

To do the Impossible:

A Four-Part Poetic Essay on Responding to Human Evil

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## PART I

### WHY TAKE THIS JOURNEY?

When a colleague invited me to write this essay, I remembered the phone call I'd made to a woman who'd helped prisoners in the jails of the Pinochet dictatorship. And she'd said "No, No, No. I don't do Chile anymore." Like her, I balked and felt like, Whoa, Couldn't the undertow, pull me backwards into human rights work I'd done where I'd started to feel like I'd held my finger to the pulse of human unkindness, and I was shaken by it. The invitation reminded me in a flash of many ways *I'd* been introduced to the subject.

I remembered some conduct in my childhood home **that brought me all the way to hate's door.**

I recalled learning that the crime of *murder was permissible if the state did it* when I studied the death penalty the year Kennedy was shot.

In college, Malcolm X, conveyed he'd had to *surpass the racism* in what he called **the vicious system of America**, before he could **even begin to** face his own demons.

So a simple wonderful invitation was opening file on some scary stuff I'd studied and written about. But I also remembered that it was from exploring this darkness that I'd begun to see how therapists and others could help people break out of some pretty destructive patterns.

In 1983 I discovered the bad hypnosis in troubled families, and wrote about a mother who in front of her whole family and an audience of students, unintentionally hypnotized her suicidal daughter and suggested she kill herself.

But it was after this session that I ended up understanding how therapists could *break the spell of dysfunctional rapport* like the one between the mother and her daughter, and create *healing counter-inductions* to help the whole family wake up from *bad messages*.

In the 1980's to interview survivors of torture, *the counter-therapy by the state*. I'd traveled to Pinochet's Chile, Apartheid South Africa, and to both Costa Rica and Nicaragua where entire liberal Catholic Salvadoran communities were exiled.

When I came back home my clients said to me Our troubles here must seem trivial and self-serving. But they didn't. I now knew that the fact that I was free to work with them, with minimal intrusion by the state, was a sacred privilege, not to be taken for granted.

It was from studying the worst social darkness, that I'd realized how society could *build people up* all of us and *restore human dignity*.

When the **inhuman speeding of social time** began in the 80's with nanoseconds, faxes, microwaves, and Nintendo and time only for work, for us beleaguered creatures designed to be hunters and gatherers, the foundation was laid out here in America for destructive forces to take hold. Our world began to function at

**that pace**

**which** leaves too little time for the slow ripening of friendship or the layer upon layer for healing,

**which** fosters a system of care that is managed as opposed to heart-felt

**which** offers legal drugs as alternatives to connection.

When we all know that it is social isolation that kills.

Thomas Lewis dedicated his book the *General Theory of Love* to showing how therapy is about therapist and client relating at the level of limbic systems, that it is **the connection,** **the reciprocal loop,**

**that stimulates the adaptive unconscious and helps to regulate the client's limbic system,** he also cites studies that demonstrate that **ostracism and isolation from community are the worst punishment. Removing social bonds lack of warmth and human connection kills babies and produces depression and heart attacks in adults.** (Vintage, 2001) with Fari Amini and Richard Lannon).

And by the 1980's we'd entered a social era in which the focus was on the *bad things of connection, like co-dependency*, which became an ailment instead of a wonderful idea.

And an era in which there would be a *pill for every ill*, even that of needing the creature comfort of a warm body by ones side.

I'll never forget the first time my television set called out to me, as I left my show to brush my teeth during a commercial. The T.V. raised its volume.

It screamed, "Are you feeling lonely?"

Wow. Yes, I was.

"Are you feeling socially isolated?"

You bet I am.

"Do you find yourself uncomfortable in social situations?" Yeah, I find some social situations cold.

By this time I am levitating my arms my eyes, glassy, and facing my T.V. screen in appropriate robot fashion:

"You may be suffering social anxiety syndrome."

Wow. Great. An explanation for all this pain!

"You may benefit from Paxel. "

Weren't they suggesting that social problems were in my head. That....I'd have to be mad, or mentally ill, i.e. in need of chemical rebalancing if I dared to think it was society that needed changing?

Now that **suggestion** felt **downright** **evil.**

It was hard for me to wake up from just one bad commercial, and to realize everybody in the country watching T.V. that night had probably received its negative suggestions.

After the so called cold war ended when **the Hate movements reared their ugly heads during the republican conventions**, wasn't it clear to all of us that gospels of hate harm? And only political platforms with a bottom line of caring and decreasing health disparities and providing economic opportunity for all can really make a *land of the free*?

These days, when I meet with couples in transition, who lie and cheat, or deceive, and even beat each other, it has brought me to the question popularized by my post-menopausal role model, Tina Turner: *What's Love Got to do With it?*

Anyway, this matter of how to respond to all this cruelty, It's a pretty hot journey to take.

So we travel this road all right, but only because *we have to* deal with it. We do not need to be seduced by it. Or to follow it to its end. Our goal is simply this: to come up into some clearing, with an opening of the heart and mind, a brighter place by the end.

## II

### **How to Prepare for this Journey**

How do we walk this path without becoming hardened hopeless or bitter? Without deciding that maybe ants, who are very cooperative, should make us into the next dinosaur?

If we hate humans for our badness, then, we run the risk of becoming no different at heart or in mind than the abuser, the hater, or the torturer.

**So we might ask, What is the force that is strong enough to stand up against evil among our intimates inside our own families, within our governments or social orders, in racial arrangements, but is not itself evil?**

Now,

I will tell you,

**no one** should enter this treacherous territory alone,  
**without** guides. **Not you, and not me.**

When I studied Tai Kuan Do, the master of the Do Jo, Mr. Yoshida told me that when you enter a situation of danger, you must have protection all around you, on every side.

And don't need to understand it all, or to go all the way into the subject. Just far enough to turn around and come back into the light.

So, for this essay, I asked my friends, my clients and my family to tell me how they respond to malice. I read Thich Nhat Hanh, the Kabbalah, Victor Frankl, Eli Wiesel, Lao Tzu, and Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Etty Hilesun, a young Jewish woman, who *chose* to share her peoples' fate and expand her love for all mankind, even as she and her family were shoved into the cattlecar to Dachau and Ghandi and Martin Luther King,

I riffled through Beaudelaire's The flowers of Evil, and of course, the muses of North America, William Carlos Williams, Walt Whitman and Alan Ginsberg.

And I pray that all these good souls surround us today to infuse our work with the best possible spirit.

**Our journey is not easy.**

**How else do we get ready?**

Lao Tzu opens the **Tao Te Ching**, the basic teaching of Taoism, with a verse that suggests that the first part of a full life is a journey into darkness

**“Darkness within Darkness, The gate to all mystery.”**

If we tread properly, and we are blessed along the way, we will discover the light, the Yang, somewhere within this Yin, this darkness this emptiness.

**The Old Testament** too jumps right into this human dilemma. No sooner has The great Spirit of Healing and Transformation rested on the seventh day, then there is trouble in paradise.

God has given Adam and Eve, who came right out of her partner's rib -- "Bone of my bone. Flesh of my flesh"-- an earthly paradise, in peace and abundance, together with all the animals, they'd know no pain and they'd feel no sexual self consciousness. Oy, What a deal. Who could pass up on that?

God perhaps in the voice of GILDA RADNER says, Just don't eat the fruit of this *one little tree* over here in Paradise. But the honeymooners couldn't hang and chill with paradise. And once the snake put a spin on it, they just had to eat the fruit from that tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

*Now the couple feels embarrassed to be naked together and their marriage is fraught with conflict and betrayal of trust,*

And then the God force *favors* Able, their son and *rejects* the offerings of their other son, Cain. *Now we see that feeling unworthy in the eyes of an authority figure, if not the ultimate authority figure, that cannot be good.* How does Cain show his bitterness that God favors his brother? Cain kills Able.

So, we're early in chapter one of the beginning of spiritual creation, but between the marital crisis of Adam and Eve and the murderous competition of brother against brother for the approval of the higher power, the blue print for Tibet and China, Moslem, Christian and Jew, Capitalist against Socialists, Irish Catholic against Protestant, bad relationship vibes of all kinds, is laid out in what Alan Ginsberg in *Who Be Kind To*, (Planet News, 1965) described as:

the cold war (man) has borne  
against his own kind flesh  
since the days of the snake.

## **When I studied yoga in Bali, I watched The Balanese Hindus**

address evil the first thing *every morning* of their lives. From the leaves of trees they handmake a small basket in which they place an offering of incense, flowers or food to evil, so that evil will be satisfied to reside beyond the doorposts of their houses and beyond their gates.

It is no surprise that spiritual texts and practices would open on the issue of Good and Evil, yet it is rare that a **psychotherapy conference**, which tends to talk in terms of **science, objectivity, analysis** and **normal and abnormal** behavior, would address the issue of evil. In 1968, my mentor, M.H. Erickson wrote:

“Throughout the ages people have tried to believe that normal psychological behavior includes only that which is good at the social level... At times, man’s inhumanity to man is given some euphemistic label, but no effort is made to investigate scientifically the extremes to which *the normal, the good, the average, or the intellectual person or group* will go if given the opportunity: Consider the Spanish Inquisition, the Salem witch trials, or the introduction of slavery into a country dedicated to the right of everyone to equality and freedom... How did it happen that noble purposes of the Pilgrims led to the position that “the only good Indian is a dead Indian?” ( pp. 277, 278).

Burying people alive in pits, catching babies one by one on bayonettes and then burning them, inflicting maximal electrified pain on another - these behaviors can be within the norm under circumstances broadly labeled as war.

**Naturally occurring evil at the mass level** is important to recognize **BEFORE** we start our journey today, just like the Balanese do every day.

The great North American poet and *country doctor*, William Carlos Williams, shows us how the SAME collective consciousness can *naturally* sway *in an instant* from a shared reverie of enjoyment of a sport to the group-mindset of hunting down men to murder them.

### **At the Ball Game**

The crowd at the ball game is moved uniformly  
By a spirit of uselessness  
Which delights them-

All the exciting detail of the chase

And the escape, the error,  
The flash of genius-

All to no end save beauty  
the eternal.

So in detail they, the crowd,  
Are beautiful

For this  
To be warned against,

Saluted and defied-  
It is alive, venomous,

It smiles grimly,  
Its words cut.



The flashy female with her mother  
Mother, gets it-

The Jew gets it straight.  
It is deadly, terrifying.

It is the Inquisition, the  
Revolution.

It is beauty itself  
That lives

Day by day in them  
idly...without thought. (1969)

**So, we have**

1. **acknowledged** the existence of evil among the norm, in the masses,  
and

2. **mobilized** our good spirits from the past and friends in the present  
to surround us.

**3. What is a third thing we must do to dare enter into such  
profanity as evil? We must begin to separate clearly the Sacred from  
the profane.**

There exists a notion in Judaism that spiritual practice makes a  
separation between the sacred and the profane. That there is a line drawn.  
On one side of human time is the work week, in which we are on the clock  
of the world, when we have economic and material obligations, but on  
Friday night we draw a line and say, No. From now until sunset tomorrow  
we belong to the sacred world of rest, meditation, love, lovemaking and  
peace.

The observant home keeps kosher which means clean. Clean is about separation, separating milk dishes from meat. One is not to drink milk after eating meat or fowl, because we should not symbolically wash the baby, the meat, in its mother's milk.

Today, in our way, we must separate the sacred from the profane in our own hearts, to deal with our own demons.

A rabbi and scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that,

“If a man had beheld evil, he may know that it was shown to him in order that he learn his own guilt and repent; for what is shown to him is also within him.”

p. 209 the Baal Shem

So that means at every step we have to confront ourselves, our capacity to *carry* malicious thoughts, to *unleash* our own emotional negativity, or even inadvertently *to use* the vulnerabilities of others against them. The potential to do harm lies within the smallest details in each of us. There's a movie called *The Boy Next Door* that tells the story of how an ordinary man is step by step trained to be indifferent first to his own pain, and then the cries of others & heavily rewarded for inflicting pain on the enemy object, and ultimately initiated into becoming a torturer for the government.

I saw a client in her late sixties, who'd been brutally abused as a baby by her mother. Among many unspeakable cruelties to which she was subject, which were confirmed by medical reports, knives were used on her most intimate body parts.

At the end of our last session, as she came out of trance, I made what seemed an innocuous enough comment to her about a sadness in her eyes,

After this session, she wrote me a most extraordinary letter to tell me she'd stopped working with me. That she'd once told me the only hope

she'd had was when she looked in the mirror and saw light in her eyes. She acknowledged I didn't realize or intend what I'd done, but that the brutality she'd been subject to, had made her exquisitely sensitive to cruelty. Because she believed in me as a healer, she urged me to get help for myself. "I know you must be in great pain as sensitive and kind as you are, to say something hurtful." I trusted her and sought some personal consultation the next week.

So perhaps step four, the final preparation, is to know it's impossible to do this journey perfectly. By its nature.

At this juncture, the beloved Heschel once again speaks to us:

"To do the impossible is the beginning of faith."

(19 , p. 214).

### III

#### **To Do The Impossible**

One of the important things to understand is that

**Anything can be used or abused.**

**A hammer** can build a house or smash the ribs of a wayward spouse.

**A toilet** can be the beginning of hygiene. In Soweto when I did human rights work there for the National Counsel of Churches and the African National Congress during the vile incarcerations of Nelson and Winny Mandela. There was one porta-poddy per one thousand people. Although the area was hot and dry as a desert, waste matter trickled in the gutters like muddy rain. But in Piedmont, a prominent surgeon was using the same thing, a toilet, to flush his wife's head as punishment for her questioning his fidelity.

**A plane** can fly across the African veld, as in Beryl Markham's **West with the Night** in which this extraordinary writer and female pilot rushed a person to a remote area for medical care; or that same plane can smash the

wondrous twin towers in NY and bring untold suffering and loss to innocent victims and their families.

**Hypnosis** can be used to work with the most delicate connections between body and mind. Using hypnosis, the former Kay Thompson, a life-long student of Milton Erickson's, conducted a four-hour gum replacement surgery without anaesthesia, or it can be used as it was with an award winning Chilean journalist and torture survivor I interviewed, After he'd been electric-shocked to near death-- -- he was then brought to a *hypnotist* costumed in a *doctor's coat*, who took his vital signs and then told him to imagine he was in a beautiful field with flowers. The goal of the good doctor was to help the journalist get his heart rate down enough that he could be subjected to the next round of maximum pain, without it killing him.

In fact, when I traveled to Denmark to meet Inge Kemp Genefke, the founder of the first torture treatment center in the world, she sent her secretary out to tell me, "Dr. Genefke says Hypnosis is what torturers do, and she will not meet you." "Tell, Dr. Genefke, please, that I am part of the New Hypnosis (I made up the phrase on the spot) which is about the empowering of the individual against the destructive suggestions of family and society." Bingo. Out came Inge, to embrace me with open arms.

*Even compassion* which is the single most likely form of intelligence to save the species and isn't even measured on our standardized so-called intelligence tests.

can be used to forgive someone who caused you harm and appeals for a second chance, or it can be administered prematurely and allow **an aggressor or a government** to *continue* to harm.

*Psychopharmacological agents* may be prescribed narrowly and as needed to help a person pass a difficult moment, or they can become designer drugs made to fashionably match a designer diagnosis, Drugs can be abused by television advertising to invite a whole culture to drug themselves with legal drugs, until we would have entire countries of people in a mildly hallucinatory, but legalized oblivion, like the vision

Aldous Huxley warned about in 1932, in his book, entitled **1984**. He showed a world in which the government forcibly administered a happiness drug called soma to all citizens.

So, one of the most pernicious happenings of our time is the so-called Diagnostic manual IV which has evolved over only a couple of decades and yet is fatter than the old and new testaments and the Koran combined.

Someone discovered that **THE MIND IS A TERRIBLE BUSINESS TO WASTE.**

Biochemical Revolution is great, but now when in doubt blame the brain and people's biochemistry instead of socially idiotic policy. As if the poor brain weren't beleaguered enough with bombardment of continuous noises from fixed distances like highways vs. birds, breezes, leaves and rhythmical animal calls, of economic worries from stock market to job layoffs, especially in the arts...Now we blame the brain for being defective.

That's why we are sad or have mood swings or eat ourselves into obesity or take the illegal drugs. It is not a broader public health of massive loneliness, social isolation, health disparities, joblessness, fears of terrorism, child abductions--no we suffer newly composed syndromes and a marvelous array of designer drugs that pop up rather quickly to treat each one individually. We are a collection of little problems which need to be tweaked.

Just at the time of the emergence of someone like Erickson whose methods affected brain chemistry, who taught the importance of details in helping a person save his/her own life, we are virtually taking human brains on a global level at this point and depositing them 24/7 in chemicals tested over a very short period of time.

That our sense of smell matches to flowers, that I can hear the nuances of music when my friend plays the saxophone. That we are designed with taste sensors that match the fruit of the vine, that I can feel you when you touch me, and attain bliss during sex. Perfect Balance. Our minds may be filled with junk by our society, but, now we blame the brain!

Biochemistry abuse of the brain.

**We can treat well or abuse our own bodies.** It is conditions, preventable social, economic and environmental stressors, which tax our perfectly healthy hearty well-functioning minds and bodies and drive us mad or make us sick.

We ought not blame our minds and bodies, when too much is asked of them, and they end up producing symptoms of what's wrong around them.

I was in a horseback-riding accident. My teacher neglected my needs as a rank amateur and at my third lesson put me on a bitter racing horse with a sprained front right hoof in a cramped inner quarters while she had full control of the lunge line. When he bolted, I ended up with a crushed elbow. People have said to me, oh, so that's your Bad Arm? Why, no! I say in a defensive kind of how dare you way, That's my other wonderful arm. This one is special in that it has had to learn twice as hard as the other. But they are both good.

**Hating your own body**, being estranged from it, is a step toward evil. Who be kind to? Allen Ginsberg asks.

“Be kind to your self, it is only one  
and perishable  
of many on the planet,  
(*Planet News*, 1968, p.95).

Walt Whitman, left us the message,

“I sing the body electric,  
.....And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?  
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?  
(1931, p, 97)

So, anything can be used or abused.

**And evil lies in the abuse of anything. Not in the thing itself.  
Not in the consciousness, the nature, the body, the tool, the object.**

**The evil we must respond to is in the application. It is in the intent. And it is in context and in relationship that evil takes on meaning.**

**In dealing with evil we must confront fear.**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures. Yeah, though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I will fear no evil. Surely goodness will follow me all the days of my life. (Psalms, )

**In terms of intent, it is still not so easy to discern evil from not. Let's just take three hypothetical examples.**

Sitting here today, we could God forbid, have a person walk in the door and want to harm us because he or she is terrorist against citizens of the United States, or a freedom fighter for some group that hates Americans. Because many people around the world now have an irrational hatred of all Americans because of the policies of our government

A prominent Mexican architect who lived in the Berkeley hills 20 years and raised his two children here with his wife said, "I'd like to see the whole United States blown up because of Bush's policies." But Ramon, I said, your own children are Americans." He hadn't even thought of that. His revolutionary world view would justify any atrocity done in the name of overthrowing American Imperialism.

Another scenario: An American soldier who was informed that we are un-American could menace us some day. Many policies are being installed at the government level today which can be used to prevent people from convening freely. That happened in El Salvador in the 1980's. Soldiers were allowed to take over all the catholic churches which were suspected of Liberation Theology. They killed the archbishop Oscar Romero in broad daylight during a service which I saw on film. Death Squads treated nuns

and priests, so brutally, that my friend who's treated thousands of survivors from around the world, said he did not know if he could survive the hearing of several of the stories of Salvadoran military abuses. These soldiers did not think what they did was wrong.

Or a third weird scenario: the random angry person, like the brother of a client of mine, who used to chase her with an ax when mom left her to baby sit him, and as an adult was now serving time in an Alabama maximum security prison for opening fire in a 7-11. Such a one as he could harass us or anyone else, with no remorse, just a rage which for him justifies itself and any action taken in its name. The world has it coming, for such a man. They deserve it.

Few who do evil do it in the name of doing something wicked. Most of the heinous acts done within families and society are done in the NAME of Good.

The Christian Patriot Defense League is the name of a group that, since 1979, has held conferences called freedom festivals, which combine weapons training with bigotry, In 1981 their workshops included guns and reloading; demolition and camouflage; anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and knife fighting (Anti Defamation League 1987).

My second book, *Hope Under Siege, Terror and Family Support in Chile*, is about a young man who was his high-school president under the democratically elected president, Salvador Allende. The day Pinochet took over the palace, this prisoner was taken to a specially prepared secret chamber, where he was subjected to repeated near drownings, hangings and electricity.

After frantically searching days for him, like in the movie *Missing*, his mother found him, and when they removed the hood from her son's head, and she saw her beautiful son with the eyes of a tormented animal and covered with bloody wounds, she said, **“Hold your head high, my son, you are a hero to your people.”**



Was he a terrorist? Or a Freedom fighter? Was he good, as human rights movement perceived him. Or evil, as the regime and its supporters perceived him?

By the way, in Guantanamo right now, The American Family Therapy Academy has a task force investigating allegations of inhumane treatment of the so-called terrorists held there even as we speak.

Even systems which wreak havoc with millions of lives for many generations to come, **do what they do in the name of goodness**, I watched Hitler's famous propaganda film last month, A Triumph of the Will. What is intriguing is that *this* video starts in the light not in the darkness. The film opens with us, the viewer, in an airplane with Hitler himself, up above the clouds so white, and then we descend with dramatic music into our luminous overview of the German capitol where thousands of soldiers are marching in sunlit goose step, as he, we, descend into a huge rally of exuberant, hopeful sun-splashed citizens, their right arms raised in levitation, chanting their mantra of Heil Hitler, flags of patriotism waving forcefully in a strong prophetic wind.

Hitler is the quintessential savior, who will after the 22 year degradation of the German people after the shame of WWI, reestablish their pride and assert their dominance in the world. His cause was good. Just. Bright. Here is a **democratically elected** official descending with love to save his people.

But by part two of the propaganda film, we are flying into a different scene. Eerie and frightening. It is night, and all we see is vast darkness with no visible edges, and smoke and fires and torches burning here and there. It is clear that a descent into darkness, where acts that can't be clearly seen, secret, mysterious things will be an important part of this project. There will be night and darkness and fire.

**We must tread carefully here, as we are in the bowls of evil.**

**By what means?** Here we have the comparison of two men occupying planet earth at the same time. A Hitler and a Ghandi.

One way to help a group or a family member to elevate is to dehumanize another. Then the leader gives the demoralized population or individual something to step on, to elevate.

Toward this end, a leader or family member with power needs to isolate by whatever means necessary the group or individual they need to dehumanize, and to convince the demoralized that these others they are to step on are subhuman, animals, or viruses.

A survivor I knew once said of the Nazi war on same sex lovers, gypsies, Jews and Catholics that everyone will die anyway. It is not that we would be killed that was worst, but that we were humiliated every step of the way. That we had to wear yellow-star of david armbands. That we could not work. That our belongings were confiscated. That our heads were shaved and our clothing taken. That we were prisoners. That we were slaves.

A Cambodian client of mine who fled the killing fields the night her father was taken by the Khmer Rouge described the humiliation of having to leave her family home forever with no belongings, not even wearing shoes. Her feet were bare and torn, her father, forever, gone.

**So it is the willfulness, the breaking down, the intent and the cost to the other, wherein evil lies.**

Let's look at *Ghandi*. Living at the same time as Hitler. By what means did he try to help Indian people to elevate? Ghandi did not seek to destroy the British to pay them back for their oppression. He sought to awaken an alternative force more powerful than their disdain and indifference for the humble masses of India. *And to appeal to their higher order good, so that all could benefit and so that the struggle could help humanity evolve spiritually.*

**The intent is to appeal to a higher order good in man and thereby create social systems that foster our ability to cooperate, and for man to evolve, spiritually. So disagreements become opportunities to arrive at a higher order integration.**

Clearly good and evil pertain to **the cost involved** for an identified other. That the good deed, like Hitler's wish to elevate the German people from a feeling of shame and inferiority, that this kindness cannot be balanced or outweighed by the destruction and devastation to many millions of other human beings.

Because one day, these victim survivors, who have now been demoralized so others can step up from them, they will tend to elevate themselves from the bowls of inhumanity, and if their methods are no better, **the chain of pain will go on**. It will be passed on in the human community or in the human family, for generations to come.

Malcolm X wrote so well on this when he described the racism and class oppression inherent in the American capitalism when he said **A chicken cannot produce a duck egg**. So that I as a middle class person from the mid-west, who could accomplish what I worked hard on, I had to go outside my bounds to learn from people like Malcolm X, that this system, which was good to my immigrant family, was riding on the back of African Americans, Native Indians, Mexicans, and the Chinese who labored here. Without special effort, the minds of individual citizens, the social mentality the mass mind will naturally follow, to fit the overriding harming system. That is what Malcolm X meant when he said **A chicken cannot produce a duck egg**.

Once an identified other is targeted and labeled the enemy, **Scapegoating sets up a reptilian kind of vibration** a pattern that persists long after the event. Once the good and righteous are those that elevate Americans at the expense of much of the third world, Irish protestants at the expense of Irish Catholics, Terrorists at the expense of innocent citizens, Fundamentalist Moslems at the expense of Christians that elevate Germans at the expense of gypsies, Jews and Catholics,

Then the individual working within that system, such as the man who pioneers the mobile gas chamber, to cut down on the costs of the cattle cars and the attention they called, we can only imagine his mother playing bridge

with her women friends, “Oh, my Heimele, I’m so proud of him, he was always so creative, he pioneered the mobile gas chamber.” Saddam Hussein, whom the U.S. originally installed, one upped this German pioneer by gassing the Kurds outside, right in their own land.

Once systems **tolerant of cruelty to the other** exist, they penetrate all the sub-systems as well, like our systems of science, even here in America, not in an Axis of Evil, but in something more like a hologram of evil.

Selective scientific work –in the name of good, just because it is science, without understanding about **science abuse**. Beginning in 1932, the Federal Government had used Macon county Alabama as a “natural laboratory” for the study of the effects on poor black men of syphilis. When funding ran out at that time for a control group, researchers did everything to prevent the human subjects from learning their condition and getting penicillin when it was a known treatment.

Not until 1972 , that’s forty years later!, was the work stopped when a man named Buxton blew the whistle on the project saying the men were human guinea pigs. It took the government until 1997, and the man in the oval office, Bill Clinton, who did have a conscience on the matter, to apologize for the American Government.

What was wrong with this **work called science? The cost to its subjects. It is evil science, part of the racially vicious system Malcolm X wrote about. Part of the hologram of evil.**

**We, therapists and healers who are perhaps unwillingly thrown into the scientific camp through medicine and diagnosis and managed care, we must confront a science which denigrates what it calls subjects. In the name of what it calls objectivity and neutrality and data collection.**

So this matter of evil social systems and the hologram of evil that permeates individual decision making and aspiration

is not about our quickly jumping to take sides in any one conflict... So if we think we're helping in a conflict between east and west Germans, Serbians vs. Croatians, Tibetans vs. Chinese, by demeaning either of the conflicted parties, we are very wrong.

We are doing nothing but perpetuating hate.

To take a stand is to take a stand for certain values, not for one people's superiority over another. **We must reform entire situations, not individuals. Oppose governments not citizens.**

**As in working with couples in conflict. Our ultimate challenge** is to find a way to transcend conflagrational conflicts, so that we can bring out the best in the two opposing parties.

As Wilhelm Reich wrote in his famous book, *Listen Little Man*, there's a Little Man inside each one of us.

In the late 1900's **Stanley Milgram**, a Yale psychologist studied the conflict between obedience to authority and personal conscience. He recruited teachers to administer shock to a learner for mistakes the learner made. The learner was a trained actor, behind a glass, who enacted pain realistically every time they were shocked, and more as the voltage increased. The teachers were told the study was to examine the effect of punishment on incorrect responses. Even uncomfortable teachers, who learned that it was the researcher who took responsibility for the shock administered didn't stop increasing the voltage administered to the actor/learner, before 300 volts, 60% voluntarily went up to the max, 450.

So **obedience itself** can be abused to arouse in ordinarily good people, like these teachers at Stanford, their little man.

Part of cruelty requires the arousal of a natural state of mind which is then **prolongued** long enough to commit atrocities. As we have already seen, evil is about a *prolongued state* of hatred. It is one thing to say I hate this person or this group, but to live in sustained hatred, that is the **walk into the heart of darkness.**

I was watching the film on the weather underground. These cohorts of mine started off with nothing but the purest desire to stop a war in which decent American guys were out of control, blindly following military orders, shooting unarmed women and children in the heads out in their rice paddies in Mi Lai, riddling the bodies of unarmed prone men with bullets so their bodies did a grisly dance to death.

But the Weathermen went too far, and after the war ended they tried to violently bring the war home. They were involved the bombing of the Army Math Research Center one of the technological brains for the war in Vietnam, at my college, in Wisconsin, in which an innocent man was killed.

**There is also something else to do with timing in good and evil.** There is a time to do something, to protest, to rise up against something, and there is a time to stop doing that thing. There is **knowing when to stop**. Defensive actions are good until they're not.

It is **about each one of us being integrated** internally, and about us thinking on the level of All Humanity.

Wicked systems arouse and sustain our most destructive individual mental states. Indifference is perhaps the worst culprit. **Indifference. Indifference to the other. To the enemy, even.** We ought not rejoice in the suffering of our enemies. Only we wish them to be ashamed of themselves and stop their cruelty.

The Chilean woman I interviewed who was tortured with rats in her vagina followed by systematic shocks while tied to a kind of electrified wire bedframe, told me that the worst thing that happened to her was when the torturer stopped to call his wife to ask what was for dinner. Until then she'd kept herself together to some extent by feeling that her suffering had meaning.

Eli Weisel the holocaust survivor who was my son's professor at BU, author of many books from every perspective on the situation, said that **the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.** That it is indifference which

allows hate to get its foothold. Indifference of the witness group, not the perpetrators. The indifference of all of us when we are on the sidelines. There is an **indifference** to the suffering of the other. **A prolonged state of indifference is the breeding ground for hatred.**

**Abuse itself is interactional, it is systemic and it is hypnotic. And it is often hidden or embedded in other things.** So in working with it, it is not enough to take sides. The point is to **Break the Spell of the Evil Interaction.** **The abuser hypnotizes the abused in violent relationships. There is nothing harder than to leave a violently abusive relationship. This is important to understand.**

There's a classic paper by Cannon on **Voodoo Death** which conveys what I mean about toxic interactions. If the tribe decides to scapegoat or turn against one member, and the member believes in voodoo, all they have to do is circle the individual and point at him there in the center of the circle, and he will die of sudden cardiac arrest. Sudden death Heart attack! by social consensus. The method, social Isolation, scapegoating. You, the other, Die!

**So we must deal with human interaction. The ties that bind. The connective tissue. It is often not enough to pick sides. And certainly not enough to linger there too long, whether with countries or with individuals.**

Just after the wall came down, I was invited to help a group of east and west Germans overcome the hostilities that had built up when one side of the country was communist and the other capitalist. At the end of my workshop, they said, yes I'd helped them overcome those hostilities. They now knew they didn't hate each other as east or west Germans, but only as Bavarians and Prussians!

**We cannot control the river of ancient resentments. But if both sides have enough to eat, enough work, adequate education and health care, other feelings than hate will be invited into the foreground.**

**The resentments may be background, but they don't need to be aroused.**

**Much polarization has been aroused recently in regard to Mel Gibson's film, called The Passion.**

On the one hand, we have people who love the film and have said, "After watching this film, I do not understand how anyone can insinuate that it even remotely presents that the Jews killed Jesus. It doesn't. It made me realize that my sins killed Jesus." And advise us to remember that the Gospel narratives to which the passion is faithful were written by Jewish men who followed a Jewish rabbi. And that Mel Gibson is giving a gift of love. That apparently he did not appear in his own movie, except it is his hands that nail Jesus to the cross, to show that it was his own hands and the hands of all the viewers that nailed Jesus to the cross.

Rabbi Michael Lerner of Tikkun agrees that

Jesus was a great Jewish teacher whose message of love, kindness, gentleness and compassion, but says these aspects "are a side-light in the Mel Gibson movie, a prop to the main focus which is on pain, cruelty and suffering.

He asks Why Gibson didn't focus on the Resurrection with its message of hope overcoming despair?

Or the real way you are treating God can be measured by how much caring you show for taking care of the poor? Or that the truly blessed are the peacemakers?

He suggests that

"the choice of focus of this film was a highly political choice—and that is why it has become so popular with right-wing Christians who have twisted the message of Christianity to allow it to become a defense of their willingness to support



budget cuts for the needy, to spend hundreds of billions on a bloated military, to support the U.S. economic and military expansion to the rest of the world.

**There are two contending worldviews: one claims that the world is fundamentally scary, filled with hurtful people, and that our primary task is to defend ourselves from others by being "realistic" and learning how to dominate and control them before they do the same to us.**

**The other sees the world composed of humans who have been created in the image of God and who desire loving connection, gentleness and kindness—and hence the way to get security is to build cooperative relationships. The first worldview leads to a conservative politics and to a justification for militarism and narrow self-interest. It is the politics of George Bush and of Mel Gibson.**

**That is why this film focuses our attention on violence and cruelty.**

**The second worldview leads to a politics of sharing our resources with the poor of the planet, tithing what we have, and beating our swords into plowshares. It is the politics of Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the great teachers of every religious and spiritual tradition.”**

**However one sees the movie, our country is deeply polarized today, and the movie intensifies the rifts. For me, finding myself perhaps more identified with the idea that we ought to focus on love and not violence,**

**How can I make peace with people like Gibson, who for me, focus on the pornography of violence, when I need to focus on love?**

**All I know is what Rebbe Nachman of Breslov wrote:  
“The highest peace is the peace between opposites.”**

#### IV

#### COMING OUT INTO THE LIGHT

Ghandi says that when all violence subsides in the human heart what remains is love.

Tich Naht Han says, that a teaspoon of salt placed in a glass of water will make that water unpotable. But that same teaspoon, cast into the river, if that river is clean, the river water will still be drinkable. So, he says, when confronted with evil, the teaspoon of salt, it behooves us to get bigger, and to become the river. We have no choice but to do so. **WE MUST BECOME THE RIVER.**

**To get evil back down to size, it is important to realize that evil looks bigger than it is. In reality, it takes so very few to do evil.**

Now during the 1980's, I was privileged to host some speakers who'd made it out of apartheid South Africa to tell the world what had been done to them in the name of maintaining white rule there, I was part of a team of supporters of a black South African Lutheran minister Tschenuani Farisani, who had been mentally and physically violated by trained government people breakers over many years, but finally released. I was trying to get Rolando Cartagena, the prisoner I wrote about in *Hope Under Siege*, out of Pinochet's human-right's free prison.

So, one day I said, “Tschenu, who got you out? I am wracking my brain. I wrote to the Pope, Amnesty international, the Red cross, every senator and congressmen I can think of. Who got you out? Was it the French government, people in Germany? A united church organization? Rabbis for peace? Psychologists for Social Responsibility? Doctors without

Borders? Who?" He smiled folding his big hands together. "EV ER Y ONE."

**It takes everyone to save a man's life, to do something good. It takes one guy To make another man's life a hell on earth. But what Tshcenu taught me, which is what people of faith impart, is that there is more good than evil in the world.**

Another understanding which helps us **put evil in its place in the background** is to realize how long it takes to make a baby, to build a wonderous building, and that evil looks very big, masquarades as something huge, but only because it works fast. It destroys millions in minutes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it destroys the twin towers in minutes.

But much more human effort is going into creating, procreating, building and sustaining.

The Apollo, Charlie Garfield, who was involved in the Apollo flight, told my ex husband that the space ship was on course only 3% of time not error free. There is room for error and evil...it need not throw us off course.

But the media tell us all the ways we are off course. My friend's daughter came home on a Saturday night to tell us the news she'd heard in the car about a sniper, and bombings, and domestic violence. **What if those are the errors, but we are still basically on course.** Why don't we hear as news that two people fell in love, that someone did a kind service for another. That a glorious peace continued in the majority of countries not at war?

Now I like to remember Martin Luther King. Who continued Ghandi's work. And he gives us some tips on how to start to come out of the darkness within darkness, the pathway to all mystery. He says Healing society Beloved Community.

"Not to defeat or humiliate" but to "awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent: and thereby create "the beloved community."

He also distinguished between seeking to defeat the “forces of evil” and “persons victimized by evil” and lastly he asserted that the underlying principle of nonviolent resistance was “agape”- that is “an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return”

“When we love on the agape level, we love men not because we like them not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but because God loves them.” (Carson, King Biographies III, 1996 Internet biog.)

There is no formula **for how to walk this walk of agape. Every situation is unique.** We can't say turn the other cheek in every occasion or we will all be cheekless. But it is best to look for a response that will do the most good at the time, and with an eye toward the future.

“These are revolutionary times. All over the globe men are revolting against old systems of exploitation and oppression, and out of the wombs of a frail world new systems of justice and equality are being born...every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental weak response...but of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life.”

MLK April 4,1967, Riverside Church during war in Vietnam appropriate during this new American war against Iraq.

It is about making a commitment to mankind.

**So what is this agape? What is love, really? It's in the details.** During the war in Vietnam, I'd made a blue velvet patchwork quilt. I'd wrapped my babies in it many years later. When I worked to help Rolando get out of jail, his family and I would try to get anything in to him as a microcosm of a world of love outside his macrocosm of hate. Inside a shirt when he was allowed to receive one, we'd embroider a tiny, symbol a star, or a letter for love a heart or a flower, anything that defied the context. Just as hands and feet are overrepresented in the brain, **we can get the little symbol to be the world and the context to be a passing madness.** A little message on tissue paper the writing so tiny you need a

magnifying glass to read it, hidden under eyelids, in vaginas. In a special place inside a shoe. Anything you can get in by any means that signals hope. I eventually was able to get in to him this blanket, to wrap him literally in family love and resistance to war. **Now eighteen years later, Rolando just wrote about that blanket to me from Sweden, where he lives in Freedom with his wife and son. He said how he thinks of it. How much it meant to him.**

I would like to add to this that I am not so into forgiveness as some of my colleagues. If one forgives, that's fine. But for me...some things may deserve to never be forgiven. To forgive means to give away the resentment.

. I do not feel that I can realistically ask my Cambodian client to forgive the Khmer Rouge for taking her father and making her go on a death march to Thailand, losing a third of her relatives on the way. I do not feel that I can ask a Palestinian mother whose son was killed in that conflict to forgive an Israeli soldier. I cannot ask the mother whose son was with my son in his program for peace in Israel and who was blown to bits at Hebrew University to forgive the bomber? I can't do that.

As Erickson once advised me in terms of my childhood family, I offer instead what I would call for-getting. That is. Putting the thing aside for now. Not to deny it occurred. To put it out of mind. To not attend to it now.

You've killed my son. I've killed yours. **Unforgiveable.** I never want to allow that to happen again. But if you lay down your arms, and I lay down my arms, life goes on for our other children and other peoples' children. so let us agree to forget. What I mean by that is that one ought to draw a line in ones heart on behalf of the spirit and the soul that says no more. But also say, and NOW.....

So that is what my son is doing. He works full time for this vision, Photograph of Israeli and Palestinian boys in kefia and yarmelcha, walking

with their arms around each others shoulders, to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians, who are, afterall, cousins.

Kusinich in a talk he gave in Richmond said that “poverty is a weapon of mass destruction.” Poverty is a root of all evil. My daughter studies public health.

It is disparities in health she tells me that are now clearly identified as the cause of our epidemic social problems here in one of the richest countries on earth: depression and obesity. We must eliminate poverty. For everyone to feel she and he are important.

At the hospital, my ex-husband says that not only the Dr. is important. Healing starts at the information desk. The nurses. The people who draw your blood. The x-ray technician. The maintenance people. It is a community that heals us. Everyone in it is important to that process. Braulio Montalvo used to say that the research of Skinner could be understand by watching the loving hands of the woman who moved the birds in and out of their cages. That true behaviorist results could only be interpreted with love.

A principle for the revolutionary who said “at the risk of sounding ridiculous” that he “was guided by feelings of love”, Che Guevara wrote: **One human life is worth all the wealth of the richest man in the world.”**

**“When there is no truth in the world anyone who wants to turn away from evil has no choice but to play the fool.”** Says Rabbi Nachman. So, why don't we dare to play the fool.

Scott Peck in his introduction to *The People of the Lie*. Reminds us of Saint Augustine's advice *to hate the sin but love the sinner*.

St. Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Bourke Image Books, 1958 ed.), p. 304

*(People of the Lie The Hope for Healing Human Evil 1983.*

Likewise, as Buckminster Fuller put it: “Reform the Environment not the men.”

To heal means to make whole.

To make holy.

The task before us is nothing less than HUMANITY for the ENTIRE human community.

We have been given life and death, light and darkness, good and evil: Choose Life.

As I near closing, I turn to Etty Hilesum, who wrote during the holocaust: 3 July, 1942-

“Very well then, this new certainty that what they are after is our total destruction, I accept it.

I know it now and I shall not burden others with my fears.

I shall not be bitter if others fail to grasp what is happening to us Jews.

I work and continue to live with the same conviction and I find life meaningful, yes, meaningful.” –

“I repose in myself. And that part of myself, that deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call ‘God.’”

**My own upbringing, the good and the bad, taught me to believe in miracles.**

**Never let the impossible stand in your way.**

**Your path will widen.**

**The waters do part. Wait for the opening.**

**See the light when it comes.**

**You can cross the sea of suffering  
to the land of milk and honey.**

Borrowing again from Michael Lerner, I suggest that we visualize ourselves, you there, me here, together, in this essay, and around us people are going about their lives in Berkeley, and in the rest of California, or whatever state you are in, and we can see ourselves situated along the Pacific coast of the N. American continent, and we can see our continent among all the others, with war going on in Iraq, and torn, dusty exiles returning to Bamyan and Kandahar,

and children with bellies fat from hunger, throughout the world,  
there are organic farmers planting for the fertile season  
and there are new babies being born,  
there are people sipping wine and gazing out at the azure blue Caribbean sea,  
and people are dancing the salsa and making love,  
watching sit coms and doing their laundry,  
and petting their cats and dogs, and we see that all of us are together here on  
planet earth at the same time.

And whatever age we are in about 100 years, everyone on the stage will be  
gone,

and we will be replaced by other people.

So this is our time on earth, this is our time to tilt the boat going down the  
river toward goodness.

It is our time to break the cycles of pain and cruelty wherever they confront  
us, that is the best we can do.

Sometime, that will be just an inner act of faith in a humanity we do not see  
evidenced            anywhere            around us.

Then we must repose inside ourselves.

Other times, we will be able to peaceably topple a government that is  
brutalizing the rest of the world.

But this is our precious time

to Breathe in what's useful,

breathe out what's not useful

and to become all that we are capable of being,

to dare to be the fool who takes on the impossible,

and begins to have faith,

that we have been given the garden of Eden.

That there is a vine and a fig tree for everyone.

And all we need to do is to Choose Life.