



## The Cartography of Inner Childhood

Fragments from the book

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### **Abstract**

*Presented here are fragments of my book *The cartography of inner childhood* in the translation from Russian. The main hero of this book is our childhood experience. Or, rather, the book is about our remembrances of our childhood experience. Some people would exclaim, "These remembrances are extremely subjective, utterly personal and therefore untrue!" I wonder, however, if one's ultimate subjective experience may very well be one's innermost human core, exactly what is important about any person. For an 'objective' external onlooker, the childhood of different children is largely indistinguishable. All children play certain games, absorbedly listen to fairytales, react to various events, and so on. In fact, nearly all modern psychology research testifies to these 'childhood uniformities' and their typologies. The reason for this supposed uniformity is a flaw in the main approach of modern psychology. Modern psychology often focuses on universal, generalizable, predictable, and regular principles, which is the standard of the science. Anything else is viewed as non-scientific. How else it can be?!*

*The problem with this conventional approach to psychology, however, is that the human being is the only 'object' in the Universe that is defined by a **subjective cognizing world** of her or his own, building above the subjective lived experiences and feelings and redefining them – a world, unique for each person, which cannot possibly be viewed from outside, except for some of its outward objective artifact manifestations of this subjective cognizing world. That is why the childhood of each one of us is not simply a childhood of some external events or a childhood of typical or universal, but rather a childhood of absolutely unique and un-borrowed inner life that makes every person's internal experience absolutely precious. This very situation compels one to look most carefully into 'the inner child' each of us is capable of re-discovering in her-or himself.*

*The structure of the book is the following: Each chapter presents excerpts of the memoirs of one of the world-famous people, after which, there is a commentary analysis. Presented here are only three of those memoirs: by Orhan Pamuk, George Orwell and Ingmar Bergman.*

For almost thirty years, **Alexander Lobok** has been a theoretical-practitioner. He constantly theorizes his innovative pedagogical practice while trying to enact his theory of agency- and dialogue-based education in practice. His evolving theory and emerging pedagogical practice mutually inform and test each other. His overall methodology is based on Kurt Lewin's "action research" and Lev Vygotsky's "formative experiment." Alexander is a designer of exciting educational games and a host of children's TV shows in Russia. He is a leading researcher at the Institute of system projects, Moscow City Pedagogical University, Russia.

## Foreword

The main hero of this book is our childhood experience. Or, rather, the book is about our remembrances of our childhood experience.

Some people would exclaim, "These remembrances are extremely subjective, utterly personal and therefore untrue!" I wonder, however, if one's ultimate subjective experience may very well be one's innermost human core, exactly what is important about any person.

For an 'objective' external onlooker, the childhood of different children is largely indistinguishable. All children play certain games, absorbedly listen to fairytales, react to various events, and so on. In fact, nearly all modern psychology research testifies to these 'childhood uniformities' and their typologies. The reason for this supposed uniformity is a flaw in the main approach of modern psychology. Modern psychology often focuses on universal, generalizable, predictable, and regular principles, which is the standard of the science. Anything else is viewed as non-scientific. How else it can be?!

The problem with this conventional approach to psychology, however, is that the human being is the only 'object' in the Universe that is defined by a **subjective cognizing world** of her or his own, building above the subjective lived experiences and feelings and redefining them – a world, unique for each person, which cannot possibly be viewed from outside, except for some of its outward objective artifact manifestations of this subjective cognizing world. If so, a question emerges: can a particular human being, his/her particular and unique subjective cognizing world be a subject of science – a subject of scientific observation and interpretation? Can a particular child with his/her unique subjective world, subjective Cosmos, not overlapping with subjective cognizing worlds of all other people in principle, be a subject of science?

Thus, for a researcher, it would appear strange to avoid addressing this individually subjective world since it is exactly the disparities of people's inner subjective experiences that, in all likelihood, make up our essence as humans. It is not what a person has in common with other people what makes her or him become a unique personality. On the contrary, what makes one a genuine person is precisely what he or she by no means shares with the others. I strongly argue that the phenomenon of childhood is not defined by those things that make children of a certain age group category look mostly alike. Childhood, rather, is made of diversity of children's views, experiences, and fantasies that are *unique* for each person and different from anyone else's experiences. Probably, this non-overlapping of human subjectivities is the deepest and the most important enigma of human beings.

Today, due to the fantastic progress of the science of psychology, we know quite a lot about the general laws of individual development. We know what is universally, culturally and historically common for the development of each and every person and how this universality manifests itself in the individual development trajectories. Maybe time has come to tackle the very issue of how individuals' unique human universes differ from one another?

This question calls for a dramatically different paradigm of doing research. We must focus upon **phenomena of non-overlapping** of subjectivities, rather than on phenomena of overlapping human subjectivities that make human subjectivities the same. We must explore what makes children (and people in general) differ, not what makes them alike.

As matter of fact, this is what Russian poet and philosopher Daniel Zhukovsky pointed out in his memoirs. The issue is how to make the subjectivity of a child's inner world - the subjectivity of the child's

experience - the subject of investigation focus. It is not what can be generalized and squeezed into some categories, but rather what cannot be generalized in principle that is extremely valuable exactly due to its principle non-generalizability, which is what constitutes the main enigma of human individuality.

Take two children playing one and the same game in a sandbox. For an onlooker, both of them are involved in one and the same activity of PLAYING. But from each of these two children's inner perspectives they are absorbed by very different processes as each of the two is filled with her or his INDIVIDUAL IMAGINING and LIVED EXPERIENCING. Each of the two sees HER or HIS OWN reality where each is creating and/or destroying absolutely individual and unique imagined worlds as each is filled with uniquely individual here-and-now experiences.

The problem is that often a child, especially very young child, often cannot tell her or his all-important experiences to others. It is so at least because these experiences are infinitely rich while a young child's language is likely far poorer than needed to even begin expressing the richness of her experience.

It is only in the process of growing up and mastering diverse, complex, and intricate forms of language, that the child develops a capacity to express some of her feelings and works of imagination, even if to a very limited extent. By the time this linguistic mastery becomes possible, however, the memories of early childhood experiences become either blurred, erased, or supplanted by other, for the person more important and immediate experiences.

This very fact represents the main and almost insurmountable obstacle for the researcher aspiring to gain an insight into the child's developing consciousness. The world of a consciousness-in-the-making and consciousness-in-being is only accessible in its entire immediacy and completeness to the child's self, but the situation is such that he or she has no instruments enabling the observation, reflection, or comprehension of what is going on with him or her. In the absence of necessary conceptual or analytical tools, the child is, so to say, "*unanchored*" in a way that amounts to drifting and floundering in the boundless sea of the flowing sensations and feelings, which, being nameless, are all the more engulfing and overwhelming.

When a child has grown up enough to generate what is commonly known as "conceptual thinking" and to develop some capacities of observation, reflection, and comprehension, it may be futile to focus on the inner states he or she was experiencing during the period of her or his consciousness formation, since they are already gone and became irretrievably out of reach.

This is why, for an adult, the world of her or his babyhood and childhood presents a *terra incognita* of sorts that, so far, is a nonexistent topic of investigation in modern psychology.

A considerable effort would be necessary to recall even a tiny portion of what one had really experienced a very long time ago. Who of us, grown-up people, is really willing to find the time and energy needed to undertake this retrospective inner journey? What one of us strives to rediscover and revive during such a 'trip back' our own feelings and experiences for which we had had neither language nor names? Having been incredibly vivid and vastly numerous, they, at the same time, were, as a rule, not verbalized or marked in any other way by the child who was feeling and experiencing them.

It calls for a special concerted effort on the part of the today's grownups, to peer into the bygone inner world of her or his early childhood, to rediscover and describe at least some of its fragments, no matter how small. There are very few adults who have the courage to embark on this most difficult and

risky journey of a retrospective introspection. This endeavor encompasses not just the task of seeing one's own self in the past, from the adult vista, but rather looking carefully into one's own past self that remains inconceivably and unbelievably remote.

In childhood – especially infancy and toddlerhood – time is structured in ways that are utterly different from the ways they are structured in the adulthood. Just one week or even a single day in the life of a three- or a two-year, let alone a one-year-old, could be justly equaled to a decade in the life of an adult because of the density of the dramatic novel events, emotions, aha-moments, and puzzling experiences. What are days and hours for a grown-up, for a child are eras and epochs. Each of these epochs is crowded with events that leave behind but a vague imprint in the memory of an adult person into whom the former child has grown.

The earlier the age, the more each of its moments are filled with happenings and events. As for a just newborn baby, every second of its life is a real tsunami of absolutely undifferentiated and unconscious events. It is really a bombardment, by quite obscure, indiscernible and vague perceptions and feelings. It is a wholly engulfing fusion, or rather, a confusion of sounds, colors, odors and tactile inputs that must resemble the time-space and physiochemical fusion that may have resulted from the Big Bang in the Great Void, at the moment of birth of our physical universe. Thus, it is highly improbable that anyone will ever come, anywhere near, a reliable and accurate description how a newborn human being is experiencing her or his first life moments.

While looking at an 'object', a newborn baby or a toddler sees things in a very different way than an adult. An adult 'catches' any object into the trap of names-notions that, by the means of culture, are always at her or his disposal and service. But a newborn baby has no such trap. For the newborn baby, each and every one of the thousands upon thousands of objects entering his or her perception range is unknown and unnamed. The baby has no instrument inventory nor conceptual-verbal 'toolkit' to categorize the object-world. The baby sees everything for the first time and has to give "names" to each thing within his or her perception range – using his or her inner language of emotions. Sunlight falls upon a baby's face, makes the baby feel warmth and the dazzling brightness, but, for the recipient baby, it is something absolutely unknown and strange so far having no name, and existing as an immediate undifferentiated 'sensation-emotion-feeling'. The baby has yet no inner instrument inventory that would enable it to define something as 'light' or a 'sunlight', or as something that 'falls' and 'dazzles', all these notions being words from the adult stock of concepts. A bit later, having grown-up a little bit, while moving from a darker to a lighter area, a child will base her sensations on the already formed name-concept categories and would perhaps be able to say, "It's light here" or, "Here's light." As for the earliest life stages, the baby only has nameless sensations-feelings at her/his disposal; while the comprehending (and, thus, naming) of the world is something bound to happen sometime later. And there is no one to help the baby accelerate the process; the baby him/herself must separate darkness from light and differentiate the initially syncretic and 'con-fusing' perception, to create a personal and unique palette of images that would reflect the world's inexhaustible variety.

For the time being there is just the 'Spirit upon the face of the void'<sup>1</sup> insofar as there is just the sensation-feeling of an opening abyss. The abyss is 'formless and void' since everything in this deep opening for the baby's feelings and experimenting is *con*-fused and tangled in one unsegmented enormous lump that challenges the baby to mold it into a shape, to place it within certain sense and meaning frames, and to make it differentiated and articulately significant. The newborn not only faces the

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<sup>1</sup> A poetic reference to Bible's Book of Genesis Verse 1.2 "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters".

challenge to separate light from darkness but the task to differentiate the multitude of objects, one from another, to notice and grasp the outlines and boundaries of their meanings.

As seconds, minutes and hours of a newborn's life pass by, each and every one of her/his moments becomes filled with a most intense process of the feeling differentiation. Everything that happens during this period is doomed, however, to be left completely and forever unnoticed by an onlooker psychologist, who has the only option to guess and wonder at the numerousness and the diversity of the epochs experienced and lived through by the infant. However, one must admit that the content of these epochs is always sealed against any non-speculative psychological reflection. It is only much later, when the child has developed an awareness – the awareness of the individual Self as opposed to the world around (usually about the age of three) – that we can more or less legitimately say that the infant begins to retain her or his inner life's events and perhaps hold them in her or his memory, and a capacity begins to form to store some, if vague, recollections of what was going on during that period of time. Thus, a child turned adult must apply a considerable effort to evoke her or his inner states from that remote and time-dimmed era, all the more so if he or she needs to give a more or less adequate description of them. It is especially so because the concepts, which a grownup employs to define those states, are those of his or her adult life while the inner experience of an infant entirely lacks any such concepts.

To capture, retain, store, and descriptively retrieve one's early childhood experiences is really to perform a miracle since those experiences per se, or even the images of these experiences, are what the infantile memory is unable to retain and store. Memory needs certain marks and signifiers, certain 'notches,' 'nodes,' and 'serifs' – usually in the form of words. In the absence of such notches, nodes, and serifs (and they are, as a rule, totally absent in early childhood experience) the experiences and the representations of these experiences tend to escape, quite like those of a dream, even of the most vivid one, unless remembered and verbalized promptly upon awakening. If, on the other hand, the needed verbal molds are there, the night dream images will surface easily and freely, bounded by the words' powerful magnetic field.

Alas, a three-year-old's consciousness still lacks the signifying frames and shapes that allow him or her to retain and store the flow of the experienced sensations and feelings. This is why any adult person embarking upon the effortful journey of remembering and re-collecting her or his early childhood inner experiences is, in a way, undertaking to perform a heroic deed – for which professional psychologists ought to be profoundly thankful to anyone daring enough to plunge into this kind retrospective introspection.

The main phenomenon that will be investigated here, is how the children are INNERLY different. The main characters of this book are memoirs – the memoirs about their own childhood written by world-famous people, such as the Russian poet and philosopher Andrei Bely<sup>2</sup>, Russian philosopher and theologian Pavel Florensky<sup>3</sup>, missionary and theologian Albert Schweitzer, painters Petrov-Vodkin and Salvador Dali, stage director Konstantin Stanislavsky, writers Hermann Hesse and Stanislaw Lem, Bernard Shaw, George Orwell and Orhan Pamuk, philologist Mikhail Gasparov, mathematician Sophia Kovalevskaya, scientists Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein, politician Winston Churchill, historian Arnold Toynbee, dancer and choreographer Maurice Bejart, composer Alfred Schnittke, film directors Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman...

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei\\_Bely](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrei_Bely)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel\\_Florensky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavel_Florensky)

What unites them all is that they have recorded some extremely important and particular memories about their “inner child’s” most intense and dramatic life.

Of paramount importance here is that any of the mentioned people’s memories – if we do care to read them carefully – is, it appears, about something very important in each of us. It is so because these memories are not just about the inner child of ‘the great ones’ but about that ‘inner childhood’ in which each, great person is extremely close to any quite ordinary one – since the domain of early childhood experiences is the one familiar to everybody. Each and every one of us has her or his emotion marks, notches, nodes, and serifs dating back to our own past childhood. This past inevitably awakens – in its entirely indigenous and unique individuality – in response to an honest recounting of childhood events by another person.

That is why the childhood of each one of us is not simply a childhood of some external events or a childhood of typical or universal, but rather a childhood of absolutely unique and un-borrowed inner life that makes every person’s internal experience absolutely precious.

This very situation compels one to look most carefully into ‘the inner child’ each of us is capable of re-discovering in her-or himself.

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## Orhan Pamuk, Excerpts from *Istanbul: Memories and the City*<sup>4</sup>

From a very young age, I suspected there was more to my world than I could see: Somewhere in the streets of Istanbul, in a house resembling ours, there lived another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double. I can't remember where I got this idea or how it came to me. It must have emerged from a web of rumors, misunderstandings, illusions, and fears. But in one of my earliest memories, it is already clear how I've come to feel about my ghostly other.

When I was five I was sent to live for a short time in another house. After one of their many stormy separations, my parents arranged to meet in Paris, and it was decided that my older brother and I should remain in Istanbul, though in separate places. My brother would stay in the heart of the family with our grandmother in the Pamuk Apartments, in Nişantaşı, but I would be sent to stay with my aunt in Cihangir. Hanging on the wall in this house- where I was treated with the utmost kindness-was a picture of a small child, and every once in a while my aunt or uncle would point up at him and say with a smile, "Look! That's you!" The sweet doe-eyed boy inside the small white frame did look a bit like me, it's true. He was even wearing the cap I sometimes wore. I knew I was not that boy in the picture (a kitsch representation of a "cute child" that someone had brought back from Europe). And yet I kept asking myself, Is this the Orhan who lives in that other house? Of course, now I too was living in another house. It was as if I'd had to move here before I could meet my twin, but as I wanted only to return to my real home, I took no pleasure in making his acquaintance. My aunt and uncle's jovial little game of saying I was the boy in the picture became an unintended taunt, and each time I'd feel my mind unraveling: my ideas about myself and the boy who looked like me, my picture and the picture I resembled, my home and the other house-all would slide about in a confusion that made me long all the more to be at home again, surrounded by my family. Soon my wish came true. But the ghost of the other Orhan in another house somewhere in Istanbul never left me. Throughout my childhood and well into adolescence, he haunted my thoughts. On winter evenings, walking through the streets of the city, I would gaze into other people's houses through the pale orange light of home and dream of happy, peaceful families living comfortable lives. Then I would shudder to think that the other Orhan might be living in one of these houses. As I grew older, the ghost became a fantasy and the fantasy a recurrent nightmare. In some dreams I would greet this Orhan-always in another house-with shrieks of horror; in others the two of us would stare each other down in eerie merciless silence. Afterward, wafting in and out of sleep, I would cling ever more fiercely to my pillow, my house, my street, my place in the world. Whenever I was unhappy, I imagined going to the other house, the other life, the place where the other Orhan lived, and in spite of everything I'd half convince myself that I was he and took pleasure in imagining how happy he was, such pleasure that, for a time, I felt no need to go to seek out the other house in that other imagined part of the city (pp. 3-5).

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I was old enough to climb off my mother's lap and can recall that on each floor there was at least one piano. When my last bachelor uncle put his newspaper down long enough to get married, and his new wife moved into the first-floor apartment, from which she was to spend the next half century gazing out the window, she brought her piano with her. No one ever played, on this one or any of the others; this may be why they made me feel so sad.

But it wasn't just the unplayed pianos; in each apartment, there was also a locked glass cabinet displaying Chinese porcelains, teacups, silver sets, sugar bowls, snuffboxes, crystal glasses, rosewater ewers, plates, and censers that no one ever touched, although among them I sometimes found

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<sup>4</sup> Pamuk, O. (2004). *Istanbul: Memories and the city* (M. Freely, Trans. 1st American ed.). New York: A.A. Knopf.

hiding places for miniature cars. There were the unused desks inlaid with mother-of-pearl, the turban shelves on which there were no turbans, and the Japanese and Art Nouveau screens behind which nothing was hidden. There, in the library, gathering dust behind the glass, were my doctor uncle's medical books; in the twenty years since he'd emigrated to America, no human hand had touched them. To my childish mind, these rooms were furnished not for the living but for the dead. (pp. 9-10)

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Because the traffic between floors was incessant, as it had been in the Ottoman mansion, doors in our modern apartment building were usually left open. Once my brother had started school, my mother would let me go upstairs alone, or else we would walk up together to visit my paternal grandmother in her bed. The tulle curtains in her sitting room were always closed, but it made little difference; the building next door was so close as to make the room very dark anyway, especially in the morning, so I'd sit on the large heavy carpets and invent a game to play on my own. Arranging the miniature cars that someone had brought me from Europe into an obsessively neat line, I would admit them one by one into my garage. Then, pretending the carpets were seas and the chairs and tables islands, I would catapult myself from one to the other without ever touching water (much as Calvino's Baron spent his life jumping from tree to tree without ever touching ground). When I was tired of this airborne adventure or of riding the arms of the sofas like horses (a game that may have been inspired by memories of the horse-drawn carriages of Heybeliada), I had another game that I would continue to play as an adult whenever I got bored: I'd imagine that the place in which I was sitting (this bedroom, this sitting room, this classroom, this barracks, this hospital room, this government office) was really somewhere else; when I had exhausted the energy to daydream, I would take refuge in the photographs that sat on every table, desk, and wall.

Never having seen them put to any other use, I assumed pianos were stands for exhibiting photographs. There was not a single surface in my grandmother's sitting room that wasn't covered with frames of all sizes. The most imposing were two enormous portraits that hung over the never-used fireplace: One was a retouched photograph of my grandmother, the other of my grandfather, who died in 1934. From the way the pictures were positioned on the wall and the way my grandparents had been posed (turned slightly toward each other in the manner still favored by European kings and queens on stamps), anyone walking into this museum room to meet their haughty gaze would know at once that the story began with them. (pp. 11-12)

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Leaving the library to return to the main room of the museum, stopping briefly by the crystal lamps that only add to the gloom, we find a crowd of untouched black-and-white photographs that tell us life is gaining momentum. Here we see all the children posing at their betrothals, their weddings, and the other great moments of their lives. Next to the first color photographs that my uncle sent from America are snapshots of the extended family enjoying holiday meals in various city parks, in Taksim Square, and on the shores of the Bosphorus; next to a picture of me and my brother with our parents at a wedding is one of my grandfather, posing with his new car in the garden of the old house, and another of my uncle, posing with his new car outside the entrance to the Pamuk Apartments. Except for extraordinary events like the day my grandmother removed the picture of my American uncle's first wife and replaced it with a picture of his second, the old protocols prevailed: Once assigned its place in the museum, a photograph was never moved; although I had looked at each one hundreds of times, I could never go into that cluttered room without examining all of them again.

My prolonged study of these photographs led me to appreciate the importance of preserving certain moments for posterity, and in time I also came to see what a powerful influence these framed scenes exerted over us as we went about our daily lives. To watch my uncle pose my brother a math problem, and at the same time to see him in a picture taken thirty-two years earlier; to watch my father scanning the newspaper and trying, with a half smile, to catch the tail of a joke rippling across the crowded room, and at that very same moment to see a picture of him at five years old – my age – with hair as long as a girl's, it seemed plain to me that my grandmother had framed and frozen these memories so we could weave them into the present. When, in the tones ordinarily reserved for discussing the founding of a nation, my grandmother spoke of my grandfather, who had died so young, and pointed at the frames on the tables and the walls, it seemed that she – like me – was pulled in two directions, wanting to get on with life but also longing to capture the moment of perfection, savoring the ordinary but still honoring the ideal. But even as I pondered these dilemmas – if you pluck a special moment from life and frame it, are you defying death, decay, and the passage of time or are you submitting to it? – I grew very bored with them. (pp. 13-14).

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...I pretended to be someone else and somewhere else. It was a very easy to escape into this other world I concealed from everyone. In my grandmother's sitting room, I'd pretend to be inside a submarine. I'd just had my first trip to the movies to see an adaptation of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, and as I sat watching it in the dusty Palace Cinema, what terrified me most were the film's silences. In its frantic, claustrophobic camerawork, its shadowy black-and-white submarine interiors, I could not help but recognize something of our house. (p. 20)

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...The worlds that I created by my imagination were completely subject of my control – I could choose which world I could go, I could change this world according my wish like in night dream when you know that you are asleep. With the power of my imagination in one moment I erased almost all its baroque beatifications, carvings, and pearl inlay bits from the wide table with a big chandelier hanging over it and the table was transformed into a huge mountain, about which I “read” in comics – there was its special world that existed on that mountain. All the rest of things of furniture in the room also became mountains and I, transformed into an airplane, was flying between them picking up speed.<sup>5</sup>

...“Don't swing your legs like that, you're making me dizzy,” my grandmother used to say, when I was obviously immersed in one of my carefully staged daydreams. I would stop swinging my legs, but in my daydream an airplane was still banking in and out of the smoke rising from the Gelincik cigarette she was raising to her lips, and soon I would enter the forest inhabited by the many rabbits, leaves, snakes, and lions I had previously identified among the geometric shapes on the carpets. Involving myself in an adventure from one of my comics, I'd mount a horse, start a fire, kill a few people. With one ear always alert for external sounds, I would hear the door of the elevator slam shut and, before returning my thoughts to half-naked redskins, note that Ismail the caretaker had gone up to our floor. I enjoyed setting houses on fire, spraying burning houses with bullets, escaping from burning houses through tunnels I had dug with my own hands, and slowly killing flies I had caught between the windowpane and the tulle curtains, which stank of cigarettes; when they fell to

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<sup>5</sup> This fragment does not exist in the English edition of Pamuk's book but only in the Russian one. Translation from Russian is by Eugene Matusov.

the perforated board over the radiator, the flies were gangsters who were finally paying the price for their crimes (pp. 20-21).

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...Sometimes, too, I would sense, from the way my mother spent her mornings talking endlessly on the phone to my aunts, her friends, and her own mother, that something was wrong. My mother would be wearing her long cream-colored robe with the red carnations; as she sat with one leg crossed over the other, the robe would fall to the floor in a cascade of folds that caused me confusion; I could see her nightgown as well as her beautiful skin, and I could see her beautiful neck, and I'd want to climb onto her lap and nestle up to her, get closer to that beautiful triangle between her hair, her neck, and her breasts. ... While I waited for my mother to notice me, I would sit at her dressing table and fiddle with her perfume bottles, lipsticks, fingernail polish, colognes, rose water, and almond oils; I would rummage through the drawers and play with the assortment of tweezers, scissors, nail files, eyebrow pencils, brushes, combs, and various other sharp-pointed instruments; I'd look at the baby photographs of me and my brother that she had slid under the pane of glass atop the table. One showed me sitting in a high chair as she, dressed in the same robe, gave me a spoonful of baby food; we were both smiling the sort of smile you only saw in advertisements, and when I looked at this picture I would think what a shame it was no one could hear how happy my scream was. When boredom loomed, I would cheer myself up with a game very similar to one I would later play in my novels. I would push the bottles and brushes toward the center of the dressing table, along with the locked silver box with the floral decorations that I had never once seen my mother open, and, bringing my own head forward so that I could see it in the central panel of the mirror triptych, I would push the two wings of the mirror inward or outward until the two side mirrors were reflecting each other and I could see thousands of Orhans shimmering in the deep, cold, glass-colored infinity. When I looked into the nearest reflections, the strangeness of the back of my head would shock me, as did my ears at first—they came to a rounded point at the back and one of them stuck out more than the other, just like my father's. Even more interesting was the back of my neck, which made me feel as if my body were a stranger I carried with me—the thought is still chilling. Caught between the three mirrors, the tens and hundreds of reflected Orhans changed every time I altered the panels' positions even slightly; although each new succession was different from all the others, I was proud to see how slavishly each link in the chain aped my every gesture. I would tryout all sorts of gestures until I was sure they copied me perfectly. Sometimes I would look into the mirror's green eternity for the Orhan who was farthest away. Sometimes it seemed that a few of my faithful imitators did not move their hands or their heads at exactly the same moment as I did but rather a moment later. The most frightening time was when I was making faces—puffing up my cheeks, raising my eyebrows, sticking out my tongue, and singling out eight of the hundreds of Orhans in a corner—and then (not noticing I had moved my own hand) seeing what I thought to be another group of tiny and very distant renegades gesturing among themselves. Losing myself inside my reflections came to be the Disappearing Game, and perhaps I played it to prepare myself for the thing I dreaded most. Although I did not know what my mother was saying on the phone, or where my father was, or when he would return, I knew for sure that one day my mother would disappear too (pp. 77-78).

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My father and my uncle's string of business failures, my parents' arguments, the smoldering disputes between the various branches of the extended family over which my grandmother presided – these were some of the things that had prepared me for the knowledge that, despite everything the world had to offer (painting, sex, friendship, sleep, love, food, playing games, watching things),

and although the opportunities for happiness were limitless and hardly a day passed without my discovering a new pleasure, life was also full of sudden, unexpected, fast-flaming disasters of every size and shade of importance. The randomness of these disasters reminded me of the radio maritime announcements, warning all shipping (and the rest of us too) about "free-floating mines" at the mouth of the Bosphorus and giving their precise location. At any moment, my parents could begin to argue about something utterly predictable, or else a property dispute could flare up with the relatives upstairs, or my brother would lose his temper and decide to teach me a lesson I'd never forget. Then again, my father might come home and mention in passing that he'd sold our house, or they'd slapped a restraining order on him, or we had to move, or he was going off on a trip (p. 199).

...

I had a number of strategies to keep these small disasters from unsettling me. I'd established strict regimes of superstition for myself (like not stepping on sidewalk cracks and never closing certain doors all the way); or I'd have myself a quick adventure (meet up with the other Orhan, escape to my second world, paint, fall into a disaster of my own by picking a fight with my brother); or I'd count the ships passing through the Bosphorus. In fact I'd been counting the ships going up and down the Bosphorus for some time. I'd been counting the Romanian tankers, the Soviet warships, the fishing boats coming in from Trabzon, the Bulgarian passenger ships, the Turkish Maritime passenger liners heading into the Black Sea, the Soviet meteorological vessels, the elegant Italian ocean liners, the coal boats, the frigates, the rusting neglected Varna-registered cargo ships, and the decaying vessels that kept their flags and countries of origin under cover of darkness. This is not to say I counted everything; like my father, I didn't bother with the motor launches that crisscrossed the Bosphorus, taking businessmen to work and transporting women with fifty bags of shopping, nor did I count the city ferries that darted shore to shore from one end of Istanbul to the other, carrying gloomy passengers who spent the journey lost in thought, smoking and drinking tea; like the household furniture, these were already fixtures in my everyday life.

As a child I counted these ships heedless of the disquiet, agitation, and mounting panic they induced in me. By counting I felt as if I was giving order to my life; at times of extreme rage or sadness, when I fled myself, my school, and my life to wander in the city streets, I stopped counting altogether. It was then I longed most keenly for disasters, fires, the other life, the other Orhan. Perhaps if I explain how I got into the habit of ship-counting, it might make more sense. At the time—we are talking about the early sixties—my mother, father, brother, and I were living in a small Bosphorus-facing apartment in my grandfather's building in Cihangir. I was in the last year of primary school, so I was eleven years old (pp. 200-201).

...

As anyone who has had to memorize a prayer or a poem will know, if you're trying to engrave words into your memory, it's better not to pay much attention to what you see before your eyes. Once the words imprint themselves, your mind is free to go in search of images that can serve as aide-memoires. Your eyes can be entirely disengaged from your thoughts and watch the world for their own amusement. On cold winter mornings, while I shivered under the covers and memorized my poem, I'd gaze through the window at the Bosphorus, shimmering in the darkness like a dream. I could see the Bosphorus through the gaps between the four and five-story apartment buildings below us, above the roofs and chimneys of the rickety wooden houses that would burn down over the next ten years, and between the minarets of Cihangir Mosque; no ferries ran at this hour, and the sea was so dark that no searchlight or lamp could pierce it. Over on the Asian side, I could see the old cranes of Haydarpaşa and the lights of a silently passing cargo ship; with the help of faint moonlight or the lamp of a lonely motorboat, I could sometimes see huge, rusty, mussel-encrusted

barges, a solitary fisherman in a rowboat, the ghostly white contours of Kizkulesi. But mostly the sea would be engulfed in darkness. Even when-long before sunrise-the apartment buildings and cypress-filled cemeteries on the Asian side began to grow light, the Bosphorus would remain pitch-black – it looked to me as if it would stay that way forever.

As I continued memorizing my poem in the dark, as my mind occupied itself with recitation and strange memory games, my eyes would fix on something moving very slowly through the currents of the Bosphorus – a strange-looking ship, a fishing boat setting out early. Although I paid this object no mind, my eyes did not refrain from their usual habits; they'd spend a moment studying this thing passing before them and only when they'd established what it was would they acknowledge it. Yes, that's a cargo ship, I'd say to myself; yes, this is a fishing boat that has not lit its only light; yes, this is a motor launch taking the day's first passengers from Asia to Europe; yes, that is an old frigate from a remote Soviet port...

On one such morning, when I was shivering and memorizing poetry under the blanket as usual, my eyes lit on an amazing sight, the likes of which I'd never seen. I remember well how I just sat there, frozen, my forgotten book in hand. A great hulk, growing larger and larger as it rose from the pitch-dark sea and approached the closest hill-the hill from which I was watching – this was a colossus, a leviathan, in shape and size a specter from my worst nightmares, a Soviet warship! – rising out of the night and the mist as if in a fairy tale, a vast floating fortress. Its engine was running low, the warship passing silently, sluggishly, but so powerfully that it shook the windowpanes, the woodwork, and our furniture; the tongs that someone had hung wrongly next to the stove, the pots and saucepans lined up in the dark kitchen, the windows in the bedrooms where my mother, my father, and my brother were sleeping were all trembling too, and so was the cobblestoned alley that went down to the sea; even the garbage cans in front of the houses were making such a clatter you might have thought this peaceful neighborhood was suffering a minor earthquake. It meant that what Istanbul had been discussing in whispers since the Cold War began was actually true: The biggest Russian warships passed through the Bosphorus after midnight, under cover of darkness.

For a moment I panicked, thinking I should do something. The rest of the city was asleep and I was the only one to have seen this Soviet vessel heading who knew where to commit who knew what terrible act. I had to spring into action, to warn Istanbul, to warn the whole world. This was the sort of thing I'd seen so many brave child heroes do in magazines-stir cities from their sleep to save them from floods, fires, and invading armies. But I could not find the will to leave my warm bed.

As anxiety overtook me, I hit on a frantic stopgap measure that would become a habit: I applied my full mind, sharpened as it was by memorization, to the Soviet ship, committed it to memory, and counted it. What do I mean to say? I did the same as those legendary American spies rumored to live on hilltops overlooking the Bosphorus, who photographed every passing Communist ship (and this is probably another Istanbul myth that had some basis in reality, at least during the Cold War): I mentally cataloged all the salient features of the vessel in question. In my imagination, I collated my new data with existing data about other ships, the Bosphorus currents, and perhaps even the rate at which the world was turning; I counted it and in so doing turned the giant hulk into something ordinary. And not just the Soviet ship: By counting all ships "of note" I could reassert my picture of the world and my own place within it. (pp. 202-204).

## Pamuk's Inner Child

The very first experience the child becomes aware of him or herself is in the perception of 'I'm different'.

It happens when there are still no words, when thoughts appear as images that do not yet have verbal clothing for the child.

'I'm different' means something exists inside of me that distinguishes me from any other human being in the world. I am or, rather, my Self is what never coincides or merges with any kind of 'we'.

I do not have to compare myself with anyone else to feel this type of my own Self, this unique 'I'. It is something absolute, bestowed upon me as something self-evident – as *my* own feelings, *my* own experiences, and *my* own images that are evidently *my* own and nobody else's. When I realize myself as being different and distinguished, however, to really become aware of my Self I must draw a demarcation line between myself and others. This represents the moment when self-awareness emerges – the awareness of oneself and one's own boundaries.

Still, it is in the course of one's entire life that one keeps attempting to come close to the mystery of one's Self. What is there in me that unconditionally and certainly distinguishes me from any other person, given that in many other aspects I am quite like all the others – or similar to many others. I can easily classify myself as belonging to this or that we-group: I am a child, I am my parent's offspring, I am a student... But then, where am *I*? Are there no other people who can rightfully classify themselves the same way as I do?

OK, I can talk about the games I like to play or about the books I like to read, but are there no other people having quite the same likings and interests? Are there no other children who like reading the same books or playing the same games, who are being taught to and learn the same things as I do?

Nonetheless, my self-awareness tells me assertively and unconditionally that my Self – as the one distinct from everyone else's in the world – surely exists. I am unique. I feel my Self. I am aware of my-self – still, I am the only person in the whole world aware of what goes on within me! All the others know me just from the outside and are only aware of some of my outward manifestations, they can only guess what is going on inside of me, which means they – nor anyone else for that matter – do not know my true Self. Psychologically, in my view, this represents the extreme moment where emerges the problem of 'the other Orhan', "In some dreams I would greet this Orhan – always in another house – with shrieks of horror; in others the two of us would stare each other down in eerie merciless silence" (Pamuk, 2004, p. 5).

The fear of the doubleness is a very common childhood fear. Quite like the fears of being mistaken for some other baby in the maternity hospital or of being born to other parents. This is the fear that you're double and you cannot somehow prove that s/he is s/he and you are you. In the final analysis, it is the fear that the grown-ups are not able to recognize your uniqueness and your indispensability while you, yourself, are keenly aware of something in you that actually makes you 'the You' who cannot possibly be confused with or taken for any other Orhan. But the adults see just the external you – the you of your acts or words. They do not surmise the Worlds and entire Universes in your depths, they have no idea of your infinitely diverse experiences, feelings and realms constantly being created by your imagination.

Externally you are like everybody else and, frankly speaking, you can easily be confused or replaced with some other child. It is because in general what you do millions of other children all over the world do as well – what a child of your age is assumed or supposed to do. It is only within you, in your innermost depths, that something is happening – something that no one could read about in any of the textbooks on childhood psychology. What is happening is an intense, highly dramatic and incredibly rich inner life that is absolutely different from that of anyone else. You are filled with emotions, feelings, and experiences that are felt and experienced by nobody else, and your mind swarms with images and thoughts that could be found in no one else's mind. And none, except you, is aware of that inner world of yours, of those feelings, experiences and images. No one but you knows what makes you an absolutely individual Orhan, The Orhan who cannot possibly coincide or merge with anyone else in the whole world.

What makes you unique is your inner world –the world of your feelings, experiences and of your imagination. Within you there are galaxies and universes which are belonging and known exclusively only to you alone. These are the worlds that are being permanently created by your own vision, your own imagination, by your own meaning making. You are not just looking at the surrounding world, you are constantly cultivating it with your imagination's work, populating it with the images of your own creation, placing it within certain meaning making frames, attaching your own individual subjective meanings to it. There is not a single other person in the entire world who could think, feel, or imagine the way you do.

Imagination is the crux of the matter.

You are what you are totally due to your capacity and proportional to your ability to imagine; in proportion to what extent you are able to add aroma and colors of your individual, unique, and subjective imagination to those of the 'objective' world. Any object getting within your range of vision becomes imbued with an imagined life of some sort and made to exist according to the laws and logic of your imagination.

A human being's dialogue with the world never begins with a person's cognitive activity aimed at 'reflecting' the world 'as it really is'. This dialogue starts with a person **imagining** the world, filling it with her or his own images, thereby populating it with him or herself, making it her or his own.

This is what fundamentally distinguishes humans from animals.

A baby animal masters the environment in strict accordance with the genetically installed biological needs of its species. That is why the interests of representatives of a given species are practically identical. There are, of course, some minute individual differences or deviations but all of them are entirely within the specie's normative limit, which enables us to predict with a nearly 100% certainty what may be the sphere and range of interests for any representative of this or that animal species.

The human's plight is completely different. The human is distinguished through and marked by developing and possessing groups of interests that are in no way fully determined by the human specie's biological needs and necessities. A child can get interested in everything –literally in *every* thing – and the intensity and depth of this interest are determined exclusively by what he or she imagines about this object, by what individually imagined interests he or she fills out the object; by what frame of her or his individual imagination the child is able to furnish the object, and by what imaginative meanings he or she creates for it.

When a child enters a room filled with sundry objects it is impossible to predict which one or ones of them will attract her or his attention; one child will be 'drawn' by one group of things, another one – by

quite a different one. And it is absolutely impossible to infer this difference in children's interests from any bio-genetic predetermination.

These interests are of an entirely different basis and different nature. For example, let's consider a child's aesthetic interest. What is an aesthetic perspective? It cannot be explained away by a biological necessity. 'It's so beautiful', exclaims a child, but what seems beautiful to one person is not at all so to another one. One perceives something as being beautiful when an aesthetic image of an object emerges in one's soul, but an image of the object, however, might not necessarily be an aesthetic one.

A child says, 'It's interesting', but what does this 'interesting' mean? It means that a child populates an interest-evoking object with her or his individual features thereby making the object subjectively and personally important. Therefore, even when two children find interesting one and the same toy they have two quite different interests: the imagination of each of them populates the toy with altogether different features and creates for it his or her own space of life, his or her own mythical topology. Each child creates his or her own imaginary-fairytale space of this toy.

The same is true for any other object in the child's surroundings.

The child's look hooks onto or gets hooked by an object when he or she creates an imagined meaning making frame, creates an inner image of the object by filling it with some subjectively important features, and building it in her or his own worldview and the relationship to the world.

This why a child is capable of looking at things infinitely long and of really looking into things – to see things visible and known only to her or him alone. A child looks at a mere object and sees imagination-born Universes. For that matter, for a child everything has a personality of its own, its peculiar individual face. Everything has a long trail behind it made up of the fantasies that a child has been wrapping it in during her or his interactions with it. That is why the child's world is marked by fantasies. The world of images created by a child's fantasy is her or his personal GPS to the external 'grown-up' world.

This is why the child's epistemological activity is truly insatiable. The child actually imagines rather than learns or cognizes with learning and knowledge being, so to say, imagining's byproducts.

...The worlds that I created by my imagination were completely subject of my control – I could choose which world I could go, I could change this world according my wish like in night dream when you know that you are asleep. With the power of my imagination in one moment I erased almost all its baroque beatifications, carvings, and pearl inlay bits from the wide table with a big chandelier hanging over it and the table was transformed into a huge mountain, about which I "read" in comics – there was its special world that existed on that mountain. All the rest of things of furniture in the room also became mountains and I, transformed into an airplane, was flying between them picking up speed.<sup>6</sup>

"Don't swing your legs like that, you're making me dizzy," my grandmother used to say, when I was obviously immersed in one of my carefully staged daydreams.

I would stop swinging my legs, but in my daydream an airplane was still banking in and out of the smoke rising from the Gelincik cigarette she was raising to her lips, and soon I would enter the forest

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<sup>6</sup> This fragment does not exist in the English edition of Pamuk's book but only in the Russian one. Translation from Russian is by Eugene Matusov.

inhabited by the many rabbits, leaves, snakes, and lions I had previously identified among the geometric shapes on the carpets. Involving myself in an adventure from one of my comics, I'd mount a horse, start a fire, kill a few people. With one ear always alert for external sounds, I would hear the door of the elevator slam shut and, before returning my thoughts to half-naked redskins, note that Ismail the caretaker had gone up to our floor. I enjoyed setting houses on fire, spraying burning houses with bullets, escaping from burning houses through tunnels I had dug with my own hands, and slowly killing flies I had caught between the windowpane and the tulle curtains, which stank of cigarettes; when they fell to the perforated board over the radiator, the flies were gangsters who were finally paying the price for their crimes (Pamuk, 2004).

We often say in Russian, 'Man's presence spiritualizes the place.' What it means is the human imbues the surrounding space with specific soul- and spirit-born dimensions, fills it with profoundly individual subjective meanings that are not there 'objectively', without the human's intervention. Man subjectivizes the space.

This *in*-spiration of the world is the very essence of the relationship of a child with the world. First comes this *in*-spiriting impregnation of the world with the Self and self-born images and meanings and only then, based on this foundation, follows the process of cognizing and comprehending of the world as of something objective and human-independent.

Imagination presents a buffer between the man and the external world, which is a way of mastering the world, subjecting it to one's self. Imagination is a tool for gaining psychological power over the external world and thereby overcoming one's innate fear of this strange and alien environment, making it into a home, a part of one's self.

This is exactly what the mystery of all ancient mythologies boils down to. Any myth image is in the same degree a means for becoming psychologically powerful, for becoming a ruler of the world in a situation where the world is stronger than you. Thus, the human imagination is not only the instrument of the human Selfhood, but it is the foundation for the entire process of human cognizing the world.

## Bergman, Excerpts from *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography*<sup>7</sup>

Today, as I lean over photographs of my childhood to study my mother's face through a magnifying glass, I try to penetrate long vanished emotions. Yes, I loved her and she is very attractive in the photograph, with her thick centre-parted hair above a broad forehead, her soft oval face, gentle sensual mouth, her warm unaffected gaze below dark shapely eyebrows, her small strong hands.

My four-year-old heart was consumed with doglike devotion.

Nevertheless, our relationship was not uncomplicated. My devotion disturbed and irritated her. My "expressions of tenderness and my violent outbursts worried her. She often sent me away with cool ironic words and I wept with rage and disappointment. Her relationship with my brother was simpler, for she was always defending him against Father, who brought him up with rigorous sternness in which brutal flogging was a recurrent argument.

I slowly realized that my adoration, alternately gentle and furious, had little effect, so I soon started to test out behaviour that would please her and arouse her interest. Illness immediately attracted her sympathy. As I was a sickly child with endless ailments, this did indeed become a painful but successful route to her tenderness. On the other hand, as Mother was a trained nurse, shamming was swiftly seen through and punished in public.

Another way to gain her attention proved more harmful. I learnt that Mother could not bear indifference and preoccupation. She used them as *her* weapons. I also learnt to subdue my passions, and started on a peculiar game, the primary ingredients of which were arrogance and a cool friendliness. I can remember nothing about what I did, but love makes one enterprising and I quickly succeeded in creating interest in my combination of sensitivity and selfesteem.

My greatest problem was simply that I was never given the opportunity to reveal my game, throw off the mask and allow myself to be enveloped in a love that was reciprocated (pp. 3-4)

...

Most of our upbringing was based on such concepts as sin, confession, punishment, forgiveness and grace, concrete factors in relationships between children and parents and God. There was an innate logic in all this which we accepted and thought we understood. This fact may well have contributed to our astonishing acceptance of Nazism. We had never heard of freedom and knew even less what it tasted like. In a hierarchical system, all doors are closed.

So punishments were something self-evident, never questioned. They could be swift and simple, a slap over the face or a smack on the bottom, but they could also be extremely sophisticated, refined through generations.

If I wet myself, which often happened, and all too easily, I was made to wear a red knee-length skirt for the rest of the day. This was regarded as harmless and funny. Major crimes reaped exemplary punishment, starting from when the crime was discovered. In minor instances the criminal confessed, say to maids, or to Mother or one of the innumerable female relations living at our parsonage on various occasions.

The immediate consequence of confessing was to be frozen out. No one spoke or replied to you. As far as I can make out, this was to make the criminal long for punishment and forgiveness. After dinner and coffee, the parties were summoned to Father's room, where interrogation and

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<sup>7</sup> Bergman, I. (1988). *The magic lantern: an autobiography*. New York: Viking Penguin

confessions were renewed. After that, the carpet beater was fetched and you yourself had to state how many strokes you considered you deserved. When the punishment quota had been established, a hard green cushion was fetched, trousers and underpants taken down, you prostrated yourself over the cushion, someone held firmly on to your neck and the strokes were administered.

I can't maintain that it hurt all that much. The ritual and the humiliation were what was so painful. My brother got the worst of it. Mother often used to sit by his bed, bathing his back where the carpet beater had loosened the skin and streaked his back with bloody weals. As I hated my brother and was frightened of his sudden flaring rages, I found great satisfaction in seeing him punished so severely.

After the strokes had been administered, you had to kiss Father's hand, at which forgiveness was declared and the children of sin fell away, deliverance and grace ensued. Though of course you had to go to bed without supper and evening reading, the relief was nevertheless considerable.

There was also a spontaneous kind of punishment which could be very unpleasant for a child tormented by fear of the dark: being shut inside a special cupboard. Alma in the kitchen had told us that in that particular cupboard lived a little creature which ate the toes of naughty children. I quite clearly heard something moving in there in the dark and my terror was total. I don't remember what I did, probably climbed on to shelves or hung from hooks to avoid having my toes devoured.

This form of punishment lost its terror when I found a solution. I hid a torch with a red and green light in a corner of the cupboard. When I was shut in, I hunted out my torch, directed the beam of light at the wall and pretended I was at the cinema. Once when the door was opened, I lay on the floor with my eyes closed, pretending to be unconscious. Everyone was horrified except Mother, who suspected shamming, but no evidence could be found and further punishment was not forthcoming.

Other punishments were no excursions to the cinema, no food, being sent to bed or sent to your room, extra homework, caning on your hand, hair-pulling, working in the kitchen (which could be rather pleasant), no one speaking to you for a specific time and so on.

Nowadays, I understand my parents' desperation. A pastor's family lives as if on a tray, unprotected from other eyes. The parsonage must always be open to criticism and comments from the congregation. Both Father and Mother were perfectionists who sagged beneath this unreasonable pressure. Their working day was open-ended, their marriage difficult, their self-discipline iron-hard. Their two sons reflected characteristics they unremittingly punished in themselves. My brother was rebellious and unable to protect himself. Father used all his willpower to break him, and almost succeeded. My sister was loved very much and possessively, by both parents. She responded with self-effacement and gentle timidity.

I think I came off best by turning myself into a liar. I created an external person who had very little to do with the real me. As I didn't know how to keep my creation and my person apart, the damage had consequences for my life and creativity far into adulthood. Sometimes I have to console myself with the fact that he who has lived a lie loves the truth.

My first conscious lie stands out clearly in my memory. Father had become a hospital chaplain. We had moved to a yellow house on the edge of the great park that borders Lill-Jansskogen in Stockholm. It was a cold winter's day and my brother and I and his friends had been throwing snowballs at the greenhouse on the edge of the park, breaking a great many panes. The gardener at once suspected us and reported the matter to Father. Interrogations followed. My brother confessed and so did his companions. I was in the kitchen drinking a glass of milk, Alma baking at the

kitchen table, when Siri, the housemaid, came into the kitchen and relayed the progress of the awful punishments. She asked me if I had had any part in this vandalism, something I had already denied at a preliminary interrogation (I had been temporarily released owing to lack of evidence). When Siri jokingly asked me as if in passing whether I had succeeded in breaking any panes, I realized she was trying to trap me, so I replied in a calm voice that I had just watched for a while and thrown a few loose snowballs that had hit my brother, but then I'd left because my feet were so cold. I clearly remember thinking: This is just what you do when you lie.

It was a decisive discovery. In roughly the same rational way as Moliere's Don Juan, I decided to be A Hypocrite. I cannot say I was always successful: owing to lack of experience, I was sometimes seen through, and occasionally outsiders intervened.

The family had an immensely rich benefactor called Aunt Anna. She invited us to children's parties with conjurors and other delights. She always gave us expensive and much coveted Christmas presents and took us every year to the Schumann Circus premiere in Djurgården. This event drove me into a state of feverish excitement: the car journey with Aunt Anna's uniformed chauffeur, going into the huge brightly lit wooden building, the secret smells, Aunt Anna's voluminous hat, the blaring orchestra, the magic of the preparations and the roaring of lions and tigers behind the red draperies of the circus entrance. Someone whispered that a lion had appeared in a dark opening under the cupola and that the clowns were frightening and aggressive. I fell asleep from sheer emotion and awoke to wonderful music - a young woman dressed in white was riding around on a huge black stallion.

I was overcome with love for this young woman. She was included in my fantasy games and I called her Esmeralda (perhaps that was her name). My fiction finally took an all-too hazardous step out into reality. Under an oath of secrecy, I confided in the boy called Nisse who sat next to me at school. I told him that my parents had sold me to Schumann's Circus and I was soon to be taken away from home and school to be trained as an acrobat, together with Esmeralda, who was considered the most beautiful woman in the world. The next day my fantasy was revealed and desecrated.

My class teacher considered the matter so serious that she wrote an agitated letter to my mother. There was a dreadful court scene. I was put up against the wall, humiliated and disgraced, at home as well as at school.

Fifty years later, I asked Mother if she remembered my sale to the circus; she did, very well. I asked why no one had laughed or at least been affectionately amused when faced with so much imagination and daring. Did no one question the deeper reasons why a seven-year-old wished to leave home and be sold to a circus? Mother replied that they had already been troubled on several occasions by my lies and fantasies. In her anguish, she had consulted the pediatrician. He had emphasized how important it was for a child to learn at an early stage to differentiate between fantasy and reality. As they were now faced with an insolent and flagrant lie, it had to be punished accordingly.

I had my revenge on my former friend by taking my brother's sheath-knife and chasing him around the school playground. When a teacher threw herself between us, I tried to kill her.

I was removed from school and severely beaten. Then my false friend caught polio and died, which pleased me. The whole class was sent home for three weeks as was the custom, and everything was forgotten.

But I still fantasized about Esmeralda, our adventures becoming more and more dangerous and our love more and more passionate. Meanwhile, I became engaged to a girl in my class called Gladys, thus betraying Tippan, my faithful playmate (pp. 7-12)

...

To be honest, I think back on my early years with delight and curiosity. My imagination and senses were given nourishment, and I remember nothing dull, in fact the days and hours kept exploding with wonders, unexpected sights and magical moments. I can still roam through the landscape of my childhood and again experience lights, smells, people, rooms, moments, gestures, tones of voice and objects. These memories seldom have any particular meaning, but are like short or longer films with no point, shot at random.

The prerogative of childhood is to move unhindered between magic and oatmeal porridge, between boundless terror and explosive joy. There were no boundaries except prohibitions and regulations, which were shadowy, mostly incomprehensible. For instance, I know I did not grasp the concept of time. *You really must learn to be punctual. You've been given a watch and you know how to tell the time.* But time ceased to exist, something told me I was probably hungry, there was a row.

It was difficult to differentiate between what was fantasy and what was considered real. If I made an effort, I was perhaps able to make reality stay real. But, for instance, there were ghosts and spectres. What should I do with them? And the sagas, were they real? God and the Angels? Jesus Christ? Adam and Eve? The Flood? What was it truly like to be with Abraham and Isaac? Was he *really* going to cut Isaac's throat? I stared in dismay at Doré's engraving, identifying myself with Isaac. That was real. Father was going to slit Ingmar's throat. What would happen if the Angel came too late? Then they would *have* to weep. Blood running and Ingmar smiling bleakly. Reality.

Then came the cinematograph.

The weeks before Christmas. The immensely rich Aunt Anna's uniformed Mr. Jansson had already delivered a quantity of presents. As usual, they were placed in the Christmas present basket in the cupboard under the stairs. One parcel in particular aroused my excited curiosity. It was brown and angular with 'Forsners' on the wrapping paper. Forsners was a photographic store in Hamngatan which sold not only cameras but real cinematographs.

More than anything else, I longed for a cinematograph. The year before, I had been to the cinema for the first time and seen a film about a horse. I think it was called *Black Beauty* and was based on a famous book. The film was on at the Sture cinema and we sat in the front row of the circle. To me, it was the beginning. I was overcome with a fever that has never left me. The silent shadows turned their pale faces towards me and spoke in inaudible voices to my most secret feelings. Sixty years have gone by and nothing has changed; the fever is the same (pp. 13-14).

...

...the distribution of Christmas gifts took place at the dining-room table. The baskets were carried in, Father officiated with a cigar and glass of sweet liqueur, the presents were handed out, verses were read aloud, applauded and commented on; no presents without verses.

That was when the cinematograph affair occurred. My brother was the one who got it.

At once I began to howl. I was ticked off and disappeared under the table, where I raged on and was told to be quiet immediately. I rushed off to the nursery, swearing and cursing, considered running away, then finally fell asleep exhausted by grief.

The party went on.

Later in the evening I woke up. Gertrud was singing a folk song downstairs and the nightlight was glowing. A transparency of the Nativity scene and the shepherds at prayer was glimmering faintly on the tall chest-of-drawers. Among my brother's other Christmas presents on the white gate-legged table was the cinematograph, with its crooked chimney, its beautifully shaped brass lens and its rack for the film loops.

I made a swift decision. I woke my brother and proposed a deal. I offered him my hundred tin soldiers in exchange for the cinematograph. As Dag possessed a huge army and was always involved in war games with his friends, an agreement was made to the satisfaction of both parties.

The cinematograph was mine.

It was not a complicated machine. The source of light was a paraffin lamp and the crank was attached with a cogwheel and a Maltese cross. At the back of the metal box was a simple reflecting mirror, behind the lens a slot for coloured lantern slides. The apparatus also included a square purple box which contained some glass slides and a sepia-coloured film strip (35 mm). This was about three meters long and glued into a loop. Information on the lid stated that the film was called *Mrs. Holle*. Who this Mrs. Holle was no one knew, but later it turned out that she was a popular equivalent of the Goddess of Love in Mediterranean countries.

The next morning I retreated into the spacious wardrobe in the nursery, placed the cinematograph on a sugar crate, lit the paraffin lamp and directed the beam of light on to the whitewashed wall. Then I loaded the film.

A picture of a meadow appeared on the wall. Asleep in the meadow was a young woman apparently wearing national costume. *Then I turned the handle!* It is impossible to describe this. I can't find words to express my excitement. But at any time I can recall the smell of the hot metal, the scent of mothballs and dust in the wardrobe, the feel of the crank against my hand. I can see the trembling rectangle on the wall.

I turned the handle and the girl woke up, sat up, slowly got up, stretched her arms out, swung round and disappeared to the right. If I went on turning, she would again lie there, then make exactly the same movements all over again.

*She was moving.* (pp. 15-16)

...

Before the primaeval darkness of puberty lowered itself round me and confused both body and soul, I had a happy love affair during the summer I was living alone with Grandmother at Våhoms (p.75).

...

Although we were the same age, Märta was half a head taller than me. She was broad and angular, her straight hair cut short and almost white from the sun and swimming. Her lips were thin, her mouth broad and when she laughed it seemed to me that her mouth went out to her ears, revealing strong white teeth. Her eyes were pale blue and her gaze seemed surprised, her eyebrows as fair as her hair, her nose long and straight, with a little blob on the very end. She had powerful shoulders and no hips, her arms and legs long and sunburnt, and covered with golden down. She smelt of the cowshed, as astringent as the marsh. Her dress had originally been blue but was faded and torn, with dark patches of sweat under her arms and between her shoulder blades.

Love was immediate - as between Romeo and Juliet, the difference being that we never even thought of touching each other, not to mention kissing.

On the pretext of time-consuming duties, I disappeared from Våröms early in the mornings and returned after dusk. This went on for several days until Grandmother finally asked me straight out and I confessed. In her wisdom, she granted me unlimited leave from nine o'clock in the morning until nine at night. She also told me that Märta was always welcome to come to Våröms, a kindness we seldom made use of, as Märta's younger brothers had swiftly taken note of our passion. One afternoon, when we dared go down to the Gimå to fish and were sitting close together without touching each other, a horde of little boys appeared out of a bush and sang: 'Screw and Fuck want to be fine but Pricker and Cunter at once start t'whine'. I leapt on the mob and hit some of them, but got quite badly beaten. Märta did not come to my rescue. Presumably she wanted to see how I would cope.

She didn't talk. We never touched each other, but we sat, lay or stood close together, licking the scabs of our sores and scratching our mosquito bites, swimming in all weathers, but shyly, ignoring each other's nakedness. I also helped as best I could with the chores at the outfield barn, but I was rather frightened of the cows. The elkhound watched me jealously and kept nipping at my legs. Sometimes Märta was scolded. Aunt was very thorough about the duties assigned to her and once Märta had her ears boxed and she wept with rage. I was quite unable to console her.

She was quiet and I did the talking. I told her that my father was not my real father, but I was the son of a famous actor called Anders de Wahl. Pastor Bergman hated and persecuted me, which was quite understandable. My mother still loved Anders de Wahl and went to all his premieres. I had been allowed to meet him once outside the theatre. He had looked at me with tears in his eyes and kissed me on the forehead. Then he had said 'God bless you, my child' in his melodious voice. 'Märta, you can hear him when he reads the *New Year Bells* on the radio! Anders de Wahl is my father and as soon as I leave school, I'm going to be an actor at the Royal Dramatic Theatre.' (pp. 78-80).

...

We were alone in the cramped hot room. It was a mild day, the rain streaking the small windows and rustling above the loft. 'You'll see,' said Märta. 'Autumn'll be here after this rain.' I suddenly realized our days were now numbered, that eternity did have an end and separation was approaching. Märta was leaning over the table, her breath smelling of milk. 'A goods train from Borlänge leaves at quarter past seven,' she said. 'I can hear when it leaves. I'll think about you then. You hear and see it when it passes Våröms. Then you must think about me.'

She stretched out her broad sunburnt hand with its dirty bitten nails. I put my hand on hers and she closed hers round it. At last I stopped talking, for an overwhelming grief had silenced me.

Autumn came and we were forced to wear shoes and socks. We helped with the turnips, the apples ripened, the frost came and everything turned to glass in space and on the ground. The pond outside the Good Templars' hall had a thin layer of ice on it and Märta's mother started packing. The sun was hot in the middle of the day, but it turned bitterly cold towards evening. The fields were ploughed and the threshing machines thundered away in the barns. We helped occasionally, but liked to go off on our own. One day we borrowed Berglund's boat and went fishing for pike. We caught a huge one which bit my finger. When Lalla cut open the pike, she found a wedding ring in its stomach. With a magnifying glass, Grandmother could see the name Karin engraved inside the ring. Some years earlier, Father had lost his ring up by the Gimå. It did not necessarily follow that it was the same ring.

One raw cold morning, Grandmother told us to go to the village store half way between Dufnäs and Djurmo. We got a lift with Berglund's son, who was going the same way to sell an old horse. We sat on the back flap of the wagon. The journey was slow and difficult along the road full of potholes made by the rain. We counted cars passing or coming towards us, and they added up to three in two hours. At the store, we packed our knapsacks and started off home on foot.

...

One night it snowed, the river turned blacker than ever and all the greenery and yellow colours vanished. The wind dropped and an overwhelming silence fell. Although it was half-light, the whiteness dazzled because it came from below and struck where the eye was unprotected. We walked along the railway embankment towards the Good Templars' hall. The grey sawmill crouched sagging and abandoned under the weight of all that white, the water in the pool rippled discreetly, and there was a thin layer of ice on the water nearest to the closed hatchways.

We could not speak, nor did we dare look at each other, the pain was too great. We shook hands, said goodbye and maybe we would see each other next summer. Then she turned quickly away and ran towards the house. I walked along the embankment back to Våröms thinking that if a train came along it might as well run straight over me (pp. 81-83).

...

Freed from the iron restrictions of school, I bolted like an insane horse and did not stop until six years later, when I became director of Helsingborg Municipal Theatre. I learnt some history of literature from Martin Lamm, who lectured on Strindberg in a bantering tone that caught the audience and offended my uncritical admiration. I realized only later that his analysis was brilliant. I joined a youth organization in the old City called Mäster-Olofsgården and had the great privilege of taking charge of the lively and expanding drama activities. Then there were student dramatics. I soon started I course at the university in Stockholm for the sake of appearances, but student drama took up all the time not spent sleeping with Maria. She played the Mother in *The Pelican* and was famous within the student unions. She had a thickset body with sloping shoulders, high breasts and big hips and thighs. Her face was flat with a long well-shaped nose, broad forehead and expressive dark blue eyes. She had a thin mouth, the corners sophisticatedly drawn down. Her hair was thin and dyed very red. She had a considerable gift for language and had published a collection of poems praised by Artur Lundkvist. In the evenings, she held court at a corner table in the student café, drank brandy and chain-smoked American Virginian cigarettes called Goldflake, packed in a dark yellow tin with a blood-red seal.

Maria gave me all kinds of experiences, and became a splendid antidote to my intellectual indolence, my spiritual sloppiness and confused sentimentality. She also satisfied my sexual hunger, opening the prison bars and letting out a raving lunatic.

We inhabited a cramped one-room apartment on the South Side of Stockholm, containing a bookshelf, two chairs, a desk with a reading lamp and two mattresses plus bedclothes. Cooking was done in a cupboard and the basin was used for both dishes and washing. We sat and worked, each of us on a mattress, Maria smoking incessantly. In self-defence, I fired off a counterattack and was soon a chain smoker.

My parents immediately discovered I was spending my nights away. Investigations were made, the truth revealed and I was asked to explain myself, with the result that I had a violent altercation with my father. I warned him not to hit me. He hit me and I hit him back. He staggered and ended up sitting on the floor while Mother alternately wept and appealed to the remnants of our

commonsense. I pushed her aside and she screamed loudly. That same evening I wrote a letter to say we would never see one another again.

I left home with a sense of relief and stayed away for several years.

My brother tried to commit suicide, my sister was forced into an abortion out of consideration for the family, I ran away from home. My parents lived in an exhausting, permanent state of crisis with neither beginning nor end. They fulfilled their duties, they made huge efforts, appealing to God for mercy, their beliefs, values and traditions of no help to them. Nothing helped. Our drama was acted out before everyone's eyes on the brightly lit stage of the parsonage. Fear created what was feared (pp. 138-140).

## Interpreting Bergman's childhood memoir

The child's subjectivity manifests itself through pain.

It is the pain of rapture from the world, which neither hears nor understands the child – in a situation where the world is of very paramount importance for the child as it is the world of her or his dearest and nearest, most important people.

This makes the child's Self try and break into this world to be noticed – only to be left completely overlooked by the grown-ups unable to surmise the storms raging within the child's heart.

"My four-year-old heart was consumed with doglike devotion."

"...I wept with rage and disappointment."

"...love makes one enterprising and I quickly succeeded in creating interest in my combination of sensitivity and self-esteem."

The quotations above represent a four-year-old boy's love for his mother.

It is by no means an exaggeration or a lie; it is a real drama of unrequited love that many four-and five-year olds do experience as keenly as is only possible at this age – because it is in that very age that the child starts wiggling out of her or his Ego's cocoon, out of his or her mythical self-sufficiency while tentatively establishing relations with the real world around; to realize that the world runs according to the laws quite often allowing no room for the child. But how, then, is a child to establish her or himself as someone important, as a person that really is, existing, desiring, and demanding here-and-now? Previously, up to now, the world had been entirely within yourself constituting a condition quite sufficient for your self-existence.

Now, it turns out that the world is something outside you, when does not in the least belong to you and it challenges you to conquer it.

It makes no difference that you are in no way less (or, maybe, even much more) sensitive, feeling, and/or rich in experiences than any of these surrounding adults since you have neither of the skills nor knacks of living a life they have mastered, you are compelled to invent your own, quite effortful, ways to establish yourself in this world out there.

However, it is not only you who is endeavoring to establish yourself in this world. It turns out that the world of the dearest and nearest is trying hard to establish itself at your expense. This grown-up world's establishing itself at your expense bears an adult name of 'education'.

Of course, you have already experienced some of this 'education', sometime earlier. Being nearly entirely within the protective cocoon of your fantasy-born mythological Ego, however, you never noticed any of those 'education efforts' that had been considerably less refined and excruciating. Indeed, what point is there in educating a child that is still unaware and too foolish to be provoked into remorse or shame?

But as the child grows, he or she learns to cognize him-or herself as being apart from the world around – this awareness by the child becomes paired with an irrepressible urge, on the part of the adults,

to refine all sorts of 'educational activities' centered around arousing the feelings of guilt and shame within the child.

Furthermore, the task of arousing the guilt-shame complex soon becomes an end in itself for the adults. It is so because an adult who has succeeded in instilling these feelings in a child can experience a most sweet and enjoyable feeling of power, which becomes the main impellent in no time at all.

Indeed, had there never been children's faults and misbehaviors, they would have been invented. How otherwise would one have formed a basis for guilt-and-shame forming? Furthermore, where would one ground for an authoritative self-affirmation at the expense of the child?

"Most of our upbringing was based on such concepts as sin, confession, punishment, forgiveness and grace..."

Following is the 'classical' Christian education logical sequence that looks practically impeccable: a misdeed (a breach of some convention or rule) – experiencing it as a sin (a shameful, impermissible vice) – catharsis from a public confession (which is a 'must' since the violator must confess in and repent of the sin, which procedure should be made public securing the sinner's soul's would-be salvation) - an even more intense and purifying catharsis of the punishment as the expiration of the sin -and, finally, the apotheosis of a graceful forgiving aimed at making the culprit's soul fill with tears of a most tender emotion and blissfulness.

In reality, this 'ideal model' turns out to be but a sophisticated system of humiliating the child's person-dignity, suppression of her or his will that, in the final analysis, has formed the neurotically authoritarian face of the Western civilization. It is not enough to make one repent in public – it is all-important to humiliate and crush the 'sinner': in order to disgrace and pillory one in public.

Wetting your pants? Well, then you must forever wear a knee-long red skirt for everyone to see and jeer at you!

Smashed a windowpane while playing? A public confession shall be wrung out of you (with your mother, your governess while 'the innumerable female relations' present) followed by a unanimous boycott aimed at making you feel a complete outcast craving for a punishment (i.e., so-called "forgiveness") and for flogging itself.

"The ritual and the humiliation were what was so painful."

It would be wrong to say that parents do not love their children. On the contrary, they do love them and 'wish them well' and they most sincerely and ardently wish to 'rectify a bad temper', to 'vanquish Sin', to therefin punish their children with tears of a sincerest sympathy welling up in their eyes. One might surmise the Holy Inquisition was as sympathetic with the heretics being tortured. The result, however, is that the children learn to hate their parents, themselves and others, including their own brothers and sisters.

"My brother got the worst of it. Mother often used to sit by his bed, bathing his back where the carpet beater had loosened the skin and streaked his back with bloody weals. As I hated my brother and was frightened of his sudden flaring rages, I found great satisfaction in seeing him punished so severely."

It is a pedagogy based on repression and humiliation.

It is a pedagogy that provokes envy and thirst for power.

It is a pedagogy that forms a certain type of oppressive social relations in the society.

It is the pedagogical soil that, in the long run gives birth to totalitarianism – since totalitarianism, undoubtedly, had had its pedagogical origins too.

It is a respectable pedagogical violence ‘in the name of sublime values’ that leads to a total and boundless mutual violence.

Moreover, it is also a pedagogy that unconditionally results in hypocrisy and cynicism, which is a pedagogy that is doomed to form hypocrites. It is because I (my Self) can only survive if I learn to be hypocritical and deceitful. The only alternative is represented by the fate of Bergman’s brother and sister, who are people psychologically broken and crushed.

“I think I came off best by turning myself into a liar. I created an external person who had very little to do with the real me.”

It is a pedagogical drill-training that drives one into a system of social conventions and norms but, at the same time, crushes and warps one’s personality, which presents a ready recipe for an easy prey by a totalitarianism ideology.

The brother’s back, slashed bloody with repeated flogging, as well as his furious outbursts of violence were also a direct consequence of this same education. A person with a school of **such** humiliation behind her or him is likely to be as merciless in humiliating others.

The system of upbringing in a respectable Swedish pastor’s family presents a prototype for the would-be Nazi and Soviet concentration camp ‘pedagogy’ – proceeding entirely from the ideals of correct education and correction of the incorrect.

However, in the final analysis, what salvages one from this sadistic and perverted pedagogy is, not the learned hypocrisy but the intensity and the depth of the inner reflexive experiences and emotions filling the child’s soul. This fact explains why, even within the most repressive pedagogical environments, there appear and arise not just villains or psychologically broken people.

A child is not merely a being ‘educated by the grown-ups’. First and foremost, a child is a being that lives her or his own, secret and enormously rich inner active life – a life of inner observations, reflexive experiences, and deep passions. It is what constitutes the real soil for the child’s growth despite any of the surrounding ‘pedagogical environments’.

The crux of the matter is the child’s imagination, the ‘mythological cocoon’ being woven in and by the child’s consciousness. It is this very mythological, imaginative cocoon that turns out to be the main resource the child draws on for withstanding any ugliness and perversity of the ‘education systems’, the main resource nurturing the formation and development of the **humane** even in the midst of most inhuman and manipulative circumstances.

This is largely due to how, all through the childhood, the child lives mainly an inner and imaginary life instead of an outer life of ordinary acts and benign events. The greater the child’s power of imagination, the greater is her or his resources for survival as a human.

Here is a description of a visit to the circus by Bergman, “feverish excitement,” “the secret smells,” “the magic of the preparations,” “the roaring of lions and tigers behind the red draperies,” “the clowns were frightening and aggressive,” “someone whispered that a lion had appeared in a dark opening under the cupola...” The child’s intensity of perceiving and experiencing is absolutely incomparable with those of the grown-ups. What for an adult is a mere sum of ordinary things is, for a child, a chain of incredible and fantastic miracles performed chiefly by one’s capacity and power to feel and fantasize. It is all the more so as the circus is a visible symbol of an ‘other world’ full of real passions and adventures that match, in their magical incredibility, those taking place within a child’s soul. No wonder so many children have become crazy about the circus to the point of creating fantastic stories about their would-be circus life. This is because the circus is a remedial metaphor of the soul refusing to be placed within the Jesuitical domestic pedagogy’s Procrustean bed. It is also because the only alternative to the ‘meek acquiescence to Nazism’ is a soul awakened by the imagination and refusing to be structured according to the logic of meek self-humiliation or cynical hypocrisy.

Regardless, all in all, help is only likely to come from the circus, since even the pediatrician who was visited by the parents to consult the child exhausted by his interminable fantasies, instructs them with a thoughtful air on “how important it was for a child to learn at an early stage to differentiate between fantasy and reality.”

At the same time, the fantasy power is the only thing capable of salvaging little Ingmar’s soul. It is exactly what severs as a buffer between the inner and the outer worlds and allows Ingmar Bergman to eventually become what he has become.

“It was difficult to differentiate between what was fantasy and what was considered real. If I made an effort, I was perhaps able to make reality stay real. But, for instance, there were ghosts and spectres. What should I do with them? And the sagas, were they real? God and the Angels? Jesus Christ? Adam and Eve? The Flood? What was it truly like to be with Abraham and Isaac? Was he really going to cut Isaac’s throat? I stared in dismay at Dore’s engraving, identifying myself with Isaac. That was real. Father was going to slit Ingmar’s throat. What would happen if the Angel came too late? Then they would *have* to weep. Blood running and Ingmar smiling bleakly Reality.”

This fantastic Biblical story is an amazingly accurate metaphor of Ingmar Bergman’s attitude to his father and thereby becomes another metaphor of his life’s salvation.

Indeed, it is quite difficult to separate fantasy from reality in a situation where fantasy is what really led little Ingmar out of the impasse from the reality that was driving him into a dead-end! Indeed, the pediatrician’s advice about drawing a demarcation line between fantasy and the reality turns out to be utter nonsense.

“...I remember nothing dull, in fact the days and hours kept exploding with wonders, unexpected sights and magical moments. I can still roam through the landscape of my childhood and again experience lights, smells, people, rooms, moments, gestures, tones of voice and objects. These memories seldom have any particular meaning, but are like short or longer films with no point, shot at random.”

It all boils down to the fact the child has the strength to live an inner, not an outer life, which rescues her or him. No matter how harsh and strict the outer bans imposed by the adults are, the child can have enough strength to live in a state of inner freedom. If this is the case, moreover, it enables the child to break through all pedagogical enclosures to get into an authentic, true life.

“There were no boundaries except prohibitions and regulations, which were shadowy, mostly incomprehensible. For instance, I know I did not grasp the concept of time. *You really must learn to be punctual. You've been given a watch and you know how to tell the time.* But time ceased to exist, something told me I was probably hungry, there was a row.”

It is so, because for a child filled with an inner, not an outer life, time also flows inside, not outside her or him. The ‘external’ physical time, measured by watches and clocks is only needed for establishing a consensus with others. Inner time, on the other hand, needs no such agreements. It is self-sufficient. The validity of the inner time is in its eventfulness: eventfulness of the child’s inner experiences.

Likewise, the child’s space of existence is an internal and imaginary one. Even the external, the ‘outer’ physical space is only open to the child in proportion to the extent her or his imagination has succeeded to mark it with the imagination’s notches and marks. Thus, a child ‘aimlessly’ and ‘nonchalantly’ wandering around in a park seemingly just ‘looking around and daydreaming’, in fact is ‘marking’ as it were the place around with her or his individual tokens, creating her or his, deeply personal ‘cartography of the locality’ where everything gets marked with your own images, fantasy, and emotional experiences.

And a cinematograph is a wonderful gift to the child’s power of imagination.

“To me, it was the beginning. I was overcome with a fever that has never left me. The silent shadows turned their pale faces towards me and spoke in inaudible voices to my most secret feelings. Sixty years have gone by and nothing has changed; the fever is the same.”

As it came to be, imagination was not just what existed inside you but something that could be visualized outwardly. Which meant that you were not as lonely as you had believed you were. It meant that imagination might come true.

You turn a lever – and lo, the girl gets up, stretches out her arms and disappears out of the frame. It is something *you* can make happen as something that depends entirely and solely on you.

Also, it can hold feelings of your first love forever in its minutest detail...

Because, thanks to a cinematograph, it is for the first time in your life that you have and enjoy the right to be yourself, not just internally, but externally as well. It is an opportunity to limitlessly express your own Self – the Self of your redeeming fantasies – which, it proves, instead of being embarrassing or repulsive this Self of yours turns out to be incredibly important for your female vis-à-vis.

This is exactly what makes your memory retain the smallest details of the relationship, turning the externally fleeting summer months of being with Märta into something perceived as ‘infinity’ – presenting another example of the ‘inner’, subjective time that flows according to entirely different laws and clocks, and is much more powerful than the so-called ‘objective’ time flowing with the City Hall Tower’s clock.

It is so because here there is truth and authenticity. It is so because here the duty of the ‘inner Self’ is to **be** rather than to hide and this means that one can talk, and talk, and talk – freely, unrestrainedly, forever...

Hence, the anguish of separation is an absolutely unparalleled anguish.

It is so because that side of love there is again the barren of everyday life where the concentration camp-like family education complemented and amplified with the concentration camp-like education at school.

“It was an institution, a storage place, based on an unholy alliance between authorities and family. The stink of boredom was sometimes penetrating, sometimes suffocating. The class was a miniature reflection of pre-war society; indolence, indifference, opportunism, sucking-up, bullying and a few confused flashes of revolt, idealism and curiosity. ... Punishments were exemplary and often affected the offender for life. The teaching methods largely consisted of punishments, rewards and the implanting of a guilty conscience. Many of the teachers were National Socialists...”.

This is why, in the final analysis, “more than forty years were to go by before my emotions were released from that closed room where they had been imprisoned.”

## George Orwell, Such, Such Were The Joys<sup>8</sup>

I

Soon after I arrived at St Cyprian's (not immediately, but after a week or two, just when I seemed to be settling into the routine of school life) I began wetting my bed. I was now aged eight, so that this was a reversion to a habit which I must have grown out of at least four years earlier. Nowadays, I believe, bed-wetting in such circumstances is taken for granted. It is normal reaction in children who have been removed from their homes to a strange place. In those days, however, it was looked on as a disgusting crime which the child committed on purpose and for which the proper cure was a beating. For my part I did not need to be told it was a crime. Night after night I prayed, with a fervour never previously attained in my prayers, 'Please God, do not let me wet my bed! Oh, please God, do not let me wet my bed!', but it made remarkably little difference. Some nights the thing happened, others not. There was no volition about it, no consciousness. You did not properly speaking *do* the deed: you merely woke up in the morning and found that the sheets were wringing wet.

After the second or third offence I was warned that I should be beaten next time, but I received the warning in a curiously roundabout way. One afternoon, as we were filing out from tea, Mrs Wilkes the Headmaster's wife, was sitting at the head of one of the tables, chatting with a lady of whom I knew nothing, except that she was on an afternoon's visit to the school. She was an intimidating, masculine-looking person wearing a riding-habit, or something that I took to be a riding-habit. I was just leaving the room when Mrs Wilkes called me back, as though to introduce me to the visitor.

Mrs Wilkes was nicknamed Flip, and I shall call her by that name, for I seldom think of her by any other. (Officially, however, she was addressed as Mum, probably a corruption of the 'Ma'am' used by public schoolboys to their housemasters' wives.) She was a stocky square-built woman with hard red cheeks, a flat top to her head, prominent brows and deep-set, suspicious eyes. Although a great deal of the time she was full of false heartiness, jollyng one along with mannish slang ('*Buck up, old chap!*' and so forth), and even using one's Christian name, her eyes never lost their anxious, accusing look. It was very difficult to look her in the face without feeling guilty, even at moments when one was not guilty of anything in particular.

'Here is a little boy,' said Flip, indicating me to the strange lady, 'who wets his bed every night. Do you know what I am going to do if you wet your bed again?' she added, turning to me, 'I am going to get the Sixth Form to beat you'.

The strange lady put on an air of being inexpressibly shocked, and exclaimed 'I-should-*think*-so!' And here there occurred one of those wild, almost lunatic misunderstandings which are part of the daily experience of childhood. The Sixth Form was a group of older boys who were selected as having 'character' and were empowered to beat smaller boys. I had not yet learned of their existence, and I mis-heard the phrase 'the Sixth Form' as 'Mrs Form'. I took it as referring to the strange lady — I thought, that is, that her name was Mrs Form. It was an improbable name, but a child has no judgement in such matters. I imagined, therefore, that it was *she* who was to be deputed to beat me. It did not strike me as strange that this job should be turned over to a casual visitor in no way connected with the school. I merely assumed the 'Mrs Form' was a stern disciplinarian who enjoyed beating people (somehow her appearance seemed to bear this out) and I had an immediate terrifying vision of her arriving for the occasion in full riding kit and armed with a

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<sup>8</sup> Orwell, G. (1953). Such, Such Were the Joys, Retrieved from [http://orwell.ru/library/essays/joys/english/e\\_joys](http://orwell.ru/library/essays/joys/english/e_joys)

hunting-whip. To this day I can feel myself almost swooning with shame as I stood, a very small, round-faced boy in short corduroy knickers, before the two women. I could not speak. I felt that I should die if 'Mrs Form' were to beat me. But my dominant feeling was not fear or even resentment: it was simply shame because one more person, and that a woman, had been told of my disgusting offence.

A little later, I forget how, I learned that it was not after all 'Mrs Form' who would do the beating. I cannot remember whether it was that very night that I wetted my bed again, but at any rate I did wet it again quite soon. Oh, the despair, the feeling of cruel injustice, after all my prayers and resolutions, at once again waking between the clammy sheets! There was no chance of hiding what I had done. The grim statuesque matron, Margaret by name, arrived in the dormitory specially to inspect my bed. She pulled back the clothes, then drew herself up, and the dreaded words seemed to come rolling out of her like a peal of thunder:

'REPORT YOURSELF to the Headmaster after breakfast!'

I put REPORT YOURSELF in capitals because that was how it appeared in my mind. I do not know how many times I heard that phrase during my early years at St Cyprian's. It was only very rarely that it did not mean a beating. The words always had a portentous sound in my ears, like muffled drums or the words of the death sentence.

When I arrived to report myself, Flip was doing something or other at the long shiny table in the ante-room to the study. Her uneasy eyes searched me as I went past. Sambo was a round-shouldered, curiously oafish-looking man, not large but shambling in gait, with a chubby face which was like that of an overgrown baby, and which was capable of good humour. He knew, of course, why I had been sent to him, and had already taken a bone-handled riding-crop out of the cupboard, but it was part of the punishment of reporting yourself that you had to proclaim your offence with your own lips. When I had said my say, he read me a short but pompous lecture, then seized me by the scruff of the neck, twisted me over and began beating me with the riding-crop. He had a habit of continuing his lecture while he flogged you, and I remember the words 'you dir-ty lit-tle boy' keeping time with the blows. The beating did not hurt (perhaps, as it was the first time, he was not hitting me very hard), and I walked out feeling very much better. The fact that the beating had not hurt was a sort of victory and partially wiped out the shame of the bed-wetting. I was even incautious enough to wear a grin on my face. Some small boys were hanging about in the passage outside the door of the ante-room.

'D'you get the cane?'

'It didn't hurt.' I said proudly.

Flip had heard everything. Instantly her voice came screaming after me:

'Come here! Come here this instant! What was that you said?'

'I said it didn't hurt,' I faltered out.

'How dare you say a thing like that? Do you think that is a proper thing to say? Go in and REPORT YOURSELF AGAIN!'

This time Sambo laid on in real earnest. He continued for a length of time that frightened and astonished me — about five minutes, it seemed — ending up by breaking the riding-crop. The bone handle went flying across the room.

'Look what you've made me do!' he said furiously, holding the broken crop.

I had fallen into a chair, weakly snivelling. I remember that this was the only time throughout my boyhood when a beating actually reduced me to tears, and curiously enough I was not even now crying because of the pain. The second beating had not hurt very much either. Fright and shame seemed to have anaesthetized me. I was crying partly because I felt that this was expected of me, partly from genuine repentance, but partly also because of a deeper grief which is peculiar to childhood and not easy to convey: a sense of desolate loneliness and helplessness, of being locked up not only in a hostile world but in a world of good and evil where the rules were such that it was actually not possible for me to keep them.

I knew the bed-wetting was (a) wicked and (b) outside my control. The second fact I was personally aware of, and the first I did not question. It was possible, therefore, to commit a sin without knowing that you committed it, without wanting to commit it, and without being able to avoid it. Sin was not necessarily something that you did: it might be something that happened to you. I do not want to claim that this idea flashed into my mind as a complete novelty at this very moment, under the blows of Sambo's cane: I must have had glimpses of it even before I left home, for my early childhood had not been altogether happy. But at any rate this was the great, abiding lesson of my boyhood: that I was in a world where it was *not possible* for me to be good. And the double beating was a turning-point, for it brought home to me for the first time the harshness of the environment into which I had been flung. Life was more terrible, and I was more wicked, than I had imagined. At any rate, as I sat snivelling on the edge of a chair in Sambo's study, with not even the self-possession to stand up while he stormed at me, I had a conviction of sin and folly and weakness, such as I do not remember to have felt before.

In general, one's memories of any period must necessarily weaken as one moves away from it. One is constantly learning new facts, and old ones have to drop out to make way for them. At twenty I could have written the history of my schooldays with an accuracy which would be quite impossible now. But it can also happen that one's memories grow sharper after a long lapse of time, because one is looking at the past with fresh eyes and can isolate and, as it were, notice facts which previously existed undifferentiated among a mass of others. Here are two things which in a sense I remembered, but which did not strike me as strange or interesting until quite recently. One is that the second beating seemed to me a just and reasonable punishment. To get one beating, and then to get another and far fiercer one on top of it, for being so unwise as to show that the first had not hurt — that was quite natural. The gods are jealous, and when you have good fortune you should conceal it. The other is that I accepted the broken riding-crop as my own crime. I can still recall my feeling as I saw the handle lying on the carpet — the feeling of having done an ill-bred clumsy thing, and ruined an expensive object. I had broken it: so Sambo told me, and so I believed. This acceptance of guilt lay unnoticed in my memory for twenty or thirty years.

### III

No one can look back on his schooldays and say with truth that they were altogether unhappy.

I have good memories of St Cyprian's, among a horde of bad ones. Sometimes on summer afternoons there were wonderful expeditions across the Downs to a village called Birling Gap, or to Beachy Head, where one bathed dangerously among the boulders and came home covered with cuts. And there were still more wonderful mid-summer evenings when, as a special treat, we were not driven off to bed as usual but allowed to wander about the grounds in the long twilight, ending up with a plunge into the swimming bath at about nine o'clock. There was the joy of waking early on summer mornings and getting in an hour's undisturbed reading (Ian Hay, Thackeray, Kipling and H. G. Wells were the favourite authors of my boyhood) in the sunlit, sleeping dormitory. There was also cricket, which I was no good at but with which I conducted a sort of hopeless love affair up to

the age of about eighteen. And there was the pleasure of keeping caterpillars — the silky green and purple puss-moth, the ghostly green poplar-hawk, the privet-hawk, large as one's third finger, specimens of which could be illicitly purchased for sixpence at a shop in the town — and, when one could escape long enough from the master who was 'taking the walk', there was the excitement of dredging the dew-ponds on the Downs for enormous newts with orange-coloured bellies. This business of being out for a walk, coming across something of fascinating interest and then being dragged away from it by a yell from the master, like a dog jerked onwards by the leash, is an important feature of school life, and helps to build up the conviction, so strong in many children, that the things you most want to do are always unattainable.

Very occasionally, perhaps once during each summer, it was possible to escape altogether from the barrack-like atmosphere of school, when Brown, the second master, was permitted to take one or two boys for an afternoon of butterfly hunting on a common a few miles away. Brown was a man with white hair and a red face like a strawberry, who was good at natural history, making models and plaster casts, operating magic lanterns, and things of that kind. He and Mr Batchelor were the only adults in any way connected with the school whom I did not either dislike or fear. Once he took me into his room and showed me in confidence a plated, pearl-handled revolver — his 'six-shooter', he called it — which he kept in a box under his bed, and oh, the joy of those occasional expeditions! The ride of two or three miles on a lonely little branch line, the afternoon of charging to and fro with large green nets, the beauty of the enormous dragonflies which hovered over the tops of the grasses, the sinister killing-bottle with its sickly smell, and then tea in the parlour of a pub with large slices of pale-coloured cake! The essence of it was in the railway journey, which seemed to put magic distances between yourself and school.

Flip, characteristically, disapproved of these expeditions, though not actually forbidding them. 'And have you been catching *little butterflies*?' she would say with a vicious sneer when one got back, making her voice as babyish as possible. From her point of view, natural history ('bug-hunting' she would probably have called it) was a babyish pursuit which a boy should be laughed out of as early as possible. Moreover it was somehow faintly plebeian, it was traditionally associated with boys who wore spectacles and were no good at games, it did not help you to pass exams, and above all it smelt of science and therefore seemed to menace classical education. It needed a considerable moral effort to accept Brown's invitation. How I dreaded that sneer of *little butterflies*!

...

By the social standards that prevailed about me, I was no good, and could not be any good. But all the different kinds of virtue seemed to be mysteriously interconnected and to belong to much the same people. It was not only money that mattered: there were also strength, beauty, charm, athleticism and something called 'guts' or 'character', which in reality meant the power to impose your will on others. I did not possess any of these qualities. At games, for instance, I was hopeless. I was a fairly good swimmer and not altogether contemptible at cricket, but these had no prestige value, because boys only attach importance to a game if it requires strength and courage. What counted was football, at which I was a funk. I loathed the game, and since I could see no pleasure or usefulness in it, it was very difficult for me to show courage at it. Football, it seemed to me, is not really played for the pleasure of kicking a ball about, but is a species of fighting. The lovers of football are large, boisterous, nobbly boys who are good at knocking down and trampling on slightly smaller boys. That was the pattern of school life — a continuous triumph of the strong over the weak. Virtue consisted in winning: it consisted in being bigger, stronger, handsomer, richer, more popular, more elegant, more unscrupulous than other people — in dominating them, bullying them, making them suffer pain, making them look foolish, getting the better of them in every way. Life was

hierarchical and whatever happened was right. There were the strong, who deserved to win and always did win, and there were the weak, who deserved to lose and always did lose, everlastingly.

I did not question the prevailing standards, because so far as I could see there were no others. How could the rich, the strong, the elegant, the fashionable, the powerful, be in the wrong? It was their world, and the rules they made for it must be the right ones. And yet from a very early age I was aware of the impossibility of any *subjective* conformity. Always at the centre of my heart the inner self seemed to be awake, pointing out the difference between the moral obligation and the psychological *fact*. ...What you *ought* to feel was usually clear enough but the appropriate emotion could not be commanded. Obviously, it was my duty to feel grateful towards Flip and Sambo; but I was not grateful. It was equally clear that one ought to love one's father, but I knew very well that I merely disliked my own father, whom I had barely seen before I was eight and who appeared to me simply as a gruff-voiced elderly man forever saying 'Don't'. It was not that one did not want to possess the right qualities or feel the correct emotions, but that one could not. The good and the possible never seemed to coincide.

There was a line of verse that I came across not actually while I was at St Cyprian's, but a year of two later, and which seemed to strike a sort of leaden echo in my heart. It was: 'The armies of unalterable law'. I understood to perfection what it meant to be Lucifer, defeated and justly defeated, with no possibility of revenge. The schoolmasters with their canes, the millionaires with their Scottish castles, the athletes with their curly hair — these were the armies of unalterable law. It was not easy, at that date, to realize that in fact it *was* alterable. And according to that law I was damned. I had no money, I was weak, I was ugly, I was unpopular, I had a chronic cough, I was cowardly, I smelt. This picture, I should add, was not altogether fanciful. I was an unattractive boy. St Cyprian's soon made me so, even if I had not been so before. But a child's belief in its own shortcomings is not much influenced by facts. I believed, for example, that I 'smelt'. But this was based simply on general probability. It was notorious that disagreeable people smelt, and therefore presumably I did so too. Again, until after I had left school for good I continued to believe that I was preternaturally ugly. It was what my schoolfellows had told me, and I had no other authority to refer to. The conviction that it was *not possible* for me to be a success went deep enough to influence my actions till far into adult life. Until I was about thirty I always planned my life on the assumption not only that any major undertaking was bound to fail, but that I could only expect to live a few years longer.

But this sense of guilt and inevitable failure was balanced by something else: that is, the instinct to survive. Even a creature that is weak, ugly, cowardly, smelly and in no way justifiable still wants to stay alive and be happy after its own fashion. I could not invert the existing scale of values, or turn myself into a success, but I could accept my failure and make the best of it. I could resign myself to being what I was, and then endeavour to survive on those terms.

To survive, or at least to preserve any kind of independence, was essentially criminal, since it meant breaking rules which you yourself recognized. There was a boy named Johnny Hale who for some months oppressed me horribly. He was a big, powerful, coarsely handsome boy with a very red face and curly black hair, who was forever twisting somebody's arm, wringing somebody's ear, flogging somebody with a riding-crop (he was a member of the Sixth Form), or performing prodigies of activity on the football field. Flip loved him (hence the fact he was habitually called by his Christian name) and Sambo commended him as a boy who 'had character' and 'could keep order'. He was followed about by a group of toadies who nicknamed him Strong Man.

One day, when we were taking off our overcoats in the changing-room, Hale picked on me for some reason. I 'answered him back'. Whereupon he gripped my wrist, twisted it round and bent my

forearm back upon itself in a hideously painful way. I remember his handsome, jeering red face bearing down upon mine. He was, I think, older than I, besides being enormously stronger. As he let go of me a terrible, wicked resolve formed itself in my heart. I would get back on him by hitting him when he did not expect it. It was a strategic moment, for the master who had been 'taking' the walk would be coming back almost immediately, and then there could be no fight. I let perhaps a minute go by, walked up to Hale with the most harmless air I could assume, and then, getting the weight of my body behind it, smashed my fist into his face. He was flung backwards by the blow, and some blood ran out of his mouth. His always sanguine face turned almost black with rage. Then he turned away to rinse his mouth at the wash-basins.

*'All right!'* he said to me between his teeth as the master led us away.

For days after this he followed me about, challenging me to fight. Although terrified out of my wits, I steadily refused to fight. I said that the blow in the face had served him right, and there was an end of it. Curiously enough he did not simply fall upon me there and then, which public opinion would probably have supported him in doing. So gradually the matter tailed off, and there was no fight.

Now, I had behaved wrongly, by my own code no less than his. To hit him unawares was wrong. But to refuse afterwards to fight knowing that if we fought we would beat me — that was far worse: it was cowardly. If I had refused because I disapproved of fighting, or because I genuinely felt the matter to be closed, it would have been all right; but I had refused merely because I was afraid. Even my revenge was made empty by that fact. I had struck the blow in a moment of mindless violence, deliberately not looking far ahead and merely determined to get my own back for once and damn the consequences. I had had time to realize that what I did was wrong, but it was the kind of crime from which you could get some satisfaction. Now all was nullified. There had been a sort of courage in the first act, but my subsequent cowardice had wiped it out.

The fact I hardly noticed was that though Hale formally challenged me to fight, he did not actually attack me. Indeed, after receiving that one blow he never oppressed me again. It was perhaps twenty years before I saw the significance of this. At the time I could not see beyond the moral dilemma that is presented to the weak in a world governed by the strong: Break the rules, or perish. I did not see that in that case the weak have the right to make a different set of rules for themselves; because, even if such an idea had occurred to me, there was no one in my environment who could have confirmed me in it. I lived in a world of boys, gregarious animals questioning nothing, accepting the law of the stronger and avenging their own humiliations by passing them down to someone smaller. My situation was that of countless other boys, and if potentially I was more of a rebel than most, it was only because, by boyish standards, I was a poorer specimen. But I never did rebel intellectually, only emotionally. I had nothing to help me except my dumb selfishness, my inability — not, indeed, to despise myself, but to *dislike* myself — my instinct to survive.

It was about a year after I hit Johnny Hale in the face that I left St Cyprian's for ever. It was the end of a winter term. With a sense of coming out from darkness into sunlight I put on my Old Boy's tie as we dressed for the journey. I well remember the feeling of emancipation, as though the tie had been at once a badge of manhood and an amulet against Flip's voice and Sambo's cane. I was escaping from bondage. It was not that I expected, or even intended, to be any more successful at a public school than I had been at St Cyprian's. But still, I was escaping. I knew that at a public school there would be more privacy, more neglect, more chance to be idle and self-indulgent and degenerate. For years I had been resolved — unconsciously at first, but consciously later on — that when once my scholarship was won I would 'slack off' and cram no longer. This resolve, by the way,

was so fully carried out that between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two or three I hardly ever did a stroke of avoidable work.

...And yet how happy I was, that winter morning, as the train bore me away with the gleaming new silk tie (dark green, pale blue and black, if I remember rightly) round my neck! The world was opening before me, just a little, like a grey sky which exhibits a narrow crack of blue. A public school would be better fun than St Cyprian's, but at bottom equally alien. In a world where the prime necessities were money, titled relatives, athleticism, tailor-made clothes, neatly-brushed hair, a charming smile, I was no good. All I had gained was a breathing-space. A little quietude, a little self-indulgence, a little respite from cramming — and then, ruin. What kind of ruin I did not know: perhaps the colonies or an office stool, perhaps prison or an early death. But first a year or two in which one could 'slack off' and get the benefit of one's sins, like Doctor Faustus. I believed firmly in my evil destiny, and yet I was acutely happy. It is the advantage of being thirteen that you can not only live in the moment, but do so with full consciousness, foreseeing the future and yet not caring about it. Next term I was going to Wellington. I had also won a scholarship at Eton, but it was uncertain whether there would be a vacancy, and I was going to Wellington first. At Eton you had a room to yourself — a room which might even have a fire in it. At Wellington you had your own cubicle, and could make yourself cocoa in the evenings. The privacy of it, the grown-upness! And there would be libraries to hang about in, and summer afternoons when you could shirk games and mooch about the countryside alone, with no master driving you along. Meanwhile there were the holidays. There was the 22 rifle that I had bought the previous holidays (the Crackshot, it was called, costing twenty-two and sixpence), and Christmas was coming next week. There were also the pleasures of overeating. I thought of some particularly voluptuous cream buns which could be bought for twopence each at a shop in our town. (This was 1916, and food-rationing had not yet started.) Even the detail that my journey-money had been slightly miscalculated, leaving about a shilling over — enough for an unforeseen cup of coffee and a cake or two somewhere on the way — was enough to fill me with bliss. There was time for a bit of happiness before the future closed in upon me. But I did know that the future was dark. Failure, failure, failure — failure behind me, failure ahead of me — that was by far the deepest conviction that I carried away. (Orwell, 1947)

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1947<sup>(\*)</sup>

(\*) "First published with some changes of names in *Partisan Review*, Sept. - Oct. 1952, then not in Great Britain until the CEJL of 1968. ... Commonly thought to have been written in 1947 just before he [Orwell] began to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (this is highly speculative), but all that is certain is that he sent it to his publishers then. Several factors point strongly to an earlier composition." Bernard Crick: [George Orwell: A Life](#), 1980. (\* added by O. Dag)

## Interpreting Orwell's childhood memoirs

The world of Orwell's school years memories looks more frightening than that depicted in his famous "1984" anti-utopia. The school resembles a smoothly running clockwise mechanism with every cog-wheel having its own clearly defined function, including the system of punishment and hierarchical structure of relationships within the children's collective. There is no room for improvisation or for spontaneous expression of feelings – nothing beyond the perfect order of well-established conventions. Not to fit into this deeply hierarchical clockwork mechanism – to be a misfit – is to commit a real crime.

This is why little Eric Blaire – totally unable to fit within the social standards – is a real criminal. He looks preposterous and out of place in a world where the main virtue is "a continuous triumph of the strong over the weak," a world where any manifestation of individuality may become an object of merciless ridicule. It is a world structured according to the hierarchy pyramid principle which reads, "being bigger, stronger, handsomer, richer, more popular, more elegant, more unscrupulous than other people — in dominating them, bullying them, making them suffer pain, making them look foolish, getting the better of them in every way. Life was hierarchical and whatever happened was right. There were the strong, who deserved to win and always did win, and there were the weak, who deserved to lose and always did lose, everlastingly."

And the most monstrous thing about this world, however, is that none of its little inhabitants has any dignity **of his own**. Here, a person's dignity is measured not according to his or her self-actualization but according to the position he has managed to attain in the school hierarchy pyramid. It is a world inhabited by people-functions, people-roles all of whom solve their own instrumental tasks. As for the teachers' task, it mainly consists of diligently encouraging the students' industry in fighting everything that does not fit within the well-established system of rules. School is a mechanism of production of the future members of the society who will be destined to secure its smooth and slick functioning.

A St. Cyprian school newly arrived 8-year old student urinates in his bed. Still, his 'misdeed' is left unnoticed as something not even worth discussion or moral admonition. Indeed, who is he to be talked to, let alone – admonished? He is a complete nobody. And nobody is his name – this is the very first lesson that the child must learn in school. He is at the very bottom of the school social pyramid and therefore does not deserve even to be talked to.

"After the second of third offence I was warned that I should be beaten next time, but I received the warning in a curiously roundabout way."

The indirectness is the most oppressing and frightening thing of all – because it is based on a most profound scorn. All your feelings and ideas notwithstanding, you are but a nobody. You are but a student of the lowest class grade. You are just a cog in the school machine and you are only important to those around you insofar you make progress in learning and mastering the behavioral achievements. Your inner life is of no importance whatsoever. Of importance, however, is that your night enuresis hampers the logic of the educational process that provides room neither for your inner emotional experience nor for your night enuresis.

You are being scornfully ignored, however, as the atmosphere becomes denser around you, you sense that something awful is going to happen and this 'something' fills you with an irrational animal fear. No one says anything straightforwardly, but by their intonations, looks, and indirect remarks you unmistakably read that your night problem is a loathed and abominable thing that shall be followed by a severe and unavoidable punishment. Even though you do not know yet what it will come to, you feel this

atmosphere getting denser around you, and every night you pray hard to prevent this totalizing horror from coming true. There is not a horror of the punishment as yet, but there is the horror of expecting a horror to come and this imaginary horror's abyss is engulfing everything that might happen in reality. Alas, God doesn't hear your prayers. And, except God, there is no one to turn to: in a functionally built school hierarchy, you are doomed to be alone and, indeed, quite lonely. It is so because the main idea of the school is that of school achievement allowing no room for any of your reflexive experiences. The school is a track race of a stadium of sort that makes you run towards the conventional education goals and sets your 'price' and value exclusively according to how fast you can run and how much you do not deviate from the limits of the lane assigned to you.

This is precisely what constitutes the real horror of the situation Orwell describes. This horror exists not in just the mere fact of a child being exposed to physical violence – not even in just mere real fact of this violence being deeply unjust – but rather it is in the routine, even in somewhat mechanical character of what one is being exposed to, totally devoid of any personal attitude, any emotional experience, let alone sympathy. Had this punishment been a manifestation of some affective breakdown responses on the part of the teacher, it would have been much less frightening since an extreme affective response, though dangerous, is an altogether human one. As for the situation described by Orwell, its horror is in its everyday inescapability, its indifferent impersonality, and its functional disdainfulness. For this impersonal clockwork social mechanism of school, there is no such thing as an eight-year-old boy filled with anxieties and fears, rather there is a mere (and minor) malfunction of the mechanism that should be corrected in strict accordance with the preexisted pedagogical rules.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century British schools' rules required flogging (as an accepted punishment), so the headmaster took a whip and flogs an eight-year-old boy not because the headmaster is a pathological sadist or an emotionally imbalanced person but solely because he complies with the pedagogical requirements and rules of the period. The headmaster flogs a student in strict compliance with his pedagogical duties and school traditions, and in accordance with the requirements of a slickly running and finely tuned mechanism of the school hierarchy's pyramid. The corporal execution process is in itself a smoothly running ritual employing standard psychological props. So, the headmaster performs the procedure practically with indifference; in compliance with the rules and in accordance with the norm, as the epoch's guidelines fashionably require.

As for the little round-faced boy in corduroy knickers, he is a total **nobody** for the headmaster, just another **one** in the long row of those young students who have so far failed to fit in the conventional school order and who have to be made fit in by force – for their own prospective good. Since this or that particular cogwheel has got jammed, it must be rectified, and since it is conventional to rectify by flogging, so shall it be, performing some routine ritual: a purely technical procedure. Punishment is a mere element of the general school rhythm, the one completely predetermined and familiar.

This is exactly what makes it the most horrible thing in the whole story: a clockwork fixedness of a smoothly running school mechanism that has always been and still is the core foundation of any conventional school. According to this clockwork social mechanism of conventional school, a teacher acts in compliance with the accepted rules and traditions, not following his or her own emergent feelings, values, or judgment that might have distinguished him or her from all the other school teachers of the period. And it makes the teacher him or herself into a mere cog of the established mechanism, alienating him from himself while affiliating to a certain generalized school order, to a sum of conventional rules.

This is why little Erick Blaire's story sounds so familiar for the modern reader.

It is not because of flogging, nor because of corporal execution in general – by now they have totally disappeared from majority of schools. Everyone is all too familiar, however, with the unavoidable ritualistic over determination of the conventional teacher's modus operandi making him or her act this or that way not because he or she sees it as something meaningful or important for his or her personal and professional point of view, but solely because it is required by the regulations, traditions, and guidelines from above. Everyone is but too familiar with the conventional school's hierarchy pyramid where formal procedures (be it lessons, be it exams) enslave the teacher's human essence and make him or her into a function of the humanless process. Everyone is all too familiar with the common situation when the student gets depersonalized since the ultimate value is whether he or she is able to pass the test of compliance with certain educational tasks and goals, not her or his inner life. Everyone is very well familiar with the fact that conventional school is a smoothly running institutional mechanism set to produce functionally successful members of the society. Everyone is very well familiar with this idea of conventional school as a well lubricated, finely tuned, and smoothly running clockwork mechanism.

Neither Mrs. Wilkes nicknamed Flip, nor the school's headmaster Wilkes nicknamed Sambo, nor St. Cyprian school's students are in anyway worse than teachers and students inhabiting the today's conventional school; both do what is accepted and conventional, both act in compliance with a certain established norm and common practice. What they proceed from is neither their personal human feelings nor their idea of Good and Evil, nor their conscience or their personal dignity, nor their own judgment or values, it is solely what is **commonly accepted and generally required** irrespective of by whom exactly and why.

This presents the main and most dramatic vice of schools, even up to this day: the regulations' requirements priority over the commandments of personal conscience, personal responsibility, and personal sense. It is the priority of a clockwork mechanism over life – life that refuses to go at the clockwork pace. It makes little difference that old 'accepted conventionalities' have been long substituted by modern ones and the teachers display the so-called 'student-centered approach. It makes little or no difference if this 'student-centered approach' is not the teacher's deep moral choice, but another item among those required by the regulations. A 'guidelines-dependent' pedagogy is doomed to be totalitarian irrespective of the ideological and pedagogical values it aspires to attain. The clockwork pedagogy, in its very essence, is the one going against the grain of a person's dignity. If my interaction with a child is determined by external educational tasks and objectives, it is doomed to be functionally-totalitarian.

In fact, there are just two pedagogy types – the humane and the functionally-totalitarian ones.

The humane one is a pedagogy that proceeds from the student, from her or his states, needs, and possibilities. It feels stunted and uncomfortable within the limits of a standard preset syllabus. For such pedagogy, every educational task is just an opportunity for a dialogue with the student's inner world of his or her feelings and ideas. The emphasis here is not on what the child acquires or masters, but on what he or she experiences and what happens with the child. The main thing is the child's inner world, not the amount of information, knowledge, skills, competence or behavior norms he or she masters.

As for the functionally-totalitarian pedagogy, it is the one whose main pedagogical objective is not the child per se but what he or she masters in the process of being educated. Its main concern is not the child's inner processes, but the cultural clothing he or she must duly and properly put on. What goes on within the child's soul is of no or very little importance. What he is required to do is to stop wetting bed-sheets, to pass the high stakes finals and to master some other institutional prerequisites of "life success" known in advance. In Erick Blaire epoch, scholastic prerequisites of such "life success" were different

from modern prerequisites of “life success.” The totalitarian core of these educational systems is just the same, however, and the child must become “successful in life” therefore her or his ‘incorrectness’ – alias her or his Self that makes her or him unique and distinguished from others – must be corrected. So, it is of but secondary importance what is employed to crush the child’s Self (physical or psychological violence):

“This business of being out for a walk, coming across something of fascinating interest and then being dragged away from it by a yell from the master, like a dog jerked onwards by the leash, is an important feature of school life, and helps to build up the conviction, so strong in many children, that the things you most want to do are always unattainable.”

A student should not necessarily be flogged – a student may be lashed with sarcasm, or irony, or contempt. There is nothing more humiliating and crushing than to be made an object of ridicule. There is nothing more hurting and debasing than to be laughed at, which mercilessly exposes you as a nobody and good for nothing.

“How I dreaded that sneer of *little butterflies!*”

Again, neither butterflies nor the value of the natural history is what really matters. What matters is the presumption, on the part of the grown-ups, concerning what the child needs and does not need, this is what serves the basis for the entire school hierarchy’s pyramid outlining the so-called ‘curriculum program’ aimed to predefine the limits of the child’s cognitive needs and ‘corresponding’ educational goals in advance even without seeing the child. The most important thing here is to preset the uniform limits for all children without even meeting these children.

This is exactly what constitutes the very essence of a functionally-totalitarian school; its objective is to destroy the individual Self for the sake of the ‘universally common’.

A ‘selfness’ child is the one that could be drill-trained into becoming tame like animals in a circus. This makes the functionally-totalitarian adults regard children’s ‘selfness’ as children’s ‘incorrectness’ in whatever form from academic to behavioral, as an offence, a deficit, and/or a crime. This is why this functionally-totalitarian system requires merciless trimming and pruning the children’s selfness as early as possible. The ideal child/student is an unconditionally obedient and fully controllable one, the one who never contradicts or thwarts the grown-ups and readily and willingly complies with whatever they require of her or him.

In this system, a person must be able to be and act always together with the others in bundle (cf. Italian word “fascio”, Fascism). A person has no right to be and act on her or his own. A person must be able to be an element of a thoroughly controllable mass, a part of a smoothly running clockwise mechanism. A person must be a useful member of the society ideally capable of being unconditionally obedient and controlled.

To completely eradicate everything that is the individually-incorrect in a child in order to educate, at the cleared ground, a universally-correct person (of course, “a highly spiritual” or “a highly moral” one) is the ultimate super-objective of any totalitarian pedagogy.

However, this is nothing less but a pedagogy of destroying the child’s Self, her or his individuality, which cannot possibly be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It is either there – or not there. If it really is there, there will always be those who will perceive it as ‘wrong’ and deviating from what for others is an

accepted norm. Individuality is what is 'wrong' in its very essence. This is what makes it so valuable, to the point of comprising true human dignity.

The pedagogical dominance of the European culture – in family, in school, in society – is, undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the rise of the totalitarian regimes that were so widespread in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was the functionally-totalitarian pedagogy's soil that the European totalitarianism grew upon in all of its political manifestations.

Totalitarianism is rooted in certain education. Basically, totalitarianism is also a pedagogical and not just a purely political phenomenon. The political regime of totalitarianism is simply what gives a 'finishing touch' to the functionally-totalitarian pedagogy. If a culture is founded upon a system of education aimed at modeling debased human automatons, which means it is based on humiliation of the human dignity, it will be inevitably pregnant with political totalitarianism.

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