

Freedom from Egyptian Bondage

Tuesday, March 26, 2002

My Passover Fight

I don't want to admit that I feel totally battered by my back. It has made me mad as hell. Witness my blurred "blind with rage" vision in Budget Print. Holy fury!

But do I have a "right" to be mad at an inanimate object? Isn't that rather silly? Can I be mad at a body part, at my back? Am I not more "sophisticated" than that?

But it is my back that is hurting me. If someone else hurt me, would I not "allow myself" to get mad at them? Of course.

Obviously, I can be mad at whatever I want. I just have to be aware of my anger. Well, I am aware. The best thing now is for me to fight my fucking back with all the furious, bilious, throw-up rage I can muster.

My back enslaves me. I won't be a slave! Fight back! Passover is here. Free myself from bondage. The struggle for freedom from Egyptian slavery is being waged in my lower back.

What were my original psychological reasons for "wanting" to create my back pain?

I was having too much fun in my new folk dance and hard working life! All the jobs I was getting meant that someone out there loved me! A registration check is a symbol of love in the mail, a booking phone call is love in a phone call. I was flying, rolling on a high energy, roaring on a wild run. Could I stand so much love? Partly not. Therefore, I had to push myself back. "Back," indeed. I did it by hurting myself. It is an ancient habit. Old neighborhood poisons are still in my body. Primitive thought patterns. Like a last gasp of winter, they returned; an old neighborhood April snow storm before a new neighborhood spring.

Thursday, March 28, 2002

Keep Looking

I have been absolutely sand-blasted out of the room. Everything has fallen apart. My back pain is driving me up the wall. It just won't get better. The most recent advice is: "Let it run its course." Sounds good. But so did all the other pieces of advice. Hot baths, rest, resume normal activity, it's mental, it's physical, don't be angry, be angry, on and on. It doesn't seem to matter what the advice is. The only thing consistent in all of it is that none of it works.

How frustrating. Is it all a long lesson in patience? Must I learn to wait, seemingly forever, before this fucking pain disappears and I can function normally again? I am acting and feeling like a total cripple. On top of that I am so fucking mad at the whole thing. Fuck, fuck, fuck! That's all I can scream. But it does no good. Every avenue of cures seems hopeless. I am cry out in frustration and rage. But that doesn't work either.

Nothing works. I thought I understood it all. But, au contraire, it seems I understand nothing. I can analyze, and appear to know why I hurt my back. But this so-called "understanding" does no good either.

"Patience" is the new morning motto, along with "letting it run its course." Who knows what new ideas tomorrow will bring? One thing seems certain: no matter what new ideas I bring to the table either today or tomorrow, none of them will work.

Although I say this with pain and frustration, strangely, I do not feel despair. More awe and amazement. How could I have been so wrong? How could I have misjudged my situation so badly? How could I have the hubris to think I could heal myself so easily? God works in mysterious ways. Working on, in, and through me, He brought me back pain. The He in me decided somehow it was time to destroy my satisfaction and happiness, to burst the bubble of belief that I was finally moving forward with daily running and calliyoga. I was rolling, feeling good, getting back to getting better. I loved being on an upward roll. Well, the love of it explains my

destruction. I couldn't stand the love, joy, and fun. I created back pain to destroy it. I now "know" all that. So? Shouldn't my knowing it make the pain go away?

According to mystical philosophy, physical pain is a reflection of mental pain which is, in turn, a reflection of a spiritual problem. Once the problem is solved, the pain goes away. Could it be I have not yet solved my spiritual problem? Do I have one? If I do, what is it?

At least I'm making verbal progress. The pain in my back is causing lots of words to pour across my computer. Agony and suffering is certainly causing me to be creative.

Well, what kind of progress am I making? First, I have reiterated my belief that physical pain reflects mental pain which reflects spiritual pain. Thus, instead of focusing on my back pain, and the physical misery it creates, I could move a step higher to look at my mental pain. Passing that, I could move even go higher and look at the root, or summit, of my problem, my spiritual pain.

Let me step back a second. Mentally (I include emotions in my mental state), I am afflicted by feelings of frustration, anger, and rage at my back. Beyond that, I am also afflicted with the fun trauma and the concomitant fear of joy. Is there terror too? How about panic? Good question.

We have anger, frustration, and rage on one side, fear, panic, and terror on the other. Any sadness? Probably. But I don't feel it at the moment. Perhaps tears would lubricate my back and help release some of the pain down Teardrop river. I wish I could find some sadness. In a sense, it would be easier.

So we're covered mucho mental emotions: rage, fear, anger, panic, terror, frustration, even maybe a grain of sadness. Covering them does not make the pain go away.

It's a spiritual problem.

What is my spiritual problem? What do I see? Nothing.

Keep looking.

“Back” To Second Place

Through Back Pain and the Middle East Situation

I wonder if my frustration with the Israeli-Palestinian situation – something I can do nothing about, and the frustration with my back – also something I can do nothing about, is a fancy, subtle “new” way of putting myself in second place.

Can’t do anything about them; I have to wait on the side and watch; it’s all up to them to change things, etc. Both make me feel helpless. To dwell on such helpless, frustrating, and enraging thoughts creates a second-place mind.

Why do I dwell on them in the first place? What is the peculiar fascination with being helpless, the secret desire to be pushed back, kicked down the stairs, and to dwell in the cellar at the bottom?

It must be a reminder of infancy, childhood, home, the past. Part of me is habitually, constantly, and secretly searching for ways to return to the old neighborhood. Once I realize I am trying to do it, once my secret search becomes conscious, then the light of awareness causes me to see through the delusion and give it up. Yet the yearning, although lessened, persists.

I’ve found two new ways. On the surface, they both seem quite horrible, mean, evil, and painful. They are:

1. The Israeli-Palestinian situation. Politics is itself always a great grab-bag of helplessness and frustration; it is, if taken seriously, a good exercise in putting oneself in second place.

2. Lower back pain. In a sense, this is even harder than the Israeli-Palestinian situation. The pain is located in something quite close to me, namely, my body. How can I escape my body? Hard, indeed. But, truth is, I often manage to escape through thoughts. Work forces me to rise above my pains and forget about them. Temporarily at least. But isn’t most of life temporary? If I can forget pain temporarily, and forget my back or the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts temporarily, isn’t this all a matter of attitude?

Indeed, it is.

Friday, March 29, 2002

The Rage Cure

A Two-Hour Run

I wonder if this bad back has released a primal push-down Mama fear, namely, the voice: "You are hurt, therefore, do nothing, rest, stop all activity, until you are better." In other words, hurt, sickness, or disease creates total helplessness. All my toys are taken away; all the loves of my miracle schedule are removed until I "get better." I can no longer function. I am helpless. And the slightest suggestion of disease, sickness, hurt, or even pain creates this old helpless situation in my mind.

No wonder I am simultaneously enraged and fearful. This double whammy cripples me, keep me frozen and paralyzed. My bad back either gets worse or remains the same. It never gets better as Sarno says it should. I keep myself in limbo.

Well, if this is all true, if a seething rage is boiling with-in – and it certainly is – then perhaps I ought to try biting the bullet: Use the rage cure: pour my anger and energy into a long two-hour run today! It worked once for a marathon. I had pulled a muscle in my back one week before the 1985 marathon. But I ran it anyway. In pain. By the end of the marathon the pain had completely disappeared. It never came back. I had "run it out."

Work, namely folk dance teaching, and even other work, causes me to forget pain. Energy in the form of anger gets turned away from my lower back and put into the work at hand.

The rage cure: a two-hour running. Maybe I'll try it. See if it works. Deep in my heart I "know" it will work. Still, I have to "do" it.

Saturday, March 30, 2002

This back pain is all about the trauma of joy, the trauma of success, the fear of

hurting myself through them.

Ugh, how I hate it! “Calm down, take it easy!” Ugh. Ugh! This squashing warning instead of “Go with it, Jimmy boy! Go with it! Jump for joy! Roll in the grass with the joy! Give it your all! Great, great, great! Let your love roll!” That’s what I should have heard; that’s what I wanted to hear. That’s what I am now learning to tell myself. But I hurt my back as a hold-over from the past. I am so fucking mad at myself for letting my brain fool me again! Shit, shit, shit! Just like the woman on page 74 of Sarno’s book.

I can’t even believe that my emotions could do this to me, could hurt me so much, but they did.

I can’t even believe in the experience I’ve just had, I can’t even believe in the experience I believe in, the experience of hurting myself to “protect” myself from revisiting the joy trauma, but it’s true.

I can’t even believe I could do this to myself, but I did.

I can’t believe how I have denied the truth of my own, but I have.

What is this experience? What is this truth? That there is absolutely no question I hurt myself, I twisted my back, I created my back pain to counter the joy I felt doing the scorpion in particular, and the joy I felt that I was “gaining on it,” progressing, getting back into shape, running again, on target, the Weininger approach, etc. Plus I loved my work! All these joys gathered together in a little basket. A joy basket. But also a trauma basket. And I let the trauma aspect bang me over the head!

I am so fucking mad at myself. Or rather, I am mad at my brain for fooling me, for distracting me again from my real trauma fear and pain, and placing, or rather, misplacing it, directly into my back.

Singing and Revelation!

Maybe that’s why I “hesitate” to sing: it is just so (too) emotional! Gut-wrenching, heart-breaking. It makes me cry, scream, whoopie, laugh, wrench in pain,

and yelp for joy,.

Singing is the deepest artistic cry from the heart, closest to the human gut.

Perhaps that is why I have been “avoiding” it for years. I always think: Why bother? I know the songs. They’re easy. I don’t have to practice them. Instead I must practice the guitar. Until I get my guitar playing right, I won’t (can’t) allow myself to be free; I won’t let me express my true self.

Now I’m seeing all this as an excuse. Or rather, these rationalizations are a shield protecting me again pain and anguish, of experiencing the joy/suffering trauma that is life. Gut-wrenching anguish, heart-breaking joy, terrifying wonder, and the cauldron-baking awe of revelation!

Monday, April 1, 2002

Key To Editing: Self-Understanding

I have just discovered a reason why I would want to read my own writing: to understand myself.

This is a major discovery. Remembering it will make me actually want to read what I write. And parenthetically, edit it.

Editing is thus secondary, a parenthetical, job. Self-understanding is the prime and central motivator.

This explains why I have not, and have rarely been able to, edit.

I found the key to editing by putting it second. Self-understanding: one; editing: two.

New Leaf is an adventure story. A voyage of self discovery. Columbus crossing the self-understanding ocean. Editing its contents is a technicality, important but secondary.

The Pain Mitzvah Mobile

There is a fascination with pain. My pain, your pain, their pain. Pain may not feel good; it may be morally bad to inflict pain upon others. But there is no escape from the human fascination with pain. . .and the suffering of both others and the self.

What is this fascination made of? Fear? Awe? Wonder? All of the above? Is it “simply” a form of energy packet?

Whatever it is, there seems to be no escape from the fascination.

If this fascination with my own pain and the pain of others is an integral part of me, what do I do with it? What “positive” personal use can I make out of it?

Look right into its guts, its maw. Do I then see and use it as a stimulant, a motivator?

Maybe.

Perhaps I could use it as a stimulator to remove pain through good deeds. My first good deed would be to make my back feel better.

Use my pain as a motivator to make myself feel better. Then use it to make others feel better.

This is the creation of the Pain Mitzvah Mobile.

Even though pain is a motivator, from a feeling perspective feeling good does feel better than feeling bad.

From a feeling perspective, I prefer to feel good than to feel bad.

That is why it is a mitzvah to make others (and oneself) feel good. Making yourself or others miserable, causing them pain, is not a mitzvah.

How about doing myself a mitzvah? How about using my pain to heal my suffering back?

Mitzvahs start with self love. You can't love others unless you love yourself; you can't heal others until you heal yourself.

The energy of pain is amoral. It is neither good or bad. But the acts it stimulates and motivates can be judged good or bad.

The packet of pain energy located in my lower back is amoral. It is neither good or bad. But I can use it to stimulate myself to good, self-healing acts. These will, in turn, radiate out to others. First me, then them. But even this dichotomy is fallacious. On the deepest of levels, me is them, they is me. All is One.

Tuesday, April 2, 2002

Loving Lid

I go back to Ma for the juice.

I miss my mother. She appears in the form of Music. She is the one who keeps me in my room with the promise of redemption once I master my music, open the door, and go outside.

But Ma (the "Ma") is a lid.

This morning she is a loving lid! Totally new idea. She sustains me by keeping me in my room keeping me practicing, keeping my hopes alive. My hope for redemption; my hope for future love; my hope that, through music and my violin, I will, through her, gain entrance to paradise.

As a lid, a keeper of the gate, who keeps me voluntarily in the "prison" of my room, she becomes a symbol of hope, of redemption, of the More.

As such, she becomes a loving lid.

New Lid View

This would mean I need my lid. I want my lid. It is a source of hope, energy, and redemption. That is why I have it, need it, and keep it. It is not a minus, but a plus.

Wow, what a concept!

Without my lid, I lose my energy. Lid is a source of energy containment; it keeps

the energy alive in the box.

Ma represents my lid. Her memory symbolizes hope. Hope for the More. In this way, I would need, want, and love her.

Ma, of course, exists only within. I imagine her. She is me. I am Ma. We are together; we are one.

But this morning she has metamorphosed into a new symbol of loving and More.

I am empty without my lid. Everything leaks out and washes away. I need my loving lid to help fill me up.

How does back pain relate to loving lid?

I don't know. . . yet.

Perhaps back pain is my lid. It certainly has shut me down.

Perhaps the cosmic purpose of my back pain was to put me in touch with my loving lid.

I ought to see my back pain as my loving lid! What a cure that would be! I could well be right and proper.

A lid is also a type of wall. I could see it as my protection. My Protector.

Back pain as my lid, my Protector. Perhaps it saved and protected me from a higher pain.

Perhaps I was not yet ready to see lid as love.

Looking at it this way, I could see my back pain as a twisted and painful form of love.

Holding me back, holding me down would then be a form of love.

I'm looking for love. Is that what bondage and restraint is all about? Imposing limits, too?

Must be.

Bondage, restraint, imposing limits, as forms of love. What about slavery? Did Pharaoh secretly love his Jews? And did the Jews secretly love Pharaoh? A love-hate relationship. Must be.

Isn't back pain a more extreme form of limitation? Then it is love in its pain form.

Wednesday, April 3, 2002

Back Pain Causes A "New, Disguised Form" Visit To The Old Neighborhood

Why the total crack in my spirit? Is it only from the pain push-down? Or is it the pain "reminding" me to rest, take it easy, don't get excited (until you are completely better), and thus compounding the fear and paralyzing me at the same time? The ultimate "Don't work so hard. You'll get sick; you'll get hurt. Rest." This are indeed ancient voices of self-repression.

Have I slipped back into the old neighborhood? Is this simply a new form of slipping into the old neighborhood, a temporary but disguised visit?

I think so.

I'll have to live with this awhile. But actually, deep down, I know so!

The old neighborhood warning here is: Don't get excited until you are better. Sit on all excitement. Rest until you are completely cured (whatever that means).

Under this old neighborhood way of thinking one is never cured. There is always a new pain ahead, a new stone in the road. If you let the stones deter you, you

will never walk down the path.

So, fuck the stones. Let's roll on!

This old neighborhood visit couldn't be that different from former visits. It is just "differently disguised." Tanks have rolled over my enthusiasm. One of the disguise poisons injected is forgetting my true excited self.

Thursday, April 4, 2002

Thinking About It

The publishing, the going-public, of my New Leaf coincides with my going-public, political entrance into the world.

How so?

Look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. About this and similar "outside" events, and travails of this worlds, others often says, "It's terrible. But what can you do about it?" Now I know what can do about it and what I do do about it: I think about it!

If you are a mystic, you realize that thinking about it is doing something about it.

Materialists believe that if you are not actually doing something physically, you are not doing something.

But idealists, or rather, dreamers, spiritualists, and mystics, whatever you want to call them, believe first in the power of mind, and then realize that thinking about it is the most important part of doing something about it. True, often thinking, imagining, is often followed by an actual physical deed. But the first step is always thinking. Often it is the last step, too.

The effectiveness of thinking about it requires a belief in the power of vibrations, the electricity, magnitude, and energy power of thought itself. The mystic believes that the vibrations created by thinking about it will sooner or later created the necessary physical changes "on the ground."

Thus the total importance of thinking about it.

Thus even though I join no political (or religious) organization I am still effecting change in the political world (religious) and outside world. How? By thinking intensely about it. By creating my positive vibrations which transfer out of my mind and into the world itself, effectively altering outside events.

This is another reason why morale is so important. Positive morale creates the effective positive thoughts the change both the inside and outside worlds.

Thus I now actively involved in politics.

Thus I am now actively involved in religion, Judaism, yoga, music, and more.

Just as my thoughts alone have often changed relationships in my tour, weekend, and folk dance groups, so they do and will, in a more indirect way, change the political landscape.

I believe totally in Israel's righteousness, survival, and victory over terrorism. As Sharon says, "Israeli morale is indestructible." I love it. I believe it, too.

I am also amazed at how weak-willed, pessimistic, defeatist, and wimpish are so many in the world. Is it only me and a few Sharon-like others who are so absolute, resolute, definite, and tough? Why do not others see that the only way to fight terrorism and evil is to absolutely not tolerate an inch of it. To squash it immediately and in place. Warn, chastise, and, if that doesn't work, punish and persecute the first person who drops a wrapper on the sidewalk. If you don't, it keeps going downhill until you do. Stop the evil and terror in its tracks. It only get worse if you don't.

Sunday, April 7, 2002

Knocked In and Knocked Out

The crack in my back knocked me in to this world, into the going public world. But it also knocked me out of this world, into the private, inner, artistic chamber of my imagination. Yes, it broke down the walls between the two. But in doing so, it strengthened both. Or rather, it strengthened the room and world of my imagination

by giving it a public okay.

That crack in my back was the crack in the wall between private and public.

Next is to let my Alhambra index finger leak through the private, break the wall, and flow into the public.

The mental step has been taken; so has the physical (through the cracked back). Now comes the application through the fingered musical.

Segovia said okay by fingering the F. F as in finger.

(Though he played as F in the base he was playing the De Visee piece in D tuning. "D" Visee? De vice? Losing the vice grip, losing the vice-like grip of old (neighborhood) index finger? Hmmm)

He gave me permission to be me.

But it was my dream. I gave myself permission to be me.

The crack in my back cracked in my index finger too.

Crack! A mammoth crack! "Break" through.

The dam broke.

Monday, April 8, 2002

Jumping Into The Sea Of Shit

Jumping into the sea of shit. Swimming with all the mistakes I have made, all the wrong things I have done. So disgusting!

But also, so fertilizing.

Let me make more mistakes. Let me find more wrong things to do. It fertilizes new ventures; it feeds new adventures.

No question hurting my back was a mistake; I did something wrong. And indeed, it felt like shit.

What did I do wrong? What was my mistake? Perhaps I'll never know.

But at least I can make new back mistakes. Sure they hurt. They are disgusting, too. But I must find new ones, make new mistakes. Dive into the sea of shit.

Without mistakes and wrongs there is no new path.

How else to start an adventure?

Wednesday, April 10, 2002

I need a new dream.

Goals are specific, direct, and important. Dreams are vague, misty, somewhat abstract.

I need goals. But more important, I need a dream.

Can dreams be found through intellect and thought?

I doubt it.

Rather they come in a vision.

Dreams touch at the source of motivation.

Goals are dreams brought "down to earth." They are dreams in the form of concrete, material reality.

Thus I need both. But a dream comes first. Then it is realized through goals.

My dream was once to give a concert. Alhambra was the spiritual and technical center of the concert.

Sunday, April 14, 2002

Going public with the downs again. It's about the sales and acceptance of New Leaf.

A long down struggle.

But, truth is, the real me, the inner me, the me of ups and downs, is in the book. The public knows only the “social” me. That is the one I have, so far, revealed. Do I really want or need to reveal the other side of me, the down me? Is it good for my ego? For business? For me?

Perhaps it doesn't matter. Most people, even those who buy my book, don't read it anyway. They keep in on the mantel piece as an autographed souvenir.

The non-responsiveness response. Aha, that's it! I publish New Leaf and instead of a rush of love, praise, and sale, I sell only two copies! Plus, Carl's reading of my passage on Aetna wasn't that good. Even I wasn't impressed. But that could be me.

Again, do I want to display my anger, downs, and sadness in public? When I do, it doesn't seem I get much public response. No laughs, aha, or smiling faces. Hard to tell what such a lack of visible response means. It's similar to a quiet, meditative guitar piece. On the surface, no reaction.

New Leaf is pensive—like a classic guitar piece. It doesn't “fuck” the audience or hit them hard. After the audience hears New Leaf, or listens to a guitar piece, what are they thinking? Does their silence mean they are pondering, reflecting, thinking, touched? Or are they simply falling asleep and distant? Hard to say.

Do I know? Can I judge? Obviously I interpret their silence and non-reaction in my own terms. But am I right?

I don't know. Perhaps I'll never know. Perhaps it is impossible to know. I can only know my own reaction, my own interpretation.

But it seems there is and will be a different reaction to this book—and my guitar playing. Rather than laughter, smiles, and happy faces I'll be getting silence, thoughts, pensiveness, reflectiveness, and semi-blank faces.

It is different all right. But is it bad? Is it a rejection of me?

Is it really non-responsiveness? I don't know.

The adventure of selling New Leaf—and classic guitar playing in public—will be to find out.

Thursday, April 18, 2002

The Path Of Enthusiasm

What is my mental state?

First, I'm still recovering from my bad back and the Weekend. Secondly, I can't get my mind off Israel. Thirdly, New Leaf publication, and (hopefully) my new guitar playing, has started me on new roads. These are my so-called "blocks."

Blocking me from what? First, the bad back has frightened me into little exercise. I have not run for two weeks; I haven't done a head stand for a month. Fear has dampened my calliyoga and running spirit.

New Leaf publication and new guitar playing are starting me on new roads. To where I don't know yet.

Studies, namely, languages, have also disappeared. I think that is partly due to the Israeli situation. Israel's very existence is being threatened. I'm in a post-September 11th mode. I can't get my mind off politics and war. But, as Nina said, "Rightly so. Without Israel we are all cooked."

So I could describe my situation as a waiting mode. I am waiting for something to come up. But I am also annoyed that I can't seem to do yoga, run, or even write the way I used to.

Deep down could I be suffering from enthusiasm squashing, the dampening and pushing down of my enthusiasm? After all, this whole syndrome began when I hurt my back. As I see it, the psychological reason I hurt it was due to my enthusiasm and excitement over enjoying my intense week(s) of work. I suffered from an "enthusiasm back breaker." This would fit other historic listlessness, lost, and push-down patterns.

Let's look at it through push-down of enthusiasm glasses.

1. Guitar playing.....No doubt I should be ecstatic about my Alhambra playing. Rapid, flowing, and sweet. Filled with mistakes, yes, but flowing with bass lines and good finger feelings as well.

Am I enthusiastic about it? No. I am afraid to be. I'm afraid of being "fooled,"

that the qualitative leap is only temporary, that I'll slip back into my old tight-assed guitar tremolo forms. Result: dampened enthusiasm.

2. Calliyoga and running. . . and Carl's advice of "doing it all" in spite of my heavy dance-teaching schedule. I loved his idea. Now I didn't have to be afraid of too much work. I could fulfill the dictates of my miracle schedule and work hard as well. Yes, I was enthusiastic about that and had a wonderful two weeks of doing both. I ran, did calliyoga, studied a bit of Spanish, taught my classes, and did my bookings. I was rolling full steam ahead, all cylinders wide open. I was enthusiastic about "doing it all."

What happened? I hurt my back. That slowly killed all my enthusiasm. I stopped running, and, of course, all calliyoga. Even when my back "healed," I now developed a caution based on the fear of hurting myself again. This caution dampened my enthusiasm. Dampened, hell. It killed it.

Thus, although I hate admit I know the answer. It is the usual Jim Gold sit-on-the-enthusiasm syndrome. Kill your joy and pleasure. Too threatening. "Why bother?" is setting in quick.

Is the answer really so simple? Probably. Only I hate to admit it. I am afraid of my boldness and audacity: I hesitate to admit that I know. I hear the mother of my mind crying out: "What nerve!"

Thus it goes back to performing an act and acts of courage. I have to start fresh, follow my own book's advice by turning over a new leaf. I need the courage to face and accept my enthusiasm, go with it, give it my best, and love the whole process.

What about language study? I don't know.

When I say there are many, nay countless, distractions on the path, I mean the path of enthusiasm.

We'll see where all these thoughts lead.

The path of enthusiasm will cure my back, feet, mind, and everything else.

The challenge is staying on it.

I know my own cure. I just have to remember it.

My challenge is no longer to improve. Rather, it is to stay in touch with my enthusiasm! Improvement and everything else will follow in enthusiasm's wake.

Sunday, April 21, 2002

He Is Always There

I woke up this morning missing God. Where is He this morning?

I woke up feeling sad. . . or wishing I felt sad. Truth is, I don't feel sad. I want to feel sad. I miss my sadness.

Why?

Somehow and subtly my sadness makes a pathway which, as I follow it, soon connects me to God.

But I no longer "believe" in my sadness. I know its sources, its origin, why I need, even why I feel it. Let's look at these:

First, sources and origin: Sadness goes and the habit of sadness go back to early childhood.

Second, I need it in order to energize myself. I sadness feeds my creative mind. I creates a "reason" for me to create. It makes me want to fill the empty hole.

All this understanding of my sadness, my cosmic sadness, the cosmic dimensions and energizing aspects of my sadness, shines a bright light upon it. The light of understanding, in a sense, "destroys" the sadness. But not my need for it.

But what do I really need? Is it my sadness? Or is it the connection to God that my sadness highlights?

Obviously, it is the latter. On some days or moments I have direct and immediate connection to God through creative work; other days, although God remains hidden and the feeling is loneliness, emptiness, cosmic sadness, even meaninglessness

and purposelessness, truth is, He is always there. But rather than a direct presence, He is directing the show from the sidelines. Although hidden from the stage of my action itself, He remains the ultimate Director of my play. Of course, since He is omnipresent (and omnipotent), He directs me from within as well as from without.

Thus, God is always there. But due to the vicissitudes of life and the wavering of emotions, my experience of Him vacillates between up and down.

One of my old habits of reentry into God's graces is through the melancholy deliciousness of cosmic sadness. Ah, how I love my cosmic sadness.

But now that much of the veil has been lifted on my "sadness game," the "sadness ploy," and I find it hard to "believe in it" anymore, what can I use to return and rekindle the God feeling and the beautiful and beauty-filling connection the higher forces?

I don't know.

Realizing the purposeful and connective function of my sadness is a step forward in awareness.

God is there always. Sometimes hidden and backstage, sometimes standing, in miracle form, right before my eyes. Maybe just realizing this is enough.

Fame

Reading about and remembering Village days through David Hajdu's book, Positively 4th Street.

What terror, fascination, love, and hate I had for fame. What jealousies I felt. And terrible downs. I was always on the outside, on the periphery peering in. I had too many internal questions to deal with. I couldn't handle fame or let it come to my door.

But now I can. I am psychologically ready for it. I am not attached to it as I once was. Fame would (might) be nice, but it wouldn't mean the same thing it once did. Fame would now be just a strange, wondrous, and funny thing on the way to the

forum.

Jealousy and Envy

In Greenwich Village days: Jealousy and envy. Horrible feelings. But I was haunted by them. Based on the feeling that I am less.

Well, communism and most of left wing politics is based on it. Certainly, it is the milieu I grew up in.

But I was never jealous of my classical music heroes. Perhaps it was because they were gods, too distant to ever be touched. Jealousy and envy were reserved for people I could reach, my "almost" peers. They were the mirrors of my unfulfilled potential; they reflected the horror of that emptiness and lack of fulfillment back to me, back in my face. I couldn't stand looking at it. So instead, I turned it on them by becoming jealous and envious of them, their talents and accomplishments.

But, truth is (was), I could do it too, and in my way, too. But rather than see them as a source of inspiration, I recoiled in fear, jealousy, anger, and envy. It was psychologically easier to envy them than face the denial of my own power and the resultant emptiness of my unfulfilled potential.

But, as I say, jealousy and envy is all there in communism, socialism, and left leaning politics.

Truth is, I'm not jealous or envious anymore. Rather, I've slowly become and adopted the attitude of an entrepreneur and a capitalist. Glory to the individual! I love the person who tries! Make the effort and bring yourself glory! Fuck jealousy, envy, communism, and left wing politics. "Workers of the world unite!" Ha, screw that. Instead of uniting, let them the working people of the world, work. It's good for them.

Thursday, April 25, 2002

Taking My First Political Steps

I can't stop reading and thinking about Israel, the Middle East, politics, etc. I am

passionate about these. . . and the love of Israel.

Is there an internal change in the making? Will I some day, soon, now be able to talk about politics without getting tongue-tied in the usual, old neighborhood, past life anger and frustration?

What does this frustration and suppressed rage come from? From my past, of course. Who would ever listen to me? What chance did I have that my views would even be considered? What chance did my father have against our household, namely my mother and her family communist menace? He was the open-minded one, the "liberal" in the old sense of the world, the one who could calmly consider opposing views. He was the one to question the communists, dare doubt the moral superiority they so smugly felt. He was the one to question whether Stalin's Soviet Union was the paradise all my left-wing, communist mother's side of the family believed in. Why, he even doubted the doctrines of Karl Marx.

What was the result of his "innocent," humanitarian, liberal (old sense) and heart-felt questioning? He was called "stupid" by the rest of my family – naive, dumb, his views and questions cast away with a flick of the hand. He was irrelevant at best, a traitor to the cause at worse. And always objected to, humiliated, put down, laughed at, scorned, and more. Indeed, liberalism (old style), independent thinking, open-mindedness were out of the question. Only stupid people did that. The communist line was hard, definite, clear, undeviating, and absolutely true. Anyone who even considered questioning it was at best an idiot, at worst a traitor.

Growing up in the suppressed atmosphere, seeing what "happened" to political open mindedness, liberal thought, and to thinking on your own in general, I retreated into the certainty of violin playing and its clear notes. Who would question that? All the notes were on the page. I could at least face the possibility of being master of that realm. The land of music was my kingdom. No communists, Stalin, or Marxist doctrine here.

So no wonder I quake in frustration and lip-biting rage when the subjects of

political discussion come up. I have an ancient trauma on my shoulders.

Am I getting ready to lift it? Can my love of Israel added to love of my own views, added to loving the strength, passion, and belief in my own views carry me through a political discussion? In other words, can I verbally and in public stand up for my political beliefs?

Dare I even have political beliefs? That used to be for the realm of smart people. I was not smart. "You're an artist, a musician. Your mind is in mush land, fantasy land, dreaming and waa-waa and goo-goo land. Go into your room, practice, and shut up. We're not interested in your ga-ga land views, They are for children at best, idiots, and worse. Just shut up and go to your room. Soon you can come out and play the violin for us. We'll smile, admire your effort, pat you on the head, then tell you to heel! And you will do that along with Lucky, our dog."

No wonder I tremble in tongue-tied rage and frustration whenever I try to "talk politics."

But I'm at a new place, a new stage. Could I now begin to "talk politics" in public. It is, indeed, dangerous. Much passion and danger here. Do I dare? Can I?

Just asking the question means there is no choice up ahead. I am standing at the border of a new, going public, putting my views forth, political land. Nay, I have crossed the border. I am standing for the first time in a new land. Yes, this political land is all strange and different. But nevertheless, I am standing in it and learning to take my first steps.

What will this mean? We'll see.

Talking politics is fraught with danger. Immediate dangers are I could lose my friends. . . and my customers. Well, I'll start with my friends. They're "easy." First of all, "losing" them is not an economic threat.

What about losing my family. Well, they won't leave me over my political views. But I'll sure get mad when they don't agree with me. This kind of getting mad

is my problem. It is part of the past tongue-tied approach.

Politics: for me a whole new ball.

Moving from tongue-tied frustration to expressing my views, drawing from my vast bag of historical knowledge, and from hitherto untapped inner, historical, and political wisdom.

Political wisdom? Do I have such a thing? Only in so much as politics is the public, group expression of individual thought. Whatever I do or think on an individual basis is also expressed through various and different groups in politics. It is the inner expressed through the outer. Phylogeny recapitulates ontology. Or is it vice versa? Well, whatever. New Leaf is an exploration of the inner self. It is a short jump from the inner self to the outer self, from the private land of passion to the public realm of political expression. I just have to consider it and start doing it.

Dare I go public with my politics? The leaks have already started.

It is a very aggressive public stance. An avenue for my aggression, anger, rage, and energy.

Politics, Passion, and History

There is no question that in public mode of political expression I have been completely shut down.

That is why my knowledge of history has never been “used.” I have never been able to make the connection between passion and history. Thus it has remained a “useless” intellectual exercise. And yet, I have always been interested in history. I can’t say I love it. I have been afraid to love it because love requires passion. And I am afraid of my passion in history because it is connected to my secret (but long suppressed) passion for politics. Oh sure, you can say my interest in history has been “expressed” in and through the tour business. And that is partially true. But my true passion, the one that touches my manly and indignant rage, my passionate Jewish

hatred of injustice, is in politics.

Suppressed seemingly “forever” . . . up til now.

To me history, politics, and passion are connected. But I have never consciously made the connection.

Studying history for tourism and my tour business is still an intellectual exercise and thus a step away. Knowledge of their history is not vital for my survival in a foreign country. Language is. Thus my passion has gone into studying foreign languages, the language of the country I visit. But there has, through tourism, been no passion or vital interest in the study of history.

Politics, passion, and history. Plus going public with all of them. Daring, indeed. And dangerous. I am leaning over the abyss. Should I jump in? Do I even have a choice?

Integrating it all in my going-public personality.

This is all certainly a new adventure.

Indignant rage is the key. My personal key to passion in politics is indignant rage.

Could I have indignant rage in history? Good question.

Saturday, April 27, 2002

All Good Questions on an Aching, Painful Morning

Let's face it, buddy. Pain will always be part of my life. Although it may change its forms it will never go away That's just the way it is.

This morning's pains are my left (and right) foot tops, and my left knee “inner side.” Panic? Why panic? I've had pains before. Long term, they come and go. Sometimes they take a year to pass. Maybe longer, this time. Maybe even never. That too is an ever-looming possibility. Never? That's quite a long-term word. Nevertheless, “never” is possible. Suppose I accept it as a possible reality. Certainly

pains “feel” like never; like they will never end. Of course, pleasure feels the same way.

In fact, the moment, whatever it brings, usually feels like it will always last forever.

But, in reality, in perspective, it never does.

So, my mind “knows” nothing lasts forever. But my “feelings” make me “feel like” it does.

Where does that put me? Nowhere and everywhere. At the same time.

Shall I let the knowledge and constructs of my mind run my life? Or shall I let myself be led by my feelings? Is there a combo I can use?

All good questions this aching, painful morning.

Strangely, I am also “looking forward” to these pains. They are also a challenge. Indeed, they “wake me up,” make me pay attention. To what? To my thoughts, to my direction, to my life. What am I doing? Where has my bliss gone? Big questions in the pain production game.

Monday, April 29, 2002

Physical Reflections of Panic

Tour terror rising. Panic, too. What to do? Nothing. Just know it, be aware, watch, enter it. Meditate and ‘see’ your way through it. Realize that my aches, pains, and physical ailments are mostly physical reflections of panic in disguise.

Creating projects may distill some of the panic.

Tour projects:

1. Write my journal in Spanish. Speak Spanish. Total Spanish immersion.

Projects soften fear. They divert the (pain-filled) energy into the projected tasks at hand.

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

The Dread Before The Show

There is no way I will ever escape the dread before the show. Nor should I. And this, whether the “show” is a concert, weekend, tour, folk dance class, public reading, whatever. Even going to a party can sometimes be a show.

Nor should I want to escape. (Not that I could anyway.)

Dread is the forerunner of creativity. It is the gathering of energy before the storms of creation hits.

Jump into the dread. Sink into it. Let its whirlpool drag you down to the sickening, fear-filled bottom. On the way, the body aches with heaviness and pain in every joint. The mind trembles. It’s all part of the show.

Every show has a prelude. Dread, with its mental aches and bodily pains, is such a prelude.

Defiance Is The Best Mode Of The Day

Yesterday was a terrible financial day. I wired \$14,000 to Alejandro in Madrid – that’s three grand more than I anticipated. My error, but a pain, nevertheless; the stock market went down even further – it keeps sinking. Who, knows, I may be totally wiped out. Another unhappy thought. Finally, my Monday night folk dance class was small for the second week in a row.

Life is getting worse, but I refuse to be crushed. Defiance is the best mode of the day.

Better Poor Or Dead Than A Slave To Vicissitudes

I woke up with a slight headache, too. I’m furious for letting myself be pushed around by vicissitudes.

I can’t do anything about vicissitudes. But I hate being pushed around.

What can I “do” about it? Nothing. Vicissitudes are forever. Some appear worse than others. Nevertheless, slight or powerful, they are all still “only”

vicissitudes. I can change my attitude towards them. Over that small, powerful space in my brain, I have control. Sure, it's hard to handle the bugger. But that doesn't change the truth that I alone am in charge of "her."

Attitude is a "her." I wonder what that means.

Better to face and accept poverty and death than to be gutted and pushed around by financial losses. Better poor or dead than a slave.

Even with no money or no body I can still be my own man.

Are bodily pains vicissitudes? Indeed they are.

Life throws lots of shit in your face. Just wipe it off and move on.

Relaxation And Fun Mean Total Focus

Will this mean I'll see my upcoming tour to Spain as "relaxing?" Even fun? Probably.

How about packing and preparing for the tour? Will that now be "relaxing, even fun"? Probably.

How about all the minor annoyances, like my new answering machine doesn't work, that there is no beep on the outgoing message and thus I can't receive incoming calls. Will working on this annoying problem ever become "relaxing?" Or trying to right the annoyances of this world? Fun? That would indeed be a major shift, development, and breakthrough.

But is it possible? Probably. In fact, why not? Start the "relax and fun" approach to the answering machine fixing problem today. Use my knowledge of persistence. Even though I scream, rant, and rave, pound the tables in frustration at these petty annoyances, I know I will never give up trying to fix them. Never, never, never! Sometimes I reach the "I'll never give up, Never, never, never! I'll die first"

stage.

Persistence. I can't imagine my life without it. I am often short on patience but on persistence I am long.

Knowing and remembering this might help make handling the non-functioning answering machine more "relaxing". If that works, then I can aim for fun!

On a deeper level, what do relaxing and fun really mean? Total focus. Complete concentration on the situation at hand.

Next goal: Make fixing my answering machine. . . and running my upcoming Spanish tour relaxing and fun.

Friday, May 3, 2002

Deepening the Tour Vision

Tours: I may start repeating myself. Perhaps that is the stage I am in. After the new destinations of Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, the Scandinavian countries, I'm thinking about returning to Sicily, Greece, Turkey, even Israel.

I've done all the others: I've covered, touched on, most of the countries I love. What else is there to do? Deepen my knowledge of language and history. I have passed through the first stage. I've got the tour program together. Now deepen it. It's like playing the guitar. I spent many years putting together a concert program, learning the pieces I like, memorizing the music I want to play. Now I know them. What else is there to do but play this music I love over and over again. In the process, I deepen my knowledge, love, and wisdom. I have no desire to learn new guitar pieces. I have more than enough already.

Perhaps in tourism it is the same thing. It is the time of return.

Like a concert, I now have a "concert of tour countries," a program of places I want to visit and know.

It's the stage of useless deepening with no goal in sight. I'm going in no

particular direction and loving every minute of it.

The Next Tour Business Adventure

What has brought on most of this thought? I'm giving up on the stock market. Write it all off as a loss. That means I'll have to make money by working. That is the only way I have ever made money in the past. Looking back, the stock market has been a total disaster. And, truth is, I have never made any money in it. When the market goes up, I hold onto my stocks hoping they'll go higher. So I do not sell them and make money. When the stock market goes down, I do not sell them either. I keep hoping they will eventually go up. The result of all this has been, over the years, that I only lose money. I am paralyzed by the low stock market. The only decision I seem able to make is to hold on, to wait. In the process, the stocks keep going down. This forces me to wait even longer. I guess I have made a decision after all: it is to hold onto the stocks even as they descend into the gutter. My decision is: if we sink into a depression, which I now expect, I have decided to go down with the ship. In the back of my mind, I hope I am wrong and there will be no depression. But I also realize I may be right. But since I truly don't know, and hate to sell at the bottom (and, for all I know, this isn't the bottom yet), I will simply hold.

What about my expenses and debts? I'll just have to pay them out of earnings. Well, I always expected to do that. Not out of folk dance teaching, weekends, or booking earnings. But I expected to pay them out of tours.

After September 11th, tours collapsed. But perhaps they are coming back. There may be a ray of hope, after all. But where will I go? To my "concert of old countries."

Thus, in a sense, I am back to an old purpose: to make money, "my big money," in tours.

The exploratory stage is over. I know the countries; I know my repertoire.

But this New Leaf is called New Adventures. If I know my countries and repertoire, what is my new adventure?

Perhaps it is something to do with deepening. Or perhaps it is simply that I am returning to the old with new confidence, power, and vision. I am touring in and with a new self. That may be the way I begin my next tour business adventure.

Go For It!

Let's face it, buddy: the sad truth is I depended on my stock market hopes. Secretly and ultimately I knew I would get rich. I expected it.

Death of a dream.

Now I have only myself to depend on. The good thing is, past history tells me I can depend on myself. The only time I have ever made money, even in impossible fields like music, the arts, etc., is when I depended on myself. Putting my faith and trust in the hidden hand of the stock market and its movements only caused me, in the short and long run, to lose money.

In and through the stock market I sustained the childhood dream that someone would take care of me. The stock market as my father. True, he wasn't taking care of me today, but always had the dream sustained me: soon he would. It was coming, it was coming. Some day, some day. But it never came. I kept hoping.

Somehow yesterday I stopped hoping. Why? I was stimulated by more stock market losses. But I've had them many times before. Also I heard a program on the radio about how often a deus ex machina is needed to create radical change in a downward spiral.

Why now. Perhaps I was simply ready.

Depending on myself is the way to go. I've got the confidence and the products. Go for it!

Saturday, May 4, 2002

Stunned, Shocked, Confused, Mad, Sad: Standing In The Wreckage

Yesterday was an historic day: I sold all my "Joel" Prudential account stocks. I closed both my personal and Keogh retirement account.

I closed them at a terrible loss.

The stock market has basically crashed. In my mind, I foresaw a depression ahead. Years of down market.

This is the first time in twenty-five years that I am "stock free." (I'm keeping the few stocks of my fidelity account. We'll see about that.)

I am stunned, in shock, sad, mad, depressed. But also, right after I sold everything, for a brief moment I felt a whiff of elation. It was the "at last, I am free!" feeling. Suddenly, the curtain was raised. I had a similar feeling after my mother died. Suddenly, she was no longer sitting on me, pushing me down, mentally repressing me. I was "free" to see all the good in her.

In retrospect, my twenty-five years in the stock market was financially the worst decision I ever made. I have here a ripe opportunity to put myself down on every level, to rip into myself, tell myself what a fuck-up and miserable person I am. Indeed, losing so much money and ending up in so much debt is a perfect opportunity to lambast myself. I am partly doing it, too. I feel so sad, mad, miserable, stunned, shocked, and somewhat confused. It's the "Huh, what happened?" feeling. A devastating wake-up call. My World Trade Center just collapsed. My Iron Curtain, my Western Wall of Hope just melted down, crumbled. It has been destroyed forever.

I stand among the financial ruins.

Indeed, it feels like the deus ex machina sending me a lightning strike wake-up call through the final recognition of the total destruction of my hopes for financial resurrection through the hidden hand of the stock market.

My hopes for stock market "more" have vanished. I stand financially all alone.

Of course, I always have. Only, in my imagination I always had the hidden support, the "unrealistic" hope that somehow, someday, and in some way the stock market would mysteriously rise and ultimately take care of me. Mainly, it would make

me rich. Yes, I admit it: I had dreams of riches through the stock market. That's why I hung on. Wealth, wealth, wealth; protection, protection, protection; security and love all wrapped up in delicious bundles of money.

Well, it was a beautiful future dream (with many nightmares along the way) but it ended for good yesterday.

Financially, I am now completely starting over. In a sense, I could also call this the beginning of a new adventure. Both of these are positives views, up-beat approaches. However, I still feel too miserable, stunned, confused, and shocked to look at them in this manner. But, I suppose, being basically an optimist, I will eventually see this financial debacle as both an ending and a new beginning. Right now I'm focusing on the ending, the death, finality, and closing down of an old path. I'm not ready to look ahead, not just yet. First I'll look at, get used to, even analyze (I hate that word) the ruins and wreckage. Looking ahead comes later.