

An unfinished didactic novel. Chapter 4: Cappadocia

by Richard D. Chessick, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Northwestern University
Senior Attending Psychiatrist, (Emeritus), Evanston Hospital
Fellow, American Academy of Psychoanalysis
Training and Supervising Analyst, Center for Psychoanalytic Study in Chicago

Early the next morning our group assembled, ate breakfast hastily, and prepared to board a private bus for our drive to Cappadocia — a drive that was supposed to have happened a week ago. Professor Kozan appeared and assured us that all was in order. We were to stay, of all places, at a “Club Med” in Cappadocia. Our bus driver, also named Ali, did not speak English. Our English-speaking Ali, the psychiatry resident, joined us but Professor Kozan remained in Ankara. I found myself sitting at the back, on a bench that constituted the rear of the bus, between Henry and Claire. Ali the resident happily squeezed in at one end of the bench, next to Claire of course.

Our musings about the loss of a week’s time from our trip in Turkey led Henry to begin speaking about a philosophical interest of his, the problem of time in general. “Bergson, in his book *Time and Free Will*, pointed out the artificiality of scientifically measurable time as opposed to something he called ‘real concrete duration’”, said Henry rather pedantically, “and this proves to be much involved in the recent day findings of investigations in the mathematical biology and physiology of the nervous system, on the one hand, and in psychiatry on the other.”

“Well of course,” I replied, not to be outdone in academic competition, “as Bergson pointed out, ‘duration and succession’ belong to the intellectual apparatus of the conscious mind. For example, in sleep, where our perception of space is no longer intellectually ordered, our notion of time is freed of the bounds which consciousness imposes upon it, and becomes rather instinctual or, as Lowenstein of the ego psychologists would put it, instinctualized in nature. There occurs an intermingling of past, present, and future, driven by the pleasure principle, and later when we are awake it is the work of intellect to superimpose an abstract succession in space upon our natural perception of time. Psychologists have described how in states of alteration or disturbance of intellectual processes, whether due to sleep, drugs, disease, and so forth, there occurs what appears to the intellect to be a remarkable distortion of time perception. The past, present, and future become kaleidoscopically intermingled.”

Ali the resident chimed in, “This argument is also supported by cybernetics in which a distinction is made between Newtonian time inextricably bound up with intellectual

calculating processes, and Bergsonian time in which the automata really seem to exist.” Everyone looked a bit puzzled at this rather obscure remark.

Then Claire began, “Even more remarkable distortions of perception occur in schizophrenia, where not only time perceptions but space and motion perceptions are capable of being twisted completely, as a secondary feature to the fragmentation of the personality.”

“That’s right Claire,” I responded, “I recall a case of mine in which an acute schizophrenic episode was ushered in by the chief complaint of the patient that all the clocks in the place were slowing down. The clocks were reported as becoming slower and slower until finally they stopped and the patient became acutely psychotic. It is probable that what is being referred to here is the classical sense of impending fragmentation of the whole mental works, found in patients approaching the beginning of a schizophrenic episode. What is interesting in this case is the expression of this slowing of the mental works through disturbances in conscious time perception, again indicating the close relation of time perception to psychological status.”

“I suppose it is true then,” said Ali, obviously eager to get into the conversation, “that psychiatry insists our fundamental perception of time is what Schilder called ‘biological’. That is to say, time perception may be distorted like any other perception; the experience of time is interwoven with emotional factors and the actual biological situation of the percipient.”

“Who expresses this better than Proust,” I replied, “in *A la recherche du temps perdu*? As Schilder pointed out, psychoanalytic psychiatry tends to support Bergson and Proust when they insist that the social or intellectual perception of time is basically tied up with psychological conscious awareness. Or, as Freud said, ‘The processes of the system *Ucs* are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system *Cs*.’¹ In this passage we have an integrating viewpoint of extreme interest to philosophy, neurophysiology, and psychiatry. When one juxtaposes the study of neurophysiological time with true ‘instinctual’ or Bergson’s ‘real’ time, one becomes involved in the investigation of the unconscious!”

At this point Henry interceded, saying, “But we can’t go too far with this integrating viewpoint because there are major faults in Bergson’s philosophy. It shows certain serious syntactical and analytical shortcomings. There is beautiful poetic vision in Bergson, but the arguments leading up to the visions are unfortunately often characterized by mere play on words. When Bergson becomes mystical with his concept of ‘real duration’ scientists should part company with him. The definition of ‘real time’ is an exceedingly complicated problem, and one must be very careful not to fall into the medieval error of giving a metaphysical ‘reality’ to such an intangible, and then endlessly discussing it without hope of ever actually gaining empirical knowledge of the subject.”

I was delighted that Henry was being civil and apparently engaging in a friendly conversation for a change. Claire asked, “Well Henry, then what do you think were

¹ *The Unconscious*. Standard Edition 14:187.

Bergson's important contributions from the scientific point of view?" He replied, "First of all Bergson pointed out how the conscious intellect perceives the flow of time and then he raised the question of the existence of a true philosophical time, which is different from that which our intellectual perception of time would lead us to believe. But his actual argument rests on a confusion between the biological basis for our sensation of the passage of time, which tells us nothing about the 'real' or intrinsic nature of time on the one hand, and this 'real' or intrinsic nature of time on the other."

Ali, trying to focus on the contributions of psychiatry to our understanding of time, said, "Therefore, we have really three problems: 1) how the conscious intellect perceives the flow of time; 2) the biological basis for our sensation of the passage of time, or what might be called 'primitive instinctual' or 'biological time'; and 3) the 'real' or philosophical nature of time."

I brought up Harry Stack Sullivan's contention that a phasic variation of living between waking and sleep, and of physiochemically conditioned recurrent means and satisfactions is basic and primary in human life. It is easy to see that the infantile prototype of time sensation may arise from this situation. Lewin similarly cited the original infantile repetitive situation of hunger, oral satisfaction, and sleep, which suggests the same kind of basis for the instinctual primitive sensation of the passage of time.

"These theories could be used to explain why there is a difference in time perception when the normal processes of conscious awareness are disturbed," said Claire, "on the basis of the regression that occurs under such conditions from normal intellectual perception of time to the primitive biological sensations of time."

I added, "Freud in the *Interpretation of Dreams* suggested that the psychic system has a direction and that excitations traverse the system in a certain temporal order. Organization in time of conscious awareness seems to be based on this ordered flow of psychic processes. When the excitations in the system follow what Freud called a 'retrogressive course', which is neurophysiologically equivalent to the situation of regression as in conditions of sleep, psychosis, and so on, one gets the kaleidoscopic mingling of past, present, and future appearing in the conscious. This description is as far as we can go in understanding the variations in time perception that occur under various biological conditions."

"This does not, as Bergson thought he was doing, reveal the 'real' or 'philosophical nature of time'", interrupted Henry, "rather it is a psychological phenomenon with concomitant neurophysiological events. For Bergson, conscious time perception is postulated to be based on an indigenous mechanism of the intellect by means of which an order is brought into our state of conscious awareness. The intellectual perception of time is thus tied in with conscious awareness in a way not clearly understandable."

"Then actually what can be said about the 'real' or philosophical nature of time?" asked Ali. "It is embarrassing to admit that centuries of philosophical discussion of the intrinsic nature of time have not yielded more fruitful understanding than is to be found in book XI of St. Augustine's *Confessions*," replied Henry.

"There are certain basic propositions about the nature of time," I said, summing up the discussion. "First, there can be no such thing as 'absolute time' – time depends

on creation, and before that there was no time; in fact the question, 'Can there be time without matter?' is a nonsense question."

"So the relativistic theory of time in Augustine is more advanced than Newton's dichotomy of 'absolute' and 'relative time'!" trumpeted Henry.

Ignoring his obvious attempt to put down science, I continued, "Second, time is something subjectively known but not explicable in a scientific language. But Augustine in holding this view is being too extremely subjectivistic; perhaps one should simply say that time is something subjectively understood but only indirectly or partially explicable in public language."

"So the past exists in the present only as memory traces distorted by the subjective personality of the individual," added Claire, "This argument avoids the play on words and confusion of Bergson and is fully supported by modern philosophy and psychiatry."

"Definitely," remarked Henry, "Time is measurable in scientific terms only when projected by the intellect into some kind of succession, usually in space."

At this point Sema asked for our attention. She was sitting at the front of the bus with a microphone, as is typical of tour guides, and asked us to look out of the left side of the bus where a large lake was appearing as we drove along. "This lake," announced Sema, "is a salt lake in the Anatolian plain. In Turkish it is known as Tuz Gölü and is very similar in characteristics to the famous Dead Sea salt lake. We are now about seventy miles due south of Ankara. Tuz Gölü is a catchment basin for run-off water and as a result during the summer months it becomes dry, desolate, and parched with salt deposited from precipitation. But unlike the Dead Sea, it is shallow and during these few months salt cake can actually be collected from the lake as solid briquettes."

Here the businessman Edward spoke up for the first time, loud enough for everyone to hear: "Historians and archaeologists have found it difficult to explain the clearly important trade and caravan routes that passed by this lake and have ignored reference to these salt sources. Almost never mentioned is the strategic and critical commodity, salt, which might have explained the considerable effort and resulting prosperity for those who exploited Tuz Gölü. After it rains this lake could be more than three times greater than the area of the Dead Sea."

"Not only that," added Sema, "On the salt layers of Lake Tuz Gölü, storage facilities are now being developed for natural gas. Turkey is hoping to avoid its dependence on Russia for natural gas imports, one of the main reasons for criticism of Turkey's energy policies by the Americans. And quietly Turkey is also importing natural gas from Iraq."

This impressive lake was the only major attraction on the road from Ankara until we reached Cappadocia, a bus trip of about four hot bumpy hours. As we drove into the Cappadocia area the famous formations that one can read about in any guidebook appeared. Millions of years ago ancient volcanic mountains spread their volcanic ashes over this entire area. Over time, this ash was beaten down into a heterogenic tufa and then for thousands and thousands of more years the winds blew and the rivers snaked through the lands. Perhaps one of the most horrendous erosion events of all times

formed the geological area called Cappadocia.

The people who lived in these valleys carved out hiding places for themselves. Early Christians used these underground sanctuaries to hide from persecutions by the advancing Romans. Hermetic religious sects took to the hills and carved out chapels which they decorated with frescoes. Whole monasteries were carved out of hillsides and habitats were carved out in such a way that thousands of caves became homes. Even one full day of visiting would have been long enough to give us at least an impressive overview of the area.

Cappadocia is along the trade route that connected the East and the West and also is along the road taken by Arab armies as they advanced against the Byzantine civilization. So during the seventh through the twelfth centuries A.D., the people of this area were under constant threat of marauding armies of all sorts. For this reason the Christians who inhabited these lands excavated and constructed two massive underground cities and a number of other smaller ones.

Some of these underground cities are almost unbelievable. For example Derinkuyu's city goes at least twelve to eighteen floors underground (the numbers depending on which guide is speaking) and includes over 1200 rooms; this underground haven provided shelter for ten thousand people in times of danger and connected by an underground road of ten kilometers to a sister city with eight floors and perhaps the same number of rooms.

For those who were willing to go underground we planned to visit these places and also the rock-hewn chapels. Some of the art in these chapels was destroyed by fundamentalist believers in Islam called iconoclasts, a destruction of art that lasted until the fourteenth century. The frescoes of these chapels depict the lives of Christ and his followers described according to the beliefs of the Orthodox Church.

The hills of volcanic tufa were used to carve out fortresses from which they could defend their lands from the threat of an approaching army. The whole region is dotted with strange "fairy chimneys", rock-hewn houses, and so on. There are surrealist landscapes of rock cones, capped pinnacles and fretted ravines, in colors ranging from warm reds and golds to cool greens and grays. Dwellings were hewn from the rock as far back as 4000 B.C. Remarkably, the mineral-laden volcanic soil is very fertile and Cappadocia is a primary agricultural region with fruit orchards and vineyards. Its main industry, however, is tourism when there is peace in the area. The name Cappadocia does not usually appear on maps, for it forms a rough triangle starting about 160 miles southeast of Ankara, between Nevsehir, Kayseri, and Nigde, with the main sites in an even smaller triangle marked by Ürgüp, Göreme and Avanos.

It was in this restricted area that we hoped to spend the next full day walking and talking and exploring and discussing how the geography of the area symbolizes the geography of the human mind and how the endless wars and destruction and comings and goings seem to go on throughout history in a relentless manner. I could emphasize in this discussion the power of archaic sadism or, as the Kleinians might put it, the death instinct turned outwards. For the history of Cappadocia is the history of man's inhumanity to man. It was probably seriously settled first by the Hittites about 2000

B.C., although there is a Neolithic fresco that was found dating to about 6000 B.C. From about 5000 to 4000 B.C., Cappadocia was ruled by a series of small but independent kingdoms. In the golden age of Anatolia at the beginning of 2000 B.C., Assyrian trade colonies were established in the area. The tribes that settled at that time were the Hittites. The Hittites were then conquered by the Egyptians and the Assyrians and finally the area fell under the sovereignty of the Persians between the sixth century B.C. and the arrival of Alexander the Great.

Cappadocia was then ruled by the Macedonians until Alexander died, after which the residents of the area attempted to form an independent kingdom, which soon fell to Roman rule in 66 B.C. and became a province of the Roman Empire. The much traveled emperor Hadrian visited Cappadocia in 129 A.D. All this warfare and strife along with the streaming in and out of the nomadic Turks made Cappadocia a dangerous place to live and precipitated the formation of the fortresses and underground cities. I was hoping to draw some parallels between the human psyche and situation in Cappadocia, setting the development of the psyche from birth to early adulthood parallel to the history of Cappadocia from its early settlement to the fall of the Roman Empire. But it was not to be.

We arrived late in the day at our “Club Med”, a rather unpretentious series of cabins with a swimming pool. Everyone agreed that a rest period would be in order, after which we would assemble for dinner and discuss our plans for the next day. As everyone began to scatter I cornered J. and asked her to come briefly to the bar and have a drink with me. She was tired and annoyed but attempted to be courteous. We sat down at a table in a corner where I hoped we would not be disturbed. I quickly sensed her mood and realized I was going to get nowhere by trying to be romantic, so instead of that I pulled out of my pocket a quotation that I had brought along hoping to read to her at an opportune time. It was from a letter by Samuel Johnson, one of the great minds of all time, written in 1782:

DEAR SIR,

It is now long since we saw one another; and, whatever has been the reason, neither you have written to me nor I to you. To let friendship die away by negligence and silence, is certainly not wise. It is voluntarily to throw away one of the greatest comforts of this weary pilgrimage, of which when it is, as it must be, taken finally away, he that travels on alone, will wonder how his esteem could be so little. Do not forget me; you see that I do not forget you. It is pleasing in the silence of solitude to think, that there is one at least, however distant, of whose benevolence there is little doubt and whom there is yet hope of seeing again².

“Who are you trying to fool Martin?” retorted J., “You are not talking about friendship, you want a lot more and that is the trouble and the problem! You want to be the love of my life and at the same time keep on with your own life project and life

² *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, by James Boswell. New York: Modern Library, p. 1005.

curve. This seems to me like narcissism in the extreme; you say that you cannot live without me but you live quite nicely without me indeed! Maybe you should get your act together and find someone else who is more malleable to your wishes. I have my hands full with a very unhappy marriage and great financial problems; why do you wish to put more pressures on me?

“I know that I am drawn to you and want to be close to you but at the same time I am very ambivalent and find that you violate some of my deepest beliefs about how a person should conduct their life. I am confused and I am distracted and I am tired and I want to take a nap so let us talk later.”

I was somewhat taken aback by the vehemence of this response, and realized this was not a very appropriate time to discuss the matter further. So we agreed to take our respective rest periods; J. went off to her husband in their room and I remained sitting in the bar by myself.

Soon Ali the resident came by and asked if he could join me. As the youngest and most energetic of the group he did not need much of a rest! Clearly he wanted to continue the discussion on the bus. He said, “You have written a number of books and papers on existentialism and depth psychology. Could you tell me more about your interest in existentialism?”

I replied, “As a clinician I am interested in existential anxiety. It has both a neurotic and a realistic aspect. The neurotic aspect is essentially from the projection or the externalization of unresolved narcissistic conflicts and the rage at narcissistic wounding. On the other hand, there are realistic grounds for existential anxiety, making this a complicated problem. For example, Kierkegaard said that as servitude decreases in the age of science, we begin to ask questions like ‘What’s it all for,’ ... so I think existential anxiety is a normal part of the human condition. But a healthy person is not preoccupied with it, because the neurotic aspect of it, the narcissism, has been transformed in the normal person into acceptance and hopefully, wisdom, as Kohut tells us. If this does not take place, then it becomes a vehicle for expression of pathologic anxiety and narcissistic rage. As such it leads to a stage called existential melancholy, existential deadness, or existential despair. The best literary examples of that are Kierkegaard’s journals, and there are many other innumerable literary allusions to it.

“I have written about existential deadness following the theories of Federn. He introduced the concept of *Ichgefühl*, or ego feeling, which has since been neglected. Its absence refers to the lack of what Winnicott called ‘good enough holding’ in infancy. If good enough holding does not take place, the individual feels this deadness and many patients complain of this sense of deadness. The antidote they try to use is usually passion. Very commonly one sees patients complaining of a great sense of deadness, and wildly involving themselves in passionate adventures or the quest for excitement in order to tranquilize the sense of deadness, either physical adventures or looking for ecstatic passions or drug states of some kind.

“The state of severe existential melancholy is always pathological, and, if I am correct, then the treatment for this would be the successful working through of narcissistic conflicts. Often this is impossible because only a small percentage of people try

to get treatment for these things. If it is impossible, then a person is, to a certain extent, bound to be damaged and that person can only use what I call pacifiers. Of course we all need these pacifiers to some extent since there is only a quantitative difference between neurotics and normal persons, and existential anxiety is a realistic as well as a neurotic problem. It partakes of both.”

“What are these pacifiers?” asked Ali.

“Above all, the exchange of warmth with loved ones as much as possible. Modern theoretical thinking as in the earlier work of Kohut says narcissistic libido and object libido take different developmental pathways so it is possible to exchange some warmth with loved ones even though one has narcissistic damage.”

As I launched into this long discussion of existential anxiety and pacifiers I vaguely had the realization while I was talking that it seemed I was talking about myself. Now, lying helplessly in this bed in the intensive cardiac care unit, I know I was. For me, insight came too late.

I continued, “Then there are delusions as pacifiers. These may be various, speculative, political, and religious systems in which one simply consoles one’s self; for example that the utopia or the millennia lies just over the horizon. There is also simple stoic endurance. Aurelius’s *Meditations* is my favorite example of that: *Sustine et abstine*.

“There is also immersion in aesthetic appreciation, art and literature. Other pacifiers in the sense that I am using the term involve such things as immersion in puzzle solving, whether it be science, mathematics, chess, research, or a Sherlock Holmes adventure. In all of these you take yourself out of temporality, out of time. So the concept of time or temporality is central in all forms of existential thinking.

“The historicity of mankind is the primary problem a person must overcome if he or she is struggling with existential melancholy. Usually pacifiers are combined in all of us to some extent but whether they work or not is really not much up to the individual. It depends primarily on that person’s autonomous ego capacities. The pacifiers depend on what Harry Stack Sullivan called the ‘clamor’ of the repressed, constituting, for example, in Kohut’s terms, grandiose exhibitionistic needs or the desperate search for the idealized parental imago. If the clamor is too much, the pacifiers don’t pacify enough and the person doesn’t overcome the melancholy and anxiety. Probably commitment and engagement are most essential; here is another contribution of existentialism to modern psychotherapy. In examining a patient, the lack of commitment is a mark of psychopathology.

“Existential thinking suggests a view that is somewhat different than the scientific approach to humanity; it is a command to strain one’s capacity to the utmost. Another way to put it is that the human is always more than the sum of his or her parts. It is not just a matter of accepting a human for what he or she could be, for no matter how much you know about a person, that person is probably more than that. So you can never reach a thorough, scientific, technical and completely dissected understanding of a person. And that ‘more’ is always what you are reaching for, but you never completely reach it. This kind of attitude helps in maintaining respect for patients, an approach to patients in contrast to a compulsively detached observer status in which

one picks the person apart piece by piece.”

Ali asked, “Is this taught to residents in psychiatry in the United States? We hear very little about it here, and most of our training is in psychopharmacology which is insufferably boring.” I responded, “It is extremely difficult to present existential aspects of psychiatry and psychotherapy to residents in psychiatry. They even resent reading anything about it. In a sense this confirms what Jaspers and Heidegger claimed: We are so immersed in the scientific approach that when someone presents a different view it is almost impossible to really grasp it and we fight against understanding it.”

“Would you expect this attitude to differ in a person trained in Europe?” asked Ali.

“Yes, it is different if you go to the continent of Europe. If you talk to colleagues on the continent about psychotherapy using these concepts, you don’t encounter the same kind of opposition and puzzlement. But if one has been immersed in scientific training for many years – biology, chemistry, physics – it is extremely difficult to make the transition to the language of the humanistic imagination”³.

At this point the group began filtering in with the expectation of having a drink or two before dinner. By the time Ali and I had finished the above conversation everyone was present and within hearing except for Claire, who, contrary to her usually reliable behaviour, did not appear or was quite late. As everyone listened I continued, “If you talk to psychiatric residents today, how quickly you discover how harassed they are. And it isn’t their fault. There is so much for them to do that there isn’t time for reflection of significant depth. Furthermore, I strongly suspect most practicing psychotherapists don’t take enough time to reflect about what they are doing and why. Throughout your professional life you have to discipline yourself to make time to reflect; it doesn’t happen just by itself. There is so much harassment in the modern world – what Heidegger calls ‘immersion in the they’ – that unless you watch out you don’t give yourself any time to reflect. The problem, even beginning in medical school, is that students are confronted with an enormous amount of stuff they must memorize. They are very frightened because if they do not do it they are graded down.”

Gertrude interposed, “A doctor doesn’t receive much training in human relationships, although actually they get more presently than when I went to medical school. For example, until recently, doctors didn’t know much more about sexuality than the uneducated layman. It never occurred to anyone until recently to give a course on just sexual techniques and information to medical students. It was somehow assumed that medical students would know all about it. One study pointed out that medical students had as many misconceptions, prejudices, and ignorance about sexuality as the ordinary layman.”

The soft spoken Pearl, in one of her unusual contributions to the conversation, said, “Martin, you must have in mind Karl Jaspers, a psychiatrist who turned philosopher. He had bronchiectasis—a malformation of the bronchi with sacs at the end of the bronchi instead of the normal bronchioles. In those days it made you very prone to lung infec-

³ See *Dialogue Concerning Contemporary Psychodynamic Therapy* (1996) and *Why Psychotherapists Fail* (1983) both by R. Chessick. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

tion, so he was told he would have a short life (actually he lived into his eighties). So during his psychiatric residency he was not given the usual duties of a resident; he was given half-duties, which turned out to be the greatest thing that ever happened to him because it gave him ample time to reflect.”

This gave Sarah a chance to show off her erudition again: “Jaspers’ thoughts about ‘Being’ are the product of these reflections. He was a borrower; he used poor terminology and was muddled as a thinker. But he brought up the concept of the *cipher*. He borrowed it from Kant but used it differently and perhaps they both took it from St. Bonaventure’s doctrine of ‘exemplarism’. If you want to get an idea of what a cipher is, it is simplest to read Tolstoy’s novel *War and Peace*. A cipher is something occurring from time to time in flashes, giving you the sense of transcendence. It can be used, if an individual wants to use it, for reaching a sense of something over and above our sense perceptions. For example, in *War and Peace* the most typical cipher is the sky. Indeed, at almost every critical moment in *War and Peace* the sky appears — for example, at the point when Prince Andrew hopes to be like Napoleon at the Bridge of Toulon. He takes the flag, goes forward and tries to lead the regiment. He’s hit by a shot, falls over on his back and realizes he missed his narcissistically sought opportunity to be a hero. He sees the sky and has a typical example of a cipher experience. He says,

“What’s this? Am I falling? My legs are giving way”, thought he, and he fell on his back... Above him there was nothing but the sky – the lofty sky, not clear yet, still immeasurably lofty, with grey clouds gliding slowly across it. “How quiet, peaceful and solemn; not at all like I ran,” thought Prince Andrew – “not as we ran, shouting and fighting, not at all as the gunner and the Frenchman with frightened and angry faces struggled for the mop: how differently do those clouds glide across that lofty infinite sky! How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last! Yes! All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace. Thank God”⁴.

I added, “The sky keeps appearing at crucial points in the novel. I don’t know whether it’s deliberate or not on the part of Tolstoy. He’s a fantastically good craftsman. For example, the exact opposite occurs at the time Pierre finally confesses his love to Natasha. He goes out and looks into the sky and what does he see? – the great comet of 1812! The sky appears at other times. When Nicholas is first under fire, the initial time he faces death in military action taking the Bridge at Ends, just for a moment he looks up and instead of seeing the fighting scene, he sees the panorama of nature and the sky. There are many references like that. This is what Jaspers (and I certainly agree) calls a cipher – it often tends to appear at certain critical points in one’s life.”

Edward was getting bored listening to me. He quoted Sartre’s statement, “Metaphysics is the art of bewildering oneself logically”. But I wanted to defend Jaspers, one of my favorite psychiatrists, so I retorted, “And how do you unbewilder your-self? The phrase today is ontological commitment. Jaspers called this *philosophische Glaube* –

⁴ *War and Peace*, by Leo Tolstoy. Translated by L. and A. Maude. New York: Simon and Schuster 1942, p. 301-2.

philosophic faith. This is not so difficult to grasp if one is willing to think it through. The world as one knows it must be grounded in *something*. Now the nature of that 'something' is a very big question. But if one does not accept that the phenomenological world is grounded in something, then one is forced into some very difficult views, such as solipsism or various forms of logical positivism, views which, as is now well known, contain internal contradictions.

"I am simply saying that the phenomena studied in science must be grounded in something, and that something is usually called Being. However the problem is that Being cannot be approached without a method. Yet if the method of science is all that is used, one cannot approach Being at all. A big problem has been to find a method by which it is delineated, and by which we can approach this 'something' that the world is grounded in. This, in my opinion, is Heidegger's great contribution. I was very impressed with Heidegger's pointing out the 'error', as he calls it, in the movement from pre-Socratic to Socratic philosophers. Heidegger wants to return to Heraclitus and Parmenides who concentrated on this 'something' that the world is grounded in.

"Heraclitus thought it was fire, but I don't know whether that is a mistranslation or at least an excessively literal translation. It is very difficult to understand exactly what Heraclitus is talking about. What we have are fragments – a hundred or so fragments. The legend is that Heraclitus was so angry that nobody paid any attention to this 'grounding', he committed suicide. Heidegger makes statements like: 'How is it that in this age where so much thinking is going on, we are not really thinking?' Try that out on a resident in psychiatry and you'll have quite an experience because it just doesn't make 'sense' to them. Heidegger's idea is that in reducing things down to their distinct and separate essences, one is missing the boat. It is actually moving away from what is essential; from Being, existence or whatever the grounding is. This has nothing to do with the notion that Being or ontological grounding has any personal interest in any individual. To think there is any Being or grounding that has a personal interest in intervening in an individual's life has to either be taken strictly on faith, or one must accept Freud's position that it is simply an illusion based on hope for an omnipotent parent."

"So I am not talking about an approach to a kind of personal God in heaven, who if you pray to He or She will deliver a slice of pie. Such a belief would be strictly a matter of faith. I'm talking about ontological grounding, which we know nothing about directly nor can we approach it by the method of science. It was really Kant who started this. Kant writes in such a dreadful style that he is today insufficiently appreciated. He started what we call modern philosophy; he began in many ways the foundation of modern psychiatry. Kant's Copernican revolution directed our focus onto the mind of the observer. Instead of saying there are things out there, and the mind has to find out about them, he says you can only learn about 'out there' by studying the mind, because only things with certain features out there can be known by the mind. The mind already imposes a screen or filter. He makes a division, then, between the 'observed' phenomena on the one hand and their source on the other hand, that he calls *noumena*, offering us the beginning of modern concern with ontological grounding.

Sarah added, "Another example of a cipher that Jaspers gives, and that I think is

very important, is the cipher found in the total immersion in the work of any one of the world's great creative persons. He advocates, for example, 'to not read about the history of philosophy, but rather to pick one philosopher (or philosophically minded scientist like Einstein or Bohr or Darwin or Freud and many others), any one you like, a great one, and totally immerse yourself in that philosopher's work. Enter into the mind of that great thinker as he or she gropes over a lifetime with universal human problems. After you get so completely conversant with this person's life work, you begin to feel this sense of transcendence, this forward force, which you don't get by studying only some of a person's works or the history of philosophy, science or art. You can experience the same thing if you want to totally immerse yourself in all the works of one great artist like Rembrandt or Goya or of great authors like Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. If you immerse yourself in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, as well as Tolstoy's many other writings, you get the same enormous sense of a man or woman groping for something that he or she cannot quite find. And not a single character ever finds it in Tolstoy's books.'

The group began to get restless with all this talk about philosophy, so I added, "If the therapist is totally immersed in the mind of the patient, as he or she watches the mind of the patient unfold and do its work, the therapist may also experience a cipher. That is, the therapist experiences the groping process, the unfolding process in the patient, the unfolding of another human being, the forward force in a person toward health. Now the patient may experience it also within himself or herself. Sometimes patients do and sometimes they do not, just like a person may watch the sky and sometimes may experience it as a cipher and sometimes not. The same is true for other ciphers, such as immersion in natural, or mathematical, or aesthetic beauty."

"How interesting it would be to compare this and connect it to Bergson's concept of *elan vital*", said Henry. But no one responded.

"Is a cipher, then, a related synonym to 'insight'?" asked Ali.

"No. Insight is different because you can put insight into terminology. Cipher is an experience. It's an experience in which you have an option – to either use it or not use it. If you use the cipher experience you can get the approach to a sense of transcendence. If you don't use it you won't get that approach or sense of transcendence. I'm suggesting that the cipher method is a better method, for example, than what Heidegger recommends. To put it in an oversimplified way, he says in his early work, go off all by yourself and listen to the voice of your 'conscience' – using the term in a different sense than we use it in psychiatry. This method cuts you off from people, it cuts you off even from nature and animals in a sense. It's a very schizoid type of existence...Heidegger in his lonely hut in the forest. The ciphers that I'm talking about are almost the opposite. But you have to feel it. It's not the kind of thing that you can teach somebody. All you can do is tell somebody it's a possibility."

"And this is what I tell my psychiatric residents about existentialism. I merely tell them: here's an additional alternative way of grasping the patient. You can use it or you don't have to use it. It's up to you. And it's very hard if someone is trained strictly in science to know what's its all about. Even the British empirical philosophers thought this was a lot of gobbledygook. So I'm not trying to sell it. I'm just saying it is a pos-

sibility. If you want to use it – O.K.”

“It certainly is a lot of gobbledygook,” said Edward grimly.

Now dinner was served and I noticed that Claire was still not there. Edward, her husband, went to find her. We had just begun to eat a sumptuous meal when he came out visibly upset and reported that Claire had a terrible headache. As the tour leader, I asked permission to visit her in their room and Edward agreed. When I went into her hotel room I found Claire lying in the dark, face down and silent. I asked her how she was feeling and to my dismay she responded that she had the worst headache that she ever had in her life. The pain was almost unbearable and she was nauseated and could not even sit up, much less come to dinner. The phrase “worst headache I ever had in my life” rang my medical training bell and I became concerned about the possibility of a subarachnoid hemorrhage. We were in Cappadocia, far from any medical center, and Claire seemed so extremely sick that I was afraid something terrible had happened. She could not even swallow the standard NSAID analgesics because she tended to vomit them up. She just wanted to lay quietly in the darkened room. There was no history of migraine or any other headaches like this. I could feel myself beginning to sweat with worry. My heart began pounding irregularly but I ignored it.

By this time both Claire and I had missed the attractive and generous dinner that was set out for us by the hotel. I called Lisa aside and explained the situation; by now I was really beginning to trust her and was happy I had let her come along as my assistant. I felt I could not take the responsibility of continuing the trip while Claire was in this condition. So for the second time changes had to be made in the itinerary! I called New York and contacted our travel agent in the middle of the night and changed around our air reservations while Lisa got on the phone and shifted our hotel reservations. The plan was to go immediately back to Ankara the next day and then continue on to Istanbul if Claire was no better. The original plan after Cappadocia had been to go next to see the early pre-historic Hittite civilization at Hattusas, about 100 miles east of Ankara. My idea for the tour was to go backwards in time from Ankara to Cappadocia to Hattusas, a kind of developmental study in reverse, which I had hoped would stimulate a lot of talk about archaic aspects of the human psyche. But now I was confronted with what seemed to be a medical emergency.

After a couple of hours of telephoning and annoyance Lisa and I finally got the changes made and we were sitting exhausted in the bar again with a couple of drinks. Suddenly Pearl came out looking for Richard, whom she reported had been absent since before the rest period but who then showed up for dinner and again disappeared. Pearl also mentioned that she was getting very uncomfortable around Sarah. It was clear that Sarah, Gertrude’s lesbian partner, was beginning to have an interest in a different possible partner, Pearl. Furthermore, Pearl’s considerable discomfort was apparently from the fact that Sarah’s interest was stimulating her more than she expected and conflicted with her image of herself.

To add to my confusion, when Pearl left, still searching for Richard, Lisa told me that just as Sarah had become interested in Pearl, it seemed that Gertrude was showing some interest in her. Lisa did not like this at all and was not uncomfortable with coldly rejecting Gertrude’s lesbian overtures. In the distance I noticed Henry walking in the gardens with Sema and I thought to myself, is it out of boredom or what is it,

but people on this tour are beginning to pair off in new liaisons that are bound to lead to a lot of trouble.

Foolishly attempting to break it up, I asked Lisa to call everyone together for an after-dinner seminar and question and answer session. Ali, Gertrude, Sarah, Lisa, Pearl, and J. appeared. Henry, Sema, Richard, and Edward did not appear.

“It is time to get serious,” I said as I opened the seminar. “Let us talk this evening about the healing aspects of psychotherapy.

“First of all, *the psychotherapist must be a thoroughly trained craftsman*⁵. I try to introduce in psychotherapy what I call the field theory of interaction. There are a variety of factors in the therapist and the patient that are important and interact, and they form limiting factors in the success of therapy. The field theory is important because it offers quasi-mathematical forms that one can work with and focuses on the great variety of aspects in psychotherapeutic interaction. One discovers that these factors can be described in two different languages. Even Kant talked about two different nuclear processes in the mind – understanding and imagination. Unfortunately Kant uses ‘imagination’ in at least three different ways. So if you go back and read Kant you are going to get confused.”

“Kant’s German was muddled and very confusing,” interrupted Pearl, who was clearly not very well versed in philosophy.

“Very confusing, but his concepts are important because unless we know that there are two different possible languages, and unless we are able to go back and forth between these two languages, we stumble into many pitfalls. For example, the greatest genius in psychiatry for going back and forth into these two different languages was Freud. He was a tremendously humanistically educated man, as well as a tremendously scientifically educated man. If you read his work he is always shifting back and forth. He talks about the Oedipus complex. This has all kinds of overtones involving Sophocles’s play *Oedipus Rex*. He knew that play very well and I bet he read it in the original classical Greek. How many psychotherapists can say that today? He talks about the Oedipus complex using terms like energy cathexis, libido distribution, and repression – he suddenly shifts to physics, classical Newtonian physics. He can go back and forth in these languages – the speculative book on Moses, on the one hand, and then his very technical works about metapsychology on the other. Freud’s followers didn’t have quite this much background and they often got confused. And there’s still a lot of confusion in the literature of psychoanalysis.”

“But the field theory of interaction that I’m talking about is based on the study of borderline patients, which forces us to it. It doesn’t contradict the ideal of classical psychoanalysis.”

“Are you saying, then, that psychoanalysis is the treatment of choice for all people?” asked Ali.

⁵ See *The Technique and Practice of Intensive Psychotherapy* (1991) and *Dialogue Concerning Contemporary Psychodynamic Therapy* (1996) both by R. Chessick, M.D., Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

“Not at all. I think that psychoanalysis is the *ideal*. If every patient would form a classical and analyzable transference and could afford to come in four times or five times a week, and there were enough psychoanalysts to go around, that would be what I would like to approach as the ideal. But it’s only the ideal – we’re limited in many many ways. If you work with borderline patients you just don’t find the classical transferences very often. You have to deal with many other disruptive factors. Almost all authors are in agreement on this. But formal analysis of the intense transference offers the best opportunity of producing real basic structural change.”

“Characterological? Structural?” asked Ali.

“No, structural. Characterological change is already a consequence of structural change. When I talk about structural change I’m talking about intrapsychic relationships between the id, ego, and superego. To use the old metapsychology, which I still happen to prefer as a valuable metaphorical tool for understanding psychic processes if you do not take it too literally, shifts in amounts of energy which are bound to various forms of ideation. To really shift those energy cathexes around fundamentally, and to free up energy for healthy living, you have to have the formal analysis of the transference. You have to resolve the infantile conflicts. Characterological change might be a result of that just like changes in neurotic symptoms might be a result of that.”

Pearl began, “One of the problems with change in psychotherapy is that when a person changes, they tend to blame the last thing they did as causing the change. That’s only human nature. So if you get somebody to make any kind of a shift, even if it’s a temporary shift, chances are they will blame that shift on something they just did...”

At this point the seminar was disrupted by shouts and vulgar curses! A tremendous row was taking place between Edward and Richard in the hall, so loudly that we could all hear it clearly in the seminar room. At one point I was afraid that Edward would actually physically attack Richard. It was unclear at that point why this altercation took place. It ended with mutual threats toward each other and a lot of genuine archaic hatred being expressed in the most unsavory language. Clearly, in spite of my best efforts, matters were beginning to get out of my control as the evening ended. It was several hours before things quieted down and everyone went to their rooms.

The next morning, to complicate matters further and make them more miserable, it was raining very hard in Cappadocia. There was no hope of visiting the various sites even for a few hours before we drove back to Ankara. Some of the braver members of the party went out with umbrellas and tried to look around, while others sat gloomily in the bar. I asked permission to talk to Claire again and received it from Edward.

When I went to her room I found her crying bitterly, but her headache seemed to be much less incapacitating. After some discussion she finally admitted that Richard had made several sexual passes at her on occasions while Edward was out of the room. When Edward found out he almost killed Richard and as a consequence broke up our group, because the hatred was now permanent between the two men. Claire was very upset and worried about what her husband would do to Richard. At the same time she was intimidated by Richard, who was a big authority in the New York psychoanalytic community and could seriously compromise her career and even her residency in the field of psychiatry. It was a terrible dilemma for Claire and she could not imagine how

it could be resolved.

Finally I now understood the origin of her headache but it was too late to change our plans back to way they were. So once more on the bus we went and once more to Ankara.

While on the bus I managed to sit next to J., in the hope of continuing our conversation and ameliorating her irritation with me. In my palpitating heart I felt a terrible longing as I sat next to her, as if a great treasure had been placed in my proximity and yet I could not touch it. It was not from fear of Henry that this prohibition took place but from J.'s own repeated insistence that I not possess her. What made it so painful was that I knew that deep down J. wanted me to possess her, wanted me to run off with her, wanted me to be with her forever. I could sense it and I was not wrong. But I was producing in J. a situation of conflict which she was beginning to find painful. Her self-preoccupied husband knew nothing about it and could only assume that she was being irritable and unpleasant. This gave him more ammunition to blame all his problems on his obstreperous wife.

I said to J., "Life without you is inconceivable to me. And I believe that life without me is inconceivable to you. Why can we not compromise and work out some kind of arrangement where we get to spend at least some intimate time with each other?" J. responded, "It's very simple Martin. I do not wish to allow myself to become sexually involved with you because I think it is wrong on the basis of my marriage vows. It is not that I do not want it and it is not that I do not love you. But I simply cannot bring myself to do anything like that. What this precludes is the possibility of physical intimacy and you have made it very clear that mental intimacy is not sufficient for you. I think a friendship would be something I could handle but it is obvious that you want a lot more and this I cannot handle."

She continued pensively, "Last night the toilet went crazy in our room. It began flushing itself over and over again and we had to call the night man who came and simply shut the toilet off. In order to use it we had to turn it on this morning and it continues to be crazy."

"Imagine," said J., "a psychotic toilet! What will come next on this trip?"

As the bus bounced its way toward Ankara, I felt guilt over stirring up J.'s conflict and bitter disappointment over her resistance to my most urgent pleas. As I thought over the many unpleasant events of the past 24 hours, I remembered Kant's letter in which he reflected on the meaning of life:

Every human being makes his own plan of destiny in the world. There are skills he wants to learn, there are honor and peace, which he hopes to get from them, and lasting happiness in conjugal life and a long list of pleasures or projects make up the pictures of the magic lantern, which he paints for himself and which he allows to play continuously in his imaginations. Death, which ends this play of shadows, shows itself only in the great distance and is obscured and estranged by the light, which envelops the more pleasant places. While we are dreaming, our true destiny leads us on an entirely different way. The part we really get seldom looks like the one we expected, and we find our hope dashed with every step we take. . .until death, which always seemed far away, suddenly ends the entire game⁶.

Author's address:

Richard Chessick M.D., Ph.D.

9400 Drake Ave.

Evanston

IL. 60203-1106

USA

e-mail: r-chessick@northwestern.edu

fax: (847) 329-0528

⁶ *Kant: A Biography*, by M. Kuehn Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press., 2001, p. 126.

