

Singing Body

Thursday, November 13, 2008

I'm in a strange place this morning. First, I'm off to the doctor to check out my left knee. These kinds of admissions and visits are always a bit depressing. Is there "really" something wrong with my knee? Is it really incurable? Will its bother and pain never go away? Or can I deal with and cure it myself through my own psychosomatic medicine?

On the other hand, let's look at the financial crisis looming. For some strange reason, it gives me inner peace. It says, "Why bother trying to sell this year? After all, almost no one is or will be buying anyway? Why not use this down financial time as an excuse to take the year off?" I like that!

Financially, I'm stable and good, certainly for a year. And it firmly brings up the question: What would I do for this, my sabbatical year?

Well, what would I do? How would I run it?

So for the only priority I can truly think of is what I would call, for lack of a better term, the exercise priority.

I would devote myself to exercise!

This means running, yoga, calli, and the daily 50's routine.

Friday, November 14, 2008

Eternal Fight for Customers

Forgetting about, or rather "not knowing" about the eleven thousand dollars I still owed from my Greek tour bills, both woke me up and drove me down. I got real mad. How could I, why did I forget and forego these fuckers? It brought me down hard to post Greek tour material reality. It threw me from distant dream mode into hard-fighting sales mode!

Finally. I'm mentally back from the Greek tour. Bathing in its afterglow has

ended. Over and done.

I'm back in the fight for customers! Tour customers, book customers, CD and future DVD customers, T-shirt, concert bookings. . .all customers!

This illuminates the positive aspect of losing money. It is a wake up call to restructure your brain and get your ass moving!

The Great Secret

The Great Secret is: Helping, inspiring, and serving others totally energizes me! Look what happens to my mind, body, and spirit when a job, a booking comes in, someone registers for a tour, when folk dancers show up for my folk dance class, or whatever. I get a sudden excitement surge. My desire to do a good job rises. Suddenly, I am energized to function at a higher, even my highest level! All this is good, very good!

Thus the connection between inner and outer, private and public is total. It is the complete energy source. Pull out the lamp plug, remove it from its energy source, and the light goes out. When I forget about my public connection with others, I then pull out my energy-source plug, and my light goes out.

Saturday, November 15, 2008

Life of the Divided Soul

Patient for life in the Sarnoian mode. That's me.

After getting diagnoses from "real" doctors (Dr. Mariner and Dr. Ghosh), who said that my right shoulder pain is due to an inflamed tendon. and my left knee problems are due to muscular stiffness, I can now no longer "blame my body." Stretching, yogic exercises, and muscle moving are my answer.

I will return to Sarnoian medicine, mental examination, and delvings deep into my soul. That is my daily path and future cure. Hard to believe, but true.

Check out depressions. See how they relocate themselves in my left knee and

right shoulder. I sense these “new” pains could all harken back and be related to my long-standing, but hopefully, ever receding, “success depression.” In spite of transitions galore, I am still not motivationally comfortable in this new place.

Thus, let’s face it, stupid as it sounds, I am still vaguely depressed over success and the loss of belief in motivation that it brings.

Although I am a natural leader, my goal in life has always been to be an artist. Not a leader. Leadership, although I am good at is, has always been secondary.

However, my recent success has been leading tours. I have accepted this role mainly because the money is so good.

Thus my soul is divided. I live a divided life. I put most of my time and effort into building a tour business, which, although important, is nevertheless secondary. In doing so, I have pushed my artistic self into second place; artistic motivation has been partially murdered.

No wonder my knee and shoulder hurt!

My former stock market and even present tour goals had always been means to an end, means to earning money and achieving financial stability. Why did I want it? So I could be free to lead the artist’s life that I truly believe in.

I have lost sight of my true goals.

No wonder I am depressed by success. I am succeeding in fields I have little interest in. Desire for money and financial stability, along with innate leadership skills, are guiding me there. But my heart yearns for art.

It’s an old conflict, a life conflict, reborn and expressing itself in tour-leader-and-businessman form.

I understand what’s happening.

What to do?

Is awareness enough? Perhaps.

Actually, the answer is obvious: Back to the artistic life!

Suddenly, as I say this I feel sick to my stomach! Like throwing up. Why? Is it

because I have been so unfaithful to myself and my vision? That I have been blind to my true self for so long? That I have denied, or at least pushed back, my artistic self and soul for the past two years? Is it a form of self-disgust? Maybe.

Evidently, I am not giving up my tour business or money making skills. I want and need both.

Nevertheless, I can reevaluate the meaning, purpose, and health-creating importance of art in my life. I can make artistic life my top priority.

The above is much too rational. I need to choose. It's one or the other. I am a mono kind of guy.

I've got to choose the artistic life. I've got to create the proper balance between physical, mental, and spiritual health. I've got to wed my dreams to reality.

Dive into the Artistic Life!

A true artist can never be a folk artist. They must be classical artists, classical musicians, etc. Is this snobbery or upbringing. Probably a bit of both. Whatever, I must admit, it is something I strangely think. A true artist either plays classical music (he can also compose), or he is a writer (mostly of fiction). The writer is a composer of music, but instead of notes, he uses words.

Am I returning to my old prejudices? Yes.

New Level

Maybe I'm tired of saying everything is going well. Maybe it's no longer about success. Maybe I'm ready to be mad about something else. But what?

Evidently, I want to be mad! An internal, interesting part of me likes it! But what can I rationally, or irrationally be mad at? Do I need to ask permission? I know I don't. But that still doesn't answer the basic question: What am I mad at?

Maybe there is no answer. Maybe madness, and this, of course, means divine madness (divine rage) is a good-in-itself. Thus I need no reason or explanation for it. It

is simply part of Truth and Beauty, like the Sun.

Divine madness means total passion. Dare I dive in? Perhaps that is the only meaningful question.

I am the life's point where there is nothing left to do but dive in.

Perhaps anger, my righteous rage, is because a good part of me is holding back. I want to give my brain a good kick in the ass. But my knee hurts so I can't do it. Or, if I can, it will be a light, weak, passionless kick. No satisfaction there.

It's the difference between diving into God or watching Him from the sidelines.

These are good words. But will I find any truth in my knee?

Can I live what I write about? Can I lead a (daily New Leaf) life of Mad Shoe Truth?

What is the difference between lead a life and live a life?

Performing at the Folk Dance Party?

I just lost my way practicing guitar. Should I somehow connect my playing to performing? Indeed, it would center it, give it a larger purpose.

What about Ginny's idea of me performing at our December 15th folk dance party. This non-paying performing idea raises many questions. That I am even considering it is surprising, nay, amazing.

I'm talking about playing something classical. Per-forming some classical guitar. If I ever did this it would be a total blowout performing breakthrough, a totally new look and view of performing. What a question!

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

The Inward Direction: Massaging the Strings

Is this really my new and next guitar direction? Playing each note so slowly that, in the process, I destroy each piece, then re-create it all over again "from the inside." I get such physical pleasure out of the delicious feeling of slowly massaging, relishing

each string!

What other direction is there? I'm uninterested in learning any new guitar pieces. I'm happy and satisfied with the ones I play. In my opinion, they are the top, the best in the repertoire. Playing and perfecting them is my only guitaristic desire.

Thursday, November 20, 2008

Writing: The Importance of "Fiction"

I can't figure out why I woke up feeling down. Sure, the future registration for tours looks bad, and the economy looks even worse. But I also feel it is giving me a wanted, needed, and even desired vacation! Somehow, this year feels like an off year, a coalescing, pull back, one to put all my past lives together. A break. I've got some money saved up from the past three good years to get me through. So what's the big deal?

I can even point to some minor "reasons," namely my leg, shoulder, even hammer toe. But I don't believe these.

Could it be I have no new novel to ride on into the future? Could it be that writing-wise, I am in finishing mode? I'm mopping up Zany, and even, in a sense, mopping up my guitar and violin playing. I'd also be mopping up by learning basic video and web techniques. Even tour sales (and bookings, if I even bet to pushing them) are forms of mop-up. I've done all these worldly things before.

In fact, as in the past, the "only thing" that turns me on has been, was, a new writing project! Zany used to turn me on. Even writing New Leaf every morning used to turn me on. (Now a.m. writing of New Leaf has become a habit. It has moved from a turn-on to a necessity.)

I always say that depression precedes creation. Perhaps I am waking up down and depressed because I have no new novel to write, no new fiction project. Perhaps writing, just as it has cured and elevated me in the past, is the only thing that will cure my present down condition and elevate me into the future.

No question, I am missing the daily spark in life. What gave it to me? Writing! But not just any writing. Only a new fiction project! (I hate, and hesitate to use, the word “only,” but it keeps coming up nevertheless!)

Am I so tied to writing? Is it really that important? More important than music, athletics, study, business, and more? Is it really the essence and turn-on of my spark?

I call it “fiction,” but it may be closer to the truth than any non-fiction, or new leaf writing that I do. My kind of fiction creates my kind of reality; and it is the blueprint for my future.

So, my depression and down will not lift until I start my next fiction project, my next novel.

I have just beautifully “explained” to myself and the world at large why I am depressed. And indeed, as you can see, depression precedes creation. And until I start creating my new and next “fiction” I will continue to be depressed. Evidently, this is a life rhythm rule, a law of life, at least, of mine.

I won’t know my next direction until I write my next “fiction.” This so-called fiction is, in reality, a subtle form of my business plan for the future.

All other activities in my life, sinews of my miracle schedule, such as guitar, violin, running, yoga, study, business and human relations (note addition of business to the miracle schedule, and human relations to business!) are all important. But writing my “fiction” is the centerpiece, web and spark, unveiling the music, meaning, and purpose that holds them all together.

My Books as “Gifts?”

Pushing my novels is a whole other business. It has nothing to do with writing them, or the reasons I write them.

In fact – and maybe this is the reason – I resent pushing them.

If this is so, perhaps they should be given out as gifts.

Now that is a new sales approach! Sales gifts.

Could I call my books “sales gifts?”

Take Myself Seriously as a Writer

New Chapter in my Life!

Since I grew up in music, and had cosmic experiences playing violin as a teenager, I always thought of myself as a musician who happened to write. But suppose this self-definition was limited? Suppose I am really a writer who happens to be a musician! Music gave me the vision. But writing about it, and the freedom writing gives me, may be closer to my essence.

Is my essence found in music or freedom? Does music express freedom, or does freedom express music? What freedom would it express? The closeness and union with God.

What does God have to do with freedom? Is He, among other things, freedom?

Which comes first? Music, freedom, or writing? Does it matter? Only because I am trying to re-define myself as a writer. To give my writing more, nay, most importance!

If this is so, why not simply say and accept that, at the point in my life, writing is most, important!

That is the new me. The now me. The me beyond the post-Greek tour transformation.

It might mean that, for the first time, I have to take myself very seriously as a writer. Talk about fear. I tremble at this new purpose and self-definition!

I cry, vomit, tremble, and shake at the thought!

I never had the confidence to take myself seriously as a musician.

Although I have the confidence in folk dancing, and as a folk dance teacher and leader, I never believed that folk dancing could be a serious profession. (No money, etc.)

I also never believed I could be a writer. I don't quite know why.

But, I wonder if I never had the confidence to become or take myself seriously as a musician because, deep in my heart, I knew that, in essence, it was never my true calling!

I am, by nature, a leader. It is easy for me. But again, I never see leading others as a true calling. Truth is, even though leading others is often a “serious business” and I personally like teaching folk dancing, I can’t take it “seriously.” It’s fun, interesting, a pleasant and unstressful way to spend the time. But I do not and have never seen it as a calling, as something I was put on the earth to do. At best, it was always one of the things I was put on earth to do.

But when I write, I experience the feeling: “I was put on the earth to do this!” Although I love music, when I played the violin and felt my awe-inspiring cosmic melt downs, I never felt I was put on the earth to do it. “ In the grandes of ways, I melted into nothingness. But the melting experience, the melt-down itself, is different in writing. Somehow when I write, I melt into somethingness!

What is the difference? Confidence? Does it have something to do with God’s commands? Is God defining me, and commanding me to do something? Strangely, that is what it feels like.

Again, when I die, and stand before Him, and He asks, “What have you done in your life?” Will I be able to say, “I fulfilled the vision You gave me. I fulfilled my promise and talents. I gave my all in unveiling, promoting, dispensing, and revealing the true me. And the world is a better place because I was there and placed the full force of my vision upon it.” And where is my vision best expressed? Somehow the call from above says Writing.

Maybe it’s a Present thing, something I had to be ready to accept in both age and wisdom.

But tremble as I do in saying so, I believe I am ready now.

Maybe that’s what this feeling, idea, and desire for a “Year Off” is all about. I

needed time to think about this.

Thus I don't mind the stock market falling and my tour business diminishing.

Friday, November 21, 2008

Searching for New Motivators and Motivations

I met Joe Freedman for brunch to discuss our Israel tour. After the meeting, I now plan to go on the trip in spite of the small registration. In other words, I plan to go, no matter what, no matter how many people we get.

Why did I decide to do this?

First thing that comes to mind is: I need to find a whole new reason to do things. My former, pre-seventy, mostly financial reasons no longer work. Something deep inside me has changed.

I still like the things I do. But I need new reasons for doing them.

Saturday, November 22, 2008

Strange Hubris

Excellent violin lesson with Allan Schiller last night. Also interesting left knee physical therapy session at the Dr. Liss clinic. Noah defined my injury as a ham string injury at the left knee insertion.

I can't believe I actually learned something from another human being. That's because, deep in my heart and psyche, I think I know everything. How did I get this idea? Strange hubris, indeed.

Feeling Good Mode

I am moving from improvement to feeling good mode – from going somewhere future oriented, to going nowhere present oriented.

Guitar: Moving from improving Villa-Lobos, Alhambra, Leyenda, etc. to feeling

physically good mode through right hand fingers and finger tips.

Language: Moving from improving my Greek to feeling good mode. Language through four senses.

Sunday, November 23, 2008

New View of Video

I just thought of a wonderful truth: I don't have to dance in order to learn video! I can just do it as a side thing, a fun-and-learning in itself, like learning Greek or Hebrew. If, eventually, I happen to video my dance choreographies and make a DVD or file to put on my website or even Youtube, so much the better. But learning video is no longer contingent upon the making a folk dance DVD of my choreographies. Thus, the pressure is off, and the fun can begin.

Strangely, I can thank my leg injury for this vision. How did it come about? Well, folk dancing is no fun when you're injured. Why then should I even bother folk dancing or making a video of my dances? I'll never want to dance them in public. In fact, I may never want to dance again. If that is so, what does it do? It frees me from the must, the pressure, the have to of making a DVD. This forced to-do has taken all the fun out of learning. And, as a true contrarian, my soul works against it. Thus, the more I feel I must do it, the more I resist doing it. Not a good way to go.

My leg injury has freed me from the "must" of dancing. Sure, I still have to do it when I get a job. But I can rationalize that by saying it is my profession and I'm making money. (But there is no need to force thing by pushing myself to learn video and make a DVD.)

Since, with an injury, I can no longer be a professional, and certainly, no longer want to be a professional (in fact, I no longer even want to dance!), the injury has taught me that I can survive without folk dancing!

I can return to the divine beginners state of loving it or, if not, simply dropping it. I am free to chose again. This, in itself, is wonderful.

Time to Move On

Why I developed this injury might be a good question to ask. Is it really because it slowed down my stretching for about a year? Maybe. But somehow this morning, I'm thinking that although lack of the usual intense and focused stretching might have been a factor, I doubt it explains the whole picture. (This is also true for my right arm.)

What other psychological factors might there be? Am I drifting back to Sarno? Didn't the belief in curative power endorphins once cure me?

Wouldn't it be better for me to see folk dance teaching as a skill and not a profession? After all, how can it be a profession if you can't make money at it?

As for "profession" and payment, the only thing in folk dancing that makes money is bookings, leading folk dancing at bar mitzvahs, weddings, or special events. These are more mental and leadership challenges rather than dance challenges. And to run or lead them, I certainly don't need to squat. In fact, they are physically easy, a cinch.

My private folk dance classes are an experimental fun laboratory. The dribble of funds that come in is laughable. (Perhaps because the paltry sums are so laughable, they could be considered part of the fun!)

The idea of choreographing folk dances is part of the fun, too.

Mine could be a values thing. Focusing on ego enhancement through folk dancing may only lead to a bad knee.

More important, fundamentally, I may also be avoiding a sad truth: I have accomplished all my goals in both folk dancing and tourism. It may be time to move on to something else.

My artistic goal in tourism was to learn about the boundaries and perimeters of folk dance improvisation, leading, and teaching. Well, I learned it.

My goal in folk dancing was to make a living from it. Well, I learned I couldn't. I need its peripheral events, namely, running folk dance weekends and folk tours.

Tours and folk dancing taught me to be an excellent leader. Now when I lead, I

know my boundaries, and how to communicate the steps and telegraph the movements through my own, personally developed form of folk dance telepathy.

Basically then, all my goals , many of which began twenty to thirty years ago, have been achieved. Indeed, this is a big accomplishment. I'm proud of it.

But it also signifies an ending. It is a sad and scary truth that it may be, or rather, is, time to move on.

Perhaps I can bounce my folk dance and tour career along "as a sideline." I did this at the end of concert career. It lasted a few years, then slowly dribbled away, and mostly died. Although partially stunned by the fading of my concert career, I was not unhappy. Evidently, concerts had served their purpose. Folk dancing and tourism may have also served their purpose.

I'm sad, afraid, and hate to say it, but my leg injury and even shoulder injury may have risen to tell me it is time to move on.

Physical Therapy

The idea of physical therapy does not suit my artistic temperament. The therapy takes all the fun and joy out of the exercise.

Concentrating on the body parts (and not the whole) eliminates the unity, endorphin high, cosmic oneness, and artistic beauty.

There is no artistry (or artistic high) in physical therapy. Only a clunking science.

Certainly there is no spiritual high. How could there be? It is, after all, called physical therapy. It separates physical from mental and spiritual. Therein lies the problem.

For me, this lack of spiritual beauty eliminates purpose, and with it, my motivation to do the exercises.

Why bother if there is no beauty at the end, beginning, or anywhere?

Macho Squat or Beauty Squat

I lead the men's version of Reka from the Black Sea area of Dobrudza in Bulgaria in Darien last night. A few of the steps are squats and kicks. Later, I thought about the difference between a macho squat and a beauty squat:

Macho squat relates to power. When squatting in this manner, with these thoughts in mind, I am competing with all the men in the room (and showing off, demonstrating my masculine prowess for all the women in the room.) This is a vision of "Kill'em!" and separation.

Beauty squat relates to spiritual unity. When squatting in this manner, with these thoughts in mind, I unite myself with everyone (all men and women) in the room. Involved in this power is a vision of flow, melody, and unity.

Which is stronger, more satisfying, more beautiful: A vision of competition and separation, or a vision of togetherness and unity?

Since politics is about power, I could call the macho squat a "political" squat. When doing it, I compete with my fellow man.

The spiritual squat is also about power, a different kind of power, a unifying power. When doing it, I unite with my fellow man.

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Suppose I Was Wrong

This is an easy one:

Suppose I was wrong about folk dancing. Suppose my conclusion from a year (nay a "lifetime") of wrestling with folk dance teaching questions was incorrect. Suppose teaching folk dancing, giving workshops and concerts, presenting my folk choreographies in dance workshops to local and "foreign" groups (like Raleigh) is good for me!

Good for me! And all this beyond money!

Suppose my conclusions about the whole picture weres wrong. Suppose my

knee and even shoulder pains are reactions to wrong thinking? Suppose they are really based on resistance to doing what I was put on earth to do, resisting God's will and plan for me?

Wow! What a reversal?

Suppose I've been using the "can't make money in folk dancing" excuse to prevent me from diving into the work I Love. Suppose I've been using excuses, holding myself back for years from diving into my Loves?

Let's take my guitar career: In spite of the fact that this was a field I made money in, I still had excuses. The main one was I didn't play "well enough." So I practiced for years to get better. Result: I still didn't play "well enough." Nevertheless, I love playing guitar and singing, perhaps even giving concerts! (Now there's a switch!)

Same in folk dancing. Only I never had a folk dance teaching lack-of-confidence problem. I always felt I was good enough. After all, folk dancing and folk music, too is "only folk music." The high standards of classic training are absent. Thus, these fields freed my mind from the shackles of inner "standards" and criticism. It meant anything goes. I could be creative, and it didn't matter. No one would criticize me.

So folk dancing has always been no problem. I'm good with others. Relaxed, calm, humorous. It's always fun for me to deal with people.

But what about my excuses, the ones that prevent me from diving in? My folk dance teaching excuse has always been: How can I take it seriously, give it my all, if there is no money in it? How can I call it a serious profession when it is impossible to make a living in it? I've been living with this attitude and philosophy ever since I started teaching.

But, truth is, I do make a strange living out of it. It is based on the peripherals deriving from this art form, namely, weekends, bookings, and tours. All three have grown out of folk dance teaching skills and leadership.

I have been in a new place, a new mental location, for almost two years. It began with tour success syndrome. Presently, I can say, I have a profession: running folk

tours. And it can actually earn money! I can make a living through it. Over the last two years, success in this field has partly thrown me into a depression. Why? I know, deep in my heart, that money isn't everything. Even with this new financial success I realize that something important and vital is missing from my life. What? Love, of course.

What is it I love? Among other things, it is folk dancing! I love the music, the athletic movements, the people, the giant swirling energy scene that occurs when many dancers move together in a circle. To me they portray the celestial union, they express a group connection to higher forces, oneness with God. Truly, it is a most beautiful thing, an ecstatic experience. And I have the opportunity to experience it every time I lead and teach folk dancing! What a wonderful position to be in!

Only I have denied it, run from it. For years I avoided it, ever trying to escape from the vital importance of this magnificent melt-down ecstasy.

Maybe it is just too powerful and overwhelming an experience. As they say in kabbalah, you have to be old enough, mature enough, to handle these higher sparks of musical and terpsichorean divinity. Without this maturity, without the wisdom of self-control, the overwhelming breakdown power of this joy can destroy you.

Kingdom of PEP, State of Euphoria

Am I on the border of a great truth? I hope so. But I'm also afraid so.

The truth is that PEP (physical exhilaration point), taking things to their PEP really works!

PEP is the euphoria point; euphoria chases away all pain. The state of euphoria is a painless state.

The great truth I am talking about is that the pains I create, are created in order to prevent me from entering this state, distract me from euphoria, keep me exiled from the Kingdom of PEP.

Why would my mind do this to me? Why does it prefer pain to euphoria? Does it concern childhood memories, and old habits? Could be.

But whatever the reason is, and I can and do and did go on for years trying to find out what it is, at this point in my life, the reason no longer matters. What matters is: I want to be – and remain – in that state!

Kingdom of PEP, State of Euphoria: That's the place for me!

How do I get there? How do I stay there? These are the only questions that count.

How do I get there? The Way of Repetitions. Over and over is one road.

How to stay there? Remember the truth of repetitions.

Vulnerable

The kitchen sink pipe broke last night. Water flowed all over. We're calling the plumber this morning.

It makes me feel vulnerable. How quickly and suddenly everything you work for, in fact, your entire life, can, for no apparent reason, fall apart.

It's a sickening terror at the vulnerability of life.

Guitar: Vulnerability expressed through "weak and vulnerable" right ring finger as I play arpeggio warm up.

Vulnerable at the flesh-to-fingernail touching point. It might touch the cracked finger nail and send a cold chill down my spine.

What's the crying over "Alhambra" for? Could be a combination of fear, the terror of vulnerability) coupled with success of playing a fast, dynamic "Alhambra" (crying for joy!). Repetition is working! Crying for the break-down ecstasy of such an Alhambra-success wonder! (Even VL No. 4 crept in.)

Terror, vulnerability, and success mix, creating a savage route.

Saturday, November 29, 2008

On Physical Therapy

What have I gotten out of physical therapy? The exercises themselves seem kind of useless, or rather, they are mostly variations of the yogic types I do anyway.

My benefits have come more in philosophy and approach. And basically, they confirmed and also reminded me of what I know already. Almost accidentally, Michele, the student trainer, mentioned repetition. "Over and over again, five times in a row, stretch the same leg." Even though the next day another trainer said the opposite, namely that alternating legs is good, nevertheless, the idea of repetition stuck in my brain. I'm applying it now (guitar practice and other) with the plan and idea of reaching ecstasy.

So, physical therapy, like many other things, has had peripheral, unexpected, serendipitous benefits.

As I get older, my body becomes more sensitive to subtle changes, aware of deeper nuances, thus creating a broader, deeper vision of the self. This new-forming self does not come without growing pains, rock-obstacle blockages, interpreted as pains, in my various body parts.

Monday, December 1, 2008

No question pains give me something to write about. Better to write than not write.

Thus: My right knee feels better today. Noah said pain in my knee caps was caused by tightness, mostly in my quadriceps. Thus stretching quads would help. His "permission" to practice sitting on my heels really freed me to practice them again. Results so far: knee better.

Have knee pains, in Sarnoian fashion, now been mostly transferred to my shoulder? Displaced by my brain. Is shoulder my next area to conquer? Could be.

I've been through this before. Jump the gun, over-intellectualize, use intellect to keep myself from diving into the morning freshness.

Every moment a fresh moment. That's the key.

Yesterday's conquests, although meaningful as memories and building blocks, are ultimately, useless. You need the ability to plunge into the fresh vitality of the moment. Veil-removing ability helps eradicate past memories and habits. That's the skill needed to open the mind, and enable you to dive straight into freshness of the moment.

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

Trauma Roots:

Left Knee: Folk Dancing

Right Shoulder: Violin Playing

I worked my knee yesterday, sitting on my heels and even doing a squat. It felt better. Also, it felt better at Monday night dancing. (IA great dance night, too.) Even though I ache this a.m. my knee, nevertheless, feels better.

Dare I say my knee is "on its way?"

If yes. Perhaps I am ready to move on to my right shoulder.

Just as I relate my left knee – I know it relates – to my attitude, philosophy, and approach to my folk dance career and folk dancing, in general, so I relate my right shoulder to my violin playing. I don't know this, as I did in folk dancing, but I sense it. Thus I know it, but in a soft way. What else could it be? Should I not believe in and follow my intuition?

So for now, let me assume it relates to my violin playing. Perhaps to traumas, violin traumas from my teenage years, and even earlier?

With my left knee, it suddenly snapped to attention when I realized my love for folk dancing, folk dance teaching, and also accepted my calling to do these things. This happened a few days ago. At that point, I just knew my knee would get better. It was

only a question of adjusting to this new truth. My physical therapy sessions helped solidify the truth of my folk dance/yoga/caliyoga exercises, and how important was their stretching truth. And strangely, perhaps in timely fashion, my two weeks of knee physical therapy end today. Perhaps this also shows I'm ready to move to on to the next level, the next stage.

Now, on to my shoulder!

Fatigue and aching of muscles after intense physical use (like last night's folk dancing) is different from constant, persistent pains caused by psychological traumas.

It is normal to feel aches and pains after exercise. But it is not normal to continue feeling them for weeks, months, even years!

Re violin-playing traumas. I suspect, think, even believe, they must have come from my childhood and teenage-playing years. In fact, I relate them mostly to my violin lessons with Graffman! Look how I loved Celentano at Eastman when, for the first time in my violin-playing life, a violin teacher treated me like a human being! Also, look how long it has taken for me to recover from my guitar lessons with Alexander Bellow and their affect (influence) on my arpeggios, Alhambra, etc.

My folk dance knee and my violin right shoulder, along with my guitar playing, are evolving. They represent transitions in the flesh. Thus cures for these body parts come slowly. The traumas that created them are slowly revealed, understood, unraveled, and then discarded. This process may take weeks, months, years, even many years. But it is, in essence, a psychological process whose repercussions are both reflected and felt in the physical body.

My goal is to dive into post-seventy life with verve and vigor, to live the dynamic mad shoe life of fast, inspired, and wow! I want age seventy to be a blessing, not a curse. Removing life-time traumas is obviously the first step.

Right Shoulder and Violin

As I played violin in a relaxed, slow, soft, and focused manner, my right shoulder suddenly relaxed. When I finished playing, I felt no pain. I immediately realized the deep psychological connection between my right shoulder pain and violin playing. I knew that somehow, my attitude towards playing was the cause and creation my right shoulder problem. (Yes, I had been on the right track!)

I went to sleep quite satisfied and happy.

Faith

Guitar: I can't believe how fast I played Villa-Lobos Prelude No. 4, Alhambra, and Leyenda, but I did. When I got up, rose from my seat, it felt like my body fell apart in the process. Perhaps it has.

There cannot be rebirth until the old body falls apart and dies. This is the "annual" transformation process I am going through.

Thus, have faith. Things are much better now than they were two months ago. Eventually, it will end in completion.

Out of the cocoon. Chrysalis breaking.

That means the physical pains I am feeling, the knees, shoulders, and other, are pains of transformation, growing pains, pains of development. The devil of forgetfulness creates discouragement and/or depression. To keep the devil away it is important to remember this truth of transformation.

Thursday, December 4, 2008

Marketing, Communication, and Healing

The question and problem in marketing is that, although I need and want people, I don't want to put my hopes in people. Up 'til now, my concept of marketing has depended (totally) on others; I achieve success only through and depending on the actions and reactions of others. This is never a good position to be in.

And yet, it is (unless I find a new way, a new approach and attitude) my present attitude towards marketing.

Is there another way? Can I depend “only” (one-ly) on myself and my big partner, the Lord Himself? That’s a combo I can believe in.

Just as playing the violin is a direct communication between myself and the higher forces, can I possibly make marketing the same kind of beautiful, healing, and wholesome communication?

Or for me, on the deepest level, can this communication only take place in and through the arts? Well then, can marketing ever become an art?

I’d like it to be. But just because I want it, does that make it possible and true? Maybe.

If it is to become a truth, it must grow from a strong dream, and a strong desire. Is my desire strong? Maybe.

Such strong connection and communication does take place on my tours, or when I run my folk dance classes. But tours and folk dance teaching are not marketing. Or are they? Well, I could see them as forms of marketing, art created on the spot, spontaneously by seizing the moment.

Marketing starts in my imagination. Art starts there, too. Is there a connection between art and marketing? There would be, if I wanted it badly enough and created it.

I have always resisted such a connection. Could this resistance ever end?

Or could such resistance subtly be a good thing, a way of protecting my core?

But my core is strong enough now to stand by itself. It no longer needs the protection it once did. Thus, it’s ready to expand, to accept marketing as part of its being.

Art and marketing: Am I old enough to bring the two together?

What a dream pulling off such a stunt, achieving such a union!

Union between art and marketing! Saying it in this manner, obviously means I want it.

How to achieve it?

The answer is personal: Imagine it, think it, believe it.

This divisive and divided kind of thinking is obviously a childhood habit and one I am getting ready to drop. It comes directly from my mother. It is amazing that it has stayed with me so long. But that's what post-seventy life may be, nay is, all about: Dropping these old ideas and old selves, clearing the way for the new selves to be revealed. Or better, clearing the way for the real selves, the true selves, to be revealed!

I'm on the road to freedom. It's being expressed in guitar, violin, too, through fast, divinely insane, wild, mad shoe playing. It's also being expressed through the aches and pains my body is experiencing as it throws off the old self.

It's time now to drop the old division between art and commerce, the separation between creation and marketing. Both grow from the same source.

Friday, December 5, 2008

Learning a New Language

Since this my physical therapy and physical education year, should I learn the language of medicine? Should I study the names and locations of muscles in my body?

I'd be adding this to ancient Greek geography, video, violin, Greek, and Hebrew. Well. . . why not?

I could start with rotator cuff.

Learning the names of muscles in my body is an intellectual exercise, a linguistic study. Unlike the physical exercise, this effort will not make my muscles hurt less, heal my body, or make them better. . . . Or will it?

My conclusion this morning is that both the physical therapy people and Sarno are right. (Left, too.) Both have contributions to make.

Saturday, December 6, 2008

Crushing Enthusiasm

The crushing of enthusiasm and inspiration is a terrible thing. It makes me want to throw up, to vomit.

I wonder if my belching, coughing, etc. are due to my own crushing of enthusiasm and inspiration, my inner self-denial and pushing down these wonderful positive visions. "Pushing down" (my throat) is a good phrase because the whole thing makes me want to throw up.

In fact, I would even say that crushing enthusiasm is major but undeclared sin. "En-theos," the root of enthusiasm, means in God. Therefore, crushing enthusiasm means crushing and denying God. This is the worst sin, and one which one must eventually atone ("at-one," root of atone) for.

In fact, in my personal mind sphere, I'd say that denying my own enthusiasm is my major sin. It follows me and still makes daily visits in its daily attempt to destroy my house of happiness. Paying attention to this negative force, listening to its negative voice in others, as well as and paying attention and listening to it within myself are major terrible habits to watch out for and be aware of.

Enthusiasm can be dangerous. It can push you off a cliff, drop you in the abyss, divert your "realistic" path in fantastic and crazy ways. But it's a danger I'd like to face. Enthusiasm is the nectar of the gods, the juice of life. I want to drink it daily. Crushing it is the greatest sin of all. It is murder of the soul.

Sunday, December 7, 2008

Bar Mitzvah Happiness

The dancing I led at last night's bar mitzvah with Michele's Klezmerconnection was a beautiful thing. The simcha of it! So many sparks in eager, happy eyes.

What an event! How can I remember how wonderful is this work, the wonder, fun, and joy of getting everyone up to dance!

The best life skill to develop: Learn and practice living in the simcha of events.

Paradox

My playing, guitar, violin, is getting fast as hell. My fingers, mind, and self are flying in relaxed and easy fashion! And all this as my body aches and falls apart. What a paradox. Am I in the process of forming a faster, easier, more relaxed body? Maybe.

Fuck the critics. I just don't care anymore. Is this an age-related growth thing? Maybe.

Play all my pieces ("all" here means the appropriate ones) upbeat, dynamic, and fast as hell!

I wonder what this means for my "artistic parts," namely, my (left) knee and (right) shoulder. I call them "artistic parts" because the knee relates to dancing, and the shoulder to violin playing.

Does this mean that my dancing and violin playing will (soon and eventually) become, be, upbeat, dynamic, and fast as hell?

Is this part of a rising annoyance, a dizzy/vague form of anger with the world and the critical demands it has put on me all my life? Is it all coming to a head in this strange, new, one year transformation?

Sunday, December 14, 2008

Movies and Misery

I feel vaguely down, bumbly, nauseous, disgusted, and hopeless this morning. Could be from last night's realistic, excellent, and depressing movie The Counterfeiters. German concentration camps are never upbeat or inspiring.

In fact, I have a little headache; I'm basically mad about something. Could it be the movie? By reminding me of evil and death, it ruined my fun.

I was off to such a good start yesterday. Why should I and how can I let a mere movie ruin my fun?

Is it the “wasted time” factor? I spent two hours of my good and positive time watching this movie about misery and evil. Although an excellent movie, it held me in its grip for two straight hours without a blink, there was, basically, nothing in it that was inspiring or redeeming. Technique and story excellent, but nothing worthwhile or redeeming in it. Thus, a waste of time. And I hate waste! Especially waste of my valuable time. Instead of falling prey to watching this depressing movie, I could have been exercising, practicing the violin, or both!

Is that my take away lesson? Maybe.

In fact, I gave up exercising and practicing the violin in order to see the movie. In retrospect, was this a good idea? Generally, I feel the movie experience robs me of my imagination. I usually walk away from one feeling vaguely depressed and empty. Thus in pursuing what is best for me, I must ask: Is watching any movie a good idea?

I could say, by choosing to watch this movie, I consciously chose to have the misery of its subject rubbed in my face. And rubbed it was, with technical and narrative excellence.

Is this a choice I want to make in the future? I know misery exists. I don't need to be reminded.

Going to and watching movies is totally passive. The only thing you need to do for them is show up. Beyond that, no effort or imagination is required. (In fact, for me, they kill effort and imagination.)

We could eliminate movies and choose to go to concerts instead. Perhaps in the future, we should. But in order for this to happen, I will need to take an active role.

Identity

Prelude to the Mad Shoe Self

As I do my exercises, I am searching for my old pains. Where the fuck did they go?

Identity question: Feeling the old pains reminds of me of my old self. I don't like

the pains, but at least I recognize myself.

But now I may have to drop my old, pain-wracked self.

Who and what will I be then?

Is this the necessary prelude to the mad-shoe self?

Must that self exist in a wrinkled body?

Like a gnarled tree, maybe?

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Hysteria

A vague sense of hysteria has haunted me for months. It has been expressed in these various and unending ailments (sciatica, left knee, right shoulder) and “explained” as belonging to some kind of long-term transition and metamorphosis. But, the truth is that, deep down, I really don’t know what they are or why I have them. I sense, feel, think, that whatever they are, they’re now reaching a point of no return. Time to end this silliness; the “dis-ease” has run its course. I’m more than ready to move on and move out.

Here’s something I wrote last night before the Folk Dance Party:

Learning, Focus, and Free to Move On

Is this what I learned, and shall focus on?

After this year of physical and philosophical misery, I have discovered that: Slow and fast are the same, and from this comes the fact that my future direction is: Be here.

Was it worth the struggle and pain? Not that I had a choice. Nevertheless, the result is: Where I live now is not a bad place to be.

Next question: Shall I hang on to my gains? Or is it healthier, better, and more realistic, to let them slip away? Then, in open, naive, fresh radiance, I am free to face a new day with its new leaf.

Also there is the thought that, in reality, these gains have not been lost. Rather

they have been incorporated into my unconscious, become part of my cellular structure and my being.

Thus I can forget about them.

I am free to move on.

Sales Paradox

Christina loved my New Leaf Compilation. She said reading it helped her get through the college year.

“Wow!” I felt flattered and happy.

What an influence this book has and can have on others. How helpful and encouraging it can be. How important that others read it!

Then I felt an obligation, and a responsibility. With this came an often-felt sense that I hadn't fulfilled my responsibilities. I hadn't done enough to promote, not only this book, but all my books!

I see this as a personal fault and failing. (I also hope that such a guilt trip and insult to my person will motivate and push me to do something about it, namely, start promoting my books!)

On the other hand, the “fact” that I must promote my books creates an equal and opposite reaction. Since I “must” do it, am “forced” to do it, I respond by saying “Never!” Never shall I do what I must. I resist and rebel. I am a free person. I refuse to be pushed around. Even by myself!

Different, Different!

I just cracked the Sor Sonata in C code.

How?

By making sure I use my brain during every moment of guitar practice. (Susan's idea.)

Different, different! Play it one hundred different ways, one hundred different

paths, one hundred different directions, one hundred different flowers.

Never the same route. Always engage my brain.

The Physical Enjoyment Factor

Sense of Touch

Breaking the Barrier

Guitar: Plucking with slow, sensual, physical feeling: The Physical-Enjoyment Factor. Elevating the sense of touch. Is it enough? Is it all? On a purely physical-enjoyment level, is it the ultimate “reason” for playing?

I am on the verge of discovering and developing a new way of touching the guitar strings, a new approach to feeling them, thus a new approach to enjoying them.

I have broken the barrier.

Admit it: This is a new approach and direction.

There is such sensual, orgiastic enjoyment in touching, feeling, and plucking the string this way. Perhaps I have been hesitant, afraid to face the sensual power and erotic joy in it. Too strong for me. . . . Until now.

(Are fingers an extension of the penis? Well, why not?)

This is something totally new in guitar plucking. It turns plucking into fucking, and vice versa.

Quantitative pile-ons have finally turned into a qualitative change. I have crossed the line. Quantity turns into quality, a qualitative change. Years of heating water have finally caused it to boil and change it into steam.

Good Causes as Motivation

Due to success and the success syndrome, money, love, and fame have lost their motivational allure for me. Yet I need motivation; I need a new reason to be motivated.

Promoting good causes might be a good “next” motivation.

Put ads (from companies I like) on my website; they represent a good cause!

Promote them because they are good causes.

What is a good cause?

Music, folk dancing, travel, writing and others are good causes. They foster joy, love, and creation, all biggies in my belief system and my life. By promoting their causes, I’d also be promoting my causes, and thus, myself. Big Self and small self, self and Self, are the bottom line in sales and everything else.

I’m not a cause person. But, to my amazement, I actually do believe in some causes. And I’ll promote them.

Saturday, December 20, 2008

Looking Back. . . and Forward

I see the last two years in Music and Art High School as wonderful, fulfilling, scintillating, even my best years. During that period, I never knew or even heard of depression or gave a thought to money, worry about making a living, etc. (True, I got terrible headaches, but that is another matter.) Golden years, or at least, that’s how I imagine them.

Why is this? What was I doing?

Violin and basketball. That was life as I remember it, at least for those two years. (I could expand this generally to two abstractions: music and sports.)

Seems that now, after many years in the workaday-world wilderness (fifty years, ten more than Moses and the Children of Israel) I am returning to those years.

How so?

In music, I am back to the violin, and still working on the guitar. (Perhaps even songs will return as I move into performance mode.)

In sports, although basketball is gone, its physical being has been replaced by

running, yoga, and calliyoga.

(I cannot yet include dancing since it is now part of business and has thus been tainted by money and never-ending, depressing/elating concern about how to make a living.)

Where do writing, study, and travel fit into all this? Perhaps they don't. Or at least, not yet.

Practicing Performance

During my violin lesson with Allan Schiller he mentioned performance. He said, just like practicing violin, guitar, or whatever technique, you must also practice performing the pieces. By saying that I'll learn the technique so that some day I'll be able to perform it, or I can always perform it so I'll plan to do that later – well, "later" never comes, and performing the pieces never comes either. Clonk! For some reason (perhaps the timing was right), this hit me directly and simultaneously on my head and in my heart.

No question, postponing performance has been my life style. I'm always practicing and practicing with the hidden idea that sometime in the future I'll finally be able to perform this piece right. And, of course, the future never comes. So I never complete my performance.

This attitude has run its course. I suppose I am simply ready. And it only took forty years. Or is it fifty? Whatever. Time is of no importance where art is concerned.

I left Allan's lesson stunned and ready. Ready to start practicing performance. I'll set up an imaginary audience in my living room, perhaps even place dolls on seats in front of me, a la the great pianist Joseph Hoffman, and perform for them.

This is definitely not an out-directed reason to perform. It is not even to please the audience. It is even beyond feeling comfortable performing, although it includes that. Rather, it is about the voyage of performance, the adventure of presenting a piece, what energies public performance will reveal to me, what performing itself will teach

me; Learning how to perform. In the process, I expect to move beyond the trauma of performance. I expect to get a new view of the pieces I play, and of myself.

Perhaps accepting my (guitar) imperfections yesterday, and changing of my name to Jim I Gold, (Jim "Imperfect" Gold) was the necessary first step.

Should I actually buy dolls, set up chairs in my living room, put the dolls on the chairs, and perform for this audience? (If it was good enough for Hoffman, it may well be good enough for me.) The physical act of buying them, then placing them before me, may symbolize my commitment to practicing performance. It may also solidify my imagination, concretize the performance practices, make them more "real."

(I'm getting a pang of nervousness just thinking about this. It means I'm on the right track.)

On a mysterious and higher level, I wonder how this will affect my right shoulder, the performing shoulder. (Guitar, violin, etc.)

Was my right shoulder problem created as a distraction, to first help me avoid, then eventually deal with, my performance trauma?

My right shoulder feels much better this morning. Is it coincidental? Or has it been strangely affected by opening this new performing door, to starting me on this new path?

By practicing performance, I am bringing the audience in. Rather than constantly trying to avoid them, I am making them a permanent part permanent part of my life.

Another step on the struggling path towards All is One.

Concert Practice

Prepare a little concert and give it to myself:

Programs

Classical Guitar

One

Villa-Lobos Prelude No. 4

Alhambra

Bulerias

Leyenda

Two

Bach: Prelude in Dm

Bach: Suite in Em (Prelude, Bourree, Gigue)

Bach: Gavotte en Rondea

Zapateado

Alegrias

Alard

Three

Lute Pieces of the Renaissance

Capricho Arabe

Zambra

Recuerdos a Seville

Violin

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto

Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso: Camille Saint-Saens

Symphonie Espagnole: Edouard Lalo

Gaida

Folk Songs

Mule Skinner Blues

Love, Love, Love

etc.

Sunday, December 21, 2008

What Would St. Paul Say?

This morning, I heard the WNYC radio piece about the life of Thomas Merton. Nostalgia hit me hard in the gut. I remembered Merton's books and his influence as I searched for myself many years ago as a young lost soul in Greenwich Village. Suddenly, sad, pushed, and filled with nostalgia, I felt the panic of time rushing by. Soon I will die, and my work (namely, my writing) will die with me, unrecognized by others. Time is fleeting; it is precious; I have little left; I don't want to waste this precious commodity. It's a question of time management. I want to use it to the fullest.

How can I increase my focus on important work? Are there activities I can prune or even eliminate completely?

Who am I? Where am I? What shall I do? Eternal questions, I ask again. (Why now? Nostalgia has temporarily diverted, poisoned, confused my mind.)

Does this mean again doing gospel work, getting the word out, my books out there? Finding readers? When I see myself as unrecognized, it is my books I see as unrecognized. Not enough people read them, and this because I don't spend time promoting them.

I do not feel unrecognized in other work I do. In fact, except for business, and in a business sense, recognition in the other work I do is hardly even important to me. Sure I want people to attend my folk dance classes, come on tour, book me in concerts or for special celebratory events. But this is a business thing. I need the money. Plus, it's pleasant to be recognized in these areas. But it is not as vitally essential as recognition of my writings. These are my claim to immortality, what I see living after me. I could be wrong in the view. But I could also be right!

By delving and diving into miracle schedule and business fields, am I avoiding a

higher, eternal calling?

What would St. Paul say?

Success in writing, and any other field, means creating and delivering. I've spent years creating, and almost no time delivering. Should I spend the next two years balancing my approach?

On the other hand, the race against the clock is a useless approach. In the fight against time, you can never win.

Basically, do as much as you can, and the best you can. Beyond that, all results are in the hands of God.

Back to basic values: Fun, fruitful, and fulfilling. If I spend time and effort (even the next two years) promoting my books, following the Triple F's is the only real reason to do it.

Progress

My right shoulder hurt last night and this morning. It's origin is over-use through violin bowing. Friday, I had a violin lesson, Saturday I practiced with Danny, and later, too. I've been over-using the same bowing arm. So this morning my shoulder hurts.

But there is progress. My expectations have changed. Now I expect my right shoulder (and my left knee) not to hurt! And happily, to my surprise, I'm vaguely surprised when they do hurt.

That's progress.

Love and Warm-Ups

Guitar and body: What to feel when I start my warm-up exercises, whether they be guitar legatos, or dance and body warm-ups:

How about Love. Love for my body parts, love for my fingers that play the legato, love for my arms that rotate during my morning physical body warm-ups, love

for my shoulders, legs, etc.

Love is an emotion I can start with right away.

Just as I begin my guitar playing with guitar warm-ups, legato, scales, and arpeggios, so I can begin warm-ups with love of body parts.

Love the feeling in my hands, love the warming blood moving in and through my fingers, love my ears, their hearing, and the sounds I produce.

A Here-And-Now Kind of Guy

Guitar: I'm moving from one extreme to another. From practicing only to perform in the future, I am moving to practicing performance only to perform now, in the present.

In truth, after years of practice, all my technique is together, or as together as it will ever be. Oh sure, there's always room for infinitesimal improvements, and they may come. But there's no longer any need or use in waiting for them to come, in postponing my performances in the hope that some day I'll play better. Those days of hope and waiting are over.

I've switched sides. I've moved to living in the present. As for performing, I'm a here-and-now kind of guy.

A Good Audience

Since my new audience accepts, loves, is interested in me, fascinated with how I think, it also means I can go public while I still remain a hermit. My new audience will also appreciate and be fascinated by my hermit status. In fact, they will be fascinated and interested in everything I do.

Now this is a good audience!

Friday, December 26, 2008

TMS Year

As I remember, it started in January. Now it's December. One year. I'd say this has been the worst physical year. Of my life? Maybe. As I recall, I have never had so many ailments, and all different, too. Sure, I remember pains in my leg, shoulder, hand, knee, that lasted six months to a year. But they were the same pains. But this year, left shoulder pain (it hurt to do the shoulder hold in Cuileandra), to right leg sciatica, to left leg knee pain to right shoulder pain – why, yesterday I went for a run, and almost immediately after I developed a new pain in my back, in the right buttocks, precisely. Well, this year, I've been all over the place.

In November I even gave up on the psychological Sarno medicine I've been using for year, and went to physical therapy. I've tried that for a month. Plus some ibuprofen, also recommended by my new physical therapy doctors.

Today is my last physical therapy session.

What is the result of this year of strange physical miseries?

Well, I'm beginning to think that maybe, after all, for me, Sarno is right. That's my conclusion today:

It's been a grand, glorious, and giant TMS year!

From physical therapy I learned one thing: That the physical exercises, stretching, running, and muscle building, are important! It is totally unhealthy for me not to do them, to give them up. My year's experiment, namely, trying to do less to none of them, just to test how long I could go without them – a macho experiment – totally failed. I learned that giving them up is totally the wrong direction for me. If anything, instead of giving them up or doing less of them. I should increase my exercises and the time I devote to them!

I also may have learned (mostly from Susan, a bit from Noah) how and where to use my shoulder, and this especially playing the violin (but also in general, and doing push-ups.)

But generally, I was on the right mental and physical track before this TMS year started. This year threw me off balance; my brain got scattered in all directions; I got

lost.

I've gone through all the "whys?". I don't care about them anymore. At this point, I want and am ready to move on.

What's my first step? Think of 2008 as a TMS year.

Also important: Rethink each ailment in its TMS form.

So ends a New Leaf.