

1 an (edited) email from Timmy Goodwing to a friend

Even in this email I'll be up to my tricks. It's not easy for me to (pretend to be able to) say 'it' earnestly and simply. Yet I think it's worth trying for a relatively earnest first-person report of my intention as I (we?) 'publish' fragments of *X*.

My content is traditional, yes. My form is, I hope, slightly novel – or puts off a piece of shine against its current cultural background. The stuff might be described as *psychedelic pornographic gal-lows humor*. But his forged email is part of the project, so it's not only psychedelic. Philosophically I connect it to the work of a Koheleth or a modified Schopenhauer or an Ernest Becker *minus the social hope*. It's no small deviation from these influences, however, to articulate and *identify with* fetishistic lust as opposed to merely theorizing about it. The phoniness of the concerned therapist is mercifully gone. The talk is peer-to-peer, sinner-to-sinner, joker-to-fool.

It's a *postpessimism* that *laughs* with Nietzsche, Cioran, and Beckett. *Nothing is funnier than unhappiness*. The nastier side of Sartre, the one that mocks humanism and the spirit of seriousness and grasps man as a futile passion, is also part of it. Sartre's style of womanizing also seems to fit some of the eroticism in *X*. [One is in and out of the game at once, able to play a cold secondary game on top of the first.]

Joyce's 'pervert' (?) Poldy, along with the idea of Earwigger as guilty of a blurry sin, was a central influence. Blurry confession, blurry boast, blurry seduction of the reader into complicity. My own here-comes-everybody 'bigger darker listener' is a similar sinner with (metaphorically speaking) a greasy hump on his back. He is fascinated by a necessarily underspecified 'glistening device' (numinous fetish object). What's in the hump ? *Personality*.

For me, personality *is* sin and guilt. The soliloquy and the aside represent the secret dimension of a character, his or her interiority, implicitly dependent upon the possibility of concealment. I

say things to myself, perhaps *about myself*, that I do not say to anyone else. **Thoughtcrime** is a central theme for me, and this connects to the graffiti theme and my anonymity. The dreamlanguage represents an ambivalent communication that wavers between confession, boasting, and cold analysis.

My own secretive humpback character (my twist on an aging Earwigger) is Mr. Pyotr Stumpf, and he's a psychologically impotent onanist. The underspecification of his 'since' (of his sins) is intentional – though he's at this stage reduced to a mere voyeur or fantasist. He's an imploded man who deals with the world as a necessary evil in order to get back to his fantasy life. His honorary hump reminds us that he's a psychical camel. He carries amniotic fluid with in that hump: he's his own wife-mother-daughter-son.

He's *anti*-resentment, *anti*-scapegoating — he forbids himself these indulgences. He also does not evangelize. Like Poldy he's tolerant, curious, empathetic. The hump is, among other things, an integrated shadow, a bag of reassimilated reeled-in projections. The stranger mirrors his *own* greed, apathy, fear, and suspicion – and his own tenderness and magnanimity. He is in this sense a big dark listener and a *spiritually* old man – 'old' from an experience of limitation and the knowledge that the the root of all conflict in the outerworld lives *in his own depths*. The world mirrors the civil war of every soul, though it's only a painful journey of self-recognition that reveals this.

Stumpf is also a symbol of that part of a philosopher or artist that resists marriage. We might imagine him divorced in his late 40s or early 50s, still lustful but far from eager to jump through the necessary hoops for an uncertain and fragile reward. He's also lost trust in his potency, afraid that he'll have trouble with new partners. How does one know, after all, that one is currently psychologically impotent ? Or that the next real relationship won't be the one that is dreamt of ? Stumpf is a 'psychoanalytic platonist' who has come to believe that projection is the essence of sexual love, or at least that which lifts it above an intimate friendship. This is a deepening generalization of 'beauty is in the eye of

the beholder.’ This ‘introjection’ (projection in reverse) is the basis of psychoanalytic education, which is something like a private, spiritual climb in the secret darkness of the self.

But why graffiti ? Is this message so daring ? It’s traditional, right ? Yes, but tradition is a sleeping dragon. It waits like a spore for reactivation. I love Heidegger’s concept of idle talk – which (being an idea from phenomenology) is ‘just’ shrewd articulation of a noticing of a basic structure in our (essentially social) existence. Genuine culture can and mostly does function in an ungenuine way. A person can keep Emerson on their bookshelf while constantly witlessly betraying in their chatter the spirit of what hides in that book. The living dog was used as (and understood as from the beginning) a dead lion.

This is a key theme for me. *For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.* The ‘lion’ in my ‘misreading’ is the flashy phony counterfeit, the falsifying celebrity-approved popularization (the mere smell of education rather than its enacting). It’s an impressive image but not alive. The ‘dog’ is the *reality* of philosophy, of art, of doing the thing, possibly unrecognized, *because* one does not give the popular but false signifiers. In short, this is like the authenticity of existentialism, but it’s the authentic authenticity, because existentialism is as vulnerable as Emerson to shallow misreading. The relatively authentic personality *emerges* in and as sin (as crime, as deviance) from the safe warm ‘innocent’ mud of the mob, which is in cultural terms a set of simple ‘cartoons’ (childishly simple conceptions of good and evil and history, etc). We are born fallen and entangled and we are constantly tempted to relax into the warm safe mud again – this includes very much the mud of a political tribe.

I’m saying that the appearance of this living dog is discouraged. Even if people don’t care about the unknown atomized others out there, they do a quick google search perhaps before a date or a job interview to look for red flags – in short, for personality that isn’t

conveniently categorized as *one of us*.

If I were to play the a martyr for Honesty at this point, I'd be, in my own eyes anyway, a less interesting character. That'd be more projection, as if I don't also help sustain the 'Matrix' of what can and cannot be said. My cowardice is part of it. If Tommy is bolder, it's a historical contingency, and this boldness only exists by contrast with a therefore necessary foil. Every finite hero needs a windmill. The infinite antihero is his own windmill, including and therefore offending everybody (all 'finite' personality, which exists by exclusion.)

But let us proceed : Nietzsche was right to emphasize the dark side of Socrates. He was living it, in its purity, even as he (and because he) brought it mercilessly to tribunal. Institutions pretend to be able to grab it and freeze it and convert it into an icon, but it's only the original-primordial *intention*, the root idea of questioning from the center of one's own experience, which is perennially subversive. It's as terribly free as time itself. It is nothingness, negativity. It is the hole in being. This too is in Stumpf's hump. The blossoming heretic hides a growing awareness of the falseness and fragility of all that the experts claim is certain and sacred.

Perhaps you can see at this point that *X* is a strange way to present a philosophy. Perhaps I can dig deeper. I have a certain feeling about the world that, far as I can tell, doesn't get expressed much. I imagine the amusement and relief I could bring to an ideal stranger by trapping the truth about existence in a string of words. Now this truth about existence is the truth about existence *for a certain kind of personality*. As much as I've loved universality, I've come around to facing what I'd call the necessity of the esoteric. For example, Joyce's *Ulysses* is not truly a universal novel. I love it, of course, but it's used as a signifier at this point. One respects it, a safely dead lion. But Poldy is pervert. Isn't he even problematic now ? If anyone bothers to remember him ? Is the book really for those who can't relate to Poldy's perversions ? Joyce is giving us a carefully crafted version of himself. The book was legitimately offensive to those who rejected a certain kind of

consciousness – who did not want to relate to a man with the thoughts and feelings of a Joyce. Joyce is a corrupter and liberator, two sides of one coin. A certain kind of cognitive hero pushes such 'corrupted' (also a questing questioning) to the very end.

I try to take a spot above both sides, and I think Joyce was like that too. In the battle of Shem and Shaun, he seems to be picturing the civil war that the father *is* within his mighty hump. The old Hump is transcendent through the articulation of this ambivalence. The self-image becomes less exclusive (less projecting) until the hump is everyone and no one, or at least, that is, behind some resolutely stiffnecked avatar – an exoskeleton that prudently performs safenormal consciousness. This is possible because the civil war becomes relatively harmonic – self-amused and self-fascinated enough to wander around like Poldy, reluctant to descend into stupid hatred, boring resentment, interested instead in articulating and intensifying a sense of transcendence. Boring disclaimer: it's not really about me but an archetype. Traditional content, like I said. But I've written enough for now.