (1934-) notion of "being in the zone / groove" referring in his "positive psychology" to "flow", or complete immersion in whatever one is doing now - in the present moment.

⁷⁵ Human life expectancy, according to Psalm 90 of the Old Testament (exhorting us to count and be grateful for our days), is 70 years - or 80 if we are lucky. Although a popular expression, it is only in the King James Version of the Bible (a 17th century Church of England translation) that these 70 are stated as "threescore years and ten".

or an equally faulty, even vengeful, fellow human being. This is not to aver in the least that we are never hard done to, even in the most reprehensible ways; nor that other people weren't ever at fault in relation to what has happened (that shouldn't have) or not happened (that should have) in our lives. Certainly it is to posit, however, that it is in the very handling of such challenges that personal sanity stands, lurks invisible, remains unreachable or just fails us entirely. "Being in a good place" doesn't mean merely realising that the planet is green and blue and beautiful, but knowing that when it seems otherwise, it is we who make it ugly, and not the circumstances in which we flail about vainly. In other words, there is something about our perception that renders things awry, and it is to ourselves that we must look if we wish to put things right (for to attribute or engineer elsewhere only ever invites disappointment sooner or later).

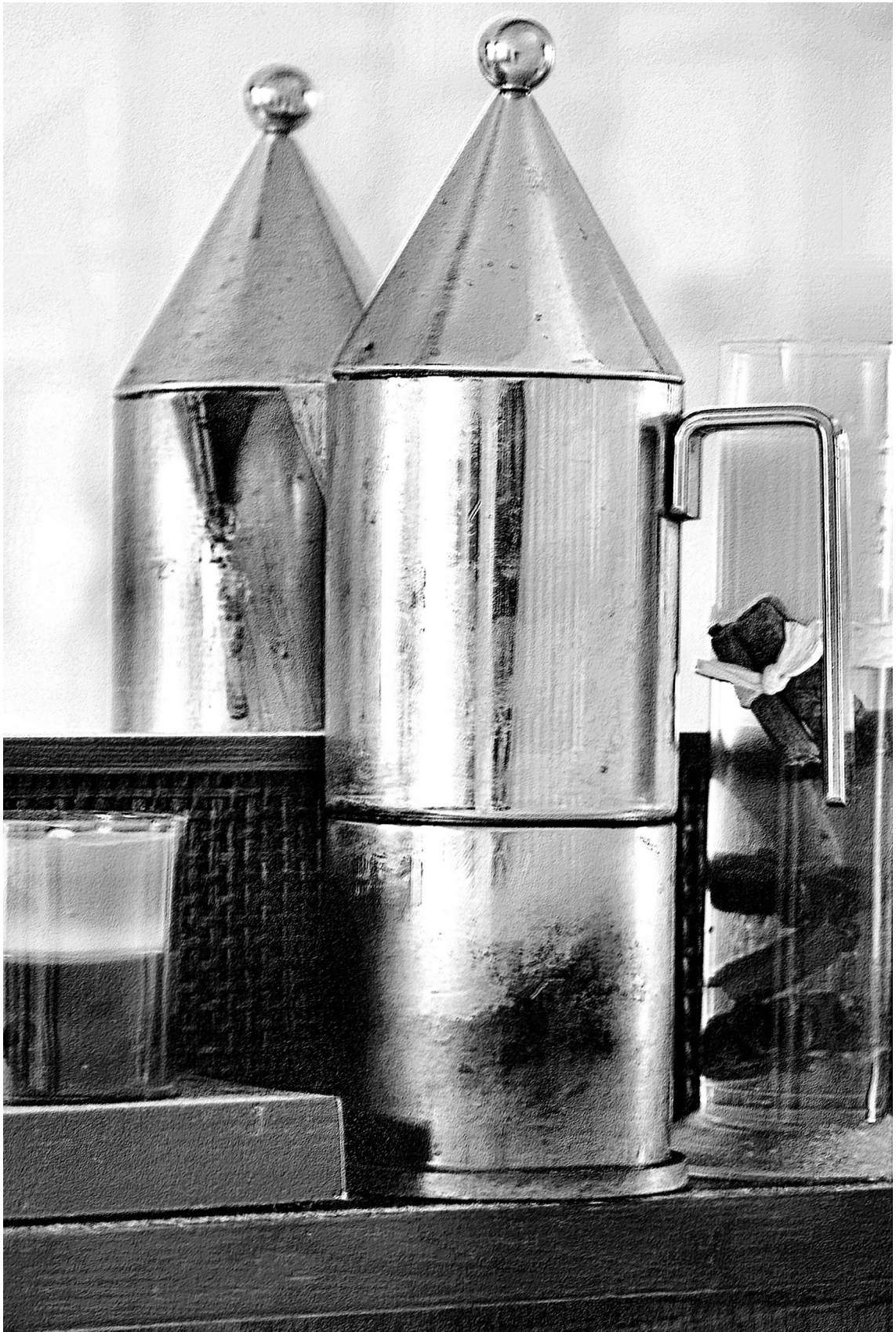
Intermezzo: interpreting the "moral environment"

Is the "moral environment" that really matters, then, simply our "selves" (as far as we can perceive our "selves"), or the realm of subjective experience or "inner world" that we also all inhabit? No. It is more than that, because that realm is continually marked out and shaped and coloured by the way we process what we perceive. This is what makes us what we are and who we will become. Whether we start out with a core "mind" or soul - or neither but an Aristotlean blank slate - or don't start out at all but are always reincarnated - will be a very interesting concern indeed to at least some of us, and we may arrive in person at a more settled or even different position on the question in the course of developing our own "moral psychology". Meanwhile, and whichever our starting point (but shall we agree birth or conception at the earliest), how we array all that we perceive in our "minds", and the manner in which we call upon those records later in the same or on another day, has everything to do with whether we tiptoe merrily through life's tulips⁷⁶ as it were, or jump off bridges or out of windows, or somehow survive - crying with ulterior, silent and futile pleas of, "Help Me..." to our fellow human beings, thereby creating trails of relationship and other wreckage through the course of unanchored and undisciplined lives. Each microcosmic and larger instance of our interpreting the "moral environment" represents a significant investment in - or withdrawal from - our sanity reserves.

The third principle: trusting the process

The third level of psychological responsiveness that we may bring to bear on our "moral environment" is a rather more mysterious and elusive one, but actually no less simple or accessible. To recap: suppose on an average day we forgot to be attentive - but in a sudden moment of clarity took in a view, or pondered with curiosity an example of non-human animal behaviour, or wondered what another person was really feeling - then, we have woken up to the coffee pot and obtained a little more of life. (Did we notice how much return we got on the effort and how scientifically measurable that return was?) Suppose on a difficult day we said to ourselves, "Ah well, that misfortune was down to me I guess, and I can let it go at that"; now, how much easier was it to obtain the first appreciation! (Did we realise quite how much the resentment of our troubles inhibited our capacity for free and easy living?) And now third, the more we became willing to awaken in these first two ways, the more the course of our lives seemed actually and reliably to improve. (Was this a trick of perception or some other enigmatic but ludicrously apparent reality?) Old dogs learn new tricks, but some things are easier said than done!

⁷⁶ The catchy and innocently romantic (now iconic) *Tiptoe Through The Tulips*, written by Joe Burke (1884-1950) and Al Durbin (1891-1945), was performed to appreciative audiences during the 1920s by Nick Lucas (1897-1982) in *Gold Diggers Of Broadway*.



"Wake Up And Smell The Coffee": Easier said than done?

Definition of the "moral environment"

For the sake of clarity and expansion of the argument, a working definition of the "moral environment" seems apposite and timely here. As far as the present *Plea For Sanity in Nine Seahorses* is concerned, the "moral environment" comprises the various "worlds" that all of us each inhabits: the "external worlds" of planet, nation, family and the various communities in which we elect to belong, and with which we engage - from work environments to social organisations to religious and spiritual fellowships, all of which are interpreted and processed from cradle to grave by our "minds" which certainly contain records of experience in traces whose exact natures are very far indeed from precisely understood in epistemological terms, but which we know mostly as the "inner world" of subjective experience ... and it is the quality of that subjective experience that determines how others regard and how we ourselves experience and adjudge our sanity.

Recap of our position on "mind" and a definition of "conscience"

Our approach to personal sanity up to this point co-opted "mind" carefully, then recognised a rudimentary "conscience" ecumenically, and now we have introduced the "moral environment". We sidestepped the "mind-body problem" as history has precipitated it for reasons threaded through Part I, but we formed a definition of "conscience" because we need it for a "moral psychology". At the climax of Part I (a résumé of the modern discipline of psychology as it pertains to the "human condition"), and having considered alternative ways of looking at the concept of conscience from diverse positions in (chiefly) religion, philosophy and psychology - always seeking and having found at least some common ground - a pragmatic, working definition of "conscience" for a "moral psychology" was proposed:

a quiet strain, having the capacity to become psychologically "noisy", which has the effect of pressure to settle upon one or more beliefs, attitudes, intentions or behaviours (including not doing certain things as well as doing them) and which is experienced subjectively as psychological conflict - usually mild, but potentially deadly

Recap of questions posed by "conscience" in a "moral psychology"

Part I (Chapter 5) also indicated the variety of sanity-relevant questions this form of definition or model generates:

"Does this tension that is conscience as we have just depicted it, along with any other psychological tensions that we may care to recognise, engender a kind of subjectively-experienced 'emptiness' which, as fallible human beings, we are prone to fill with all kinds of distractions, some of which are harmful to ourselves and others?" ... "What is the nature of this emptiness?"; "Does everyone experience it?"; "Under what circumstances are folks more or less likely to experience it?"; "Why do folks pursue certain rather than other distractions?"; "Do we have the capacity to observe it, evaluate it, effect or adopt alternative behavioural courses directed at filling or otherwise compensating for it?"; "Is there a moral quality to any such processes?"; "Can the 'nag' of conscience be disregarded, resisted, or modified by personal will or psychological therapy?"; "Can 'self' change 'self'?" and ... "Why are there psychotherapists?"

Perseverance in the "moral environment"

Provisionally, it is in the perseverance of an "Accountable Self" in the "moral environment" that sanity stands or falls. By the close of Chapters 9 and 10 we shall have answered all of these questions systematically. Some of our standpoints will have been presented formally; nevertheless, it is in the acquisition and maintenance of a personal "moral psychology" that unstealable understanding resides.

The force of the "moral environment"

Now, what aspects of the "moral environment" lend force to this strain or pressure that can have such life-enhancing or deadly consequences depending on how we settle upon things? Among them can be counted: the "weight of human history"; the times in which we live (aka the *Zeitgeist*⁷⁷); the circumstances in which we grew up as infants and children including our families (or whatever we had that was nearest to such), and what we have done with our lives as sentient⁷⁸ adults (in the personal narrative we ever create). Contiguous are the psychological structures and processes we possess and employ because we are instances of our species (a society, as it were, with no conditions for membership as long as we draw breath). Then there are also the variations amongst us described in terms of "temperament", "personality", or "individual differences" although - as we have seen in Chapter 3 - the best models are actually primitive and questionably relevant to any underlying and universal faculties.

The "weight of human history"

The "weight of human history" creates pressure on us as individuals in the here and now because, wherever in the world we reside, there are seen and unseen, spoken and unspoken, and formal and informal laws, customs, values, mores and traditions with which we are expected to comply. These are always eruptions of deep history; i.e., the evolution of culture. To appreciate the variety that abounds demands voyage, experience and understanding. Seasoned travellers may become more and more inured to "culture shock", but it is a very real phenomenon to anyone who has experienced it. We take our indigenous culture for granted. The impact of another is surprisingly great. We scuttle for cover. Perhaps those who ever successively navigated profound culture shock (compared with those who hadn't) somehow overcame an inner resistance⁷⁹. Do we find it "natural" to comply with every one of these expectations wherever we are? To the extent that we don't, pressures of some kind on our "consciences" are imparted.

Lateral thinking and the unravelling of history

One way in which the diversity and richness of such variations in culture can be appreciated is to conjure by imagination any number of "parallel universes" that one can create, contemplating how things could have been in the past, and might be today. Far from mere idle or fantastic indulgence, this kind of recreation is the very stuff of growth and progression at the levels of both human individuals⁸⁰ and the various collective entities that wax and wane like the moon: nations, monarchs, governments, political factions, overarching civic regulators, commercial and other organisations with a specific motive, each of which combines with a superfluity of responses from individuals - and groups of people with whom they are intimately connected, including families - within pyramids of rich relationship.

⁷⁷ referring to the broad culture of an identifiable place and time in human history (its news, values, arts, achievements etc - probably best regarded as what comes to mind in the sense of nostalgia). It translates from German as "Spirit of the Times".

⁷⁸ "Sentient" here just means consciously thinking and feeling; with no apology for any suggestion of lifecycle acceleration. The capacity of non-human animals to report their subjective experiences to our own species has already been considered in Part I.

⁷⁹ What is the psychological nature of such resistance? Under what circumstances and in what manner might its hindering quality be dissipated or dissolved? What are the moral implications of such processes? These questions are like - and may be added by way of adjunct - to the ones about which we have already reminded ourselves in this Chapter.

⁸⁰ In *Walden; Or, Life In The Woods* Thoreau concluded, "I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." (*Walden; Or, Life In The Woods*, 1854, "Conclusion")



"War Memorial": Supermarine Spitfire Mk IX
near Newquay Airport (was RAF Saint Mawgan), Cornwall

Vignettes from seven continents

One doesn't need to traverse much of history, or dig too deeply, to unearth exemplars. A continent-wise set of notables from recent times follows. Each of these individuals somehow survived the pressure of hierarchical relationship - their personal sanity having been tested, but having remained intact or otherwise got restored. No recognition, approval or disapproval of their political or other views, positions or causes are intended or relevant: the brief summaries are presented only to illustrate the relationship between individual "conscience" as it has been defined herein and the pressure of human history. Although these figures are - for the most part - widely admired, the vast majority of courageous cases in point, perhaps even the most perfect instances, like The Unknown Soldier⁸¹, remain utterly unsung.

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In North America, Joan Chandos Baez (1941-) was born in New York to a Mexican father and Scottish mother (she resides with her mother in Woodhouse, CA). Religiously mongrel, her immediate ancestors between them having backgrounds in or dedications towards Scottish Episcopal Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and Methodism, Baez herself still engages with Quakerism. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968, with whom she developed a friendship) Baez has campaigned courageously, unswervingly and sometimes ferociously for pacifism, non-violence, abolition of the death penalty, anti-war positions (including Iraq), tolerance of and equal rights for folks of diverse sexuality, various other civil rights including anti-racism, employment rights and free speech. Remaining party-apolitical herself until publicly endorsing Barack Obama in 2008 (backing him on the basis of his capacity to help the poor), she has been peculiarly outspoken about abuses of human rights right across the political spectrum, having experienced at various times surveillance and death threats especially during visits to South America in the early 1980s. Baez is reputed to regard her social causes at least as significant personally as her track record in folk music. The young age at which Baez first took a stand for what she believed in and the doggedness with which she has maintained her dedication to such a wide variety of causes aligned with the general theme of human equality, suggest that she didn't have to work too hard at discovering who she was. Her campaigning right across the board was not underpinned by powerful allies; rather, like-minded friends. Although she has had a somewhat chequered romantic life, she seems secure and happy. Her domestic arrangements are designed to facilitate her appreciation of nature.

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In South America, María Eva Duarte de Perón (aka Evita or "Little Eva") died from undetected cervical cancer at age only 33 in 1952. She was born out of wedlock and in such obscurity that her surname is uncertain. She was probably the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy man (Juan Darte) and a woman (Juana Ibarguren) with whom he had an additional family but left without financial support. Evita's baptismal certificate (as "Eva María Ibarguren") records birth in 1919; however, the birth certificate prepared immediately prior to marriage to President Juan Perón (1895-1974) of Argentina (as his second wife) records birth in 1922. She had travelled to Buenos Aires from the country in 1934 anticipating fortune as an actress. She met Perón in 1944 and married him a year later. As Argentina's First Lady, she won the hearts and minds of the nation, campaigning for charitable causes, employment rights via the Perónist trades unions and - having formed an entirely female political party - women's rights including suffrage and the availability of divorce. Her candidature for Vice-Presidency in 1932 was thwarted by poor health but also by resistance from the military and the social elite, an establishment loathing she had endured over and over as the loyal wife of the President.

⁸¹ There are many usages of the expression "The Unknown Soldier" in literature and the arts; however, most often "The Unknown Soldier" refers to any grave or memorial (typically inscribed "Known To God") dedicated to unnamed individuals lost in war - especially the First World (or "Great") War in which many millions died - including swathes of boys (not men) who fought each other in horrendous battlefield conditions.

There are suggestions of personal corruption in the record, possibly involving the diversion of monies associated with her enormous Foundation for which she undoubtedly worked tirelessly, and ulterior association with General Franco in Fascist Spain not long after the Second World War. On that European tour she was also received well in France, but less warmly in Rome. The British Royal Family would not receive her at all. Her visit to Switzerland was a disaster and precipitated her decision to head for home. Reports of her life suggest a dedication to the cause of the impoverished, unfortunate and oppressed that was not merely extraordinary, even fanatical, but somehow mystical. She is still known as "SpiritualLeader Of The Nation".

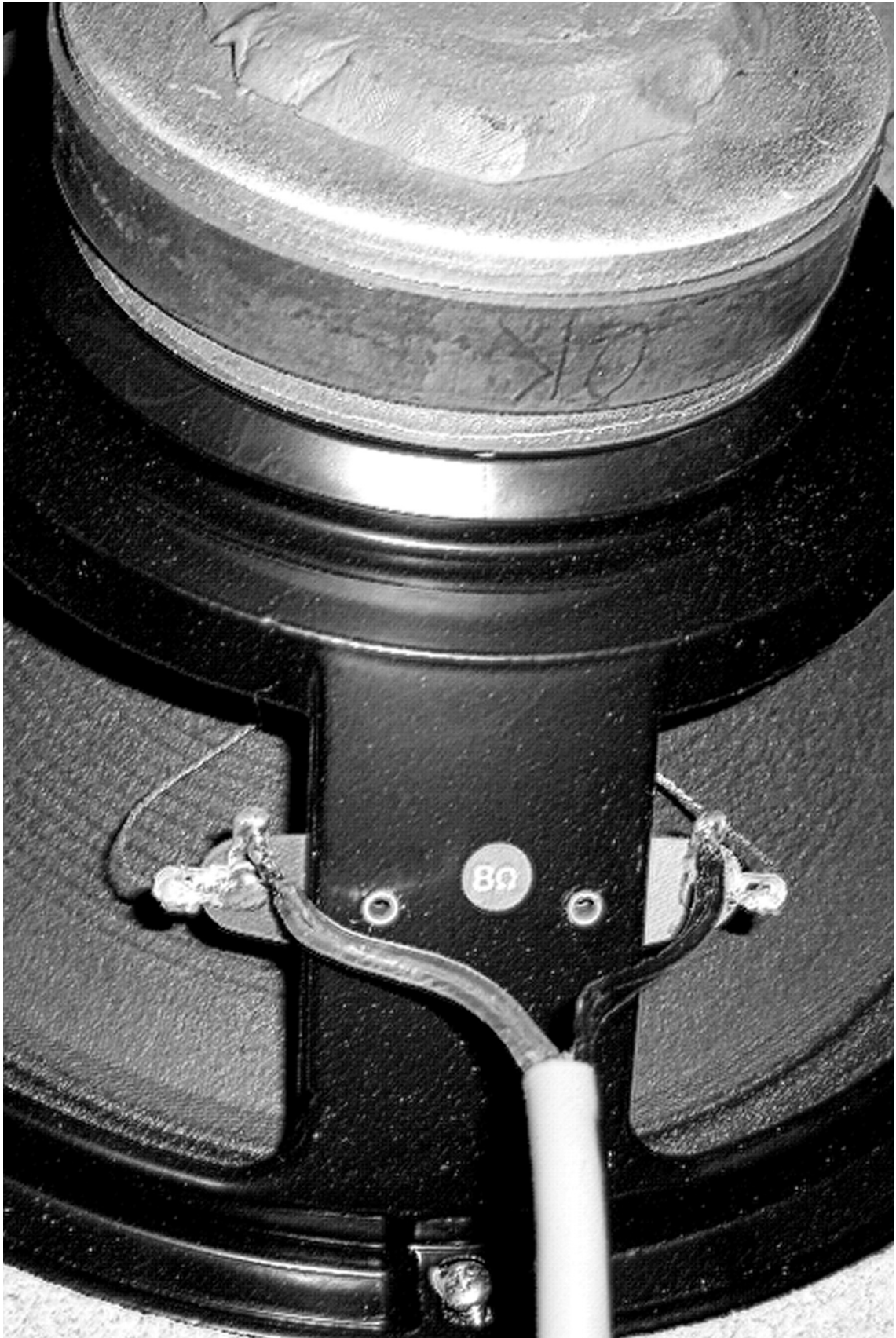
In Europe, Terry Waite (1939-), the son of a British policeman, seemed to have developed his Christian instincts somewhat independently of parental influence. From his early adult years he enjoyed a steady, solid series of posts in the Anglican Church - including several positions overseas - a great deal of travel and an enviable record in hostage rescue having negotiated: the release of Anglican Priests in Iran in 1980; British hostages in Colonel Gaddafi's Libya in 1984; moreover, having developed working relationships in the Lebanon from about 1985. By January 1987 he was "Special Envoy" to the Archbishop of Canterbury, then Dr Robert Runcie, but was *Taken On Trust*⁸² in January 1987 in breach of prior agreement with the Islamic Jihad Organisation which had promised a safe passage to visit sick hostages. Waite was held for nearly five years, of which four were in solitary confinement. The subjective experience of that episode of detention is conveyed powerfully in his own writings - especially the autobiographical *Taken On Trust*. His experiences of separation, cultural severance, loneliness, beckoning hopelessness - the psychology of his survival of the entire ordeal - combined with his highly personable and affable nature, have made him an eminently impressive speaker.

The Foreword to *Taken On Trust* reads:

During my long years of solitary confinement in Beirut ... I 'wrote' in my imagination ... I always managed to return to my story and thus was able to preserve my sanity and identity ... Now I can see that past, present and future are carried in the experience of the moment ... We all suffer ... suffering need not destroy; it can be creative ... I would wish that for my captors ... If you read this book as a captive, take heart. Your spirit can never be chained.

In Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918-), having descended awkwardly from African nobility, developed political interests rather early in life. He qualified in law eventually, providing subsidised services to the otherwise legally disenfranchised in South Africa's apartheid system (i.e., segregation and other discrimination against black people). From about 1948, and the election victory of the Afrikaner National Party, he fought apartheid tooth and nail, rising to lead the armed wing (MK) of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1961. He was convicted of sabotage, and imprisoned from 1963 until 1990, many of those years having been spent in solitary confinement on Robben Island. His release came about because his reputation remained alive, carried by numerous individuals who remained dedicated to the cause of equality in South Africa. On his release, Mandela defended the use of violence as a last resort against violence, maintaining that the conditions for such violence still prevailed. He was, nevertheless, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. South Africa's first truly multi-racial elections took place in 1994 and Mandela (as Leader of the ANC) became President by a clear majority, remaining President until 1999. Mandela insisted on conceding to the post-apartheid "Truth And Reconciliation Commission" that the MK had violated human rights itself during the anti-apartheid struggle. Nelson Mandela has been married three times altogether. He was reconciled with his second wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (née Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela, 1936-), on release in 1990 but they divorced eventually in 1996. Mandela, reportedly, began his autobiography called *Long Walk To Freedom* whilst still in prison.

⁸² *Taken On Trust* is a Terry Waite autobiography (1993, Hodder & Stoughton: London)



"Impressive Speaker": A vintage woofer from the 1980s which, pending redemption, remains connected to its power supply ... (this one, from a Snell AIII, has disintegrated foam surrounds)

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In Russia, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev (1931-) was the last President of the Soviet Union until its (economic) demise in 1991. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990 for his contribution to the end of the "Cold War". A peasant by birth, he graduated in law in Moscow, rising rapidly through the Communist Party under the patronage of Mikhail Suslov, then joining the Politburo itself as its youngest member in 1985 at age 54. He was elected its General Secretary almost immediately after the death of his predecessor (Konstantin Chernenko who, like his own predecessor Yuri Andropov had held office for only a short time before dying; accordingly, the need for a younger leader had become pressing after the deaths of three Soviet leaders - including Leonid Brezhnev - within about two years). A few Russian words suddenly came into common use in the West, among them, *glasnost* - meaning "openness" - and *perestroika* - meaning "reconstruction". Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, rather uncharacteristically expressed publicly her confidence that she could "do business" with Gorbachev. Although Gorbachev's reforms could only have taken the stagnant Soviet economy to a better place, subjectively and privately he must have felt the weight of the future of Communism on his shoulders as the Soviet Union's traditions - and then entire political integrity - started to crumble during his leadership. He maintained the confidence of the Communist Party nevertheless - in 1989 becoming President of the Soviet Union (a new executive post) in the first elections in Russia since 1917. Soviet Communism, indeed, declined terminally in 1989 as numerous (predominantly peaceful) counterrevolutions were effected across Eastern Europe - after Gorbachev made it clear that any (hypothetical) Soviet interventions would be "inadmissible". The process culminated in the breaching of the Berlin Wall from within the GDR (German Democratic Republic) on 9th November 1989. By 26th December 1991, the Soviet Union was finished.

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In Asia, more particularly Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi (1945-) as leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party won by an unequivocal majority a 1990 general election called by the incumbent military junta. She was placed under house arrest just prior to its occurrence, and has never taken office having been incarcerated for many of the intervening years. She barely saw her British husband (Dr Michael Aris who died of prostate cancer in 1999) whilst he was alive as he was refused entry visas by the Burmese authorities and Suu Kyi would not leave Burma (during periods between arrest) suspecting that she would never obtain readmission to the country. Her children by Aris live in the United Kingdom (where she pursued her university studies) and she has barely seen them during their mutual separation. In 1991 (whilst under arrest) Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, her two sons accepting it on her behalf. A committed Buddhist and advocate of Gandhian non-violence, she is known for remonstrating that it is not power that corrupts, but fear: the fear of those in power that they will lose it, and fear of the scourge of power by those who are subject to it. Suu Kyi was tried jointly with an American man of obscure motives (John Yettaw) for his trespass onto her property in 2009. The extra sentencing she received rendered her unavailable to run in the November 2010 election, only days after which she was released once more (... as *Nine Seahorses* goes to press).

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In Australia, Neville Thomas Bonner (1922-1999) was the first indigenous Australian to be elected to that country's Parliament. From impoverished beginnings as an uneducated farm worker who never knew his father, his inclination to stand ground for the rights of indigenous Australians combined with a conservative political bent rocketed him through a variety of organisations - culminating with his being elected to Parliament in his own right (as distinct from representing a franchised organisation) from 1972. He belonged to the Liberal Party from 1971 to 1983 after which he stood as an Independent. He will be remembered in history most for the obvious political first. What resonates here is his apparent resistance (if ever it were called upon) against the conformity that might have made way for personal ambitions; rather, he remained true to his "natural" self trusting in providence - just what he seems to have shared most with our other six continental exemplars.

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Heroism in human history and Tolstoy's standard

These biographic accounts, depending on one's personal stance, may seem "heroic", and one might be tempted to regard these people as fundamentally significant figures in the shaping of modern history - even, perhaps, in the mould of the Egyptian Pharaohs⁸³, or Genghis Khan (1162-1227)⁸⁴, or Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon I, 1769-1821)⁸⁵; however, this presents one or more new polarities. Whereas Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) who, having written a passionate account of the French Revolution, developed a "hero" theory of history - holding that things today are very much as they are because of the measurable achievements of "Great Men" - Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) transposed horse and cart, or the cart and the horse, arguing that significant historical figures are, conversely, products of their times (equivalent to what was introduced earlier as the *Zeitgeist*). Inexorably and continually, the *Zeitgeist* is enmeshed with the "weight of human history" in that the former is, during any given episode of history, the natural culmination in time of the latter. Globally, there are many *Zeitgeists*, perhaps most easily envisaged as an evolving one per nation (although we may say just as plausibly per continent or family): the *Zeitgeist* is an (overlapping) unit of culture, so to speak. In the sense that the *Zeitgeist* is intangible, and not of itself material, it is like "mind" and it is like the "meme": you can't see one, but you certainly know about it. Of course it is beyond discussion that the "heroines" and "heroes" we have contemplated emerged (into global consciousness) and prevailed (psychologically and politically) in the context of their own times. Once again, whether one regards them as "hero" or "anti-hero" depends on where one stands personally on certain matters. What separates our chosen continent-wise characters from Khan, Bonaparte, and most leaders in history as it is recorded (including much of all religious scripture) is their promotion of peace and vilification of violence. Whether each matches Tolstoy's standard⁸⁶, the reader may decide:

Even if you are told that all this is necessary for the maintenance of the existing order of things ... pauperism, famines, prisons, gallows, armies, and wars ... that still greater disaster would ensue if this organization were destroyed; all that is said only by those who profit by this organization, while those who suffer from it - and they are ten times as numerous - think and say quite the contrary. And at the bottom of your heart you know yourself that it is not true, that the existing organization ... must inevitably be reconstructed on new principles, and that ... there is no obligation upon you to sacrifice your sentiments of humanity to support it.

⁸³ The Pharaohs of ancient Egypt are significant for many reasons, amongst which is their pre-eminence as iconoclastic rulers over several thousand years (approximately 3150 BC to the Roman invasion of 31 BC) - during the formation of civilisation *per se*.

⁸⁴ Founder of the largest unbroken empire in human history, Genghis Khan is associated with "hell-fire" invasions stemming from North-East Asia into Central Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as the promotion of religious tolerance within his territories! The Mongol Empire had been redrawn into smaller parts, including old China, by about 1294.

⁸⁵ Attributed to ingenious military accomplishments by historians, Napoleon Bonaparte established himself by *coup d'état* as First Consul and then Emperor of post-Revolution France, thence master of continental Europe until the invasion of Russia in 1812.

⁸⁶ Penned by Lev (Leo) Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910), who was more in favour of Spencer's view of history than Carlyle's, this quotation is from *The Kingdom Of God Is Within You* (1894, Bison Books: London, 1984, p.363). Tolstoy and Mohandas (Mohatma) Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) were of one mind as far as violence was concerned, both of them staunchly resolute that a human being had to be "intoxicated" or "hypnotised" - probably by corruption of power, or evil - to kill another human being. Tolstoy is known also for fiction in *War And Peace* (1865-1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877).

Tolstoy's standard as provocation

Tolstoy's provocation represents as perfect a model as it is possible to imagine of staunch personal integrity in the "moral environment" whether or not one is an apologist for violence even if conditionally (like Mandela). There is an existing "order" that affects each of us. We know it through first hand familiarity with our respective and overlapping *Zeitgeists*. The formation of that familiarity in our "minds" and how we respond to it (what we do, don't do, and how we otherwise process and regard it), together with the consequences of that response for ourselves and for others, are "moral psychology".

All of us are shaped by, and are now shaping history

Now, our seven exemplars: Are they products of history, or shapers of history? Of course they are both. We all are. In every generation there must be countless new "heroes" and "heroines" willing to stand up counted on the grounds of some controversy or another in relation to which it might seem "easier" to say nothing - thereby expending no effort - and attracting no unwanted attention. Then again, perhaps these people simply number among those who somehow discerned their course, accepting and persevering with what they had to do. How many others spend their lives waiting vainly upon a purpose or vocation?

Lardy stagnation

That feeling of drift and despondency (versus direction and purpose) seemingly lies like solidified lard on the top of a jug of meat fat. The richness and juiciness of the lives that we once knew as carefree infants, children and young adults⁸⁷, stagnates suffocated and stifled underneath, and we can't find any way - under our own auspices - to warm ourselves enough to scrape off the crud, stir things up and get going again. All that others can see of us is our pasty white surface utterly lacking in sparkle, character or appeal. We feel as thick, stupid and unappetising as we seem. Folks pass us by. We have lost the confidence of spontaneity. We find ourselves churning quietly - and then, at times, painfully and noisily - in a "descending vicious spiral" of isolation, loneliness and inferiority. This "emptiness" is ever more demoralising until it overtakes us on our blind side (no-one told us about that ...), and we seek help if we are still standing.

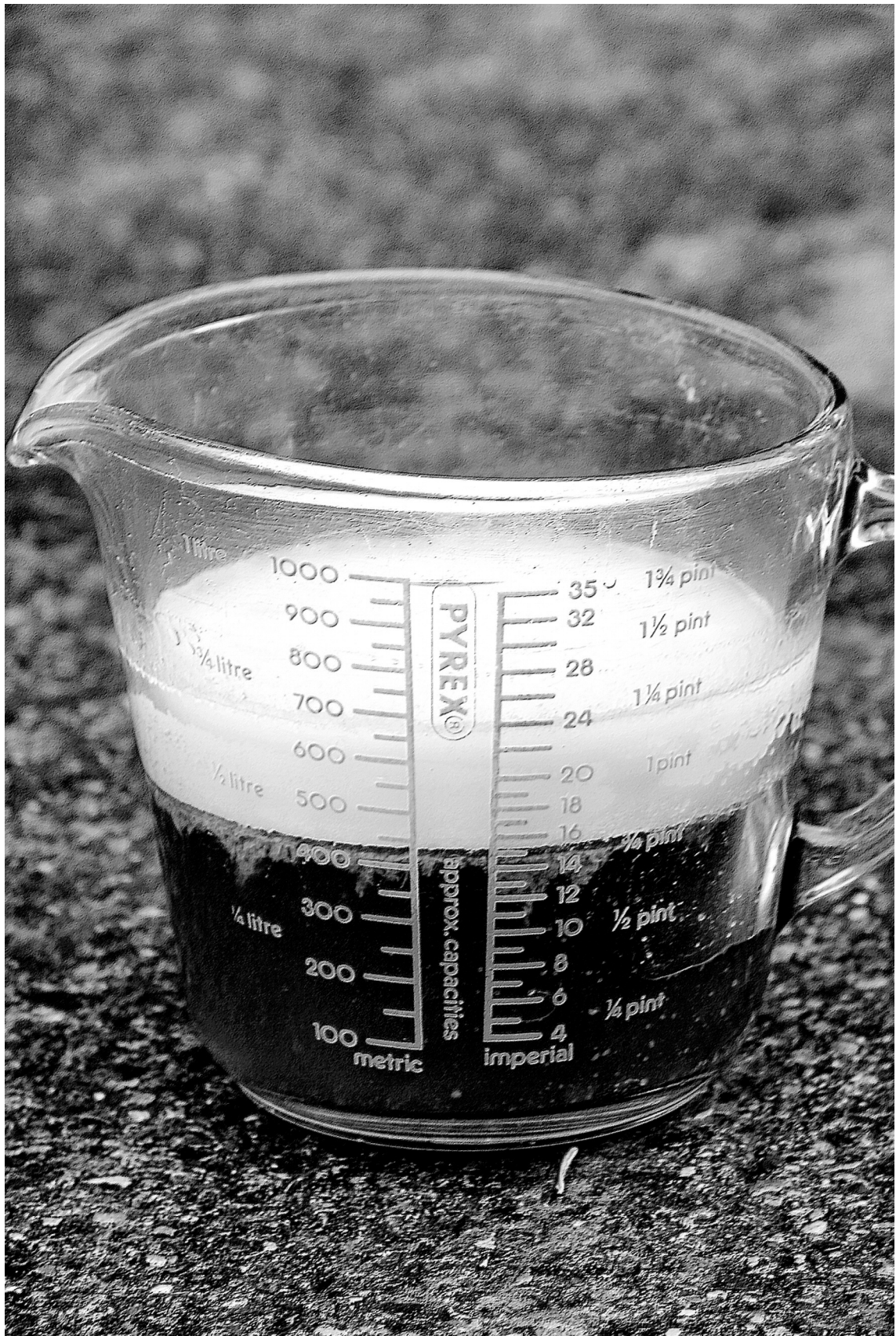
Dreadful infection

Dreadfully, according to ubiquitous literary and statistical sources, such a phenomenon is happening at an increasing rate and is more and more common at a younger age in most Western nations. It is probably permeating the so-called developing nations and third world - even if those places have their own toxic difficulties to redress as many are taken over eventually by democracies⁸⁸. In "developed" nations the foundation for personal values has shifted from obedient religion⁸⁹, fence-sitting agnosticism and atheistic "enlightenment" as variations on one dimension; to deification of cash, celebrity-worship and spiritual ennui on another. Alongside, we have been visited by the descent of old vices taking form amongst us in deadly ways. If this seems to you an exaggeration, consider getting out more - or visiting your extended family soon. In recent decades, alcohol problems have exploded, and the trajectory is still rising. Illicit drugs problems accelerated more recently, but the same principles apply. Gambling is just starting out, officially encouraged by tax-hungry governments.

⁸⁷ assuming we luckily enjoyed early lives unspoilt by existential or any other despair

⁸⁸ This is neither to endorse nor to denigrate democracy nor any of its alternatives - mooted or unmooted; such reflections are outside the scope of the present argument.

⁸⁹ The received education in the established Church is catechistic, meaning it is authoritative and imparted. Tolstoy preferred Christian inspiration by another route.



"Jug Of Meat Fat"

Rolling stones and runaways

The impact of such trends in the "moral environment", and the ways people are responding to them, shouldn't be underestimated - for in social environments as in personal lives, rolling stones gather moss. In addiction circles, the unfinished business of a declining life is often termed "the yets"⁹⁰. An interrupted tragic social trajectory is better than an ignored one, and that is especially true for younger people because they have a greater stake in what is going on than everybody else on the grounds that they must endure more years of it. For reasons that may remain elusive to even the family, friends and educationalists in a teenager's life, some young people begin to drift away from the paths proffered by society (qualifications, training, routes into employment, responsible single or family life) turning to distractions (truancy, alcohol and drugs, dependent relationships) that look like recipes for unmitigated misery (police attention, the courts, prisons, hospitals and poor living conditions) and often become just that - not just for the distracted - but for those in their social vicinity - all those most loved and loving too.

Stand up if you sold out

Of course, this is not an entirely new phenomenon, but youth culture travels on sands shifting as quickly as time itself. Politicians and policymakers at least one and perhaps even three generations removed from the problem can be caught discussing whether "binge-drinking" is really a new phenomenon on consultancy fees more reminiscent of a final salary pension than a Job Seekers Allowance. Of course it is - but not for reasons that you imagine (else you would apply another remedy). Times are different. They are not the same as when you were young. Bob Dylan (1941-) told you⁹¹ during your own salad days. You felt taken seriously, and you felt liberated. But the liberation didn't last, because it wasn't real. It certainly wasn't sustainable, even if it felt real. Look at the evidence. It was an illusion. You got tangled in the same trap as your career-bound predecessors, lured by the same ageless bait (money and status). A young person may drink or drug today as much to quench a thirst for fun as an "emptiness" entirely characteristic of his or her own place in space and time - their own "moral environment". We shall come eventually to the application of an "Accountable Self" in a personal "moral psychology" as an expression of social and civic responsibility. In the meantime, what shall we all make of our "moral environment"? For example, upon whom does or should responsibility fall in the hypothetical situation where a teenager incarcerated for an acquisitive offence (burglary) petitions successfully for personal injury or similar redress against a treatment system designed, implemented and funded by a government, arising out of failure to administer adequate substitute medication (more drugs - titrate yourself - but these have a longer half-life, keep you quiet and help you back on your feet - maybe - eventually) in time to head off the discomfort of withdrawal symptoms in the new temporary residence, the youth's prison cell? Having identified the respective parties in the scenario, including the ones behind the scenes such as the offender's family and the entire criminal justice system, one is compelled, unless beset by prejudice and knee-jerks, to ask in relation to each assailed party: "Why so?" and "How so?"⁹²

⁹⁰ Whether or not one is convinced by "disease" models of such problems (and there are plenty of worthwhile arguments either way), they are "progressive" in the sense that, once they have set in, as long as a person continues to "use" their "drug of choice" (alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, chocolate, shopping) life deteriorates mercilessly against any meaningful criteria one chooses (health, finance, relationships, sanity).

⁹¹ *The Times They Are A-Changin'* is Track 1 on Side 1 of the eponymous 1964 album.

⁹² The reader may care to revisit this scenario and its responsibility test(s) later.

Doing what you really want to do

Whilst there are significant ethical and practical implications of custodial sentences (because many incarcerated young people have experienced significant deprivation and poverty, a difficult family life, substance misuse and mental health difficulties; and because some young people kill themselves in custody; and because young people learn new tricks from old lags etc), a "moral psychology" is not directly concerned with whether it is "right" or "wrong" to lock up young people (whatever thresholds one might set for seriousness of offence, circumstantial culpability and so on)⁹³. The central point so far as a "moral psychology" is concerned is the discrepancy between what young people say they want for themselves and what they actually do. In the UK there are thousands of young people serving custodial sentences including a significant number of children (under 18s); some of whom, because of resource problems, may be incarcerated with adults. The precise figures vary according to source and date - but the drift is that some 70-90% of young people leaving custody say that they do not want to re-offend, but a significant majority do. This gap, whatever its percentage or scale in reality (with hindsight in a "moral environment" defined in an offender's difficult existence by whether they end up back in the Courts) represents precisely the scope for "moral psychology" to endow its beneficence to young lives. Whom amongst us would not wish all criminal justice short-circuited, rendered to oblivion, because nobody had recourse to it any longer?

Collective responsibility in proportion

Should young people (or anybody else for that matter) be left to establish a "moral psychology" under their own auspices and resources however scant those might be at a time of special need? Can "self" heal "self"? Has it done so successfully in history to date? If it has, in whom has it done so, what was their secret, and may we share it? What is obstructing that process happening now? If something else is called for, would we recognise it if it presented itself? Does society have a role to play? This is just where the line between "moral psychology" and "moral agenda" will ever be most blurred. Not many of us would discount entirely the role of the family (howsoever defined or conceptualised but we are talking for the main part about parents) in the child's psychological development, and some would let it remain there to venture nowhere else. Still others prefer to exercise a "social conscience" and we may - in deference to political tradition - envisage a dimension from zero involvement of government or any social agency (*laissez faire*) on the one hand to the formal provision of psychological safety nets - even compulsory education and community service - on the other. Putting aside other political (including economic) arguments for a moment, the balance to be struck is one that takes account simultaneously of the social drift that we all know about⁹⁴ and the requirement to promote psychological autonomy for - as we shall see if we don't know already - there is no authentic independence without it. Perhaps the ideal scenario is one in which folks have found a way to help each other of their mutual appreciation of honest need and harmonious co-operation - to such an extent that argument about government involvement becomes irrelevant.

⁹³ Such a judgement would establish a moral agenda, whereas we have made it clear that in a "moral psychology" each person establishes their own identity, with its various positions and values, drawing then on the "natural" source of courage that accompanies discovery of the "authentic" self in order to live out a personally meaningful life.

⁹⁴ Without wishing to labour a point, sociologists (correctly) have been bewailing accelerating social disintegration ever since they got their feet under university desks. Problems of disaffection and alienation are very much with us and burgeoning at an armchair-rocking rate. A plethora of data support the general point that humans prefer healthy mutual engagement to isolation. This is discussed fully in Chapter 8.



"Pig Philosophy"
Gyrwe Anglo-Saxon Demonstration Farm, Bede's World, Jarrow

Probing between polarities for joy

The notion that collective experience and wellbeing (as opposed to religious authority whether in ecclesiastical law or "natural law"⁹⁵) should constitute the proper basis for morality in society effervesced during the Enlightenment in the "utilitarianism" of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). "Happiness for the greatest number" was promoted over the interests of the individual wherever conflict arose; however, anchoring morality in "happiness" was interpreted by the refined John Stuart Mill as "a doctrine worthy only of swine"⁹⁶ unless it took account of "higher" (or "morally elevated") pleasures. For Thomas Carlyle, all utilitarianism is "pig philosophy"⁹⁷ on the grounds that mere pleasure and pain (no matter how noble) inform its thesis. Well then, to what extent has our experience of "obedient religion, fence-sitting agnosticism and atheistic 'enlightenment' as variations on one dimension; to deification of cash, celebrity-worship and spiritual ennui on another" over past centuries set us upon firmer⁹⁸ moral ground? Apparently, it has not. Neither dogma nor hedonism has precipitated favourable moral trajectory - whether we go by contemporary mental health and social statistics - or just what we see around us. As ever - we must search between polarities for joy.

Venturing "headshrunk" into psychotherapy

The ways in which we shape our own "minds" - our personalities and value systems, the foundations of all our day-to-day behaviour - or the ways in which they are shaped (depending on whether the relevant factors and processes are passive rather than active), is discussed throughout this volume hither and thither (especially as we proceed towards the close of Part II in Chapters 8, 9 and 10). In Part I, we had to determine our position on "mind" in deference to philosophical tradition, and practically all of serious 20th century psychology. The very discussion illustrated how mightily (and severely) mainstream human history has shaped our thinking in matters psychological today; in particular, the Scientific Revolution grips the moral *Zeitgeist*. The argument for a "moral psychology" could not have proceeded beyond that impedance without nailing down a consensus on "conscience" and demonstrating the significance of the "moral environment". We are about to go "headshrunk" into a detailed consideration of sanity and psychological helping as it has ventured out into the 21st century; absolutely, as with psychology itself, a product of its own history.

Visiting smaller "worlds" . . .

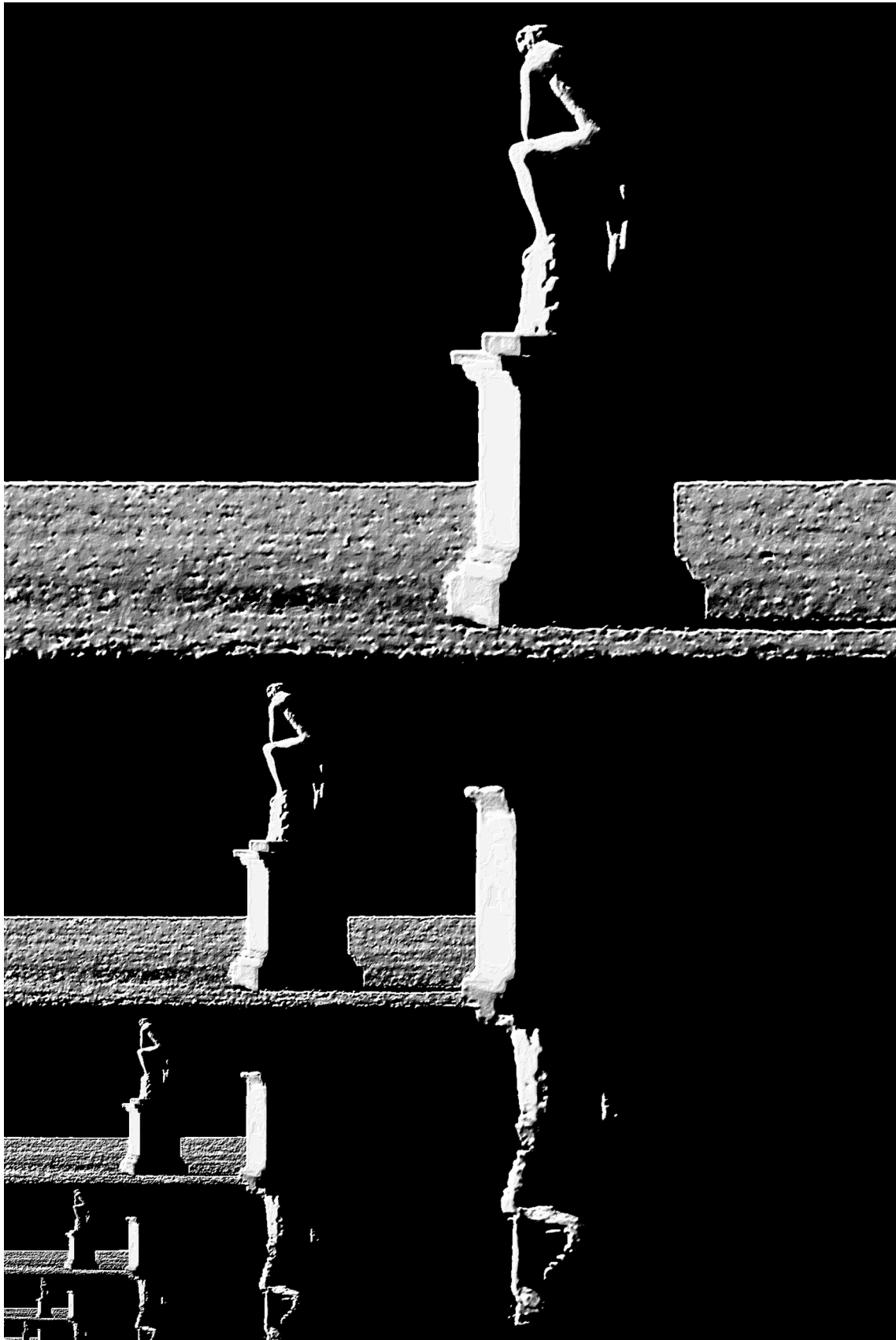
The journey throughout the next two Chapters is rather like taking a magnifying glass to the "moral environment". We shall zoom in from the planet, its continents and their political trials; from modern nations and their difficult struggles to manage social disintegration by juggling social fairness with social resources; to the smaller "worlds" in which we are touched - and from which we reach out from ourselves to touch and connect with others in our immediate "social environments". These are the things that people talk about when they present for psychotherapy: the "self", "others" and "relationship". The touching can feel at once as if it is life-enhancing, and just as immediately as if it is persecuting us. We can get very confused. What happens when a confused person meets a confused response? What happens when someone who has lost internal congruence, unable to see themselves objectively, descending into an almighty mess, meets . . .

⁹⁵ to which we have been introduced in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of Part I

⁹⁶ *Utilitarianism* (1863) - see also J.S. Mill in footnote to Chapter 1 and Chapter 4

⁹⁷ *Latter-day Pamphlets* (1850)

⁹⁸ not "higher" ... if you please



"Old Ways Of Thinking"
Statue of Galen (129-200 AD), Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire