



Finding the Cow Within

USING FANTASY TO ENRICH YOUR LIFE

Jerome Levin Ph.D.

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to Enrich Your Life

By

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Preface

This is a book about the creative use of fantasy. It is itself a kind of fantasy. It is also a book about cows. The cows you know and ones you never even knew existed. Our imaginative journey into fantasy will take the form of narrative, of exposition of psychological and philosophical notions, and of a bit of how-to self-help instruction. It can be taken as parody, and in part it is, and it can be taken seriously. I intended both. Paradoxically, there is nothing more germane to living a satisfactory life than ‘important nonsense.’ I take the phrase ‘important nonsense’ from the Viennese philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. So my hope is that Finding the Cow Within is important nonsense that speaks to you.

Jerry Levin

Chapter 1: It's So Sad She's Mad

It was so sad that she was mad. Lovely, intelligent, deeply decent, I could easily have fallen in love with her. That is, until she started mooing. Patients, of course, ask for help with all kinds of things—even finding the courage to kill—themselves or others—so I was used to strange therapeutic goals; yet in all my years of practicing psychotherapy no one had ever asked me for help in ‘getting in better contact with my inner cow.’

I had never met anyone like her—and believe me, I’ve treated every kind of weirdo, even some not described in that Doomsday book published by the American Psychiatric Association, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, wherein every variety of madness, oddness, emotional debility, and just plain nuttiness is described and numbered, symptoms delineated with great specificity, syndromes illustrated and explained. None of them fit her. She was completely sui generis—one of a kind. At first you couldn’t tell anything was wrong at all. She was attractive, well-dressed, perky, articulate—thoroughly delightful. But my initial judgment that there wasn’t much wrong didn’t last long.

After the mooing began—I believe it was in our sixth session—I couldn't help but observe that given the ardor of her mooing, perhaps she was already in contact with the cow within. When I verbalized my observation she gave me a withering look, totally withdrew, and said nothing the rest of that session.

Next week she attacked, “How could you think that my pathetic imitation of a moo partook of the essence of bovinity when it was clearly nothing but a shallow, all-too-human effort?”

Her use of stilted language, ‘the essence of bovinity,’ was so uncharacteristic that I instantly realized the depth of her fury. She was going philosophical on me to avoid expressing the full intensity of her volcanic rage at me. Judging from all she had told me about her life, she was so caring, so connected to people, so kind, so sensitive, that I couldn't quite believe that at that moment she would have gladly stomped me into mush with her hooves. When I found myself looking down at her feet to see if she actually had hooves, I was more startled, in fact deeply shook up, than I was when I first found myself saying, ‘Hoof’ to her as if she really had them. I was clearly in danger of joining her in her delusion—not as a therapeutic technique but for real. I pulled myself back from a kind of folie a deux, saying to myself, “Well! I'm getting as crazy as Dr. Batty,

who, whatever else troubles her, certainly doesn't have hooves." Recovering, I tried to pacify her, saying, "Well, perhaps your mooing could be improved. Do you have any thoughts about what you might do to improve the authenticity of your mooing?"

I had hardly gotten the sentence out of my mouth when she snapped, "How dare you patronize me!" and brought our interaction to an abrupt halt.

These last two sessions—the ones where she mooed—were so different. As I said, when I first met her she seemed so normal that I couldn't quite understand why she wanted psychoanalysis. But I don't pay my mortgage by sending patients away, so I accepted her as an analysand. True, her problem baffled me. I had never met a bovine iconographer before. But scholars are into all kinds of weird inquiry, so I didn't make too much of it except to note that the ancient canard that Ph.D. stood for piled higher and deeper seemed particularly applicable in her case. And I did, in a more professional mode, consider working a referral for vocational rehabilitation into her treatment plan, commenting that the employment opportunities for bovine iconographers must be highly limited. Of course after the mooing began and she pridefully told me that she was the first and only bovine iconographer, my suspicion that she was crazy was

confirmed. She told me that it pained her that she was merely an iconographer of bovinity rather than a bovine iconographer. I was lost. Then, suddenly, I got it. She wanted to be a cow, not a student of the representation of the cow as cow, as symbol, as icon, in various cultural phenomena. She really was nuts; now I had no doubt whatsoever. To want to study cows and their appearance and the role they played in the history of art was one thing. But to be a cow! That was over the top.

Unlike the well known and in some ways brilliantly creative analyst, Harold Searles, I don't inevitably fall in love and then fall in hate with every one of my patients, yet I do commonly have strong feelings for them. In the case of Dr. Batty, I had liked her from the first and as I became more and more certain that she was delusional and perhaps incurable, the force of my sadness made me realize how much I had come to care for her. As a possible need for hospital commitment entered my thoughts, I became more and more upset. This lovely woman on a closed ward, possibly receiving ECT—and I would have been the one to put her there. It was a chilling thought. The more I thought about it, the more agitated I became. It was then, one day not long after she had left my consulting room, that I found myself mooing. It didn't work for quite a while, but after about ten

minutes, I grew serene. Coming out of my reverie I felt torn—on one hand this was all too much identification with my crazy patient—empathy yes, but this was too much; yet, on the other hand, maybe there was something in this cow business, crazy or not. Now, two years later, I am co-director of the Institute for Bovine Iconography, a title I keep to myself at analytic conventions.

Trying to find your inner cow, taken as metaphor, or symbol, as allegory, as creative play, makes some sort of sense. It might even be useful—a vehicle to enhance serenity and feelings of peaceful oneness with nature. But wanting to be a cow? That was totally irrational—overt psychosis, pure delusion. How could she possibly be a cow when her hooves kept metamorphosing into feet? Most of the time she didn't even have hooves. And I knew—somewhere—that the times she did were the times I joined her delusion. Wordsworth wrote, "The world is half created and half perceived." Not in the case of her hooves—they were a hundred percent created. She definitely wasn't a cow, no matter how much she wanted to be one.

Then I remembered her telling me that she had gone on a date as an undergraduate with a real provincial guy. During the course of the evening, he had started to feel her head. "What on earth are you

doing?” she asked. She pulled back from him.

He replied, “You’re Jewish, aren’t you? I wanted to feel your horns.”

She looked at me piteously, started crying, and said, “Not even ‘I want to see if you have horns,’ just ‘I would like to feel them.’” She sobbed some more and then dried her eyes and said, “Well, Michelangelo sculpted Moses with horns so why shouldn’t that idiot have looked for mine?” As she continued to try to make light of what clearly had been a traumatic event in her life, I decided to try and keep her focused on the trauma.

Seeing a connection I said, “Cows have horns.”

She snapped back, “Only some cows have horns. Do you think I think I’m a cow—or want to be one—because an imbecilic jerk thought I had horns? Isn’t it enough to have dated a damn fool? Do I have to have a damn fool for an analyst too?” Continuing, she mocked, “I suppose you think only Jewish cows have horns, so I can never be a gentile cow.” She laughed, but I knew that she was deeply sorrowful underneath the humor.

I wasn’t going to let her get away with disowning the connection between her traumatic date and her delusion. So I offered

an interpretation, “Dr. Batty, you were so traumatized by your date thinking that you had horns that you had to find a way to reduce your pain. The way you did that was to give yourself horns—well, not exactly horns—that would have been too close to the original trauma. Besides, as you observed, not all cows have horns. Instead, you displaced the horns downward and became—in your innermost self—a creature with hooves—a lovable, gentle creature with hooves—namely, a cow. That way, you could turn something that happened to you—was imposed on you while you were merely a passive recipient—into something you made to happen—made to happen with your imagination—with your creativity—into an active experience in which you acted instead of being acted upon. That is why it’s so important to you to find your inner cow. If you find it, you will no longer feel traumatized.”

She looked at me for a long time. Then she said, “Doctor, you are udderly mad. Very smart, but udderly mad.”

I replied, “Your use of ‘udder’ in your phrase ‘udderly mad’ and the fact that you used it twice confirms my interpretation.” That was too much for her to take in.

She blasted me, “Doctor, you don’t even have an inner cow.” And she walked out. I knew she would return so that didn’t worry

me, but I realized that classical psychoanalytic interpretations, like the one I had just made, weren't going to work with her and I decided to change my technique and I never used that style of interpretation again during her analysis.

But that was long ago, before I became director of the Institute. Of course it—meaning my conversion—my going mad—my loss of boundaries—my insight into the true path to enlightenment or at least happiness—call it what you will—didn't happen instantly. On the contrary, it was a painfully slow, up-and-down, forward-and-backward struggle characterized by long periods of skepticism. What I called in those days my rational, that is to say, sane, state was punctuated by brief, barely momentary peaks that penetrated the veil of Maya and permitted a vision of the true nature of things. In those days unfortunately, I still regarded these epiphanies as lunatic interludes. One of the most transforming comes to mind. Dr. Batty was expositing on the aesthetic sense of cows, on how they always position themselves in the landscape in such a way that they constitute a pictorial composition of great beauty, which is why so many great 'hoofless' painters, as she called the human artists, were drawn to cows as a subject. She went off on a long, totally self-absorbed monologue, that manifested no intent to

communicate, on the history of the cow in Western art. I found my mind drifting and then, with a strong conscious effort, pulled my attention back to my patient. It happened over and over again. This repeated pattern of drift followed by recall back to the present moment was accompanied by a kind of unspoken mantra, “What do you expect from a bovine iconographer?” A mantra that I repeated to myself each time I lost contact with her. I had to admit that she really knew her stuff. Even if she hadn’t been the only one, I was certain that she would have been at the top of her field regardless of how many bovine iconographers there might be. However, that didn’t stop me from being bored and I kept drifting away.

Just as one of these interminable sessions was drawing to a close, Dr. Batty shifted her focus and began to speak, not now as an academic delivering a rather dull lecture, but as a passionate advocate of a path to salvation. She spoke with great beauty of the serenity of cows, of their peacefulness, of their calm, of their inner harmony—she quoted St. Paul’s definition of a sacrament, ‘an external and visible sign of an internal and invisible grace’—to convey the deeper meaning of bovine equanimity. She went on to speak of how the iconographic significance of the cow in the Western tradition, and indeed in all cultures, is radically

underreported, virtually unstudied, totally unappreciated.

“Without the cow and its manifold representations, the history of visual art, especially in the West, would be something udderly (she smiled her cutest smile when she said ‘udderly,’ relishing and savoring each syllable) other, totally different, and profoundly impoverished. Can you imagine a manger scene without a cow? And how could you have Christian art without manger scenes? Unfortunately, nobody seems aware of this: there’s virtually no knowledge of bovine iconography, not one journal devoted to it, and not a single doctoral program in the field. I have vowed to make it my vocation to remedy this situation. At the moment, I stand alone, the world’s only bovine iconographer, but that will change. Universities will develop programs; Harvard will have a graduate department, perhaps a separate college, of bovine iconography. And of course every school of agriculture will be transformed. Departments of bovine aesthetics will be founded to supplement their departments of animal husbandry and Sister Wendy will have to rewrite her lecture series for PBS. Today I stand alone; tomorrow the herd will be enormous. Even more important, as the appreciation of cows grows, ordinary people will become aware of their bovinity—of the part of them that is cowlike, and as they achieve that

awareness, they will be transformed. Bovine traits of placidity, contentment, serenity, and affability will come to the fore of consciousness and their integration will transform the world by transforming each person who gets in contact with his or her inner cow, and it will all start with the enhanced appreciation of bovine iconography that my work will bring about. But for now, I still stand alone and that is lonely. I need your support to fulfill my destiny, to actualize my love and my vocation and to bring my message to the world.”

I sat there stunned. She was so beautiful in the state of ecstasy in which she finished speaking that it made me profoundly sad to think that she was mad. Yes, it was such a shame, so sad that she was mad. But mad she clearly was. Deluded, grandiose and manic.

At first I had found myself moved—I almost wrote moo-ved—but then rather quickly regained professional objectivity and what I then thought was an optimal distance from my psychotic, delusional patient—empathetic yet sufficiently detached to do my job and challenge the delusion. Perhaps over time I could instill enough doubt to wean her away from her madness. So I said in my most mellifluous yet even-toned professional voice, “What you take

to be inner harmony and serenity is your projection, your anthropomorphizing cows out of a deep-seated emotional need. The reality is that cows are all too passive, almost inert, painfully slow moving. After all it is proverbial that all cows do is to sit and chew their cud.”

She started to get angry, then thought better of it, saying, “What on earth is wrong with sitting and chewing your cud? Have you ever met a cow with an ulcer? I’ll bet you haven’t. So there must indeed be a relationship between outward placidity—not passivity—being placid and at ease is active, not passive—and inner harmony. Q.E.D.” She shot that Q.E.D. at me as if it was an arrow and it did indeed strike home. Wrack my brain as I would, I couldn’t think of even one cow with an ulcer.

In its quiet way, that exchange elicited a profound inner change in me. Though I continued to have periods of skepticism I never thought of Dr. Batty in the same way again, or for that matter thought of cows in the same way again. As much as my professional conscience insisted that I continue to regard her as mad, another part of me ceased to believe it. Of course I was far from being ready to undertake the journey within to make contact with my own bovine—with the serene cud-chewer somewhere inside—that would take

many more such encounters with her luminous vision—but without my conscious knowledge, my resistance had been breached, and from then on I was receptive to new experience in a way I hadn't been since my training analysis twenty years before. And not only open to the possibility of bovines within, but to all those things in heaven and earth not thought of in our philosophy.

My analyst, an advocate of the reality principle if there ever was one, would have greeted any musing about the cow within with the archest of “Mmm hmms.” Of course if I had suggested that he sat in disapproving judgment of my cow fantasies, he would have immediately interpreted that that was my projection and that he neither approved nor disapproved but rather simply tried to understand. The usual analytic bullshit—that I, to tell the truth, used to use all the time with my patients. Why bullshit? Because nothing is ever pure projection—rarely does a projection have absolutely no basis in reality. What I'm trying to say is that bastard of an analyst judged me all the time—projection or no. Incidentally, although I don't do it frequently, I do sometimes characterize particularly outrageous assertions of my patients as ‘bullshit.’ That is what is called ‘confrontation,’ a widely used therapeutic technique. It was a technique I was constantly tempted to use in my early work with Dr.

Batty, believing at that stage of the analysis that most of what she had to say was nonsense. Once I acted on my temptation and made the error of telling Dr. Batty that what she was saying was ‘bullshit.’ She immediately sprang off the couch, gave me one of her if-looks-could-kill looks, and said, “My inner cow told me that when one of her calves calls something ‘people shit,’ she immediately gives the calf’s tail a sharp pull and moos ‘never use that moo again.’” She went on to say if you must use such expressions, you could refer to ‘cow dung.’ Dr. Batty resumed the couch in the most dignified of ways as I sat with my head spinning. I haven’t used that expression since, yet my own analyst did talk bull-people-whatever-shit all the time.

But all this is taking us far afield from my discovery that serenity is, in fact, the essence of bovinity. Nevertheless, I still have a score to settle with that analytic ass—not only did he continually suggest that my perception of him was all my stuff, he went on to make what we in the trade call ‘transference interpretations.’ That is to say, he accused me—and I don’t use accuse lightly—of seeing him ‘as my overcritical father.’ How could he say such a thing when I was, in fact, a feral child, raised by wolves, who are not in the least judgmental with their cubs! Of course he thought that my account of

my origins was pure fantasy, and a deliberately regressive fantasy at that. But enough about my analyst. As you can tell, I long ago worked through my feelings about him. But the point is important—indeed vital—for one of the most important things I learned from Dr. Batty is that fantasy need not be regressive or destructive at all. On the contrary, the right use of fantasy heals, expands consciousness, and promotes growth. There was much more that Dr. Batty taught me, but that reevaluation of the role of fantasy in my mental life, and indeed in all of our mental lives, is the single most valuable thing I learned from her and the core of what I hope to offer you in this book. Moo.

Chapter 2: The Meaning of the Cow Within

It was a bit much when Dr. Batty came to session and asked, “What kind of cow are you?”

Kind of cow? What on earth was Batty talking about—a cow is a cow. But maybe not—I guess I did roughly know even then that there were many varieties of cow—but the only one I had a name for was the Holstein, and I wasn’t quite sure what a Holstein looked like, so I said, “What are the choices?”

Six sessions later, she finished enumerating the varieties—the subspecies—the artificial breeds, the naturally occurring types—the cows of Asia, of Africa, and South America. The inbreeds and the interbreeds—who can remember—maybe even the cows of the Arctic and the South Pole. Bewildered by such a range of choices, I picked one that was vaguely familiar—I had known, without knowing I knew it, more than one type of cow—namely the Guernsey, a semiconscious member of my limited repertory of cows. It wasn’t actually that easy a choice—the Swiss variety was also alluring, and Dr. Barty’s description exceptionally beautiful—but I

had never seen a Swiss cow, so after a rather intense conflict I concluded that my cow within had to be a domestic, and I decided on the Guernsey.

Dr. Batty came back with, “You don’t look like a Guernsey.”

In retrospect, it seems incredible that I was so offended. In any event, I snorted, rose from my analytic chair, tossed my head, and charged her, bellowing, “Not only am I a Guernsey, I am a Guernsey bull!”

Dr. Batty jumped onto a table, which instantly collapsed, so I ran into the wall. It hurt, but that was the least of it. What if I had damaged my horns? Dr. Batty picked herself up from the rubble of the table, primly straightened her skirt, and sat down with a maddeningly diabolical, snide smile. I now assume that she was playing a game and winning it, and that she knew it. But it wasn’t till later that I realized that Dr. Batty was even capable of being playful—of enjoying the game side of her struggle. At that point I had never seen her as anything other than deadly (I use the word advisedly) serious. But looking back on it, Dr. Batty was certainly enjoying her triumph even as her serious side rejoiced at my apparent conversion to a bovine orientation.

The smile moo-ved toward something almost seductive as she inquired whether or not I had hurt myself. This evidently wasn't a real question since she went into a diatribe about my need to discover my anima cow, my unconscious feminine self, and integrate her into my inner bull. This was too much. Not only was she a bovine iconographer—she was a Jungian. Why on earth did she go to a Freudian analyst if she was into Carl Jung and his archetypes, anima and animus, and the rest of his balderdash? If it's one thing Freudians can't stand, it's a Jungian, let alone a Jungian iconographer. I charged her again. She deftly stepped aside with all the grace and aplomb of a seasoned bullfighter. All she lacked was the cape.

Smilingly she mocked, "Careful, this room is too small for that. You might injure a horn." Then she got serious again, even conveying something akin to compassion as she said, "Dr. Toro, you seem confused. I was inquiring into your inner cow but you responded by acting like a bull. Do you think you're a bull, in fact, as opposed to an instantiation of the essence of bullhood with the multifaceted, multilayered meanings that entails? But perhaps I confuse you. Sometimes I think I am a cow; other times, that I am in contact with my inner cow. Dr. Toro, I need you to stay sane but not

so sane that you can't accompany me on my journey within."

Jungian analysts speak of going on a journey with their patients, but Jung himself warned of the danger inherent in such journeys...the danger of being devoured by the collective unconscious and its archetypes, those unconscious templates of human experience. He named and described many of them. The repository of the feminine in man he called the anima and of the masculine in the woman he called the animus and went on to elucidate many other potentialities of the psyche.

Dr. Batty resumed her plea: "Please, please let go enough to identify with my creativity, with my playfulness, with my need to explore all of my inward potentiality including the darkest recesses, while retaining enough of a grip on the mundane, the everyday, the conventional social reality, to prevent both of us from going mad."

At that moment I realized how brilliant she was and how utterly (damn, I can't stop using that word!) terrified of madness she was. That was why she came to me—not for vocational rehabilitation on however deep an unconscious level, nor for help disseminating her message—but to have a companion who kept one foot anchored in reality as I accompanied her on her dangerous mission. And the foot had to be so firmly planted that it would save both of us. She

was right and I suddenly knew that I was just as close to the vortex as was Dr. Batty. It was then that my heart melted and I tumbled into another sort of madness, the kind that Shakespeare had in mind when he said, “The madman, the poet, and the lover are of one compact,” and fell hopelessly, irrevocably in love with Dr. Batty. By then I had sort of regained my equilibrium after charging her—at least regained it in the sense that I could once again distinguish between inner and outer cows. So my being in love didn’t quite entail sharing all Dr. Batty’s preoccupations. That is to say that in spite of the ardor of my love, I was not yet fully converted. I was not even open to Jungian thought at that point and still considered myself a Freudian, although looking back on it that was never strictly true.

Dr. Batty must have sensed some of this, for her seductive, triumphantly playful demeanor had completely receded and was no longer in evidence. Nor was the Dr. Batty who was terrified of going mad. She was once more the bovine iconographer who was ambivalent about being a bovine iconographer and who had come to me for treatment to resolve her ambivalence. The perky, serious, almost professorial Dr. Batty came to the fore, addressing me in a tone of the utmost gravity, “Let us leave the question of whether your cow is inner or outer in abeyance for the moment and return to

the question of what kind of cow are you.”

I felt as if she had become my analyst rather than I hers. She continued, “Let me reprise the list of types we’ve been discussing these past weeks.” I realized that for Dr. Batty our recent sessions had been lectures, my consulting room a lecture hall at the university, or to be more accurate, it was the first Institute of Bovine Iconography and I the sole pupil, although perhaps standing in for an undetermined multitude who would eventually study at the Institute. Without knowing it, I had already fulfilled Dr. Batty’s dreams. She proceeded, “Now listen carefully before you decide. I just don’t believe you’re a Guernsey. You could be an Auroch except that they are extinct, or a Brown Swiss or a Hereford or an Aberdeen or an Angus or a Holstein or a Texas Longhorn or a Ganado Bravo or a Toro de Lidie or a Hindervalden or a Yakow or an Augerone or a Randell Blue or a Linebach or a Watusi or an Ayreline or a Black Baldy or a Blade Aquitaine or an Ayrshire or a Brahman or a Braunbich or a Brangus or a Canargue or a Devon or a Chianina or a Dutch Beltus or a Fulani or a Galloway or a Jersey or a Kuri or a Marchigiana or a Red Sindlin or a Sinepol or a Wager or any of two thousand other breeds.” Dr. Batty pulled a miniature projector from her purse, inserted a slide carousel, and projected cow after cow onto

my office wall. I was afraid she would quiz me on the names of the breeds being projected, but mercifully she didn't. Beyond Holstein, Guernsey, Brown Swiss, and Texas Longhorn, I was completely lost. By then my head was spinning so rapidly that I barely heard her ask, "Well, which breed are you?" When I failed to answer, she whipped out another large box of slides and said, "Perhaps you are one of the other two thousand breeds." That was more than I could take so in an act of pure defense I asserted my Guernseyness. Dr. Batty returned the threatening battery of slides to her briefcase and sighed repeatedly. Finally she ventured, "Well, you certainly don't look very Guernsey, but I suppose it is possible." Somehow I managed to say, "I'm afraid we will have to stop."

Dr. Batty, who always respected time boundaries and unlike many anxious patients never talked on when I ended a session, promptly rose, gathered her various weapons and let me escort her to the door. When I looked out into my waiting room I saw three patients impatiently waiting there. Unbelievably I had run over by three hours in my session with Dr. Batty and these poor folks just sat and waited. I hurriedly mumbled something about the relativity of time and asked Mr. Rack, whose session followed Dr. Batty's and who was tormented by sadistic fantasies, to come in. He immediately

shared his reverie about my being drawn and quartered. The next patient opined that I had died in the office and that was why I had kept him waiting, which seemed off since I was evidently quite alive albeit discombobulated. The third patient defecated on the waiting room floor and left. I never saw any of them again. It was just as well I eventually became co-director of the Institute since my practice shrank exponentially as my work with Dr. Batty continued.

Having reached a mutual agreement on my breed-variety-subspecies—what you will—that I was a Guernsey Dr. Batty, thank God, didn't resume her enumeration of the remaining two thousand extant breeds, let alone share her encyclopedic knowledge of the thousands more of extinct, even prehistoric breeds. Since I was on the far side of saturation, retaining virtually nothing of the later stages of Dr. Batty's exposition, this was definitely a case of less is more. As time went on, I drove most of my other patients away, so it became unproblematic to schedule the extra sessions Dr. Batty now craved, indeed demanded. She used them for a highly rhetorical, persuasive purpose, still in her academic incarnation, not that these 'lectures,' which they resembled far more than conventional therapy sessions, lacked emotion. *Au contraire*—they were delivered with intense passion. I flatter myself that at least a portion of Dr. Batty's

potent passion was attributable, not to her all-consuming love of her subject matter, but to growing feelings for me. And there was certainly some truth in that. She was not in love with me in the way I was in love with her, yet a seed was growing. Of course at that stage her love was unexpressed.

What she did do in the ensuing months was to bury me in brilliantly delivered, magnificently researched synopses—not always so synoptic—expositions of the history of primitive, non-Western, Western, literary, philosophic and aesthetic bovine iconography. By the time she finished I was totally, unquestionably ‘converted’ to her cause and from there it was but a short journey to co-directorship of the Institute for Bovine Iconography. As I can’t possibly give you all that Dr. Batty gave me during those months, nor capture the beauty with which that gift was given, let me try to give you at least the flavor of her exposition so you have some notion of the centrality of cows, and their representation, in the psychic economy and cultural life of the human species.

Dr. Batty started with the cow in religious art. “Can you imagine a manger scene without cows? And without depiction of the Christ child in the manger there would be no Christian art. It behooves the Pope in recognition of Christianity’s debt to these

artists to canonize half a dozen of them at the minimum. Of course, Jewish tradition prohibits graven images so there is no realistic Jewish art depicting biblical cows. Nevertheless, ‘cattle’ are the only animals mentioned in the creation myth. Orthodox Jews believe that the sighting of a red cow will precede the coming of the Messiah.”

“But it is not only in Western religious art that the cow shines. Think of the Hindu worship of cows and their protection as sacred animals; think of all the cultures that worship bulls or cows or both and depicted those objects of veneration in their art—on their pottery—on their cave walls—on their tombs—on their temples—in their shrines. There would be no religions and no codes of morality growing out of those religions without the cow.”

I interrupted to challenge her implication that there could be no morality without religion. Dr. Batty gave me one of the most wilting of her looks. “Dr. Toro, I didn’t say that religion was necessary for morality—the belief that it is a precondition of the ethical is incorrect—what I did say was that historical record, the factual state of things, the empirical evidence, is that morality and religion have been connected, and that there could be no religion without cows and the human propensity to see the divine, the infinite, and the eternal in them.”

Again I interrupted, “Surely, Dr. Batty, you claim too much. Cows are hardly ethereal and many tribes—many cultures—worshipped other animals—the Egyptians the cat, for instance. Alligators, wolves, birds, bears have all been totem animals.”

“No, no,” she broke in. “You don’t understand at all. Cows aren’t merely one of many possible totem animals; they’re much more than totems, they transcend mere symbolic representation. They directly and immediately partake of the divine essence. But let’s leave my metaphysical convictions aside and stick to the historical evidence—the human record. It is incontestable that cattle played a key role in the civilizing process and without their domestication there would have been no civilization. In fact, the domestication of cattle marks the advent of civilization no less than the cow in the manger marks the Advent of the Christ child. When Aurochs became bovines Cro-Magnons became homo sapiens.”

I was completely deflated. Dr. Batty was simply too brilliant for me. The connections she made—her ability to see cows throughout human development—across time—across place—across cultures—and to rhapsodize their transcendent significance was truly awe-inspiring. There was such beauty in the tapestry she wove using bovine warp and woof as she threaded her way through the centuries.

Hers was an artistry that encompassed not only space, but time. Her vocation permitted her to become the first artist working in four dimensions. Ah, I go too far. Batty has bewitched me and my judgment fails.

She went on—and on and on—for session after session—until one bright, sunny morning she fell silent. Her face twisted and contorted into a paroxysm of intensity. Evidently she was struggling to give birth to a new idea. Then her face relaxed, assuming a beatific radiance as she sprang off the analytic couch, faced me, declaring, “Dr. Toro, we must immediately inaugurate the ‘Dial-a-Cow’ service. Can you imagine—any troubled person anywhere in the world will be able to call ‘Dial-a-Cow’ and be comforted and be able to return to their life untroubled and serene. And I think you will be the one engendering such tranquility in the tormented.”

“Me? I’m not a cow—at least most of the time I don’t think I am—and my inner cow almost never moos.”

Dr. Batty dismissed the objection, “Of course you will be able to field the thousands of calls you will get daily or should I say dairy.”

Startled, I replied, “Thousands of cow—I mean thousands of

calls—you must be crazy.”

Not to be put off, Dr. Batty came back with, “Of course I’m crazy. Why do you think I’m here? But that’s irrelevant.”

I responded, “But Dr. Batty, what would I say to the callers? Besides if we get thousands of calls, when would I have time to see my few remaining patients?”

For once Dr. Batty looked nonplused, but she quickly recovered. “Are you retarded? All you have to do is moo. How long does it take to moo softly, gently, soothingly into the phone? And your patients would be soothed at the same time. If you were to get ten calls during a session the patient would leave cured.”

That was the origin of call 1-800-Cow-Dung. Of course we had to change the number, but at first that was the only seven-digit cow-related number we could come up with. When ‘Dial-a-Cow’ started, I was the only mooer. Now the Institute employs several hundred mooers who provide seven-day-a-week, twenty-four-hour coverage. Dr. Batty feels it is important that we use people rather than cows for the mooing response since they provide living proof that it is possible to be in contact with your inner cow. All of our mooers are in constant communication with their cows within and

communicating that connection by their very being provides hope to legions of the desperate. And of course we now have our monthly Moo-Ins. But that takes us too far ahead of our story.

After I rather reluctantly agreed to become the first ‘Dial-a-Cow’ mooer, Dr. Batty resumed her discourse on bovine iconography. “The cow was there from the beginning. Western art is generally held to begin with the cave paintings in southern France. They are estimated to be seventeen thousand years old. And what do they feature—cows! What else? For cows are not only the primordial source of religion and the realm of the sacred; they are the primordial source of art and the aesthetic. They are also intimately involved in the very earliest manifestations of sympathetic magic in which people assumed the identity of sacred objects and animals. The cow was at the very core of these developments as tribe after tribe adumbrated rituals in which they totally identified with—virtually became—cows. Finding the cow within is a virtual resurrection of archaic sympathetic magic and serves a similar function—expansion of consciousness. It also provides a link with the very first of our ancient ancestors all those eons ago. Hence, it inculcates the universal empathy with human beings everywhere, everytime. Thereby finding that inner cow becomes a profound ethical act and

brings about our ethical transformation, moo-ving the finder from egoistic narcissism to universal identification.”

She barely paused for breath before expostulating on the code of the bull in Crete, and on the bovine foundation of the entire Minoan culture. “So not only are Judaism and Christianity unthinkable without cows, so is Greek culture in its philosophy, intellectual history, and ideologies. Matthew Arnold’s famous essay on the Western tradition having its source in the fusion of and the dynamic tension between the Hebraic and the Hellenistic, as illuminating as it is, also misses the essential point—namely that both the Hebrew and the Hellenistic are bovine to the core. Thus the cow reconciles the tension between these two strands of influence that made the West—for better or worse—what it is. Look how sacrifice of bovines is intrinsic to biblical religion, just as Greece is unthinkable without the Minotaur and the nexus of mythological stories related to him, myths that account for the foundation of Athena’s city, Athens, and all that event has meant for human beings, and not only in the West. Athens and its meaning is universal...It would not be too much to say that democracy itself is indebted to the cow. No cow, no Athens; no Athens, no democracy.” I demurred, but as usual Dr. Batty dismissed my demurrals not only decisively, but

contemptuously.

She elaborated: “The rape of Europa by Zeus in the form of a bull is one of the primal myths of the West. Not only does the bull god, rape Europa, he takes her to Crete where their offspring and their progeny produce the Minotaur. The Minoan civilization of Crete, and later the Mycenaean civilization of the Greek mainland that eventually conquered Crete, took home the cow, and the foundational myth of Athens itself concerns the slaying of the Minotaur. So classical Greece is, so to speak, more or less of cow derivation.”

Dr. Batty did concede that all classical Greek consciousness wasn't bovinely determined, but nevertheless, she insisted that, iconographically speaking, Zeus's rape of Europa was seminal, becoming one of the most frequently depicted myths in Western art. Elaborating, Dr. Batty went on, “Medieval paintings, Renaissance paintings, baroque paintings, and even some modern paintings depict this quasi-divine primal bull carrying off Europa. It was only in bovine representation that humans could represent and integrate the full implications of male aggression. So once again, man could only become fully conscious of himself, could only gain self-awareness, by connecting with the cow within.”

My earlier interruption did, however, apparently disrupt her flow of thought, for when she resumed her first statement was, “Where would we be without the cow who jumped over the moon?” This was evidently rhetorical so I didn’t answer, and Dr. Batty was soon back into bovine mythology and iconography. “Egypt, India, and Rome worshipped the cow—in fact, Italy means ‘calf land’—and had ceremonies and rituals that were thoroughly bovine. So many myths and so many cultures involve cows and bulls that it is not unreasonable to claim that cows are also the source of literature.”

I was fairly convinced that here at least Dr. Batty was indeed going beyond the evidence. But I had learned better than to interrupt her so I remained silent. She went on to argue that not only were civilization, religion, art, morality, and literature bovine to the core, but the economy was, too. “You know—of course you don’t know—being such an ignoramus—” She saw the hurt look on my face and apologized for that one—“that the Latin word ‘pecunia’ which becomes English ‘pecuniary’ derives from ‘pecus’ meaning ‘cattle.’ And cattle were featured on Roman coins, another manifestation of a ubiquitous iconography. Then there’s the bride price, almost always figured in numbers of cows, whether in Africa or in Asia. The word ‘fee’ also derives from ‘pecus’ and wealth is everywhere measured in

the number of cows possessed, so there would be no economy without the cow.”

“And there would be no laws, no legal system, without cows. Cows were the first property, and in every legal system it was the law assigning rights to owners of herds that became the foundation of the law.” I couldn’t help but think that the land and the laws regarding it must have been antecedent to the development of the cow laws, but I didn’t vocalize the thought because I knew that Dr. Batty would refute my hypothesis by maintaining that the land existed as a pasture for cows in the beginning, not as fields for agriculture. If she is right, we owe our system of law to cows.

Dr. Batty went on, “Further, they were absolutely central to the development of pastoral life. They not only pulled the plows, they fed the plowmen, and often the first laws were those that protected the rights of plowmen. The very cows that made the laws possible played an extensive role in the transition from nomadic life to more settled agricultural life, thus preparing the way for the first civilizations. Without cows there would be no civilization.”

Dr. Batty didn’t leave any field of human endeavor unidentified with the cow. Yet she still hadn’t said much about iconography—bovine, that is—itself. So her next statement, which I

anticipated to be about the visual arts, surprised me—nay, shocked me.

“Dr. Toro, did you know that no animal farts like the cow?” I allowed that I hadn’t known that—nowhere in the curriculum in my kindergarten, primary school, middle school, high school, college, or graduate or professional school had there been any time devoted to the subject of bovine flatulence. And it hadn’t been alluded to in the various adult education experiences I have had. Of course Freud’s developmental theory included an anal stage, yet in all of my analytic training no one had ever mentioned the explosion of gas from the bovine anus. Since I was ignorant of so much else, Dr. Batty was unruffled by the utter vacuity of my knowledge of this area. So she explained, “Cows are not able to belch, and given their four stomachs, their penchant for regurgitation, and their hours upon hours of cud-chewing—incidentally if you are serious about getting in contact with your inner cow you will have to start chewing your cud—they produce reams of gas and it has to go somewhere. Eliminate belching and there’s only one place for it to go—hence the prodigious discharge of the same in every herd. Some iconographers maintain that music has its roots—or at least is indebted to—cows and bovine farting.”

“But Dr. Batty, the passing of wind is not a bovine monopoly.” For once she was shook and admitted that only part of her—iconographer number one, so to speak—believed that there was a connection between bovine flatulence and the origin of music while iconographers two, three, four...weren’t so sure. She certainly was complex. I hadn’t realized, that although she was the sole iconographer of bovinity, that iconographer had an almost infinite number of manifestations and aspects. Given the internal disagreement over this particular theory, she dropped it.

Quickly recovering, she went on to wax eloquently on the role of cow chips in human history. “There would be no architecture without cows, for the first mortar was cow dung, nor would there have been homes with hearths, homes as we know them, literally and figuratively places of warmth—without cow chips, which are the earliest and certainly the most reliable sources of fuel. Nor could agriculture develop without cow manure functioning as the primary fertilizer. And how impoverished our linguistic capability would be if we couldn’t refer to the pretentious, the inflated, the self-deceptive, and the plain dishonest in discourse as ‘bullshitters.’ No, without cow droppings, human life would be a dreary thing. And I haven’t even mentioned the origins of sport in cow chip throwing contests.

Children the world over have cow dung wars.”

She broke off her recitation of the roles cow droppings have played everywhere to talk about bullfighting and the role of cows in Spanish culture. But this was just too painful for her. The whole ritual certainly was central to the understanding of Iberia and Dr. Batty well knew it. Yet the whole sequence of first enraging the bull, then killing him, was more than Dr. Batty could stand to stay with. Yet, in her desire to be inclusive, to convey all the ways bovines and our relation to them are determinative of who we are, she managed to say quite a bit about bullfighting before she broke off abruptly after putting the best face on the ‘sport’ that she could.

“Dr. Toro, as repulsive as bullfighting is to me, I have to consider that at one level it is a morality play. It tells us that no matter how powerful, energetic, feisty, and determined we may be, in the end the forces opposed to us will destroy us. We are the bull and we identify with his beauty and with the life force he manifests. Yet for all the strength in that force, its opposite, the force of death, incarnated in the matador, is too strong and wins every time. Even if we, or our representative, the bull, succeeds in killing the matador too, there will always be other matadors. So struggle as we may, the outcome is always the same. Of course that doesn’t mean the

struggle isn't worth fighting—it is—and the bullfight teaches a bitter truth that we need to know.”

She could go on no longer—to educate people by dramatizing an existential truth at bovine cost was unacceptable to her. Turning away from the death of bulls to the world of the bovine fertility rites in Rome, she asked, “You know that the bride in ancient Rome told the groom, ‘Where thou art the Bull, I am the Cow.’” Tears rolled down her cheeks as she spoke these words. She continued, “The bull is the ultimate symbol of masculinity and the cow the ultimate symbol of femininity. What man doesn't want to be a bull; what woman doesn't want to be a cow?” Although I couldn't altogether agree, I decided to let that one go.

Dr. Batty then turned to art proper, “Cows, of course, play a central role, not only in medieval nativity paintings; they continue to do so in the Renaissance and on into modern times. And cows were not only painted admiring the infant Jesus and bringing joy to all surrounding the child; they were painted in the fields as they grazed, painted being motherly, painted nursing calves. Painted in the forms of milk, of cheese, of butter, and of meat—all ways in which they have nurtured, fed, and sustained humanity. And the milk, cheese, butter, and meat preserve and transmit and retain the essence of

bovine vitality.”

“Cows are just as central to landscape painting, whether of the East or the West. Did you ever notice how cows inevitably place themselves perfectly in a landscape? Their aesthetic sense is impeccable. Each cow just seems to know her compositional duty and places herself exactly where she should be.”

I thought that the positioning of cows had to do with the hierarchy of the herd and the availability of browse, but didn't dare to say so to my 'patient,' if that was still what she was. I had grown timid in my dealings with Dr. Batty. What kind of therapist could I be for her if I was afraid of her? Yet, it wasn't only fear of her quick wit and devastatingly sharp intelligence that led me to keep my mouth shut. As I called before my mind's eye the herds I'd seen, I had to admit that they—the cows—were so placed as to be constitutive of a magnificent composition. Each element—that is, each individual cow—contributed to a visual constellation that gave aesthetic pleasure in part because those individual elements were bound together by spatial and pictorial values that created a wholly 'right' gestalt. They even managed to achieve color balance. If you don't believe me, take a close look at the next group of cows you come across in the countryside and you will see that Dr. Batty is

right. How this can be I have no idea. Are they unconscious compositional geniuses? Maybe, but can each individual cow see herself in relationship to the rest of the herd of which she is a part? Or was the aesthetic harmony prefigured by the divine artificer when He made herds hierarchical? Again, I don't know. It remains a mystery.

But Dr. Batty wasn't concerned with the how; she was concerned with the phenomenon itself of the beauty with which cows instinctively, intuitively, deliberately, artistically, genetically or what have you, arrange themselves in landscape after landscape. She then returned to the human painters who had understood the essence of cowness and its relationship to the rest of nature. She expressed herself in a series of rhetorical questions. "Would Dutch landscape painting be conceivable without cows? Or Flemish or French, for that matter? And English landscape painting? Where would Constable have been without the cow? His painting 'Winchester Cathedral' would be nowhere near the masterpiece it is without the cows in the foreground. The peace and serenity they radiate prefigures the peace and serenity to be found in the cathedral itself and the heaven to which the cathedral is an annex. And where would Corot's landscapes be without cows? Devoid of the unique mixture

of domesticity, peace, tranquility and mystery that they convey! And what of the Impressionists? Manet, Monet, and Van Gogh all painted cows in their inimitable styles. And those styles were inexorably intertwined with solving the artistic problem of how best to convey what a cow really is.”

“Realists, romantics, impressionists all did lots of cows and so did the moderns. What would modern art be without Picasso’s ‘Guernica,’ in which the cow plays an integral part and assumes a central role? And how can you think of Chagall without thinking of cows? Cows are incarnations of pure joy. And what about the Americans? Could we have such a marvelous painting as Edward Hicks’ ‘The Peaceable Kingdom’ without the cow? What about Grandma Moses? Or Georgia O’Keeffe? Neither is thinkable without cows or cow skulls or other manifestations of bovinity. And Frederick Remington? Or the Hudson River painters? And I could name so many others. Can you think of America without the cowboy? Or without his depiction in painting, and the films, of course, without his cows? Can you think of the American West without ‘C’mon, little dogie’? No, cows and their representation are integral to our identity. And finally, look at the exemplification of the essence of faithfulness, of joy, of energy, of freedom, of vitality,

of being at one with self and with the cosmos in Marc's Yellow Cow (reproduced on the cover of this book) and tell me that bovine iconography isn't one of the things that make life worth living."

The truth was that I couldn't. It was shortly after that that Dr. Batty asked me to leave my analytic career and join her crusade. But that's the wrong word; crusade implies violence and there wasn't anything violent in Dr. Batty's quest to learn more and more about bovine iconography in all epochs of human creativity, and to help people discover their inner cows with all that that meant in the way of inner transformation. Dr. Batty believed that that inner transformation would ultimately transform the world. I didn't believe that then, but I do now. I had to be convinced—converted if you prefer—by love, by passion, and by intellect, and so even though my conversion was still a work in process, I accepted her offer and we've been working together ever since.

It has taken a long time, but now we have the 'Phone-a-Cow' line and Institute of which I am inordinately proud of my co-directorship. And soon we're going to have a book—the one you are reading—to help folks make that link to bovinity, thereby establishing a connection with the vitality and serenity within them. Of course, I had to discover my own inner cow, just as the analyst

must be analyzed before he or she can analyze, before I was in a position to assist others on their journeys.

As co-directors, we bring different strengths to the Institute. Dr. Batty, of course, brings her encyclopedic knowledge of bovine iconography. Nobody knows more about the role cows have played in human history, economy, art, myth, religion and sport. But I know some things too. It turns out that psychoanalysis has an enormous amount to contribute to our work.

Now, as Dr. Batty has pointed out, the cow within is no less real for being a product of our capacity for visualization. The way in which fantasy is 'real' is a central and much vexed philosophical problem. But fantasy is certainly real in the sense that it exists. It is real, at least in the way that fantasies are real, i.e., exist as fantasy, but they also may be real in the way Elsie the cow is real. I used to think those who couldn't make a distinction between the kind of cow that imagination allows us to construct as an aid to our liberation, and the kind of cow you can milk and actually drink the milk, were crazy. Since their 'reality testing' was so radically deficient, they were 'psychotic.' There is an old story about the difference between a neurosis and a psychosis. The neurotic builds dream castles in the air; the psychotic lives in them; and the psychiatrist collects the rent.

I no longer collect the rent. Nor do I any longer think that these distinctions are of the least importance. Dr. Batty taught me that.

C. Wright Mills was a famous sociologist who taught at Columbia University. He coined the phrase ‘crackpot realist,’ which fit me very well. Dr. Batty has helped me to see that crackpot realists are so hung up on being realistic that they are not realistic at all. If those super-realists are right that the cave painting cows and the manger painting cows and the ‘Yellow Cow’ are somehow ontologically deficient—less real—than the cows you will find in the field, then they have missed out on a great deal of what makes life worth living. Ontology is the science of being, so ontological deficiency means having less being—less substantiality. But that is nonsense. Without in any way denigrating any cow in any field or any entire herd of cows chewing their cud, it’s simply not true that the cow in the painting is less there than the cow in the field. She’s not less there; she’s there in a different way. And that applies not only to the cow in the painting, but to the cow in my mind’s eye—and to the cow I discover, construct, or whatever, within me.

Dr. Batty has taught me to take my inner life seriously, seriously in an entirely different way. Of course all my analytic training emphasized psychic life, the world of thought and feeling

within me. But that training and the sensibility that flowed from it had a different quality—it smelled and tasted and felt in a different way. My analytic inwardness was somehow mechanistic, a mechanism whose function was explanatory. It was a heuristic device rather than something to be experienced and savored in its own right. Dr. Batty's inwardness is aesthetic; psychoanalytic—and other psychological—accounts of inwardness are scientific. Not that the distinction is so radically dichotomous—the 'real' world never quite coincides with our neat categories. Yet it is mostly like that. Dr. Batty's inner cow evokes awe and wonder; psychological accounts of fantasy and the fantasy life attempt to explain it. Our minds, including their unconscious aspects, are seen in a way analogous to the cogs and wheels and gears of an incredibly intricate machine. There's beauty in that, too, but our aesthetic response to the mind seen as intricate machine is incidental to its function, which is to explain our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors—to give an account of what drives us. It is a causal account—gear A pushes valve B or their psychoequivalents and behavior or feeling results. Not so in aesthetic response. It explains nothing—has no primary referent outside itself. It is what it is in an eternal now—a moment both within and transcendent of time itself. It is an experience, not an account of an experience. That is equally true of my response to the cattle in the

cave paintings and my response to the cattle resonant in the private cave of my mind.

Let us take a closer look at the ontological status—the kind and quality of reality it has or doesn't have. That is, what is the 'real' nature of the cow within, or, for that matter, of any product of fantasy? Parenthetically, I didn't discover any of this until after my analysis with Dr. Batty. But our role reversal is another story; suffice to say that she proved to be a superlative analyst. Plato wrote that 'the pupil learns because he/she loves the teacher,' and Freud wrote that 'love is the great teacher.' And they are both right—at least they are in my case—it was love for Dr. Batty that facilitated, indeed made possible, my learning all that I learned from her.

To return to our discussion of the exact nature of the inner cow. There are a number of possibilities: it may subsist as an actual entity within us; it may be a representation of a cluster of potentials within us; or of attributes, for example, serenity, that we may have already actualized; or both the potential for and the actualization of those traits. It may be a sign or symbol denoting a gestalt of bovine characteristics that are either a part of us, or our aspirations to acquire that gestalt; it may be a purely unconscious phenomenon affecting us without our awareness; or it may be a highly conscious

project that we struggle to actualize. It may be an act of imagination, or of fantasy, whose purpose is not to discover a cow that in some sense is already there but, to the contrary, creates it. And if the latter is the case we may regard our internal bovine as aesthetic product, which we both articulate and appreciate; that is to say, we are both the painters and the viewers at the exhibition at the inner gallery. Or we may regard that cow as an instance of pure playfulness so that the emphasis shifts from focusing on the product of our playfulness—the cow—to the playfulness itself, and the value of the inner cow comes to reside in its ability to release our capacity for play. And finally, we may regard it as what the great British pediatrician and psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott, called a ‘transitional object,’ by which he meant something that exists outside of us as object or idea that has no intrinsic affective (emotional) meaning until we give it one in a creative act, thereby infusing it with emotional meaning. Linus’s blanket in the comic strip ‘Peanuts’ is the quintessential transitional object. As blanket it is just so much wool; as Linus’s blanket it is a source of comfort, nurture, and security. A substitute if not an actual replacement for mother. Transitional objects reside neither in the inner world nor in the external world; they exist in a transitional space which is both and neither. It may be that the cow within is best understood as a transitional object.

Let's look at these possibilities in more detail. The first notion is that the cow within really lives there, much as Bessie lives in the barn. Of course, this is not a corporeal existence; rather the inner cow exists as an idea, as thought-substance, something mental rather than as flesh. But seeing the cow as idea makes it no less real. It is not an idea in our head, or not merely that. Rather it exists as concept. This way of looking at things goes back to Plato and fourth century B.C. Athens. Plato thought that particular things—like cows—are instances of an Idea, or pattern, or archetype, or template of a universal notion, in this case of bovinity, which subsists somewhere. Plato is never quite clear on this—on the where—perhaps the where is the mind of God or some sort of Platonic heaven. The individual things, the particular instances, are said to 'participate' in the universal pattern, and derive whatever reality they may have from that participation in something more real—the Idea, or as Plato sometimes calls it the 'form' of, in this case, the Cow. So if Plato is right, the cow within is pure thought; it is the essence and quintessence of bovinity.

The relationship between universals and particulars is a vexed problem in philosophy. In the Middle Ages, there was an ongoing dispute between the 'nominalists,' who thought universals were but

names—hence had only nominal reality, and the ‘realists,’ who thought that universals were not only real, but more real than particulars. The universals contained the essence of the object in question and defined the whatness—the quiddity of that whatness—the qualities that make whatever it is what it is.

Seen from this Platonic point of view, my idea of the cow is an instantiation of the divine essence of the eternal cow—of the archetype of bovinity. So our particular vision of the cow within is indeed an idea, but not the Idea—it is a mental image of a cow, not an insight into cowness itself. Now, you may ask, what possible use is this Platonic balderdash to me in my search for the cow within me? Well, it is of great value, for if the instance, the particular individual cow, leads us into understanding the eternal universal, the pure form itself, then our notion of this particular cow—as idea with a small ‘i’- opens the door to a vision of the entire world of eternal forms. If that is the meaning of the inner cow, its potential is unlimited.

Dr. Batty and I spent hours, indeed whole days, discussing the Platonic cow and the Platonic notion of eternal essences—the forms. I never ceased to be amazed at Dr. Batty’s brilliance; it seemed there was nothing that she did not know. Yet, for all our

fascination with Platonism, in the end we realized that neither of us was a ‘realist’ in this special philosophic sense. For us, universals were generalizations from, extractions of, many experiences of the particular. Yes, we both had a notion of the essence of bovinity, of that which makes a cow a cow, but we arrived at that conception by induction, by abstraction of the common traits shared by Guernseys, Swiss Browns, Holsteins, and all the others. We never did quite define exactly what traits made a cow a cow; yet we had no doubt that there was such a cluster of traits, a true bovine essence. So we weren’t ‘realists,’ but we weren’t ‘nominalists’ either. For a long time it seemed as if we couldn’t resolve this question.

Then Dr. Batty said, “Aristotle had it right. His conceptualist theory is the correct one.”

“Conceptualist?” What on earth—or what in that Platonic heaven—was she talking about?

She went on, “Yes, yes, Aristotle had it right. The essence of cowness, the quiddity of bovinity, does exist—it must exist—for without it, how could a cow be a cow?” At that point Dr. Batty started weeping. The mere thought that it might be nothing that made a cow a cow was more than she could even contemplate.

My heart went out to her—not only did she love cows more than Rockefeller loved money, she was a true intellectual. Ideas really mattered to her. In discussing the nominalist—realist controversy as applied to cows she actually lived within the debate. Her intellectual passion was awesome to see. Yet another part of me thought, “*Oy vey is mir!* The quiddity of bovinity! Gimme a break! Maybe she really is nuts and I should convert from my conversion and revert to my analytic self. Besides, what has all this to do with finding my inner cow?”

Dr. Batty must have been reading my mind for she continued, “You probably can’t see what this has to do with finding your inner cow. But it does—how can you possibly find it if you don’t know what you’re looking for? It is absolutely—” she paused pregnantly, “absolutely vital that we determine—define if you prefer—the exact nature of the cow we are looking for so we have at least a decent chance of finding it.” I conceded the point. Batty went off into a reverie that somehow seemed connected to her reiterated “absolutely.” After what seemed like an endless interlude, Batty collected herself and continued in a quieter, far more assured tone, “Yes, Aristotle had it right when he thought that universals existed all right—they had to in some sense or other or there couldn’t be

particulars which exemplify them, but they don't exist in a Platonic heaven or in the mind of God. They exist in the objects themselves—in the particulars.” She grew rapturous. “David, do you know what that means? It means that every single existent cow—whether existing in the field or in your mind or in your unconscious—instantiates the essence of bovinity—contains the eternal form—the divine image of cowness.” Just as she fell into a swoon she sighed, “That’s what conceptualism means.” I thought, “‘Instantiation of the essence of cowness’? This way lies madness; let me out of here.”

When Dr. Batty came out of her swoon I abandoned my plan to give her a shot of thiorazine and decided that my conversion was irrevocable. I had no choice but to continue my journey down the convoluted byways of Dr. Batty’s extraordinary mind. She was calmer now as she started talking of the inner cow as unconscious imago. ‘Imago?’ Where on earth did she get that word? It disappeared from psychological and psychoanalytic discourse several generations ago. The early analysts, Freud’s disciples and students, had used ‘imago’ to mean a mental representation, conscious or unconscious. Was that what Dr. Batty meant? Who could tell? Her mind is so mercurial that you never know where it might fly.

And sure enough she had hardly finished her discourse on the

inner cow as imago, when she abruptly veered off into a distinction between the phenomenal cow and the noumenal cow; the cow as we perceive her and the cow-in-itself—the cow as it exists apart from our perception of it. Dr. Batty started crying bitterly as she quoted the great philosopher Immanuel Kant to the effect that we can never know ultimate reality; the thing-in-itself ; rather we can only know reality as we construct it. “No, no, it can’t be. If Kant is right I’ll never meet my noumenal cow; my cow as she exists in ultimate reality. Inner or outer, I will never know her; the best I can do is to know the mere appearance of that cow. It’s so awful—never, never, never, never, never to experience my cow, experience all that she is, apart from my perception of her.” Dr. Batty continued to sob as if her heart would break.

All in all I decided that I preferred Platonic notions of the eternal form of the cow to German philosophical notions that the cow—or anything else for that matter—was ultimately unknowable. But that was hardly germane to the present situation—Dr. Batty was becoming hysterical—she simply couldn’t stand the thought that she would never ‘really’ know her cow.

I had to comfort her somehow, so I took her in my arms and stroked her hair gently, saying, “If Kant is right, Esmeralda,” for that

is her name, “it’s the human condition—and I suppose the bovine condition too, to only be able to see—to know—to understand—in the ways we see—know—and understand. It isn’t a personal failing. And maybe this epistemological limitation”—I could tell she loved my using the word ‘epistemological’—”is not all bad. Shouldn’t cows have some private sanctuary where they can be without being known? We need to let them have their noumenal selves—to allow them—out of disinterested love—to celebrate the existence of an inwardness that we cannot know. Maybe Plato’s essence of cowness is the noumenal cow, and he did think that we could gain knowledge of the eternal essences through the proper use of the intellect. Yes, Esmeralda, we need to do both—to let be and to strive for knowledge—a knowledge that neither intrudes nor controls, but simply is, just as the universal cow—the cow-in-itself-simply is.”

“Oh, David, that’s so beautiful.” She snuggled ever closer as I stroked and soothed her.

“Darling,” (I didn’t know I was going to say ‘darling’ until I heard myself saying it) “the cow-in-itself is neither spatial nor temporal—it is pure idea. Doesn’t some mystery have to remain? If we could not, not know everything, we would lose our sense of the sacred.”

“Yes, David, you’re so right. The noumenal cow, like the essence of cowness, is eternal and can only be so because it has an existence apart from our knowledge of it. Oh, darling, you’ve made me see it: the cow-in-itself isn’t tragic at all; I need not have cried after all.” And she kissed me for the first time. After we made love, Dr. Batty dreamily sighed, “That was a noumenal experience.”

When I woke up, a transfigured Dr. Batty resumed her explanation of the meaning of the cow within. But now she didn’t rant or rave or pontificate or lecture; rather, she lovingly explained and explained with me, not at me. It was a kind of continuation of our lovemaking, now as an intellectual mutuality rather than a physical one. I was no longer being indoctrinated by a superior being; I was sharing an intellectual adventure in which I was fully participatory. And of course I was no longer the omnipotent analyst explaining my patient’s mental mechanisms to her. Our search for the inner cow, still in its preliminary stage of defining its nature, had already borne fruit—and such wondrous, succulent fruit—that enhanced our communication almost to the point of making two—one. I decided that I was in a receptive mood, so I let Dr. Batty—now Esmeralda to me—take the lead in our exploration of the Jungian cow, the next possible meaning of the inner cow that we

explored.

Carl Jung was in many ways a terrible person, but he had fascinating ideas. For him the personality—his word for the totality of our being—is complex. Far more complex than his teacher Freud’s map of the mind. I’ll let Dr. Batty explain it.

“David, I know you’re a Freudian...”

I interrupted, “No I’m not; I admire much about his thought, but I’m a Davidist.”

She laughed, “Well, it’s true that you are singular, but I was your analysand. Believe me, you’re a Freudian at heart. So let me tell you more about Jung—I know you don’t like him—but try and keep an open mind.”

Freud, of course, talked about the unconscious—talked a lot about it, but his unconscious was a personal one, a repository of disavowed, repressed wishes, dreams, and fantasies, as well as a repository of traumatic memories too painful to bring to consciousness. Turning tenderly toward Dr. Batty I opined, “I don’t think there are many cows in the Freudian unconscious though I once had a patient who lost his virginity to a cow.”

Dr. Batty angrily replied, “David, don’t be disgusting! I won’t listen to stories about cow abuse.”

I felt ashamed and apologized, “Sorry about that. It just came to mind. I wonder if that experience has been traumatic for the cow and if she has to repress it. Do cows have Freudian unconsciousnesses as opposed to being resident in my Freudian unconscious?” Dr. Batty indicated that she wasn’t quite sure and returned to Jung.

“Whatever may be the case with Freud’s unconscious, there are cows in the Jungian unconscious. Jung’s unconscious has two aspects: the personal unconscious—the Freudian kind; and the ‘collective unconscious.’ The collective unconscious comes not from our personal experience, but from the collective experience of the human race on this earth, and cows are certainly part of that experience. The collective unconscious is a phylogenic legacy, our inheritance from the past, and, as you know, cows played a tremendous role in that past.”

“Unlike the personal unconscious, which is a manifestation of what Jung called the ego, that part of the mind that harbors our own conflicts and traumas, our individual complexes and forbidden desires; the collective unconscious, which is correlative to what Jung

called the Self, harbors the archetypes, the universal dramas and representations that transcend particular cultures and particular times and places. These archetypes, though universal, albeit not quite in Plato's sense, are timeless essences. They are aspects of us that we share with every person who has lived on this earth. And in this sense they are transpersonal. And they are not necessarily traits or aspects; they can be scripts or actions as well."

I couldn't believe Dr. Batty's amazing elucidation of the psychoanalytic theory of which I was supposed to be the master. However reluctantly, I had to admit I was learning from her. She went on, "Jung's ego is pure consciousness; it is that part of us that acts in the world as we strive to realize our aspirations and dreams. Jung thought that we live too much through our egos and our consciousness, thereby missing the almost infinite riches of the collective unconscious. The Self, actually one of the archetypes, resides midway between consciousness and unconsciousness. Jung describes it as the goal of life, as a mandala, which both symbolizes, and in some sense is a point of equipoise, of balance, in which all the forces within us—conscious, repressed personal unconscious, and the archetypal collective unconscious, have equal saliency and equal representation. It is sort of a nirvana state."

“Jung thought that the archetypes and the archetypical stories were universal because they occur in all cultures, all epochs, in every mythology, and in everyone’s dreams. Whether they’re actual ‘things’ in an actual place—a part of the mind, or creations which reoccur throughout history because human beings everywhere and always must deal with the same issues; they are ineluctable and we must in some sense or other come to terms with them. The Self is our project of integration and balancing all those forces within us and perhaps the forces without us as well.”

“Among the best known of the Jungian archetypes are the Shadow—the unacceptable parts of us that we project onto others—and the Anima, the female force within the male, and the Animus, the male force within the female. Discovering and owning the archetypes within as we meet them in dreams and fantasies enormously expands our consciousness, enriching our lives and allowing us to realize previously unactualized potentials. If the archetypes are in some sense noumenal—in some sense more than templates for experiences of various sorts—then integrating the archetypes into the Self could be a way of coming to know the thing-in-itself—coming to know ultimate reality. The realization of the Self involves an infinite concatenation of yin and yang relationships,

the pulling together of opposites into creative tensions so that the antinomies within us become empowering rather than destructive.”

“When we made the acquaintance of the archetypal cow, we put ourselves in contact with the entire tradition of bovine iconography, and with the cow as mythological—with the cow as the protagonist of stories told in one way or another by every culture—with the cow as the Great Mother—with the cow as the source of fertility—with the oxen of the sun and with the cow in the manger.”

As Dr. Batty spoke, I thought of the Jungian analysts’ technique of ‘amplification,’ and of augmenting the patients’ associations, by references to literature and mythology whenever possible. And I thought of how that technique of amplification could be adapted to our encounter with the templatial cow within. Yes, we can amplify our understanding by relating our inner cow to the cows of art, literature, and myth, which are, of course, all signified by the archetypal cow within.

Of course Dr. Batty assumed I knew all this, so after this rather extended defense of Jung against my alleged Freudianism, she said, “David, do you think the cow within could be an archetype, an eternally present aspect of us drawn inside from the long, long association we have had with cows?”

I replied, “That would be one way of looking at it and then our particular internal cow, Guernsey or whatever, would instantly attain the universality of an archetype.”

She excitedly responded, “Yes, David, yes! We’re definitely in the same barn. And that means that all the bovine qualities: serenity, at-oneness with nature, aesthetic sense and sensibility, nurturance, and peacefulness are within us. If the cow within is an instance of the template of bovinity, then getting in touch with our archetypal cow has potentially stupendous positive consequences.” I could only agree. Once more she wept, this time with tears of joy.

“Oh, David, in trying to define our inner cow we’ve come up with so much—and we aren’t finished yet—she is both real and unreal; both a fantasy and a representation; a symbol and a creative act; an eternal essence; a Platonic form with the potential to put us in contact with a hitherto unknown aspect of being; a phenomenal beast that we know to the extent that we know anything and a noumenal beast that we can’t know through the intellect but perhaps can know in some other way, thereby opening another gate to the perception of ultimate reality; and a Jungian archetype that we can integrate. Riches beyond our wildest dreams, for all those meanings of the inner cow are not mutually exclusive. It isn’t either/or; it is and/too.

David, we have to convey this to suffering humanity and I haven't even said anything about the inner cow as vehicle for playfulness, perhaps her greatest gift.”

As she said this I thought that Esmeralda had something in common with the Buddha, and to think that I had thought her mad. Like Buddha, she has achieved enlightenment, reached her own version of nirvana. Yet like him, she is unable to simply enjoy her hard-won vision; rather she chooses not to recluse herself, content with her inward serenity, as long as there is suffering in the world. So she returns from nirvana to samsara to alleviate that suffering. Buddha had the middle way, the eightfold path. Esmeralda has the cow within and the fruits of her study of bovine iconography to bring those who are still suffering from the illusion that they are without an inner cow—or even worse, still think that they have an inner cow, but that they can't contact it.

“David, you told me about the English psychoanalyst—the one who started as a pediatrician. What *was* his name—oh, I remember, Donald Winnicott. He was the one with the transitional objects like Linus's blanket, wasn't he?” I nodded. “And he was the one who put such emphasis on the importance of play as a vehicle for emotional growth—not only as a vehicle—he actually taught that

the capacity to play is in itself health.”

I affirmed the accuracy of her exposition, “Yes, Esmeralda, Winnicott wrote all that and a lot more besides.” Then I decided to tell her about Winnicott’s great essay, “On the Capacity To Be Alone,” in which he says that the capacity to be alone, comfortably and creatively, is a paradox because it comes from the experience of being with another. His theory of how we acquire this capacity to be alone states that if we are fortunate enough to have had parents or parental substitutes who were able to be both present and nonintrusive (not impinging was the way he put it) when we were toddlers exploring the world, then those loving caretakers slowly became part of us—so that now, when we are physically alone, we are not really alone because those loving caretakers are within us.

“Oh, David, that is so beautiful and it sheds light on yet another gift from our inner cows—companionship. Whenever we’re in contact with our inner cow, we can’t be lonely because we are not alone. That’s just plain wonderful. Thank you. Yes, David, the cow within that keeps us company is the same as the bovine in the sky. As the Hindus who were so into cows put it, the Atman is the Brahma; the God within, the God immanent, is the God without, the God transcendent. Our inner cow is like that—a microcosm of the

macrocosm, an inwardness that connects us with the entire cosmos.”

I was surprised by Dr. Batty’s religious sentiment; I hadn’t realized that she believed in the Cow in the sky. Perhaps, she believed that the cow within was a manifestation of the Cow God, although that wasn’t exactly what she had said. I never found out because she didn’t go any further in that direction. Instead she returned to play.

“David, playing is so important. Few things are so important as the ability to play. Fantasy is a form of play and it is the basis of all art and of all creativity. Linus’s blanket is the prototype of Beethoven’s Ninth and the Sistine Chapel. So is the cow within. Do you understand what I’m saying? It isn’t that the cow within is a fantasy, although she might be; rather, what counts is that her creation is an opportunity to fantasize. And that’s true even if she is an eternal essence or whatever; it would still be through fantasy that we get to know her. And we can give her a life and story and a calfhood and a set of bovinial relations. This playful aspect of my relationship with my inner cow means I can do anything I want with her. She can be a calf one day, and a senior citizen cow the next; a Holstein one day and a Texas Brahman the next; chewing her cud one day and mooing all the next day. It’s about freedom; when I play

I am free.”

She looked beatific as she said that. And she was right about it all. The cow within does indeed make us free—and potentially imaginative, creative, and joyful. I thought of a psychoanalytic theorist by the name of Ernst Kris, who wrote of ‘regression in service of the ego’ in his essays on art. That’s another way of saying, “The little children will enter the kingdom of heaven.” Yes, there are multiple and numerous ways of regressing malignly and malignantly, all of which hurt us and hurt others. But there’s also a healthy way of regressing; a getting away from the ordinary, the everyday, the crushing weight of mundane ‘reality.’ That’s what Kris was talking about. Further, he believed that without the capacity to let go, art is not possible. Of course, art also requires discipline and technique, but without the divine spark that imagination lights, all the discipline and mastery of technique in the world comes to naught.

As usual Dr. Batty was right; the greatest gift of the cow within and an essential part of her identity and her meaning is her capacity to release us from the bonds of necessity and take us into the freedom of fantasy, play, and creativity.

Dr. Batty and I had talked enough about the multiple meanings of the cow within. I’m sure she has almost limitless

additional meanings that we hadn't discussed, let alone elucidated. But somehow that no longer mattered. We had gotten to the core—the noumenal, if you will—and it consisted of pure play. Dr. Batty—Esmeralda to me—snuggled up to me as we moored ourselves to sleep.

Chapter 3: Other Totem Animals

You may, God forbid, not even like cows, let alone want to discover the cow within. You may be one of the millions with no bovine identity at all. So you ask, “How can Dr. Batty and all this inner cow stuff help me?” And I reply that your totem animal may be a tiger or a wolf or an antelope or a kangaroo, or even a crocodile, and that whatever your totem happens to be exists both outside and inside you. And it’s been there all along; you just haven’t been in touch with him or her—haven’t had any awareness of the richness of your unconscious mental life. It’s not too late—if you wish to move with the grace of a tiger, howl like a wolf, run like an antelope, leap like a kangaroo, and attack with the ferocity of a crocodile, you are much more likely to succeed if you have a relationship with your inner totems. Yes, I said totems, plural. There’s a whole bestiary within you, although only one plays a predominant part in your unconscious mental life. Nevertheless, you can be—tiger, wolf, antelope, kangaroo, crocodile and ram—if you can only relax sufficiently to give your imagination free rein.

You, my hypothetical reader, might very well reply, “But Dr.

Toro, I couldn't stand John Bradshaw and his inner child when he was on public television every other minute pushing his book, *The Shame That Binds You*. I thought—still think—all that inner child stuff is a pile of hooey. I'm one of those crackpot realists you talked about. Inner child—bah; inner crocodile—please.”

It wasn't long after our dialogue about inner cows, tigers, crocodiles, what have you, that I felt impelled to tell Dr. Batty about you, my skeptical reader, and your feeling that all of this is nonsense. Of course, she wept bitterly, saying, “Oh, David, I hadn't realized how strong and how powerful resistance to discovering the inner cow is.”

Sobbing now uncontrollably, she exclaimed, “No, no, no! It's hopeless. Bovine iconography hoped to save the world, but it will never even save one suffering soul.”

I don't normally discuss cases with Dr. Batty, but so profound was her despair that I thought I had to give her hope. To tell the truth, I feared suicide, so I decided to tell her about Mr. Straight, who had started treatment far down the psychopathology scale—the most deluded of crackpot realists—and left, if not exactly mooing—greatly improved. And I'm going to tell you about Mr. Straight, too.

Mr. Straight wasn't the kind of patient psychotherapists dream of, unless it is a nightmare. He was the least psychologically minded person I had ever met. To say that his thinking was concrete was to radically understate the case. If Straight was concrete, Einstein was smart. The man's language was devoid of metaphor, his mind didn't contain an iota of poetry, his posture was rigid, his voice sharp as a buzz saw and just as uninflected; his clothing, starched and pressed to the point where it could have stood on its own, and his demeanor, icy, formal, flat, and unvarying. When he called for an appointment, he only said that his son had become delusional and that he needed advice on how to manage the 'demonic'—his word—child.

He entered my office with all of the grace of a rusting, unlubricated robot. Avoiding my outstretched hand, he bent ninety degrees into a right angle and sat. Before I could question him about his son's condition and his reaction to it, Mr. Straight said, "I'm urinated off."

"Urinated off?" I asked.

"Yes, I abhor vulgarisms yet wish to convey that I am angry. I never use that common, degraded phrase you apparently think I should have used. To say that I am angry would be to say too much;

to suggest that I am seriously discomfited by my son's illusion and his seemingly willing adherence to it is to say too little. So in the interest of precision, not wishing to misrepresent the intensity of my negative emotion, I said that I was urinated off. That is precisely how I feel. I never use the expression you have in mind and if you usually express yourself crudely, I'm afraid that I will have to leave."

"Mr. Straight, please express yourself in whatever way is comfortable, is natural to you." Straight nodded, once again rectilinearly, just as he had when he sat down in a right-angled movement, but he said no more. I waited him out for a full ten minutes—not a word. Finally I asked, "Could you tell me something more about your son's delusion—illusion—whatever?" Again Mr. Straight remained silent. Nearly fifteen minutes later, he finally spoke.

"The reason I'm urinated off is that my son thinks he has a relationship—an intimate friendship—with an octopus. It may even be the case that he actually thinks he is an octopus. Needless to say, this is embarrassing. When friends ask how is your son doing in school, how can I say he doesn't go to school, he spends all day talking with his friend the octopus? I hate being embarrassed, so of course it urinates me off."

I said, “Um, hmm.” Again there was silence. Thinking of Mr. Straight as the Tin Woodsman, I almost reached for my oil can, but I restrained myself, asking instead, “Could you tell me how your son developed a friendship with an octopus and perhaps became an octopus—at least in his mind? By the way, how old is your son?”

“Eight.”

Mr. Straight relapsed into silence. Then, just as if my question had functioned as oil from an oil can, Mr. Straight began to speak, at first haltingly, then fluidly.

I should mention that Dr. Batty had stopped sobbing as soon as she heard that Mr. Straight’s son thought he was an octopus. She eagerly anticipated Mr. Straight’s account of his son’s delusion.

“I was on a business trip. I’m an accountant. I had to go to Miami. My wife doesn’t know how to discipline our son and he really needs discipline—she’s into this permissiveness stuff—to tell the truth my marriage isn’t exactly a success, but I’m not here to talk about that.”

I guess my unconscious did the diagnosing, since what came

to mind was the group therapy patient's comment, "We're all here because we're not all there." Dr. Batty broke in with, "Oh, David, your unconscious is so brilliant, picking up on 'here' so astutely." Ignoring Dr. Batty's diagnostic comment, I continued relating Mr. Straight's journey from reality to fantasy, from a self-imposed straitjacket to freedom.

Mr. Straight went on, "There was no way I was going to leave Pierpont—my wife insisted on that ridiculous French name—Pierpont Straight—no wonder the child behaves so badly—with Libertine for two weeks. Her name's actually Libby, but I always call her Libertine. By the time I got back he would have been spoiled beyond redemption. When I'm around, there are rules! Rules, rules, limits that better not be transgressed. So I took Pierpont with me. I almost never make mistakes—mistakes are an indulgence I don't permit myself—but taking Pierpont was more than a mistake—it was a disaster. I left with a wayward—perhaps naughty would be more accurate—child and he returned insane. And it's all the fault of that octopus."

"Octopus?"

"Yes, octopus. I'll explain. My business took me to Miami Beach, hardly the sort of place I would voluntarily visit. On the

contrary, apart from Vegas, there's nowhere in the country I would less like to be. But Miami Beach it was. I was auditing nightclubs. Of course I never enter the part of the club where the 'shows,' if you can call such cesspools of weirdo vulgarity shows, are performed. I go straight to the offices and stay there. And they're bad enough. So Pierpont and I flew to Miami and registered at the Fontainebleau. Why the Fontainebleau, you may ask? It's renowned for its vulgarity, being what my Jewish friends call *ungepotcked*—overdone."

I was amazed that Mr. Straight had Jewish friends, but I said, "Since you ask, why the Fontainebleau?"

"It's my belief that it—meaning life—must be all or nothing. Black or white. No halfway measures for me. If I was going to the citadel of vulgarity I would stay in the most vulgar of the beach hotels. Unfortunately, the hotel was much toned down, in fact, a bit rundown, and its legendary flamboyance was little in evidence. I confess I was disappointed. I don't like experience to violate my expectations."

I wondered if Mr. Straight's disappointment might be about more than disappointed expectations. Was his rigidity a defense against a secret yearning for the fleshpots of Miami Beach? Underneath all that rectitude, did the wildest of desires rage

unchecked? In short, was Mr. Straight suffering from what psychoanalysts call a 'reaction formation,' the turning of something, let us say, hate into its opposite, let us say, love. We all use reaction formation as a psychological defense to protect us from knowing parts of ourselves we don't wish to know. It's all a matter of degree. Occasionally, use of the psychological defense of reaction formation protects us from more self-knowledge than we can tolerate at a particular moment. But to rely primarily on such a defense, particularly if it is as pervasive in our psychic lives as it apparently was in Mr. Straight's, is to impoverish ourselves, and to cut us off from some of our most valuable potentials. Psychological, or better yet emotional, defenses are much like our bodily defenses—our immune system. I see the analogy like this. If our somatic defenses are too weak, say as the result of a disease like AIDS, we cannot defend ourselves from pernicious invaders, whether those invaders come from the environment, the outside, as is the case with many infectious diseases, or from within, as in the case with other infectious diseases and with malignancies. On the other hand, if these defenses are too rigid they turn against the very thing they are intended to protect, and we suffer from an autoimmune disease, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Just so with psychological defenses; if they are too weak we cannot defend ourselves from attacks on our self-

esteem from without, nor from self-knowledge we cannot integrate. But if they are too powerful, too rigid, they work against us, constricting, limiting, and crippling our inner world, not to mention causing all sorts of difficulties in our interpersonal relations.

Strong convictions are fine. But if you discover that you have absolutely no tolerance for the opposite point of view and zero empathy for those who hold it, suspect that you're in the grip of a reaction formation that dictates your position for unconscious emotional reasons, and that the 'rational' reasons you give for holding that position actually have little or nothing to do with your fanatically held belief. In that case, you're probably using reaction formation. Extreme positions almost always contain the seeds of their opposite. Totem animals can be extraordinarily helpful in discovering the shadow side of things—if you're willing to enlist their aid. For example, you are the most passionate of pacifists. Any aggression whatsoever disgusts you. There are no flies swatted in your house. Yet you dream of murdering generals and torturing the secretary of defense. Nevertheless you find it totally unbelievable that you want to murder anyone. But you do. Your defense of flies is a reversal which protects you from knowledge of your unconscious desire to do in the defense chief. If somehow you get in contact with

the murderous aggression within you, you would be, paradoxically, a more effective advocate of pacific political positions. So much more energy, now devoted to repression, would be available to you. Then you dream about a crocodile, jaws, teeth and muscle crushing and devouring a wildebeest attempting to swim across a muddy river. I say, “Embrace your crocodile. Feel the tension in your jaw muscles pulling that huge mouth closed, feel the warm blood coursing out of the wounded wildebeest, leave your vegetarianism on the muddy bank and feel your teeth sinking into the still living meat. You will be better off, more flexible, more energetic, more alive. To embrace your reptilian self in the form of the crocodile within doesn’t mean that you have to act on your newly discovered potential—although you could decide to do so—but it does mean that you have discovered more of you.” But poor Mr. Straight was terribly far from embracing his inner crocodile, let alone his inner octopus. Let us return to his travails.

“Doctor, I had no choice but to leave Pierpont alone in the hotel most of the day while I did my best to see that the government got a full measure of taxes due from the disgusting establishments I audited. I thought Pierpont could safely and innocently spend his time at the pool. That’s where the trouble started. There was nothing

safe or innocent about the Fontainebleau pools. It seems that the Fontainebleau hadn't entirely relinquished its devotion to flamboyance. That flamboyance was nowhere more in evidence than in the pool—I should say pools. The first one was relatively harmless—grottos, waterfalls, all sorts of fa-la-la. Not what I would want for my son—straight laps to strengthen his body—a form of physical education rather than excesses of tropical lushness conducive to God knows what kind of fantasy...even, one hopes not—erotic fantasy. No! Hard swimming laps was what I wanted him doing, something to tame, to sublimate is what I believe you psychologists call it—all that chaotic energy of his. But I could live with the first pool. I suppose a grotto or two doesn't necessarily irredeemably corrupt a child, but the second pool! The second pool cost him his sanity.”

“It was dominated by this huge octopus. Quite literally dominated. The octopus rose many stories above the pool. Its tentacles were everywhere, twisting, sensuous, slimy—everything I abhor. I worship the straight, the angular, the clearly demarcated. The octopus didn't have a right angle in his entire being, in fact, no angles at all. Nothing but curves, often looping back on themselves. And his eye-radiating malice; his mouth an everlasting smirk. His

expression mocked every decent, civilized, sacred impulse held by man. It was no accident that he, like all octopi, is also known as the ‘devilfish.’ A creature from hell if there ever was one. My son took one look at the octopus and was instantly bewitched. I’m ashamed to say so, but it’s true. My son fell in love with him.”

“To make matters worse, the children would climb up a series of ladders to a platform astride one of his tentacles and slide down the tentacle to a pool far below. As Pierpont flew from the end of the tentacle into the pool I could only think of him as having entered into the ninth circle of hell. The children squealed and screamed with delight—or what they thought was delight—as they accelerated around through the twists and turns of the tentacle. I, of course, knew better than to regard it as a response to delight. Nevertheless I had no choice but to leave Pierpont in the clutches of the octopus while I audited the Pink Pussy Dance Hall.”

I couldn’t help but reflect that Mr. Straight did a few too many things because he had ‘no choice.’ I wondered what the real sources of his choices were and I couldn’t wait to hear more about the octopus.

“When I returned to the hotel, after many hours of unremitting toil at the Pink Pussy, Pierpont ecstatically told me that

he had taken ninety-seven slides down the octopus's tentacle and ninety-seven splashes into that ninth circle pool. When I prohibited him from going near the octopus the next day he became hysterical. Unfortunately, the hotel management, thinking I was beating him—I wouldn't have minded—called Child Protective Services. The care worker, as he was called, was what is called 'hip.' He said, 'Man, what's the big deal about the octopus's tentacles? Let the kid jive on all those suckers, you sucker.' Realizing that I would get no place—except possibly in jail—with that benighted excuse for a social worker, I acquiesced and gave Pierpont permission to play all the next day on the octopus. I know that that was weak parenting, but I had no choice.”

“No choice,” again, I observed. Then I had one of those aha experiences. Of course, ‘no choice’ is what Mr. Straight is about. He had no choice about anything. The difficulty is that Mr. Straight puts the ‘no choice’ outside himself, in circumstances, while the real ‘no choice’ is within him. If I could help him see that, his treatment could progress. I had long since come to regard Mr. Straight, not Pierpont, as my patient.

“The hipster social worker turned out to be the least of my problems. When I returned from Venus's Playground, my audit of

the next day, Pierpont cheerfully exclaimed, ‘The octopus spent the day stealing pies from the Fontainebleau kitchen for Grandmoo.’”

“Stealing pies? What on earth are you talking about?”

““The octopus’s huge tentacles are perfect. He straightens them out and reaches across the cabanas into the kitchen window. When he withdraws them his suckers are filled with pies and pastry. Then he curves them back on themselves and then straightens them out in the opposite direction onto the ocean side and delivers them to Grandmoo.””

“It was then that I realized that my son had lost his mind. The octopus was an aesthetic and moral disaster, a work its designer needed to be deeply ashamed of, but he didn’t move, that was for sure. It was just a plastic toy, so to speak. Besides, who was Grandmoo? I didn’t need to ask. Pierpont, growing even more excited, exclaimed, ‘Grandmoo is the octopus’s best friend. She’s a 3-ton cow addicted to clover pudding—an incredibly rich concoction of grass, clover, hay, and honey—who was sent to Miami to go to Rehab. She left Rehab against veterinary advice, and now lives on the beach. She was cured of her clover pudding addiction but she still craves sweets. So, the octopus steals pies and cakes for her. It’s so cool the way he steals; he never gets caught.’”

Mr. Straight, who never had much color, turned even paler, saying, “I almost fainted. Not only was my son insane, he was a fervent admirer of a psychopathic octopus. Not only did the octopus not exist, at least not in the way Pierpont thought he did, but he was a thief and a liar to boot. And as for the addicted cow, she was another criminal, a co-conspirator with the psychopathic octopus. Pierpont insisted on taking me to the beach to see Grandmoo. All I saw was a large shadow way down the sand. I suppose it could have been a cow, but hardly a 3-ton one.”

Dr. Batty interjected, “I knew a cow had to figure in the story,” and she giggled delightedly.

Mr. Straight sat up even straighter, as if the proverbial stick was resident in the proverbial place. In the coldest of voices he said, “Of course I checked out immediately. The Pink Pussy and Venus’s Playground would simply have to do without me.” Then he slumped, virtually collapsed into a pathetic heap. “It didn’t help in the least. The octopus, no, not the octopus, I get confused. What I meant to say is that the delusion about the octopus followed Pierpont back to New York. If Pierpont isn’t talking about the octopus, he’s talking to him. And the octopus is much worse than I thought—a complete criminal. Oh no, what am I talking about? I’m talking as if the octopus was

real! No, no, no, no, I mean Pierpont's delusion of the octopus is the delusion of a complete criminal."

At that Mr. Straight broke down completely, sobbing through the remainder of the session.

Next week, Mr. Straight was straight—his old self—again. "Doctor, things have been getting worse. When we go to the beach, my son says, 'Look, there's the octopus.' I never see him and I just had a new refraction. There is no octopus! It's a delusion. But Pierpont insists that the octopus steals fish from the restaurants along Long Island Sound, not to mention from the fish stores that are within his reach, which is considerable. And it seems that the police and the Coast Guard are after him. But he's far too clever; he never gets caught. The more criminal, the more degenerate, the better. My son is utterly entranced by the octopus's criminality. I read all the local papers to see if any fish stores have been robbed. There was one such robbery that Pierpont has taken as absolute proof that the octopus followed us back from Florida. Incidentally, Pierpont tells me that the octopus was fired from his job at the Fontainebleau. When I try and reason with Pierpont, pointing out that that fish store was robbed of money, not of fish, he completely ignores me. Oh, I should tell you that the octopus also steals pies here in New York,

supposedly for Grandmoo, who also followed us.”

“But sociopathic behavior isn’t the octopus’s only problem behavior. It seems he can’t make up his mind, if he has one. If four of his tentacles are in favor of something, the other four are against it. If four say it’s white, four say it’s black. If four say it’s true, four say it’s false. That allows the octopus to lie about everything and anything, rationalizing his lies as ‘this tentacle didn’t say it.’ I think the four against, four in favor is so much nonsense; it’s just another manipulation of his criminal nature. But my daughter, she’s a psychology student at Cornell, says that the octopus suffers from ambivalence, and Gloriana is getting as crazy as Pierpont. She believes the octopus actually exists and that he did follow us home—at least she says so, although I think she’s just humoring Pierpont. But who knows? The whole family is getting strange. My wife, permissive about everything, also says that the poor creature suffers from ambivalence. Of course, she got that from Gloriana. God help us, she was a psychology major too. Ambivalence my foot! He’s just afraid to take responsibility. This way he can be a Republican and a Democrat, a conservative and a liberal, a criminal and a criminal! He’s just no darned good—even if he doesn’t exist!”

Mr. Straight had become amazingly emotional—for him.

Even more agitated, Mr. Straight continued, “Shortly after Gloriana and my wife cooked up this ambivalence nonsense, Pierpont gave the octopus a name. He called him Eugene. Can you imagine a plastic octopus who doesn’t exist called Eugene? Ever since Eugene was given his name, Pierpont’s delusions had become all-encompassing. Everything is Eugene.”

Eugene, I couldn’t believe it. The term, ‘ambivalent’ was coined and the entire concept of ambivalence elucidated by a Swiss psychiatrist named Eugene Bleuler. It was absolutely uncanny that no sooner had Gloriana discovered that the octopus’s predominant mode of being was ambivalent, which was true in spite of Mr. Straight’s insistence that the octopus’s most striking trait is criminality, that her brother started calling him Eugene. Pierpont couldn’t possibly have known the connection between ambivalence and Eugene Bleuler so that the unconscious must have powers that even psychoanalysts are unaware of. Dr. Batty mused her assent, and I turned my attention away from speculation about the hidden powers of the unconscious back to Mr. Straight.

I asked, “Mr. Straight, are you ambivalent about anything?”

“Ambivalent? Hardly. And I’m not ambivalent about my lack of ambivalence. I’m the kind of person who knows what he thinks

and thinks the same thing with all eight of his tentacles.”

Ignoring Mr. Straight’s unconscious identification with Eugene, or at least with unambivalent octopi, I became pessimistic about the course of Mr. Straight’s treatment. I thought that my probe about his possible ambivalence had gone nowhere, when Mr. Straight became silent. I didn’t realize that his silence had become reflective. After a long period of absolute stillness, he said, “Well, I wouldn’t call it ambivalence, but I do have some conflicted feelings about an issue at my daughter’s college. Cornell has a student union called Willard Straight Hall. With all this political correctness stuff, Gloriana joined a protest group advocating changing the name of the student union to Willard Gay Hall. Then they decided it should be called Willard Straight and Gay Hall. At first I thought the idea was completely insane, and that Gloriana should be in the same asylum with Pierpont. Now I can see that there might be some degree of equity in Gloriana’s position. I suppose that is a sort of ambivalence.”

At last! Mr. Straight’s defense wasn’t as airtight as I feared. His mixed feelings about Willard Straight-Gay Hall revealed a chink in his armor. I inquired, “Mr. Straight, is Willard Straight Hall named for someone in your family, even perhaps you?”

“No, no. I went to Eastern Iowa Teachers College, became a teacher of business in high schools. Unhappily, it was my fate to teach under one impossible principal after another. They all insisted that I had trouble relating to the students, which was balderdash. But after the sixth school fired me, I studied accounting and moved east. Until Gloriana went there my family had no connection with Cornell.”

I brought him back to his ambivalence. “Mr. Straight, you have expressed some ambivalence, some mixed feelings, about renaming Willard Straight Hall. That’s a lot like Eugene. Four tentacles in favor of renaming the student union and four tentacles against it, four tentacles swimming to the left, four to the right.”

“Like Eugene? I have nothing in common with that wild, criminal octopus! What are you doing to me? Eugene doesn’t exist and you have me talking as though he were real. I came here for help with my delusional son. Are you trying to drive me mad? Make me delusional, too?”

Mr. Straight ran his fingers over the creases in his trouser legs, which were already razor thin. By the time he finished his nervous running up and down squeezing of the creases, they were sharp enough to cut a throat. I had no doubt whose throat Mr.

Straight's unconscious had in mind—mine. I had threatened his entire self-image; hit where it hurt. Psychologists call blows that get us in the gut, land where we live, challenge our self-concept, and lower our self-esteem, 'narcissistic injuries.' I'd inflicted such a narcissistic wound on Mr. Straight, not normally a thing a therapist would do. But how else to reach him? I didn't know, and I wasn't about to lose the opportunity Mr. Straight's momentary ambivalence gave me. Dr. Batty, who was hyper-focused on my story about Mr. Straight's treatment, sat even closer to the edge of her seat and broke in, "David, you did what you had to do. Mr. Straight doesn't have a chance unless he can identify with Eugene."

The response to narcissistic injury is narcissistic rage—the unvarnished, unmitigated desire to destroy the inflicter of the injury. All this was far too remote from Mr. Straight's consciousness for me to 'interpret'—that is, elucidate and comment on his reaction. I could have said, "Mr. Straight, your nervous sharpening of the crease in your pant leg confirms that knowledge of the ambivalence within you, let alone having something in common with Eugene, greatly upsets you, so you try to become even more 'straight,' quite literally straight, your habitual defense against anxiety. Since you made those trousers 'razor sharp,' it also suggests that you are very angry—at

me—for drawing your attention to such painful matters. So you would like to slit my throat with your crease-razor.” But I said none of this. Instead, I moved by indirection trying to lower Mr. Straight’s anxiety level. “Why don’t we ‘bracket,’ put aside, the whole question of the nature of Eugene’s existence—real octopus swimming in the ocean, figment of your son’s imagination, outright delusion, or whatever—and work with this ambivalence—four tentacles one way, four the other—ignoring the question of what sort of being has the ambivalence. Would you be willing to ‘play’ the octopus-ambivalence game with me?”

“That damn octopus doesn’t exist. But all right, I’ll play the game to humor you. What else can you do with a madman, and you, sir, are as mad as Pierpont. But I’m not paying for this session—not paying for this nonsense.”

I ignored the not paying part and ran with the ball, so to speak, and Mr. Straight’s willingness to play, albeit only to humor me. “Mr. Straight, I want you to conduct a thought experiment. I want you to try and feel—not so much to think as to feel—what it’s like to be an octopus. Octopi have highly developed nerve nets and complex central ganglia—a sort of brain—so they are very intelligent—like you. But it isn’t the octopus’s intelligence, but

rather the octopus's experience that I want you to identify with—to imaginatively share in octopus-hood.”

He looked at me as if I were totally bonkers—completely insane—and I could see fear in his eyes. I had no doubt he would play to ‘humor me’ because it felt much too dangerous not to. I don’t like patients to cooperate because they’re afraid of me, but in this case I had little choice but to take advantage of—exploit, if you prefer—Mr. Straight’s fear. In a sense, I was teaching him how to play. He really didn’t know how. Fear, of course, is antithetical to the spirit of play. One essence of play is fearless exploration. So I had to hope that Mr. Straight’s fear of me—as a madman who might do anything—was stronger than his threshold anxiety—the anxiety that is an ineluctable concomitant of entering hitherto unknown territory. Threshold anxiety is an inexorable accompaniment of embracing ego-alien not-self-experience. I also hoped that the longer he used fear as a motivation to play—paradoxical as it sounds—the more his fear of the hitherto unknown joys of play would dissipate and he would start to enjoy the game. Surprisingly, children don’t always know how to play and they need playful, childlike adults to take them through the threshold anxiety and convey the skills—emotional, relational, and motor—that they need to be ‘players.’ All

of which is a prelude to successfully playing the game of life. But that is too utilitarian—play is intrinsically worthwhile and requires no external justification. In a sense Mr. Straight was a child—in the guise of a hyper-mature adult—who never learned to play, so he needed me to teach him how to play.

To go from a state of hypervigilant rigidity to a state of imaginative playfulness is not possible. What is needed is some sort of bridge—perhaps a series of stepwise transitions from one state to another. I think that’s also the case when someone searches for his totem animal or inner cow the first time. I suggested relaxation exercise for Mr. Straight. You may want to try it too as a helpful prelude to your search for your totem animal.

“Mr. Straight, I want you to clench your fist as hard as you possibly can. Feel the tension. Feel the tightness. Feel the effort. Now let go. Let your hand relax. Your hand is becoming more and more relaxed. More and more relaxed. Feel the tension leaving your hand. Feel the tightness leave. Feel the absence of effort—the absence of strain. Now I want you to tense your fingers only...” and then I led Mr. Straight through his entire body, alternately tensing and relaxing each body part. My emphasis was on feeling, on experiencing, the successive waves of contraction and release—of

systole and diastole—of ebb and flow—and of conscious striving and unconscious simply being. All that is encoded in this simple exercise. I suggest you, my reader, try it, too. Try it either as an experience for its own sake—or as a way of inducing a state of mind receptive to the inner life. There are many books available in the self-help section of any of the chain bookstores, and many of the independents as well, on relaxation, on the use of guided imagery and on self-hypnosis. Here I am only briefly noting these techniques. Reading more deeply about them will definitely help you contact your inner cow—or inner whatever.

Mr. Straight sort of got into it and by the time we got to his toes, was actually somewhat relaxed. But not relaxed sufficiently to experience the octopus within. So I tried some guided imagery.

“Mr. Straight, now I want you to close your eyes and imagine—or even better, actually see—yourself lying peacefully, calmly, contentedly, on the warm, not too hot sand, next to the gently waving blue sea of a perfect, low humidity, high seventies summer day.”

“I can’t stand the beach! The near-nudity, the horseplay, the obnoxious children, the filth in the sand, the horrible creatures including octopuses in the water. And now Pierpont’s insisting that

Eugene's swimming in that ocean, too. Ugh! Not for me."

I tried again, "Mr. Straight, can you think of a relaxing, happy, carefree setting and imagine yourself there? Perhaps you would feel more relaxed frozen into a block of ice in the Arctic. Use whatever image works for you."

"No image is going to work. I never relax—don't believe in wasting time and as for being happy, I don't believe that is a worthwhile goal. Doing one's duty is. In any case I can't imagine any setting where I would feel happy and needless to say I'm never carefree and I don't want to be."

Of course suggesting the beach, instead of encouraging Mr. Straight to recall his own scene of relaxation and to imagine being there, was very poor therapeutic technique—a real mistake. But it didn't seem to make any difference what technique I used. I thought that even if I had won a Nobel Prize for my breakthroughs in therapeutic technique, it wouldn't have helped me reach Mr. Straight. I was about to give up... when Dr. Batty broke in once again with, "Oh, David, don't give up."...when I remembered that systematic relaxation had actually worked. Thinking about what had just happened I figured out that Mr. Straight's regression—for that was what it was—to a seemingly impenetrable defensive fortress of pure

negativity, about virtually everything, was a response to his terror of the unfamiliar, unstructured, undefended state of being known as pure relaxation. So I tried again, this time using a modified hypnotic conduction.

“Mr. Straight, let’s forget about the beach, and of active imagining of whatever sort; it obviously isn’t your cup of tea. Would you like to try something else?”

“So long as it’s not pleasurable,” the now glassy-eyed, no longer even remotely relaxed Mr. Straight shot back.

My mistake had cost us the gain we had made. We had to start from ground zero. “Mr. Straight, I want you to close your eyes and count backwards from a hundred. As you count, visualize yourself going deeper and deeper into a well. Deeper and deeper. Yet more deep. Just keep going, keep going slowly, gradually, yet inexorably deeper. Nod when you hit the bottom.”

To my amazement, the journey down the well was actually effective. I could see Mr. Straight’s body language change. I actually saw some curves, admittedly widely spaced by stretches of his customary linearity. Nevertheless, there must have been more carryover from the progressive relaxation exercise than I had

believed. Perhaps it hadn't been a total waste. Sensing that it was now or never, that Mr. Straight was most unlikely to ever be any more receptive than he was at the present moment, I decided to go for it.

“Mr. Straight, keep your eyes closed. Stay at the bottom of the well. There are many octopi in the well. They are utterly benign. They won't hurt you. Their spirit, the spirit of octopusness, infuses the water at your feet. They swim effortlessly through it, circling you without in any way threatening you. They want to get to know you and to have you get to know them. Now you are starting to feel, to experience, that spirit, especially their equivocation. First they move left; then they move right; first upward and then downward. Start to feel your way into one of the octopi. Feel your way into a tentacle. Slowly feel your way deeper and deeper into the tentacle. Feel its strength. You're letting yourself become the tentacle. You feel yourself splitting into two pieces, right down the middle. Your left side is spread throughout the octopus's left four tentacles, your right side through the octopus's right four tentacles. Let yourself be both sets of tentacles. Just be the tentacles.”

I encouraged Mr. Straight to stay in the tentacles for a full ten minutes. Then sensing that he had reached the limit of his endurance,

I helped him return to the state of ordinary consciousness. Throughout his stay in the tentacles I had offered support and encouragement. “I know this is strange, uncomfortable, frightening, and hard to endure, but try and stay in the tentacles just a bit longer. Just a bit longer. Okay, now flow out of the tentacles and back into your accustomed self. You’re still at the bottom of the well. How far did you count backwards?”

“I stopped at 64.”

“Okay, now slowly, easily, and smoothly count forward from 65. When you reach a hundred you will be at the top of the well and your familiar self.”

We went back to the well many times. I had Mr. Straight experience, actually feel his way into, not only the tentacles, but the body and the head of the octopus. It wasn’t till our tenth session that I dared move beyond body parts, octopus’s body parts, that is, to octopus’s qualities. In that session I urged Mr. Straight to, “let yourself feel the sliminess of the octopus. You are feeling slimy. It’s very uncomfortable—icky. But try and stand it a little longer. Try to stay with it. Just feel the sliminess—the stickiness—the slickness. Bit by bit you are enjoying being slimy.”

We stayed with sliminess for over six sessions until Mr. Straight was completely comfortable with being slimy. Then we moved on to the most difficult identification for Mr. Straight.

“We are back in the bottom of the well. I want you to notice how curved the octopi are. Nothing but curves; there isn’t a straight line anywhere in their bodies.”

For two sessions I just had him observe the curvilinear nature of octopussal existence. Then I made my move.

“Mr. Straight, I’m going to ask you to try something very difficult now. I want you to feel your curves. Remember you’re partly the octopus now—coextensive with him. (I had, of course, had Mr. Straight enter into the octopus before trying to help him move from linearity to curvilinearity.) Now feel the curve of his—your—tentacle. Your whole being is in the tentacle, the twisting, turning, returning to itself, curved and curving tentacle.”

Mr. Straight cried out in anguish.

“Stay with it. I know it’s painful, but stay with it just a little longer.”

The next dozen sessions were spent with Mr. Straight

becoming curved. By the end of the process he was completely comfortable as a curved being. Not only his tentacles, but his entire body—not only his shape but his movements—all was curved. We went to feeling into being a sucker on a tentacle and experienced the sucking itself. I also gently took Mr. Straight through various octopussal behaviors, particularly into Eugene's ruthless stealing other octopi's fish and then hiding behind his 'ambivalence' with four tentacles saying that he was innocent and four confessing his guilt. Thus Mr. Straight entered into everything criminal in mollusk life. He had become the Eugene he so detested.

We were nearing our goal. In the ensuing sessions I had Mr. Straight return to the split between left and right, to being the four tentacles in favor and the four tentacles against. It was excruciatingly painful and difficult work, but eventually Mr. Straight was able to fully own both halves, to flip-flop between positions, to know the tension between them, to fully feel what it is like not to be certain. I'm not sure which was harder for him, the wild oscillations between contending positions or the almost unbearable tension of holding both positions simultaneously. After many sessions devoted to being successively and simultaneously both sets of conflicting values, beliefs, and behaviors Mr. Straight had an 'aha!' experience, an

epiphany of sudden insight. He had just emerged from the well for perhaps the hundredth time when his face glowed and he burst forth lyrically.

“Eugene does exist. My son isn’t crazy. Eugene exists just as my curves exist and my antisocial impulses and my sliminess and my suckerness. They all exist. And the way I know they exist is from my realization that my mockery of political correctness and my feeling that it is of some value is exactly the same as the tension and conflict between Eugene’s two sets of tentacles. I couldn’t acknowledge such an ambivalence in myself until I saw it in him.”

Mr. Straight reached out a tentacle even as he withdrew another and swam happily off. I never saw him again. To this day I worry when I order calamari that I may be eating Mr. Straight or even worse, Eugene—if indeed they are different creatures.

The process by which Mr. Straight recovered repressed parts of himself is called by psychologists ‘projective identification.’ Let me explain. Simple identification is pretty straight-(pardon the expression)-forward. We realize that there is something in the other that we have too. For example, we can identify with bovine placidity because a part of us is peaceful, too. The insight is, “I can be calm and peaceful like that cow.” Projection is also fairly straightforward.

I take an unacceptable part of myself and put it in the other. For example, “What do you mean I’m angry, you miserable, raging son of a bitch?” Here I put (project) my anger into the other. Since perception itself is a projection—what I call vision is a projection of electrochemical events in my retina and in my brain onto the external world—it is a very natural, universally engaged-in psychological defense. Both identification and projection are one-stage processes. Not so for projective identification. It is more complex—a two- or perhaps three-stage process.

In projective identification I first (unconsciously) project some trait or behavior I can’t acknowledge or have to repudiate. I may do so because such an acknowledgment may surface unbearably painful traumatic memories. Or I may need to project it (or them) because to acknowledge whatever it is as part of self arouses too much shame and/or guilt; and/or threatens to intolerably lower self-esteem. So I project it. Now it’s in you—in the other. Let’s go back to the anger/rage example. My rage is unacceptable to and unacknowledgeable by me because my ego ideal—what I would like to be—is a saintly, not-retaliating, serene, never-reactive pacifist. But I’m filled with rage and need to do something to disown and displace it. So I project it onto you. It’s not me who is enraged,

but you. So far, that's straightforward projection. But now I behave in such a way—provocatively and challengingly—that I induce anger, perhaps even rage itself, in you. I may do that in a passive-aggressive way, but I do it and now you are 'really angry,' not merely having anger attributed to you by me, because I projected it. Through a behavioral enactment I have enraged you. This is step two in a projective identification. It is not an absolutely necessary step, although it is the usual mechanism. It may be enough to go on to step three simply to project my anger (or whatever) in step one. But step three is absolutely necessary. In step three I recognize *my* anger, *my* rage, in *your* anger. Your rage, whether it exists in my projection or is actually there because of my enactment, now becomes part of a process which is truly miraculous. In my recognition of the projected trait in you I become capable of owning it through identification. "Oh yes, I can be just as enraged as John" and I own my anger. It doesn't really matter whether or not I realize that John's anger was my projection to start with, or that I unconsciously behaved in such a way as to make John angry. What does matter is now I know that I am angry and need not self-destructively act it out or set off a depression by repressing it.

Accepting for the moment that Eugene was Mr. Straight's

projection, regardless of whether or not he borrowed Eugene from Pierpont, Mr. Straight's cumulative insight was the result of projective identification, here enhanced by the use of 'gestalt' techniques of being the other. First Mr. Straight projected his ambivalence, curvilinearity, sliminess and 'criminality' onto Eugene. Then he recognized them in Eugene, and finally came to realize that he shared them, too. Through identification and internalization he was able to own all these parts of self, thereby becoming richer and freer. Of course, I don't believe for a moment that Eugene is a 'mere' projection, but that is neither here nor there when it comes to awareness of the central role the process of projective identification plays in the expansion of consciousness by our encounters with our inner cows or other inner totems.

Our inner cows also help us master our 'threshold anxiety' as we encounter the new—new to our conscious minds, that is—parts of self. Seeing these 'new' aspects in our inner animals is relatively benign and lessens our fears, thereby facilitating our continued further exploration and growth. Fear of death is yet another form of threshold anxiety, of the fear concomitant with the new—with the unknown. I'm not quite sure how inner cows can help with this particular anxiety, but the more experience we have of mastering

threshold anxiety, the less afraid we will be the ‘next’ time. Surely our ‘practice’ in dealing with the anxiety of discovering unknown parts of ourselves through identification with those parts of our inner animals can only strengthen us for our encounter with the ultimate unknown—“that bourn from which no traveler returns.”

Dr. Batty looked up, eyes all aglow with admiration as I finished telling the Straight case. “David, that was a remarkable treatment. I can’t wait to introduce my inner cow to my inner octopus.”

I wasn’t sure that that was such a great idea, but I didn’t say so. That was just as well, for Dr. Batty went on, “David, did you ever wonder how I got such a strange name? There aren’t many Batties in the telephone book.”

As a matter of fact, I hadn’t.

“David, my birth name was Meshuggastein. Yes, my parents were Mr. and Mrs. Meshuggastein and they fought all the time. Basically, they didn’t agree on anything. But their worst problems came from their absentmindedness. Can you imagine two out-to-lunch professors married to each other? Dad would lose the car keys and Mom would scream, ‘You must have left them behind some

quark or other.’ He was a particle physicist. Then she would lose the car keys and he would scream, ‘You must have left them under some Akkadian manuscript.’ She taught ancient Near-Eastern languages. And when they fought about their glasses—they each had four pairs of glasses—reading, sun, sun-reading, and regular, and they would leave them all over—it was awful. Awful. They would accuse each other, screaming and sometimes even hitting. I would hide in the cyclotron, hoping nobody would turn it on.”

I now understood why Dr. Batty’s inner world was so vital for her. She went on, “One summer, we were on our annual trip to Maine—fighting all the way, of course. Their fights about losing the way and where to turn utterly dwarfed their fights about keys and glasses. If either of them had been navigator on the Pinta, Columbus would never have gotten to the Canaries, let alone the Indies. The only direction I cared about was the direction to the nearest hospital. After hours of turning, probably in circles, on utterly dark back roads, we somehow stumbled into Camden, Maine, which had been our destination all along. I was later told that nary a moose was seen in that moose-saturated comer of the Maine coast for months. The poor moose, every single one of them, must have been terrified by my parents’ screaming at each other.”

“The next day we decided to have a family outing. We climbed Mt. Batty, the setting of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s great poem, ‘Renascence.’ Naturally, we kept getting lost. We went over the peak without realizing where we were and started climbing another summit. Lost of course, we heard all sorts of weird sounds...but we saw nothing. It was very scary. The wind came up, it grew cold, and it was getting dark. We didn’t have the vaguest notion where we were. And the weird sounds got louder and louder. I was terrified and I started crying. My father, who was a kind man in spite of his chronic yelling, tried to comfort me, saying, ‘Don’t be afraid; it’s just the Batties.’”

“The Batties?”

““Yes, the Batties. They’re little invisible creatures who live on here on Mt. Batty.””

“My mother said, ‘Batties indeed! Have you gone gantza meshugga, Meshuggastein?’ Still crying, I asked my father to tell me more about the Batties. I was still frightened of them. Father replied, ‘I don’t know much about them, except that they love blueberries. Maine has the best blueberries in the world.’ The Batties seemed to laugh. I was really terrified now. Then I remembered that Mommy had packed some blueberries in our picnic basket.”

“I said, ‘Mommy, please, put out some blueberries for the Batties.’ Mother gave me one of those looks that said, ‘Why didn’t I stay in ancient Assyrian Akkadian stone inscription translation?’ but she did it. Almost instantly—magically and miraculously—we saw the path and in a few moments we were back in the Mt. Batty parking lot, by our car.”

“For a few days, no one mentioned the Batties. Then on the way home Daddy lost the road map. And Mother said, ‘The Batties must be following us. Of course. They must have taken the map. I forgot to give them blueberries this morning. Mother threw a few blueberries out the window and Daddy mysteriously found the map. My parents never fought again. Whenever anything disappeared, its disappearance was attributed to the Batties. Sometimes they returned things and sometimes they didn’t. It depended on whether or not they liked the blueberries. Of course, when blueberries were out of season, the Batties became a real menace. And they proved to be into all kinds of mischief beyond stealing keys and glasses, activities my parents decided they were into long before our trip to Maine. Soon the attic floor sagged and creaked with the weight of their loot—they lived in the attic. We often begged them to return to Maine, but they never did.”

“When I went off to college I decided that being Ms. Meshuggastein would help me neither romantically nor academically so I changed my name to Batty. Mischievous as they are, I’m grateful to them for making the latter part of my childhood tolerable—even enjoyable. I didn’t really want them to go back to Maine, though I never told my parents that. What do you think of the Batties, David?”

“Well, I’m not sure of their ontological status. Your father, of course, thought he was making up a story to soothe you, but it turned out not to be a story—or at most maybe not to be a story? Either way, story or living creatures, the Batties gave your parents a way to coexist peacefully, a means of deflecting their hostility, of not hurting each other. The Batties certainly improved your life. So creative fantasy or sometime residents in Mt. Batty, they sure turned out to be helpful. Another way of looking at it is to see your father’s imaginative story telling as the vehicle by which, or as the midwife who, brought the Batties into existence. And now that they’re here they sure are useful.”

“David, now you know why I’m Dr. Batty. But the whole episode on Mt. Batty still scares me. So let’s talk about something else. Tell me another story—case history, that is—I love listening to

your stories.”

“Esmeralda, I don’t tell stories! Your father may tell stories, I don’t. What I do do is share clinical material—case histories—so we can both learn from them, become more effective facilitators of the journey inward.”

“People-poop! Don’t get pretentious with me. That’s not like you at all. Just tell me another story.”

“Well, Freud himself complained that his case histories were so novelistic that he wasn’t taken seriously as a scientist. And there is the problem of confidentiality. I shouldn’t really be telling you about patients.”

“David, do you really think that anyone but me would believe Mr. Straight’s encounter with Eugene?”

I replied, “No, I’m afraid not.”

Dr. Batty went on, “Well, I believe it and if the Institute succeeds millions will profit from your accounts of how you work. And as for confidentiality, do you really think Eugene will sue you?”

“I suppose not. But Mr. Straight strongly believes in playing it straight.”

“No more. You cured him. That’s all he cares about now. So tell me another story.”

I reluctantly acquiesced and told Dr. Batty another ‘story.’

“Mrs. Luce was the antithesis of Mr. Straight. She had no direction at all. She looked as if she literally flowed all over the place. Perhaps she was more amoeba-like than octopus-like with her hair flying in all directions and her diaphanous white dress projecting its excesses across the floor much like an amoeba’s pseudopodia. There wasn’t an angle on her. Even her nose spread across her face. Oodles of fluid flesh draped themselves over the chair arms and out to the floor. She was so unfocused that I couldn’t even tell why she came to me. She just wandered from topic to topic, none with any apparent point. All was process, nothing substance or substantial. So amorphous was she that I didn’t have the vaguest notion of why she was seeking treatment, or of what to do. If somehow the Mr. Straight I first met and Mrs. Luce could have been integrated, they would have formed a mentally healthy creature. Mrs. Luce was forever coming into being, never arriving there, all becoming without ever coalescing into anything solid, into any form of being. Mr. Straight, before his identification with Eugene, was all structure, no process, no juice, no capacity for spontaneity. Mrs. Luce had no structure,

was perpetually protean, forever metamorphosing, never in a state of status, totally cut off from the earth. She was a caricature of the fluidity of an octopus. Loosening up Mr. Straight was a piece of cake compared to tightening up Mrs. Luce.”

Dr. Batty eagerly chirped, “David, what did you do? Was her totem an amoeba?”

I vigorously shook my head and said, “No, such a totem would just exacerbate her problems. Mrs. Luce needs nothing less than to get in contact with her inner amoeba.”

“As usual, you’re completely right, David. Tell me what you did do.”

“Well, Esmeralda, it took a long time. Therapy meandered on, driven by Mrs. Luce’s copious, unformed productions. My intermittent attempts to get Mrs. Luce to stay on a topic long enough for anything meaningful to happen were inevitably drowned in Mrs. Luce’s gushing geyser. Needless to say we never got to feelings. It was all stream of consciousness narrative—if so rambling a discourse could be called a narrative. I never even got anywhere near a satisfactory history. It occurred to me that Mr. Straight’s rigidity and Mrs. Luce’s amorphousness served the same purpose—keeping

feelings, especially powerful ones, minimal, or better yet completely at bay, while making sure that no real risk, no adventures, no leaps into the unknown would ever disturb the status quo. In its own way, Mrs. Luce's looseness was as rigid, as unyielding, as Mr. Straight's rigidity. Neither allowed an iota of room for innovation. They were simultaneously character styles and defenses."

"In Mrs. Luce's case, I hadn't the slightest idea of what she was defending against. Then one afternoon when both her mind and her body appeared unusually bloblike, something of note occurred. Mrs. Luce actually expressed an emotion."

"Dr. Toro, just after my husband died last year I was playing bridge at Mrs. Surface's home when she shocked us by announcing her divorce had just become final. After thirty years of marriage, a divorce—after thirty years of marriage! We all called out—called out simultaneously—I dropped my cards—a hand that would have been a grand slam, too—so startled was I—'Divorced? You and Herman were the happiest couple we knew! Why on earth did you get a divorce so suddenly after thirty happy years?' Mrs. Surface smiled sort of coquettishly—she can sometimes act like a coquette—and replied, 'Oh it was nothing, I had the house redecorated and Herman didn't go with the new decor. So it was either redecorate the house

again or get rid of Herman. Herman went. How do you like the new couch? Isn't the upholstery beautiful?"

Mrs. Luce rambled on about the Surfaces and the fight that followed among the bridge players when she insisted that she should be allowed to play the sensational hand she had dropped. Although Mrs. Luce evidenced more firmness in her insistence than I had heard from her, I interrupted.

"Mrs. Luce, we have been working together for six months and you never mentioned that you lost your husband. Doesn't that seem strange?"

"Oh, no. I rarely talk about Mr. Luce. It's no different now than when he was alive. He was a scientist, totally devoted to his work. I rarely saw him anyway. In the laboratory or in the casket, it is an immaterial difference. Doctor, they didn't let me play the certain slam hand. Don't you think that was unfair?"

"Esmeralda, I thought I had finally figured Mrs. Luce out. All that blobbing around was a way of avoiding mourning. If I could only focus her on losing Mr. Luce, then we could make some progress."

"Yes, David, but first you need to put her in contact with her

inner cow so she has someone to comfort her when she faces her loss.”

Of course, Dr. Batty was, as usual, right. But how in hell was I going to put Mrs. Luce in contact with her inner cow? I didn’t even know how to get her into the barn. Instead I went back to the late Mr. Luce.

“What did you do when your husband died?”

“Doctor, I guess you don’t think I should’ve been allowed to play the hand, since you didn’t answer the question.”

“Mrs. Luce, I don’t play bridge.”

“A shame, it’s a wonderful game. The Surfaces...”

“When did you lose him?”

“Oh that. A few months before I started therapy. Constantine wasn’t much company. We rarely spoke and he didn’t look at me when we did. Still, it was something. After his death I wanted a man to talk to who would have to listen and I didn’t want any romance so I called you. You do listen, even if you don’t play bridge. Now the Surfaces...”

“Can we stay on your husband for a moment? What did he

die of? What was his final illness like for you?”

“It wasn’t an illness. One afternoon he clicked off—stopped listening to me—and walked out the French doors across the field behind the house. Suddenly he disappeared, went straight down. The earth simply swallowed him up. I was concerned that he couldn’t hear me in his hole—as a matter of fact I was talking about the Surfaces and how wonderful a marriage they had—so I went through the French doors and across the field too. When I got to where he disappeared, I saw that the earth had given way over the cesspool. It smelled dreadful. He was still splashing around down there, but by the time I got help—I did try, although he was such a poor listener—he had drowned. It wasn’t so bad. The undertaker cleaned him up before the viewing. And what happened was somehow appropriate, a fitting end for Constantine.”

“Appropriate? Fitting end?”

“Well, yes. Constantine was a brilliant chemist. Really brilliant. He invented a laxative he called ‘Two-sy for You-sy.’ I’m sure you’ve heard of it. Constantine was not only a brilliant chemist, but he was a brilliant marketer. We made millions. But Constantine was anything but loose with his money. Now I have as much as I want. Don’t think me cold. It was a marriage of convenience. He was

homosexual and I was pregnant by a different man. I was very good to Constantine and he was an excellent father. We just didn't have any love for each other. Naturally, we both had many affairs. They didn't mean a thing, and in fact one blurs into another and I hardly remember their names. But Constantine's death was indeed a symbolic act—laxatives—cesspool—get it, Doctor? And he had a great sense of humor, so I'm sure Constantine enjoyed the irony of his demise. Now he doesn't have to listen to me—although you do—which he hated, and I have lots of money. Not a bad outcome.”

“David, what did you do?”

“Esmeralda, till I met you, Mrs. Luce was the strangest patient I had ever had.”

“David, please don't allude to our misunderstandings. All that is past.”

“Of course it's past, Esmeralda. I was referring to my bewilderment before I had begun to understand you.”

“It's okay, David. But what did you do?”

“Well, I couldn't figure out if Mrs. Luce was really pathologically cold, or if she was so traumatized by her husband's

hideous death that her feelings were frozen. The only thing I knew was that she had OD'd on her husband's invention, 'Two-sy for You-sy.' She was loose in name and body, I presumed in bowel, and verbalization, and in her mind. Short of termination I had no idea what to do so I let her ramble on for several more months, failing in all attempts to focus her, particularly if that focus was in any way related to Mr. Luce's death or to their relationship. If she had even one feeling of loss I never heard about it."

Then she came in oddly centered. She looked different—physically different—that is. She sat quietly for minutes, something that had never happened before. Then she said, "I had a strange dream. I dreamed of a rhinoceros. He was huge and he just stood there, rooted to the earth."

"A cow would have been better but a rhinoceros will do. A rhinoceros is wonderful, not as wonderful as a cow, but wonderful nevertheless," Dr. Batty predictably commented.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Luce didn't dream of cows, but it's her dream, not yours or mine."

"Mrs. Luce, tell me more about the rhinoceros."

"Well, he was handsome in a sort of medieval way—all

armor. He was extraordinarily solid. I could almost feel his weight pressing against the ground. And he is hugely—hugely—powerful. His horn is a thing of beauty, sculpted and elegant. Dangerous, too. I wouldn't want to be gored by him. I suppose it could have been a her—I couldn't see the er...er...genitals in the dream, but it feels male to me. Really male, not like my husband.”

“Esmeralda, I didn't believe what I was hearing. It didn't seem like Mrs. Luce speaking. It was more like the rhinoceros describing himself. I couldn't help but wonder about the sexual meaning of the dream. Was Mrs. Luce horny? Was all the business about not wanting to be gored simply denial? But I was far more impressed by the solidity and structure of Mrs. Luce's account of the dream than by its content.”

I asked Mrs. Luce, “What did the rhinoceros do?”

She replied, “Nothing, he just stood there—stood monumentally—his glassy eyes staring at me.”

“What did you feel?”

“I was awed and admiring. I suppose I had seen rhinoceroses as a child at the zoo but I never had a relationship with one. Never even thought about one. If I thought of animals at all, it was of one of

my lap dogs. Yet here he was, bigger than life, stronger than God.”

“What else did you feel?”

Mrs. Luce was silent, then thoughtful. She was assuming some rhino qualities—solid, stolid, immobile, armored, grounded. For once, she wasn’t loosely flailing. Not only was she staying in one place, she was sticking to the point, so to speak, sticking to the point of the rhinoceros’s horn. Better yet, she was talking about feelings, and, as far as I could tell, actually experiencing them.

Dr. Batty broke in, “I hate to admit it, David, but for Ms. Luce, getting in contact with her inner rhino is even better than getting in contact with her inner cow. Still, I hope she can do that later on.”

“Esmeralda, I know you mean that lovingly, but not everyone has an inner cow, and even if they had one...”

“Okay, okay. For Mrs. Luce it’s a rhino. I’m okay with it.”

Mrs. Luce let herself feel feelings akin to awe and wonder, admiration and aesthetic pleasure for a moment. Then she said, “In the second part of the dream I started to feel afraid. What if Boris—I

don't know why but that's the name I gave him—charges me? He was really staring. Then he picked up his left forehoof and stamped it. My adrenaline surged and I started shaking. I was sure I would soon be dead. Then I remember reading somewhere—I think in some travel literature on Africa—I'm always getting solicited by tour groups—that rhinos are the most dangerous animals in the whole continent because they charge without warning and apparently without reason. The article went on to explain that rhinos aren't really hostile or belligerent. The problem is that they're myopic, and since they can't see very well they don't know if you are friend or foe. And they take no chances. They charge just in case you're a threat. After I remembered reading that I thought, and then said, 'Probably you're scared of me because you can't see me clearly.' Then I reached into my purse and got out my spare glasses. I'm very nearsighted and always carry spare glasses. I walked up to the rhino and slipped the glasses on his snout. They didn't fit very well but they stayed on. Then and there I pledged to make a donation to Friends of Wildlife to fit as many rhinos as possible with corrective lenses. My rhino was puzzled. He tried to shake them off, but he allowed me to walk away. When I was about fifteen yards from him, I turned around, blew him a kiss, and waved. He must have gotten the message that I intended him no harm because he winked back.

Then I woke up.”

I said, “What a wonderful dream.” Something in Ms. Luce had shifted. The relative lack of digressions and the narrative tightness with which she related her dream already presaged the metamorphosis she was about to undergo. In the ensuing weeks and months, we worked on the dream. Much like with Mr. Straight, I put her in a state of almost hypnotic deep relaxation and helped her to feel how the ground supported the weight of the hooves and feel how the hooves pressed down on the ground. She came to experience the feel of the horn, to experience the security and sense of power possession of a horn gives, experience the confusion and anxiety concomitant with blurred, weak vision, experience the simultaneity of constraint and protective fortification armor-like epidermis elicits, experience the power inherent in being a multiple-ton mass of muscle.

We lingered in each experience, returning to them again and again to deepen Mrs. Luce’s sense of rhino-hood. Only after months of working experientially did I feel that Mrs. Luce had firm possession of her inner rhino and he of her. Mrs. Luce was no longer shapeless, prolix, flowing so rapidly that feeling was not possible. Now her behavior had purpose and direction. She could charge,

rhino-like, and she could remain rooted no less in the mode of a rhino. Then I invited her to try to experience simultaneously her old looseness and her new firmness. In the dynamic tension between the two antithetical states a new creative synthesis might emerge. A creative synthesis between rhino and blob could be extraordinary. We hadn't achieved that yet, but Mrs. Luce was still in therapy and who knew what might emerge? I was hopeful.

Once within the walls of armored epidermis, Mrs. Luce was able to mourn. Admittedly, her sorrow wasn't the deepest and was more sorrow for lack of depth of feeling between them than for Mr. Luce's absence. But mourn she did. Esmeralda, let me assure you that crocodile tears are nothing compared to rhinoceros tears. Now—on the other side of mourning—Mrs. Luce is truly a merry widow rather than a pseudo-merry widow.

Lately I've been interpreting the dream, suggesting that Boris the rhino's blurred vision is her blurred vision, her lack of insight. I also suggested that Boris's ill-targeted defensive aggression was also hers, and that her fears lead to all sorts of passive-aggressive blobbing and evasiveness. Mrs. Luce has integrated all this and lately she's been bringing a Halloween rhino mask to sessions. I have her put it on and charge around the room. Sometimes Mrs. Luce doesn't

need the mask; she can imaginatively transform herself into a charging rhino and feel to the base of her horn pure, unadulterated aggression.

I've also wondered aloud if I wasn't the weak-eyed rhino who might hurt her because I didn't see her clearly. That brought Mrs. Luce's fear and anxiety right to the surface. There it was: her core problem, repressed terror, right there in the room. After that Mrs. Luce's progress accelerated. Her inner rhino was ever more manifest and her charges ever more powerfully acrobatic.

"Oh, David, you work in the transference as well as in the rhino and I love the way you gently confront. You always call your patients on their people poop. You're remarkable. Next time we make love I'll think of you as a rhino rather than as a bull. No, no, I couldn't do that. I have to be true to my bovinity. Tell me, what's happening in Mrs. Luce's treatment now?"

"Mrs. Luce is about to terminate. She's doing splendidly. She runs her late husband's pharmaceutical company quite successfully. She just introduced a new formulation into their product line. It's an anti-diarrheal called RHINO. She expects it to do very well."

"David, if you tell me one more story we can fool around in

the stall—just don't call it a toss in the hay.”

“Okay, I'll tell you about Mr. McLoon. Believe me he's aptly named. Nothing he said made much sense. He was forever spinning impossible dreams like a dreaming teenager. But he was fifty. The way he took pipe dreams for reality was truly loony. Most of our patients are too reality-bound; they need to be able to freely take mental flights. But Mr. McLoon's style of fantasizing was not liberating at all. It was simply avoidant of life.”

“In Eugene O'Neill's great play *The Iceman Cometh*, a group of drunks are urged to give up their illusions, what O'Neill calls their 'pipe dreams.' They each try futilely to confront reality but they cannot and retreat back into boozy delusion. That's not the kind of fantasizing we help our patients do, although the distinction is sometimes hard to make. O'Neill implies that human beings need their pipe dreams, cannot stand too much truth. Perhaps that is the case, but the right kind of fantasizing expands the realm of the known and adds to the complexity of the reality we embrace. The wrong kind is simply running away into a pipe dream, the way Mr. McLoon did obsessively.”

“The only consistent theme he presented was his preoccupation with death. He belonged to a burial society and his

chief ‘recreational’ and virtually only social activity was washing corpses. Although this was under religious auspices and had truly beneficent social consequences, Mr. McLoon wasn’t in the least religious. He just enjoyed washing corpses. He was a bachelor, and as far as I know, a virgin. He didn’t seem to have friends. But he did have a successful business, doing title searches for title insurance companies on his computer. It was surprisingly lucrative, however isolating. Mr. McLoon seemed to have no complaints. He gave no signs of being distressed or discontented with his lot, apart from being somewhat bored, and asked nothing from me or from the therapy. When I asked why he was there, as I did from time to time, Mr. McLoon made comments like, ‘Why not?’ ‘As well you as another;’ ‘It passes the time.’ Yet for whatever reason I was important to him. At any rate, he kept coming back. Mr. McLoon was a compulsive reviser of his will, so I didn’t especially react when he started his session by apologizing for being late, saying he had just come from his lawyer.”

“This time the changes—to my will, that is—were really important. I completely revised the burial instructions. I don’t want my body washed and laid out and all that. That’s totally useless. A waste of perfectly good protein.”

“Waste of protein?”

“Yes, the body just goes into the ground. I suppose it helps the worms—going in and out, crawling all over your nose and snout—but that’s not dignified, and certainly not dramatic or exciting.”

I thought he truly is loony, expecting decomposition to be dramatic.

Mr. McLoon went on. “I decided I didn’t want that for myself, even if it does eventually end in my participation in the nitrogen cycle. I decided to actualize my dearest fantasy, one I haven’t shared with you.”

Mr. McLoon had complained from time to time that he lived too much in fantasy. But I had little or no idea what fantasies he lived in. Now he was going to share his dearest fantasy. Mr. McLoon’s language could be high-falutin’, even pedantic. When he was excited—excited for him, that is—he sounded like the college professor he had been in his twenties and thirties. So I was looking forward to hearing whatever it was that really got his juices flowing.

“I told the lawyer that when I died I wanted my body to be taken to the wilds of the southwest, cut into reasonably sized pieces

for comfortable eating by a large animal, and fed to a mountain lion. If no mountain lion is interested, or if exposure in mountain lion territory is not feasible, then feeding me to another large cat—leopard, lion, cheetah, tiger—is perfectly acceptable. And I allotted funds to carry out my wishes. My lawyer said I had to get a certificate of sanity from you, just in case my will is contested.”

“David, these cases of carnivore identification are so difficult for herbivores like us. What did you do?”

“Well, remembering Mr. McLoon’s asexual life, my first thought was that he wanted to be devoured by a voracious pussy. But that was far too distant from his consciousness to be of any use. So I decided to deal with the most conscious aspect—the being eaten by a large cat—of Mr. McLoon’s fantasy—but it wasn’t a fantasy. He really intended for it to happen—and only by taking his instructions literally could I help him feel his way into the puma experience. Puma, mountain lion, catamount, whatever they have been called in various parts of the country, these cats are quintessentially American. Fearing overidentification with McLoon in my admiration of these stunningly beautiful animals, I tried to be as objectively professional as possible. Unfortunately, my next comment wasn’t particularly helpful.”

I asked, “Aren’t you worried that the animal rights people will object? People aren’t supposed to feed wild animals.”

“That doesn’t worry me, but I am concerned that whoever does the feeding doesn’t become the food. But I imagine most mountain lions would be satisfied with one body. Will you give me my certificate of sanity to make sure my will is valid?”

I hedged on that one. “First, I’d like to know how you imagine being eaten would feel.”

“Of course I’d be dead so I wouldn’t feel anything. But if I were terminal or very old and decrepit, I wouldn’t mind being fed alive to the great cat—as long as he or she was a rapid eater. That would be exciting, knowing that I was about to become—literally become—at least a part of a sinuous, graceful, handsome, magnificent, winsome cat. To smell its breath, to feel—not for too long—its fangs pressing into my flesh, to feel the chunks of meat entering its entrails, to perhaps even feel my tissues broken down by his enzymes and then reconfigured as cat stuff. Then I would be a cat—the animals I admire most. Then as a mountain lion, I could roam freely, hunting as I pleased, sire cubs of transcendent beauty, and roar to shake the heavens. Of course I would not be conscious of myself as Theodore McLoon, but I would have mountain lion

consciousness. And as far as the being eaten part, I wouldn't mind the tearing and chewing, the grinding and swallowing. It wouldn't last long and is preferable to most deaths. Of course, the best I can realistically hope for is to be fed to the puma after my death. I don't believe in metempsychosis, in the transmigration of souls, or in reincarnation, so I can't be reborn as a puma or a tiger or a lion. Yet in this way—without the spiritual hocus-pocus—purely materially, I can become a magnificent wild cat and have an existence far preferable to the existence I've had as a human.”

“Esmeralda, I was amazed. I had intended to get McLoon to first experience what it would be like to be eaten by a cougar or other large cat and only then to gradually feel his way into the cat and into each of its aspects—into its beauty, grace, power, and ferocity, balance and symmetry, and at-oneness with self and environment. But he had already moved from the McLoon pole to the Puma pole of being devoured. That was fine. The problem was that he'd gone from fantasy and playfulness to concreteness and to what had to be a grim reality. The best I could do was to work with his panther identification. With most patients, most of my work is to relax their defenses so they can play; not so with McLoon. He had the capacity to fantasize; what he didn't have was very good judgment. Or to put

it more technically, his reality testing was dangerously fragile.”

Esmeralda said, “How wonderful to get in touch with one’s feelings, especially if you have the soul of a mountain lion. I say that as a bovine whose relatives have perished in the hands—and the teeth—of great cats. But Mr. McLoon’s problem is that he is afraid to die. His immortality project—David, we all have them—is actual incorporation into his ego ideal—into what he would like to be—a mountain lion. Work on his fear of death and see what happens.”

I did, and we talked a great deal about Mr. McLoon’s terror of ceasing to be. The more we talked about it, the clearer it became that Mr. McLoon feared dying inordinately because he hadn’t lived. No sex, no relationships, little creativity apart from idle dreaming, nothing since his early years as a teacher of astronomy in the way of meaningful work. No wonder he had to envision and attempt to actually make happen another life as the most vital animal he could imagine. I made my move.

“Mr. McLoon, what if you could incorporate the puma-esque qualities you most admire into your present life instead of planning to have yourself incorporated into the body of a puma?”

My question was unexpected and Mr. McLoon was visibly

shaken. I went on. “You can, you know. We have to work on it.”

Mr. McLoon took some time to consider whether that was possible. Then, once he was able to envision puma-hood for himself in this life, he readily agreed. His love for cats was as real as anything in his life. Using the same quasi-hypnotic technique I had used with Mr. Straight and Mrs. Luce, I slowly, progressively, helped him feel his way into the paws, into the claws gripping and tearing, into the ripple of the potent muscles, into the smoothness of the fur, into the languorous stretch of the body, into the energy and grace of the leap, into the savagery of the hunt consummated, into the snap of the tail. In the course of time Mr. McLoon actually came to look handsomer. He moved more smoothly. He took to licking the back of his hand and washing his face with it. But more significantly, he radiated confidence, power, self-assuredness. He sold his business and took a civil service examination for forest ranger. And he could demonstrate ferocity when he was thwarted. I heard no more about his burial—if that is the right word—plan.

It was only after McLoon was fully in contact with his inner puma that I returned to my initial reaction to his will, verbalizing, “You wanted to be devoured by a voracious pussy.” It was not long after that that Mr. McLoon changed his name to Mr. Grace and

started a love affair—with a member of what species I won't say.

I won't say what Dr. Batty and I did when I finished my story. But I do want to say that you—my reader—can use all of these techniques: deep relaxation, self-hypnosis, paying attention to dreams, feeling your way into your—especially feeling in your body—the experience of your totem animal(s). Do it slowly, repeatedly, piecemeal, painstakingly, and, as the gestalt psychologists say, you will “lose your mind and come to your senses.”

Chapter 4: The Wisdom of Dr. Batty

“David, all this about octopi, rhinos, pumas, and whatnot is well and good, but cows are what I’m about. Give me, a cow—inner or outer—anytime.”

“Esmeralda, not all our readers will be into cows.”

“I know, I know, poor things. They have all my compassion.”

“But the important thing is to have a totem animal, not any particular animal.”

“Not any particular animal! David, after all I’ve taught you, you still believe that a cow is just an animal among animals? Balderdash! People manure! Hay and biscuits!”

I’d rarely seen Dr. Batty so worked up. But then, as suddenly as she had exploded, an almost beatific calm descended on her now tranquil face and indeed radiated from her entire being.

“Of course you’re right. It’s just that the bovine experience is so essential—that it is so much of my very essence, that I momentarily forgot how important it may be for others to be octopi,

rhinos, or pumas. We must be true to ourselves, both in our outer manifestations and in our interior lives. If our core identity is bovine we must embrace the cow within; if it is molluskistic, the octopus within; if it is feline, the puma within. And we must embrace it passionately and unreservedly, totally, integrating all the manifestations of that inwardness into our conscious self. Yet the higher truth—the truth of truths—is that all and each of us is multi-specied. We are no less simian than we are canine, if only we could know it. Yes, embrace your primal identity with all your might, all your soul, and all your strength. But at the same time look to the periphery. Embrace that which is marginal and use that too to expand and enrich your experience of self and world. I myself am not only a cow; I am a snake, a saber-toothed tiger, a bacillus, an ectoderm, a kangaroo, and a shark.”

“But don’t worry about those higher spiritual states and multiple identities. For now it’s sufficient to get in contact with your core totem. If possible, don’t stereotype that totem. That limits and constricts and diminishes. Take cows. Do you think they are always placid, serene, content? They are, of course, but they aren’t only that. Think of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow who kicked over the lantern that started the Chicago Fire. Do you think she was a dumb, clumsy oaf?

Not at all. Chicago was the packing house of the world and Mrs. O’Leary’s cow’s kicking over that lantern was an act of sublime self-defense, not to mention vengeance. Defensive counter-aggression and retaliation are not usually considered bovine potentialities. Yet they are—witness Mrs. O’Leary’s cow. So if your inner animal does happen to be a cow don’t envision her too narrowly.”

“Now I know that this entire inner zoo stuff is easily dismissed as puerile, immature, regressive fantasy. Leave the stuffed animals in the nursery and grow up. To call something a fantasy is to deprecate it; ‘fantasy’ is a pejorative word. So I suggest that you think of your relationship to your inner whatever as ‘imaginative.’ ‘Imagination’ and ‘imaginative’ are just as honorific terms as ‘fantasy’ is pejorative. It’s a shame that we’re so indoctrinated that regarding something as ‘mere’ fantasy is dismissive. Wordsworth knew better when he wrote, ‘The world is too much with us; late and soon,/Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:/Little we see in Nature that is ours;/We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!’”

“All true, Esmeralda, but I’m worried that you’ve gotten a little preachy.”

“Perhaps. But I have to be deadly serious sometimes. It’s my message, not me, that counts. I’m just another Holstein.”

“And a beautiful one at that.”

“Let me get back to imagination—the liberating power of imagination. Myths, religion, philosophy, art, and even science are all products of our imagination. Being in love is an imaginative act and an imaginative achievement. Without imagination life would be intolerably gray, vapid, flat, impoverished, and devoid of interest. The cow within is of the same cloth as the other products of imagination.”

“Whatever the objective correlative, or lack thereof, of religious belief, there’s no question that the rituals, narratives, and sacred texts are works of the imagination. Regarding them in that way undercuts fanaticism and hatred of the infidels, whoever they may be, for a particular tradition. If one is so inclined, the imaginative acts that created the tradition can be regarded as divinely inspired, but so regarding them runs the danger of dogmatism. The playful element is lost and the option of ignoring or rejecting the archaic and barbaric elements embodied in all religious tradition is diminished, even sacrificed for insistence on certainty. Donald Winnicott, he of the transitional object and the salience of play,

believed that God was created by the projection of our inner goodness onto the cosmos to protect it from our inner badness. Another myth and a profound one. Science, too, is a series of imaginative myths successively approximating the *ontos* on, the really real, whatever that may be. But here each successive approximation is tested empirically. But that is also true of our religious imagination if we take seriously Christ's injunction 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' So the search for the inner cow is on the same footing as art, science, and religion. The fact that the search involves imagination and is an act of fantasizing in no way diminishes its value. I emphasize this, even at the risk of redundancy, because the stultifying belief that these things are childish nonsense is the chief source of resistance to finding—or at least searching for—one's inner cow. If all human culture is infantile wish-fulfillment, as Freud—in his crustier moods such as the one when he said he lived in the barren basement of a mansion whose upper rooms housed religion, philosophy, and art-believed, then it is hard to experience life as worth living. And of course Freud had his myths too. In Totem and Taboo he told how the primal father tyrannized over the band of brothers until they rebelled and murdered him. Then they resurrected him as a totem animal they worshipped in an act of atonement. Is that a better story than my account of the significance

of totem animals? I don't think so and besides, Freud never mentioned cows.”

“So the first thing you must do in order to find your inner totem(s) is to deal with your resistance to the imagination and its works. Once you've stopped evaluating fantasy your journey will be half over. And you will have regained your capacity to play.”

“There are many ways to facilitate the rest of the journey. Paying attention to dreams and taking them seriously is one of the most fruitful. Make friends with the animals you dream of. All the variations of self-hypnosis and deep relaxation change the state of our consciousness, as does meditation. And this change in modality of awareness opens the doors of perception, allowing us to see, among other things, our inner cows. Finally, that inner totem has yet another benefit; it makes us less lonely. Someone once said that there are two possibilities: to be alone alone or to be alone together. Wouldn't you rather be alone with your inner giraffe than just plain isolated? I 'imagine' giraffes are terrific company. Another way not to be alone alone is to get a therapist—one with a vibrant sense of playfulness—to play with you. And that play also facilitates the journey inward. Certain kinds of communal experiences do the same thing in a different way. Why not start a finding-your-inner-cow

group? Just put an ad in your local paper.”

“Esmeralda, you’re on your soap box again.”

“Oh, I suppose I am. Just let me say three more things. In Hermann Hesse’s great novel, *Steppenwolf*, the protagonist, Harry Haller, is given the task of learning to laugh like Mozart. Listen to Mozart and you’ll know what Hesse was talking about. If you can laugh like Mozart you are, by definition, in contact with your inner totem. Mozart’s laughter is all about acceptance, acceptance of the totality of being in all its variations, including all of the variations in us.”

“And moo. The more you moo the closer you will come to whatever liberation humans are capable of. Make mooing your mantra—and howling and roaring and bellowing and purring. But always return to mooing.”

“And finally, call 1-800-Dial-a-cow.”

Afterword

Dr. Batty and Dr. Toro met as patient and therapist, and then developed a complex, extra-therapeutic professional and personal relationship that included sex. This is, of course, completely unethical and not permissible professional behavior. I am here taking some poetic license and do not wish to imply that such behavior is desirable or allowable. It is not. Nevertheless Drs. Batty and Toro—Esmeralda and David—are happy and I wish them well.

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