

Chapter 2

My Education

By age 3 I could read, write and talk circles around anyone in my vicinity. By the age of 5 it was no longer possible to hide my exceptional gifts from the world. Abnormally endowed with talents, brilliant and creative, yet I was abnormally vicious too, irrepressible and headstrong, though it was hoped that these traits could be corrected or, if necessary, as is the case with other monstrous geniuses(Wagner, Byron, Machiavelli and so on) discretely ignored for the greater good of humanity.

Imagine a 5-year old doing improvisations on the piano, solving the riddles in Lewis Carroll's treatises on Symbolic Logic, with a fair acquaintance with Latin and French and already launched onto the study Greek! Not the least of my accomplishments, (in that I had been forced to work against my natural bent), I could walk. To compensate for this deficiency, strenuous hikes are a standard feature of my lifestyle. Even in the context of my abortive suicide attempt in 1947 (to be discussed in its proper place). I walked the 6 miles to the bridge over the Wissahickon River because I thought the exercise would be good for me. Hiking, sadly, more or less exhausts the catalogue of my athletic abilities.

By the mid-40's my parents realized that my education was a matter of great importance. Since the beginning of his career my father had been employed as a civil engineer with a steel mill in the neighborhood of Freewash. Now, for the

sake of my education he gave up his post and took a low-paying job as a teacher at Mastbaum Tech, Philadelphia's vocational high school. Soon afterwards I was enrolled in a private school for precocious children associated with Haverford College : *The Agape Institute* .

Agape was the embodiment of the educational philosophies of a pair of German Quaker psychiatrists, Drs. Georg Baumknuppel and Giselle Zwicky. Refugees from Nazism, they'd met one another for the first time in the United States. A similar perspective on childhood learning had inspired them to team up together. The Agape Institute first opened up as an experimental project in education for precocious children financed by Haverford College. Still housed in some buildings adjacent to the campus, it had since become independent through grants from corporations and individuals. A scholarship program endowed by the college made it possible for Agape to pay the tuition for 20 children with exceptionally high IQ 's. The parents of all children enrolled at the Institute had to submit, on a regular basis, to physical and psychological examinations, in-depth psychiatric evaluations and a long battery of intellectual and cognitive tests.

The zeal which Dr. Baumknuppel and Fraulein Zwicky brought to their self-appointed task derived its impetus from a bizarre combination of antiquated and ultra-modern notions. As Freudians they were true believers of the most literal persuasion, although one often had the impression that

their immersion in the writings of the Master had stopped with the case of Dora. Most remarkably, between the two of them they'd found a way to reconcile psycho-analytic dogma with the Society of Friend's theory of the Inner Light shining within everyone of us. From listening to them talk it was never clear to me whether the Divine Light plays like an Aurora Borealis above the polar ice of our sin-racked souls, or if it burns like the searchlights of Captain Nemo's submarine beneath the slimy turds of repressed desire in the ocean of the Unconscious. It is my impression that Dr. Baumknuppel maintained the former point of view, Fraulein Zwicky the latter. Still, one never knew which combination of these diametrically opposed dogmas of spiritual healing might be invoked to justify their odd behavior.

I remember Dr. Baumknuppel as a stocky, bushy-haired man in his early 50's. A laboratory smock was always draped over his suit, even on formal occasions. Save for a pair of long sideburns he was completely bald. He chain-smoked; even when addressing classes cigarettes were forever being lit and relit in his trembling, unsteady hands. The butts, as he lifted them to his lips, shook as if under the effect of a strong wind and often slipped out of his fingers onto the floor. It could happen several times during a class period that Dr. Baumknuppel would get down to the floor on his hands and knees and, oblivious to our presence, forage around for them.

His uncertain mouth had a way of creaking open and shut like a door slipping on its hinges. His strongest facial

feature lay in a pair of deeply sunken, servile, guilt-stricken though hardly friendly eyes. He also suffered from many compulsions, quirks and tics which made his presence unsettling after a short time. It was as if he were constantly reminding you that, for him at least, happiness was out of the question.

To give just one example: Baumknuppel was in the habit of repeatedly examining his left hand. The reason for this odd peculiarity was revealed to me one afternoon, as I was passing through the corridors of the Institute on my way to class. The door of the staff lounge was open and I could hear him lecturing to a seminar of psychology majors from Haverford College. To illustrate some point he'd been making about the importance of impressions acquired from early childhood, he told the following personal anecdote: he'd been brought up believing the old wives tale that children who masturbated grew a long, incriminating black hair on the palm of the hand most actively engaged. He went on to claim that he no longer believed such nonsense, but anyone could see that his conditioned reflexes told quite another story.

He had many other tics as well, symptoms of numerous repressed anxieties, far too many, in fact, to be smoked away by two packs a day. He scratched his legs in the oddest way, snapped his fingers without warning, and terrified everyone by breaking out into sardonic laughter with no apparent cause. Much of the time he seemed not to hear or notice you when you were talking to him. He may have been a

borderline psychotic, I don't know; certainly the word "neurotic" is too bland. Still, he did a competent job of running the Agape Institute, much better than I could have done given its insalubrious mix of hostile ideologies.

As an adult, I'm now able to view incidents and personalities from my past with a certain detachment. What was not fully understood at the time is now perfectly clear to me: Dr. Baumknuppel had a thing about little boys. Except for Fraulein Zwicky, to whom he was at least deferential, he never disguised his contempt for women. Surprisingly he was married. I never met his wife: her marriage to him must have been simply miserable. About 30 children of both sexes between the ages of 5 and 11 were enrolled at the Agape Institute . He paid little attention to the girls, yet his guilt-ridden preoccupation with the boys, myself among them, came out in many ways. It was something you couldn't escape. That he habitually patted our little behinds as we entered the school through the front doors each morning , should already be taken as an indication that not all was right with him. His insistence on supervising our wee-wee, and the way in which thick clouds of embarrassment and cloying guilt would suddenly come pouring out of his eyes when they fixed themselves on us would appear to clinch the matter. However, it was primarily through his teaching methods, all, according to him, the direct application of some far-fetched scientific insight, that we gathered the

confirming evidence that his interest in us had little to do with science.

Students in Baumknuppel's classes were encouraged to stand and speak up at any time they believed they'd received revelations from the indwelling spirit. Not every insight was condoned : they had to be of a certain kind. In a voice loud enough to command the general attention, we were expected to give utterance to whatever strong sexual impulse had just crossed our minds. Baumknuppel maintained that this pedagogical device combined the virtues of the Quaker Meeting with the Freudian Catharsis.

One would never know in advance how these messages from the repressed psyche might affect him. If one of the boys stood up and cried " I need to masturbate!", Baumknuppel generally allowed him to go to the lavatory and do his business. But if one of us said something like, " I want Dr. Baumknuppel to whip me across my behind !", he would suddenly go into a catatonic freeze as if a silver dart had transfixed his brain. As he pulled himself together he might divest himself of a hideous groan which, its polluted overtones striking our ears, made us all feel as if we were facing a discharging truck exhaust. His whole body trembling violently in uncontrollable spasms, he would rush out of the classroom and not return for upwards of half an hour.

I never observed such reactions whenever one of the little girls shared her secret wishes with the community. Although Baumknuppel might show his annoyance he never

lost his cool over a little girl. On the contrary, he could be severe with them, even puritanical. Encouraged by the spirit of freedom proclaimed in Dr. Baumknuppel's theories of education, Janice Connors, 7 at the time, jumped to her feet in class one day and said, "I want Dr. Baumknuppel to put his thing in my thing!"

A sinister silence fell over the classroom. Baumknuppel turned his bushy mop in her direction, glared her back down into her seat and snarled, "You base girl! Get to ze lavatory! Fraulein Zwicky vill meet you zere and vash your mout out mit soap!" Janice broke down crying and ran out of the room. After she'd gone, Baumknuppel assured us that he wasn't angry with her. He's merely applied the scientifically prescribed therapy for someone in her condition.

The situation quickly degenerated into farce. At least once in each hour one of the boys would stand up and bellow, "I want to lick Dr. Baumknuppel's thing!" It was the prelude to a hilarious five minutes or so in which we could watch him climbing the walls. Sometimes sheer pandemonium reigned, with the poor doctor compulsively clutching his balls and banging his head against the blackboards as we shouted out the most obscene inventions our innocent young minds could dream up. Sometimes our sadism backfired when, pushed against the wall, and despite the non-violent doctrines of his professed Quakerism, he would race into the thick of us and lay about on all sides with a leather strap. The pitiful and distracted doctor would quickly be brought to

heel by the appearance of the frail figure of Fraulein Zwicky in the doorway, trembling like a withered leaf at the end of a frosty autumn, her head bowed more in sorrow than in anger, her face crimson with shame.

In spite of all these things, Dr. Baumknuppel was a good teacher, provided he stuck to scientific subjects with neutral content like mathematics or chemistry. In fact he was the best mathematics teacher I've ever had. It is grudgingly conceded that my prodigious feats in this field when I entered early adolescence originated from insights gained during his lessons in arithmetic. Yet his methods of instruction were not without drawbacks. He had the annoying habit of lecturing to us entirely in German, for it was another one of his pet theories that all the languages of man lay buried in the Collective Unconscious and merely needed some stimulation to bring them to the surface.

At four o'clock, before school let out for the day, there was the half-hour 'aggression session'. The entire student body was shuttled down to the *Aggression Room*, a small gym where a dozen or so punching bags hung suspended from the ceiling. Caricatures of the faces of Dr. Baumknuppel and Fraulein Zwicky, the rest of the faculty, our parents and several other authority figures towards whom we might be expected to feel a particular hatred, were painted on the surfaces of these bags. As we beat the shit out of them, Baumknuppel, Zwicky and the staff, watched us, notebooks at the ready, with undissimulated fascination.

Even in this context, Baumknuppel was not remiss in gratifying his strange appetites. To augment our level of violence he walked about the gym, slapping us heartily on our backsides, tweaking our noses, pulling our ears, even reaching into our trousers and squeezing our little balls! He never failed to let us know that there was a purpose behind these acts - to wit - "to bring to the surface all those animal instincts trapped beneath the constraints of so-called civilization"!

It happened just once, and never again before or afterwards, that all thirty of us, taking him at his word, jumped him and, despite our youth, kicked and mauled him so badly that he was away from the Institute for a week. Not a word was said about the incident after he returned. I suspect that he'd secretly approved of our spirit of initiative.

Sex Education was taught once a week, mercifully by Fraulein Zwicky. One might imagine that sex education wouldn't mean very much to children between the ages of 5 and 11. Of course we were precocious.

Our mean mental age was 15. There was no correlation between this and our emotional age, which must have scored far below that of comparable children of normal intelligence. Fraulein Zwicky had never had sex in her life and knew the shape of the naked male body only from textbooks. From her indoctrination in the Freudian theory of infantile sexuality she had drawn the conclusion that the sexual appetite rose sharply from birth to age four, reached a peak at around ten,

and declined steadily thereafter to old age and death. Everything else was the result of false notions and overstimulation derived from popular entertainment and advertising. Since we were all in the susceptible age category, every precaution had to be taken to keep us from the consequences of our own ignorance.

To the extent that she was less dirty-minded than Baumknuppel, Fraulein Zwicky was a relief. Yet there were difficulties in dealing with her as well. She was as inhibited as Baumknuppel was repressed, which is saying a great deal. I remember her as a gentle, prim woman in her middle thirties. Had it not be counter-indicated by her psychiatric training, she would have fed us on chocolates and sweets all day long. Although it never happened, I picture her taking us, one at a time, on her knees, and reading to us from *The Three Bears*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Alas, her studies had made her understand that there could be no subject more vital to the concerns of the very young than sex education. Accordingly she tightened her already prim little mouth and, with grim Teutonic determination, set herself to the task.

It might have helped a bit had she known something about her subject, yet her education and her upbringing were so much at war in this particular area that the mere spectacle of her confusion exhausted us, while her demonstrations of Valkyrie-like courage aroused nothing but terror.

One night, as a schoolboy prank, a group of us invaded her office and examined her personal diaries. A few of the students knew German and were able to explain their contents to the rest of us. It was by this means that I learned more than I would ever want to know about her. Before joining the Society of Friends in her early twenties Fraulein Zwicky had been given a strict orthodox Lutheran upbringing. Drinking, dancing, cards and all games were forbidden. The very word "sex" could not be mentioned, let alone anything associated with it. Whenever she let slip an indecent word or phrase, perhaps something picked up in the street, her father took her down to the family crypt and stroked her cheeks with the bones of her great-grandparents. She left this oppressive home environment for the first time at the age of 18, to enter Ingoldstadt University with the intention of becoming a Lutheran medical missionary.

At the university she made new friends, toyed with scandalous ideas, even took up smoking for a semester. In her junior year at the urging of her professors she entered the program in psychiatry. No doubt they'd decided that the fact of her having no libido worth speaking of meant that there was little danger of its getting tangled up with that of her patients. In that same year she began attending the Quaker meetings that had been set up by a circle of exchange students from England and the U.S. Fortunately for her, their help would prove to be invaluable in getting her out of

Germany and over to Philadelphia when she had to flee in 1935.

Fraulein Zwicky was a pleasant person, not at all disagreeable or shrewish. Nor was she ugly, only very plain, painfully timid and rarely able to continue any conversation beyond the customary banalities.

She wore her hair in a tight bun, her thick-lensed glasses secured by a band of black elastic that went over her ears and disappeared under the bun. Her dresses always had too much stuff in them and were uniformly dour; a few more yards of cloth and she might have been taken for a nun. Her facial skin was so dry one could easily imagine it had always had wrinkles in it. She might well have kept a pet crow at home, so numerous were the footprints about her eyes. Her long nose protruded and her face drooped. Her posture was erect yet her gait so stiff that one marveled at her not using a cane.

Don't misunderstand me: Fraulein Zwicky was a good-hearted woman! To this day I regard her with affection. Perhaps it didn't matter that, having no clear notion of what men looked like, she set about teaching us sex education. One could not escape the painful impression that she appeared to be using the effort involved in preparing and teaching this course as her personal means for coming to grips with this domain of forbidden knowledge. She never did get around to teaching us the proper names for the "things" she continually referred to, nor the uses to which they might be put. She kept inventing circumlocutions, persisting in her efforts as if

laboring under a compulsion to dwell on a topic that was destined to remain forever inaccessible to her .

In her attempts to tell us about "how babies were made", or "how grown-ups are different from children", or "why boys are different from girls" , her emotional condition went through a number of predictable stages: scientific detachment, then a kind of wicked connivance, followed by embarrassment, and always ending up in helpless confusion. As the tension built up to the breaking point she would suddenly throw the whole burden onto our shoulders by barking out embarrassing questions that gave us lizard skin:

" Now, Jackie - do you have a - uh - *"thing"* between your legs?". The tone of the question indicated that, in her class at least, no nonsense was tolerated.

" Yes teacher", Jackie replied - "and its as long as my pinky!" . He held erect the little finger of his right hand. Fraulein Zwicky blushed:

" Very good, Jackie - you don't have to describe it. " Then, giving way to an irresistible afterthought : " Is it really as big as ... I mean as long as .. your little finger? Ohhhhh..." Then, dumbfounded : " Is it always that long?"

It was clear that she considered the erection a somewhat mystifying phenomenon:

" No teacher: sometimes it grows as long as *this* !" Quite innocently Jackie pushed his middle finger up into the air in the classic "up yours " gesture.

Fraulein Zwicky blushed deep purple:

" Very good, Jackie. *As big as that* ! Ohhhhhh... That is fascinating! Utterly fascinating! You have no idea, children! I will have to tell the Dr. Baumknuppel about this! " Her voice reduced to a whisper, she asked again:

" Jackie - could you show us again how big it grows?" Jackie obediently pushed up his middle finger a second time. Once again Fraulein Zwicky blushed:

" Very good, Jackie.... Oh my! Oh my! " She pulled out a hard-backed notebook she'd brought over from Germany with a multicolored cover. As she jotted down her observations she whispered:

" *As big as that* ! "

Fraulein Zwicky was not a bad woman, but one can't deny that she suffered from indecent curiosity. One could well surmise that much of the joy in her life was built around imagining what she could never allow herself to know. The most tedious, scarcely-to-be-endured moments in her sex education classes were the "demonstration lectures" . With one of the girls standing at attention before a fidgeting classroom Fraulein Zwicky, armed with a blackboard pointer, would move up and down the body of the subject explaining how babies were engendered, where they were conceived and how they were ejected. A fairly routine procedure one would think, yet for her it meant half an hour of torture, tedium and embarrassment, with numerous opportunities for ridicule of the sort that would

occur naturally to a class of very bright and normally sadistic schoolchildren.

Her other class was on "culture" : literature, art and music. Here, even more than in sex education, she once more demonstrated her utter hopelessness as a teacher. She would not have been a good teacher in any subject. Her personal dilemma was of such a nature that she could not be expected to maintain discipline or order in a classroom. Then again, had she been able to exercise more authority it is doubtful we would have profited very much from her views about culture, based on misreadings of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* , Theodore Reik's *Listening With The Third Ear* , Jung's divagations on creativity , Ernest Jones' essay *Hamlet and Oedipus* , and Edgar Allen Poe's description of how he wrote *The Bells* .

By combining this fruit cocktail of misconceptions Fraulein Zwicky had developed a philosophy of Art which can be expressed as a set of principles:

I. As all artistic productions are creative releases of the Unconscious, any work of art is as good as any other work of art. How dare anyone state that one person's unconscious is better than another's ?

II. Because civilization and its superstructures have completely repressed the natural savage in man, frankly ugly creations should actually be preferred over beautiful ones.

III. Because all art comes from the Unconscious, Art cannot be taught. No one can tell the Unconscious what to do.

None of this really mattered, if only she had just let each of us follow his or her own artistic bent. But that meddling old spinster - (no, I really can't allow myself to talk about her in those terms; she really was a sweet middle-aged lady) - all the same, she insisted on guiding our tender footsteps towards the full unveiling of the Divine Light, while at the same time achieving total liberation for our tyrannically repressed impulses through the unique capacities for 'venting' (one of her favored buzz-words) latent in the Creative Arts.

In other words: if one of her students painted a truly beautiful painting, or wrote a fine poem, or played a piece well on the piano, she would detect therein the effulgence of the Divine Light. Yet if this same student painted an atrocity, or wrote some crude, stupid piece of doggerel, or hacked his way through a violin recital, it would be interpreted as the anguished expression, or desperate cry, of some deep-set neurosis stuck in the dungeon of the super-ego. Her philosophy of art was so broadly conceived that it could tolerate anything calling itself art, which is another way of saying that her confidence in her own opinions was so deficient that she dared not presume to criticize anyone.

In fact she did know a thing or two about music. One of the by-products of her German Lutheran background was a cultivated musical ear. She was perfectly capable of distinguishing between Beethoven and Perry Como. Unfortunately, a fanatical application of Freudian ideology to

all aspects of reality had gone so far to undermine her sensibilities, that one might rattle a garbage can in her vicinity and she would fancy that she was hearing the glory of the Divine Light permeating through the turmoil of the repressed Unconscious.

About literature she knew next to nothing. She did not read a novel for pleasure until the age of 30. About painting she knew nothing at all. Here again the primitive obsessions of her arid emotional life burst upon us in unexpected ways: everywhere she turned she uncovered sexual symbolism. Points and sticks were always penises, hollows always vaginas. Of course she never called these things by their real names : instead she referred to them as "*boy things*" or "*girl things*" .

Stories, poetry and essays were plunged into the acid bath of Freudian hermeneutics, as over them she poured a murky catalogue of sex symbology both fabulous and sterile. Creative writing classes were turned into long ordeals of tedious interpretation, and generated the same atmosphere of obscene embarrassment, prudery and guilty voyeurism that characterized her sex education classes. Fraulein Zwicky ruined literature for me for decades: only recently have I been able to read a novel for enjoyment. And my appreciation of the graphic arts has been poisoned for life.

Between Dr. Baumknuppel and Fraulein Zwicky the Agape Institute was one hell of a school! Life between the ages of 5 and 7 was one prolonged ordeal of suffering. Along

with the misery-filled days at the Agape Institute, came the added burden of long nights of serialized nightmares, cast in the form of episodes involving the same combinations of characters and events week after week. For nights on end I was being eaten alive by bears, tossed about in terrible storms which dashed me against cliffs, or pushed me down to the bottom of the ocean where I disintegrated under tons of water pressure. Over and over again I was roasted alive by monsters, electrocuted, torn to pieces in explosions, thrown out of airplanes, dragged in back of trucks, and many things of a similar nature. Leering faces with glittering eyes hovered over me, injecting me with chemicals that seeped through my system and induced gruesome tortures. Buildings collapsed on top of me, rats crawled through my stomach and ate out my bowels. It was my Dark Ages.

In retrospect I've come to understand how this siege of manic-depressive psychosis originated from 3 sources: World War Two, Walt Disney movies and the Agape Institute.

The war only indirectly affected me, serving as the reservoir from which I drew forth the images that tormented me. WWII made no notable intrusion into my life. My father avoided the draft because his job was deemed vital to the national defense. At home there were always the newspapers, but I never read them. All I can remember from World War II is the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the dropping of the A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For the simple reason that the war had something to do with the outside world, its very existence was never mentioned at the Agape Institute. Its two directors believed that a hermetic environment was an absolute requirement for a child's mental development. Fortunately, despite the persistent efforts of its lawyers, the Institute never acquired the legal authority to remove us from our families and lock us up!

If only the same could be said for Walt Disney's cartoon comics and movies! Several years ago I made a solemn oath on the Chandrasekhar edition of Newton's *Principia* that, if by some happenstance I ever become a father, my children will never be allowed to watch Walt Disney movies. I don't recall any horror movie, not even *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf-Man* or *King-Kong* that had the effect on me of the forest-fire in *Bambi*. For weeks afterwards I fancied that whole districts of the city of Philadelphia were in flames. Lying awake at night I trembled with fear, hearing in every creak of the woodwork or rustle of water through the pipes, or seeing in the wisps of fog that rose up along the window-panes, the immanent approach of the conflagration.

Viewing *Pinocchio* for the first time at age 6 threatened for awhile to turn me into another Baumknuppel. For the next 4 years I was plagued by a nagging compulsion to twist my body about in a vain attempt to see my ass: telling the truth no more than ten percent of the time, I feared

the spontaneous eruption of a donkey's tail. With equal frequency my hands sped up to cover my ears. Over and over again I tapped my nose to push it back to normal size. Watching Pinocchio being swallowed by a whale so traumatized me that I was unable to go near a beach until my late teens. Even today swimming in the ocean has little appeal for me.

Yet the primary responsibility for this long period of emotional turmoil must be laid squarely on the doormat of the Agape Institute. Its' stifling atmosphere of cloying indecency, guilt-laden and ghoulish, combined with its conflicting philosophies and chronic disorganization, reduced our sensitive young minds to permanent states of cringing terror. Firmly gripped in the tentacles of the two octopuses that ruled it we were little more than helpless prey.

We must now come to an incident which would have serious repercussions in later life. When I was seven years old, Dr. Baumknuppel attempted to rape me. He may or may not have succeeded: the reader will judge. Immediately afterwards I ran away, never to return. This and related incidents led to a criminal investigation and ultimately to the dissolution of the Agape Institute. In 1942 Dr. Baumknuppel was placed in an internment camp for suspicious Germans, where he was the guest of Uncle Sam until the end of the war. I would meet him again at a crucial moment in my life, long

after he was able to do me any more harm. I don't know what has happened to Fraulein Zwicky.

These were the circumstances in which it came about. Once each month every pupil enrolled at the Agape Institute had to endure an hour's psycho-analysis. Closeted in strict privacy with Dr. Baumknuppel, defenseless against his predation, we were intensively queried with ill-disguised lasciviousness about our infantile sex life. Mid-way through the session we were made to stretch out on a couch and free associate for half an hour as Baumknuppel, taking notes with his right hand, manipulated his balls with his left.

It was during one of these sessions that he attacked me. Lying on the couch, I had associated back to my infantile memories. When I began describing how, in the incubator, I stared at the doctors and nurses and recognized that I was better than they were, Baumknuppel got very angry and said:

" You *was* an insolent baby, weren't you ? Didn't you haf no respect for authority? "

To which I replied that at the time I was too young to know what authority looked like. The concept continued to cause me problems. Dr. Baumknuppel's eyes swelled with indignation and his face became congested:

" If I was dere there you would be trown into ze garbage can - alonk mit de slops!"

I realized that he was throwing some kind of psychiatrist's hostility tactic at me, so I kept my cool and said nothing. From the way he was scratching his legs and pulling

his ears it was apparent that he was becoming more and more agitated. His fear transmitted to me and I began to gasp . Then he muttered the word "feces" and told me to use it as a basis for free-association.

I saw Dr. Baumknuppel sitting on a bed-pan, compulsively examining the palm of his left hand and defecating . As I described this mental picture he of course began a compulsive examination of his left hand. Then I saw Fraulein Zwicky carrying the bedpan into a classroom and forcing her students to eat its contents. Baumknuppel became furious and roared:

" You're making zat up! You von't get away vit zis! " As he spoke he wacked himself several times on his back with a ruler. After he'd calmed down he instructed me to free associate on the word, "penis" .

Right away my imagination conjured up one of the dinosaurs from the Disney movie *Fantasia* , belching hot volcanic lava from his huge penis. As I spoke the sweat stood out on my face. My own prick erected, bulging up through my corduroy trousers like a tent-pole.

That's when Baumknuppel reached out and grabbed it. I was ordered to keep free-associating. Now I saw a dinosaur doing a savage Pleistocene dance based on *The Rite of Spring* and biting his own penis . Totally unhinged Baumknuppel zipped open my fly, exposing my rosy juvenile prick. With guilty hesitation he began pulling it back and forth in his slimy paws.

I was horribly frightened and started to rise up off the couch. Baumknuppel pushed me down, placed his left hand over my face, tightened the grip of his right hand on my penis. Although he'd begun jerking it violently up and down, I was obliged to keep free-associating.

Now I was in the middle of a gigantic prehistoric earthquake. The ground split open and huge masturbating reptiles disappeared into the yawning chasms. Enervated to a condition of delirium I began to scream. In order to shut me up Baumknuppel stuffed the fingers of his left hand down my throat. Tears poured down his cheeks through tightly shut eyelids. The weak structure of his slavering lips totally collapsed as he whined piteously:

"...Please God!God! Please God ...!..."

The door opened without warning. Inside stepped Fraulein Zwicky . When she saw what was happening she emitted a short scream; her hands ran to her cunt. She watched with dirty fascination for a few minutes before fainting. Baumknuppel let out a long groan and slid to the floor, drained of life, his head in his hands. I jumped off the couch and raced out of the building.

For the next two years my memory is a total blank. It is as if some guardian angel had dropped a cloud of amnesia over some great mass of pain. My parents say that I was picked up later that night wandering around Bryn Mawr, the town neighboring on Haverford, unaware of my surroundings.

According to them I didn't utter a single word all through those two years. Instead I did lots of reading. It was then also that I exhibited the first signs my remarkable abilities in mathematics. They also claim that we moved to California for 9 months, where Dad had been assigned by the government to work on some military project. Of this I remember nothing.

I know for a certainty that these were the formative years of my spiritual development. It was in them that the foundation was laid for everything I am today. How, you may well ask, can I be so sure about this when, although I can remember being in the incubator and staring at its serial number, I can't recall a single detail of 9 month's residence in California?

It's like asking the devoutly religious to justify their belief in the existence of an undetectable god. How is it that people in love will maintain, despite all evidences to the contrary, that the object of their desire cherishes a secret passion for them? How is it that writers, with nothing published after 40 years, continue to believe that they will win the Nobel Prize? What guarantee is there that anyone boarding an airplane will come out alive? It's all a matter of faith.

Imagine dropping a pebble into a deep well on a dark, overcast night. The echo coming from the well indicates that something must be there, even though the water that is producing the sound cannot be seen. Barring strong

indications to the contrary, one is as confident of the existence of the water as of anything else one imagines be true about the world.

It is like that with regards to my feelings about those two lost years.

If it is not in fact the case that the essential character of my psyche was forged in that time, then I am also being deceived in imagining that 2 plus 2 equals 4. ¹

From time to time I drop a psychological pebble into my subconscious. The echoing reply of struck water always emerges from the period lying between ages 7 and 9. In the great crises of life, when I have had to bow my head before destiny and search for reasons for continuing my existence, the voice that comes to me is the one I would have had had I not be speechless at the time. There is a deep reserve of wisdom stored up in my Unconscious all these years, available only at those moments when it is really needed. For I must have asked all questions and given all answers at that age.

I am not alone in thinking this way. Everyone imagines that if he digs deep enough he will touch base with that part of his being which is infallible in all things. Though intellectually we may be Copernicans, emotionally we are all

¹Note that modern mathematics does allow for other alternatives under certain conditions .

Ptolemaians. It is the same way with myself. The center of my universe is myself as a boy of seven.

Occasionally I will experiment with heroic regimens for tricking my Unconscious into revealing some small spark of light hidden in this period of darkness. I have literally wasted hours free-associating on the word "California". I've never come up with anything more than a patch of orange trees, and a couple of Mexicans. At one time I thought I might have encountered those Mexicans while we were out there, but after stabilizing their images to my inner eye, they always decompose into a composite of Wild West movie villains, Cesar Chavez and musicians from glamorous mariachi bands; they have as little to do with real Mexicans as the medieval caricature of the Jew has to do with the appearance of my father. I've never been to California on my own and have no intention of going there. I know the trip would be useless.

More than once I've drawn a big "7" on a piece of cardboard with a Magic Marker. I place it in front of me and stare fixedly at it until my eyes are bloodshot and I can feel electric shocks shooting through my brain. All to no avail. Similar experiments with the number "8" have cost me an urgent visit to the eye doctor.

However I remember very well the moment and the day -July 19th, 1944 at 4:35 PM - when both speech and memory came back in a blinding flash. It created such joy in the household that no one thought to discipline me for what I'd

said. I don't remember any of the circumstances that provoked it, nor why I should so suddenly have emerged out of my cocoon, (for I certainly didn't come out any butterfly). Yet something provoked me, after two years as an elective mute, to turn to my parents with the indignant query:

“ So? Thanks to you, I'm messed up for life! What are you going to do about it? Nothing, I suppose! ”