

The Exclamation Point Life!

Monday, April 16, 2001

The Fallacy of Fear

Playing Poorly Equals Playing Slowly

In order to conquer the fear of playing poorly, practice “playing poorly.”

I did.

The result was not mistakes, sloppy playing or anything I had expected. It was: playing poorly meant playing slowly!

When someone asks me to play the guitar, especially if they are a classical or flamenco guitarist, my first reaction is, I must prove myself. I must be not only a good guitarist, but a virtuoso. What does a virtuoso do? He plays fast! Very fast! At lightening speeds!

The fast pressure freezes me up. I end up hardly being able to play at all. If this is the case, one can understand why playing poorly, to me, means as playing slowly.

So the way to combat my fear of public performance, nay public humiliation, is to practice performing poorly.

On Change. . . and Patience

The great lesson here is how slowly real change takes place. We call it growth or expansion. It takes weeks, months, years. There is no rushing it. You can merely start the process, begin your path, takes the first steps on the new road. Then keep walking and see what happens. Change will take place along the way. But you never know when or how much.

There is no choice but to be patient.

It takes forever to change, to grow, to expand.

Luckily, we have forever.

Wednesday, April 25, 2001

Hemorrhoids are a pain in the ass.

Do they have emotional roots? Why not? Only I can't figure out what they are yet.

Reading my journal is personal and applicable to my life. It has my best philosophy written down right in front of me. The writing and ideas are superb. Just what I need to be reminded of.

What a writer! Flowing ideas and values! All so useful and inspiring

The Calm, Muddy River of Self

I'm angry at something.

What?

Worry about the bills on my desk? But I thought I had given up worry and annoyances.

And I had.

Yet they still annoy me.

But I don't believe in their annoyances anymore.

Maybe I feel I should be annoyed, worried, and bothered. But I am not. None of this stuff really gets to me the way it used to. That is what's bothering me. I have lost my old annoyances. The bites are gone. The sting has dribbled away. I am now floating down a peaceful internal river.

Things don't bother me the way they used to. And I can't figure out why they should.

The only thing I can feel disgust about is my lack of disgust for anything.

And I don't even feel disgusted about that.

Maybe I'm not disgusted at all. Just puzzled. I'm not even puzzled. I'm just "there."

Balanced, steady, flowing slowly in the calm, slow, muddy, wide, Mississippi-like river of Self.

Tuesday, May 1, 2001

Threat Of Death!

The exclamation point life is here. After years of struggle I have made it. I stand in my flowing success river. Storms of up and down passing by effect but do not deject me. I remain calm while wars rage on the river bank.

What has been my reaction to success?

Assaulted by the heavy guns, I run for cover. Success will drain my life's blood. I will lie passionless. What can you hope for when you've got it all already? How depressing and disgusting!

You wimpy worm, slob, slut, clut, and blut! What is the matter with you! Success is a paradox, a full state of less, a plenitude of nothingness, a permanent resting place.

It is where the buck stops. . . dead!

Okay, this is a philosophy I agree with. What about my hemorrhoids?

I'm going to assume they were caused by success! Sounds crazy? Perhaps. But perhaps not. We're dealing with subtle calibrations of the mind-body relationship.

If I am right, what does it prove? That trauma of success with its incipient threat of death not only causes self-disgust, but can also draw blood!

New Approach To Stocks

I've made some money trading in the stock market. I've accepted the pain of selling too early and watching the stock move higher. I am no longer paralyzed by "I could have made so much more if I held onto it," the pain of second guessing, of

Monday morning quarterbacking decisions. This is a new stock place for me.

I wonder where it will lead.

Could it be a partial answer to the financial mess I have been in so long? After all, this whole debt problem began when my stocks crashed three years ago. I lost over half of my assets, maybe even three-quarters. I almost went bankrupt. I am still in recovery. Had that not happened, I would easily have been able to pay off all my debts.

My financial situation is definitely the “fault” of the stock market. But am I not responsible for my money and my decisions about it? Yes. My decision then was to make to hold onto my stocks “no matter what.” And this because I didn’t want to sell too early and miss the tremendous wealth that would come when these fuckers went up. Also, I listened to Joel. Somehow, I always thought, he knew. His opinion on these stocks, even when communicated with a voice tone, whisper, or some subtle suggestion, always turned my mind around. I really thought he, as a broker on the inside, knew something I didn’t know.

Well, the decision I’ve made after years of therapy, is that, as far as the future of my individual stocks go, Joel doesn’t know shit. Or rather, he knows as little or as much as I do. Finally, it is up to me to make the personal decisions of when to buy or sell. It is up to me to decide how much I am willing to win or lose.

Saturday, May 5, 2001

Mark Epstein says that in the foundation of Eastern wisdom “the contents of the mental stream are not as important as the consciousness that knows them. . . . In this practice, problems are not distinguished from solutions. . . The mind learns how to be with ambiguity while learning to be fully aware.”

What does this mean?

If all problems have solutions, then all solutions create problems.

If there is no solution, then there is no problem.

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Family Visits

Sunday I ran for an hour and three-quarters. A long run. I haven't done that for a long while.

Sunday afternoon was beautifully peaceful. I sat in the back yard under the blue sky; warmed by the sun, I read Going On Being by Mark Epstein. By evening I felt spacy and bordering on getting sick. I went to bed early.

Monday I fell apart. It may have been fatigue from the long run that broke me down, or other factors. I was teary, down, energyless, a bit lost. A puzzle indeed.

Perhaps feelings like abandonment, loss, and mourning never go away. They just "become more familiar." Like old friends, they get easier to deal with. You invite them home, pour coffee, offer them something to eat, discuss old times, how are the kids and grandkids. Then, when their visit is over, you show them to the door. You easily say goodbye. That's progress. But you also say, "I'll see you again."

Feelings, like family visits, are forever.

Wednesday, May 9, 2001

How To Give A Concert

When teaching folk dancing I noticed that if I "hold back," that is, eliminate fast Romanian-type dances, not only does my body ache and I get tired, but I lose my inspiration as well. Do not hold back. Give it all you've got. If this means I lose part of my audience, so be it. Doing fast Romanian-type dances in spite of people's "too fast!" complaints lifts the dance and aerobic level of the class. Fast, lively dancing is simply good for me. It raises my spirits. I can't teach a class without raised spirits. I shouldn't, either.

Last night I added several fast-type Romanian dances to the folk dance class. I ran it both to heal myself and raise up my spirits. I succeeded in spite of the fact that several people sat down.

Perhaps that is the way I should give concerts, too. Forget about what the audience wants. What do they know, anyway? Besides, it is most important to remember, I am giving the concert to please first to please myself, second to please the audience. Naturally, the two go together. But in terms of approach priorities, pleasing myself comes first. You can't love another if you don't love yourself; you can't raise up the spirits of another if you don't raise your own.

Use the fast Romanian-type dancing concert approach.

It may be a good way to handle my pre-concert nervousness and performance anxiety, too.

In other words, pour on the juices; give it all you've got. Fuck myself and, in the process, fuck them, too.

Thursday, May 17, 2001

Huh, I feel the guitar relaxation in my teeth! What does that mean? This especially through my index finger during forward arpeggios (Villa-Lobos Prelude No. 4, big bars in Leyenda, Soleares ending).

I've made "final" change. I've reached the "end." I have succeeded, been perfected, reached perfection. I did it by realizing there is no end or perfection. I am in the process of being perfected. Forever. Only the River of More flows on, rolling to the sea.

Why, oh God, after all these years, have you suddenly given me the ability to play the guitar?

Uncle Willie

Willie was my favorite uncle. I was so hurt when he told me I shouldn't go to France now. You must finish college before anything else, he said. He rejected my

adventurous identity. After that, everything changed. I no longer trusted him. In his presence, I was on guard. I closed off to him. I now knew a rigid, hard-line, communist, narrow, tow-the-line, follow-the-forms, unartistic side of him I'd never known before. He was no longer the playful, fun-loving children's uncle who gave me shoulder rides. Ah, I couldn't wait for those shoulder rides, riding high up, holding on to his hair and neck! They were so much fun! Was this now the "real" him, the rigid orthodox man I'd have to face as a grown-up?

Sunday, May 13, 2001

Financial Failure

I have to see the last twenty-five years as a giant financial failure.

One of my goals was to become a millionaire. Instead, financially I'm worse off than when I started. What else could this be called but a financial failure?

Admit it. . . and move on. I succeeded in many other things: guitar playing, writing, running tours and a business, strong and confident leader, self-confidence, power, enthusiasm, etc. But we're not talking about that. We're only talking about finances.

It was all based on the assumption, nay, absolute belief, that I would make money in the tour business. . . lots of money. There was so much potential profit in it. Instead I lost money. . . lots of money.

I lost money because of my belief that I could predict.

I have given up that belief.

That is the difference between now and then.

And it only took twenty-five years to realize it.

Sunday, May 13, 2001

The Trauma of Performing

Performing is such a trauma!

I am facing the possibility of non-recognition every time.

I'll do anything to be recognized, anything, anything, anything! I'll twist and turn and do whatever Doris says. She may be right; it may be better to start the program with a lively song, and end with one, too. Or she may not be right, it may be better to start with a soft, pensive, meditative classical guitar piece, or by reading a quiet poem.

How to start the show? There is no one answer to this ever vexing and ever-present performing question. Classical guitar piece? Song? Story? Ad libs? Other? Each situation is different. I never know in advance. I have to decide on the spot. There is no one right way.

And only I can make that decision.

But no matter what decision I make, I still have to face to trauma of possible non-recognition.

I am so vulnerable just before the show. Seems I'll listen to anything. Is it because I am courageous, vulnerable, and open to new ideas? Or is it because I'm floundering and don't quite know what to do? Probably a combination of both.

Performing is very tough. I've got guts to dare doing it.

I need performing situations to practice in. I should look for more performing jobs.

Monday, May 14, 2001

Irene, Goodnight

If I were free of the dignity lid, I could start my concert by singing Irene, Goodnight . . . and I'd ask for audience participation. Only three chords, simple to sing. Courage would be demonstrated, but hardly any skill. By opening my program with it, I prove absolutely nothing. After all, any beginner could play it. "Irene, Goodnight?" the audience might say. "Are you kidding? And you're asking us to sing this simple piece of shit? My daughter, who's twelve, can do that. What do we need you for?"

My answer to this would be, "Why not?"

Would it be humiliating to start out so simply? What about proving myself, introducing myself with a bang, impressing them, showing my talents, wowing the audience with a virtuoso display of pyrotechnics? Shouldn't I prove I'm worthy of their love and admiration. Then, once done, I can relax and have some fun.

This has been my former approach to performing, full of self-proving egotism and loaded with dignity lids.

Is the Irene, Goodnight approach a valid way?

Mourning The Old Life, Entering The New

Through nostalgia, am I mourning the old nobody feeling of a Greenwich Village guitar player, a lidded form I continued to carry into marriage and beyond. Weighed down with covers, I ventured, heavy and desperate, into the world. But now the weights are lifting. I see happiness up ahead. Nostalgia helps me shed my old skin. I'm getting ready to put on new clothes, walk on stage, and present the new me. Of course, I never got rid of the old me. I simply "submerged it a bit" . . . for sixty-three years!

Wednesday, May 16, 2001

Classical Guitar For Private Pleasure

If I am going to be starting my performances with Irene Goodnight, then the classical guitar will be played strictly for my own personal pleasure! I don't need it for public performances anymore. (Actually, I never did.) Sure, I'll play one or two pieces in public, maybe the Milan Pavaanes, Romance D'Amor, and perhaps a flamencan dance and Granados Spanish Dance Number 5. But I don't need to practice anymore to play them. And frankly, it doesn't even matter if I ever play them in public. I don't really need any classical guitar to make my appearances. It can now be played privately, for my own pleasure, meditation, and personal development.

It can enter the category of yoga, running, language study, and all the other

“useless,” non-money making activities.

I feel angry and agitated. But I don't know why.

Perhaps I am only agitated.

Perhaps I am not even agitated but puzzled and confused.

Yes, I am puzzled and confused. It agitates me which, in turn, makes me angry.

Why am I puzzled and confused? In one weekend my debt and guitar playing have been turned on their heads. Consequently, I don't know where or who I am anymore. Life feels so strange and out of place. The pacing is off. I'm not feeling bad; I'm not feeling good. The off-rhythms are confusing me.

All the problems I worked so hard on for so many years are being dissolved.

Does this dissolution mean an end to problems with women, money, and guitar?

Intellectually, I know things never end. But emotionally I'm not so sure. I have been fooled so often in the past. I'm afraid to believe in endings and how they give birth to new beginnings.

But just because afraid, doesn't mean I'm not right.

Chapters end, but the book of life keeps moving on.

It's time for the next chapter.

Through angel Bob I've given up the debt route.

Through angel Doris I've given up the prove-myself performance route.

Through angel Dave I've learned about Ma and through this understanding, have given up women as lids.

Why am I giving credit to all these “angels?” I don't know. I've walked the path through the forest alone. They have simply said along the way, here is a direction you can choose.

Friday, May 18, 2001

Pain is a tool. As such, it can be a doorway to transcendence.

Christ had nails in his feet.

I have nails in my feet, too. Through my crucifixion on the folk dance floor, I can transcend.

Life is full of pain. It cannot be avoided. Why not see it in a positive light?

Pain is a doorway to transcendence.

What a positive and optimistic view!

By transcending pain you don't get rid of it but rather transmute it into a higher form. A tree contains its seed.

Finding Anger's Energy In The Mystery

My back hurts. I'm angry at something.

But I'm not angry at anything.

I want to be angry at something. I want my anger.

I want the energy from my anger.

Thus, I don't even need my anger. Rather, I need energy! In the past, much of it came from anger. But I am not angry. I can't even find something to be angry about. Anger is gone. What a loss. I can't "get turned on" by it.

But I hurt my back. That means, in some form, I am still angry. As I said, I've lost the turn-on power of anger; I lost its high, its charged energy.

I still want that energy.

Can I get it without anger?

How? Where can I find it?

In the Mystery.

Pain

Pain is a wake-up-and-focus stimulant.

It hurts; it creates fear. Thus, it touches great energy sources.

Pain often makes you draw back. Sometimes it makes you panic. What will happen to me?

Terror and panic: both incredible energy sources.

Sunday, May 20, 2001

Un-Concentration

It is a performing temptation to let myself be distracted to let my focus unravel by wondering what others will think of me. My mind splits between guitar playing and the audience. Thus the trap.

Why do I flirt with this monster?

To prove myself.

But it is a losing battle. The very act of letting it in is an act of losing.

By letting my mind split, drift into distraction, descend into un-concentration, I flirt with squelching my voice, self-diminishment, put-downs, and death.

When you flirt with un-concentration, you flirt with fire; you put your soul in the oven and roast it into oblivion.

The flirting is the lid that will cover your coffin.

Tuesday, May 22, 2001

Success: An Ugh And A Puzzle

Sold Cisco at 22.50. I made about \$2000 profit. Teetering at the edge of the abyss, I trembled at the decision to sell. But sell I did.

Dave says our work is now about success.

Ugh, ugh. This success stuff is killing me. I'm disgusted and sick; I'm also confused and puzzled.

I have to face with it. There is nothing else for me to do, no other place to go.
My concentration is better. I focused on the melody in Alard, and on going out
the window of the exit door at the dentist. I'm dealing with un-concentration.
All roads are opening up. Folk dance teaching as entertainment is widening.
Success is here. It's an ugh and a puzzle. But I'm dealing with it.

Wednesday, May 23, 2001

Anger As A Turn-On

Anger as a turn-on.

Women are tied up and beaten because my anger is tied up and beaten.
I hide it. No one in public or private should see my secret anger. It is my biggest
secret. How I love it! The turn-on of its energy and secret clout!
But I won't acknowledge it to anyone. I won't even admit it to myself. It is too
shameful.

Shameful? Where did I get that from?

Must be Ma. Who else? Anger was an absolute no-no in our house. My father
never got angry. . . (well, he did once). Only my mother got angry. Part of me sees
anger as only for "hysterical women." If they get angry, like my father, it becomes my
job to soothe them. If I don't calm their rage, they might turn it on me! I am
defenseless. I cannot fight back. Why? Because the powerful force of my anger is
forbidden to me. It is too shameful.

But it is a turn-on, too. It always has been, even though it remained a secret. As
a child I loved crushing red ants with my fingers. Ah, how I loved to kill them, even
torture them a bit before I did it. And I was only five years old!

Anger is an energy, a power source.

I deserve mine.

I hoped to get rid of anger in psychotherapy, to be “cured” of it.

I have not been cured.

But I have become aware.

Thursday, May 24, 2001

Fun Being Pissed: Anger As A Good-In-Itself

Maybe it's just fun being pissed! Why analyze it away? I like anger. It energizes me. It's a turn-on. It's lots of fun.

Is there such a thing as playful anger?

Why not?

This Leaf is called The Exclamation Point Life. Anger itself is an exclamation point, an energy burst, a fun lollipop! Perhaps it is even a good-in-itself! Ha! Amazing stuff. The only thing “bad” about anger is the “bad” way my upbringing taught me to see it.

I missed my anger. Now it's back. I'm not hiding or feeling guilty about it. I'm moving into the fun category of the exclamation point life.

Anger Excites

Anger is “fun” in the sense of its energy burst, when it is part of the lidless flow.

What is the opposite of excitement?

Depression, melancholy, listlessness, lethargy, stupor, dullness, and fatigue.

These lidded states are not fun. They are the opposite of excitement. They are also the opposite of anger. Depression, for example, is anger turned inward.

Anger is an expression of positive out-turned energy. It lives next to fear. Both reside in the stomach at the edge of the cliff. Thriving on the precipice, they prepare you for your plunge.

Reaping the Harvest

Reading Bob Dylan's book about the '60's is my way of reading about my own life in Greenwich Village during that time. I am amazed that I can look back, revisit the past, and this, somewhat calmly. I have more perspective.

Perhaps I am also at the edge, at the beginning of a new phase of life: the Repeating the Rewards, Reaping the Harvest, Reaping the Fruits, period.

Perhaps that is why things seem easier and easy, flowing, and pleasant. All the years of hard work "have been done." I'm putting it all together now – reaping the rewards of all my labors, of a life time of work to perfect my art and my arts.

Guitar is together, New Leaf is being put together, performance feels easy and flowing, the pressure of tour success is off, so is money pressure (even though I still have little). All these streams of my life are beginning to flow together. Slowly, into one long Mississippi River of Better, one long muddy and endless flow of the River of Bettermore.

Is this what my birthday is about? Is this what the post sixty-four age is about? Sixty-four "sounds" so old. But I feel so young.

What does it all mean?

Certainly, I am at the doorway of a new place.

All Arguments Are Self Arguments

All arguments are self arguments. They are arguments within your own soul. The "other" or "outsider" with whom you argue is merely a prop set up to help you argue with yourself.

Arguments appear to be external and with others, but actually, they are internal and with yourself.

Monday, May 28, 2001

Transformation

I'm reading a book on Bob Dylan's life. Does this mean I'll start reading books

on music?

Does this mean my tour, folk dance teaching, and weekend career is being pushed to the back burner?

My fees for a school show are \$600 (\$575) for one and \$900 (\$850 for two. That's more than I make from a month of folk dance teaching! Club dates, church and synagogue groups, etc., will be \$600 for a one-hour, one-man Jim Gold show plus an hour of folk dance teaching, or \$450 for a Jim Gold show or an hour of folk dance teaching. Again, this is a little bit less than I make in a whole month of folk dance teaching. But of course, I've always known this. Still it did not propel me to do school shows, club dates, bar mitzvahs, or weddings. Naturally, if such jobs "came along" I took them. But I did not promote them. My total mind and commitment was to make a go of my tours, weekends, and folk dancing teaching. The whole shmee. Although it is wonderful to make money, it is still not, and has never been my prime motivation. Except, of course, in the stock market. But then and again, money to me has always been just another form of running wild in the streets. . . or, in this case, running wild on the lawn.

Read the Bob Dylan book slowly, slowly. Take your time. Through it, I am reliving my Greenwich Village days, working through the put downs, push downs, jealousies, and miseries I felt during those times and for many years later (and probably before, too).

Reading it, I am being reborn. . . as a folk singer and entertainer. It helps me work through and crystallize my new, running wild, one man show, performing self.

An earthy and earthly transformation is taking place.

Tuesday, May 29, 2001

Where Am I?

Lost And Found Department Revisited

Today is my birthday.

I feel depressed and low. I can't figure out why.

Am I lost? Does it have something to do with yesterday's "family" party at Paula's and Ben's. Family events bring out former lids.

I'm reminded of the melancholy and nostalgia I felt a few days ago. I concluded it was due to the repressed memory of former miseries unfaced, former lids.

Family events do bring them up. And although, except for Paula, they are not my "direct" family, that is, not my own mother, father, brother, or sister, they are, nevertheless, still my family.

After former family gatherings I often felt sad. When Ben said he hadn't talked to me for a long time, I felt some of the same sadness. Perhaps it was partly due to an obligation to help or cure Ben's "problem." Or perhaps it was truly a memory of my own sadness. . . and the beauty of breakthrough when family touches family, when father touches son, son touches sister, and sister touches brother. There is a beauty in connection, but it is tinged with sadness. . . and loss.

Why?

Is it the repressed memory of lids?

It must be. What else could it be? Nothing I can think of, besides lids, creates such sadness for me.

I want my therapist!

Does this down feeling also come from my sense of arrival. If it does, isn't this an extension of sadness from success? Seems so. But again, although I feel sad, I cannot think of anything to be sad about. And, although my sense of direction has been lost, outer directed goals dissolved like making more money or becoming successful in the eyes of others, still my core feels centered, calm, and steady. It continues to float down the slow-flowing, wide, muddy Mississippi River of More, the self-contained and peaceful Better River.

Basically, I don't know where I am. There is a vague paradoxical feeling:

Although I am lost, I am found. Although I am found, I am lost.

Where am I?

Inner-Directed Goals

The idea of pushing, pounding, and beating myself so I can “get somewhere” does not work anymore, because there is no longer any place to “get.” I don’t believe in the illusion anymore.

There is no place to be but here.

This being so, from where will I get my more?

I need it for happiness. But it no longer come from outer-directed goals. What is left, then, but inner-directed ones? Obviously these will have nothing to do with fame and fortune.

They may make others happy.

Inner-directed goals will make no one happy but me.

But what inner-directed goals can I develop? I’m vacant at the moment.

Father To The Next Generation

Is it also depressing that I am becoming father to the next generation. . . of klezmer musicians and family.

It is a new self-definition for me.

Father to the next generation: How depressing. I was always the child, the young one, the precious thing at parties, social gatherings, and family events.

True, I am wiser. I definitely have much to give. Still, I am not used to such a definition. What does it mean? Where will it lead?

But it feels right.

At sixty-four, what else could I be? Maybe that is what the embarrassment over my birthday is all about.

I am lost in this new self-definition.

I started out this morning's birthday writing feeling directionless, lost, and without a goal,

Within the words "father to the next generation" are the seeds of a new lifetime goal.

What it is, I do not yet know.

But if I see myself as "father to the next generation," my "advanced age" is no longer embarrassing. Therefore, from a personal, feeling better point of view, "father to the next generation" is good for me. It makes me feel more comfortable with the present self in which I live.

Friday, June 1, 2001

The Money Fun Exclamation Point Life!

It has been an incredible financial week – the first positive one in over three years. Maybe more. Is it a sign from above that my fortunes are changing? Indeed, it is, but only I can decide what it means.

Pain is a teacher and a teaching. It is put there to help you focus on and solve a problem. Once the problem is solved, the pain goes away. I first read these teachings in Book of Emmanuel. I have been thinking about them years. Certainly, these stock market "signs" along with Bob Baumol's idea of making settlements with credit card companies, have pushed me over the financial top: they have helped free my mind from many, most, even all of my financial lids. Of course, this is coupled with years of lid-removal therapy with its ultimate purpose of freeing me to run wild on any lawn I chose.

Now it is time for the financial lawn. I am beginning to run wild on the financial

lawn. What this means is: playing with money is so much fun! Period. That's it. Money for security is, naturally, important. But, for me, it is not the bottom line. The old idea of money as a tool to prove myself worthy to Bernice, as a provider, money as an ego power tool, to show how smart I am, how worthy, good, able, competent, manly, macho, and more: all these old ideas of money are now out the window. The only one left is: money is fun! Money is to run wild on the financial lawn! Money is mad shoe money! It should be thrown into the wind, and, like leaves flying in the autumn breeze, I'll enjoy its wind-blown patterns under a fresh blue October sky.

This is the radical shift of the money fun radical.

I am that radical.

I am leading the money fun exclamation point life!

Saturday, June 2, 2001

Success Headache

I woke up with a headache this morning. It has been growing worse all day.

A headache means I am mad. Furious, in fact.

But at what?

Could it be my success? After all, success can take away my motivation, rob me of initiative. In such a mental scenario, sadness equals initiative, happiness means listlessness.

Imagine that: sadness related to initiative and motivation; success (no sadness or lids), leads to lack of motivation; it vitiates my initiative.

Yes, somehow my stock market success is making me furious. It is secretly robbing me of my strength, motivation, and drive.

Lids, miserable as they may be, have been largely responsible for my push. Sadism, beatings, violence, are all hidden forms of motivation and initiative.

That's why part of me does not want to give up lids; In my fantasies, I beat, hit, kill, tie up, become master or even slave. But it doesn't matter what I do or become as

long as my motivation and driving power stay in tact.

Success upsets this old balance.

What a stock market week it has been! If this success continues, I won't even have to work anymore. I'll have enough money to free me from worries, pain, frustrations, and self-torture. Call that a life? Why bother living if you've got everything? What is there to look forward to, to strive for?

Nothing, nothing, nothing!

No wonder I'm mad.

By succeeding, my more is becoming less.

Fuck, fuck, fuck! What a mind I live with. It is so delightfully warped!

Yet I will keep succeeding. Why? Because I've got nothing better to do. Plus, I've gone the route of lids, misery, push-downs, and self-inflicted failures. Been there, done that. The underbelly of the monster has been revealed. Awareness of revolving dynamics has killed it.

No wonder I keep scurrying to pay my debt. It keeps me motivated.

What will motivate me to write, play guitar, study Hebrew, or whatever?

If I succeed in the stock market, why will I even bother trying to earn a living?

No wonder I have avoided the hollowing plague of success all my life.

No wonder I haven't wanted to succeed in playing the Alhambra. Once I do, what will I practice for? Why would I get up in the morning to pick up the guitar?

Oh yes, there are good reasons for failure. They are becoming clearer and clearer.

Success just brings me a short respite, a momentary jump, a quick high but short-lived high. But failure with its cyclone of lids upon lids, can motivate me forever!

There's no more in success; but there is plenty more in failure!

Sunday, June 3, 2001

Torah Lids

Much of my Torah reading – and even biblical Hebrew study – has been punctuated by a “Look, Ma. Look what I’m doing. Look at what a good student I am. Look how smart I am: I’m studying Hebrew; I’m studying the Torah. Look at what a smart and good Jew I am. Look at what a smart and good boy I am. Please love me. At least notice me. Say something good about me. I’ll do almost anything to get you love, acceptance, approval, and admiration.”

Well, this is quite a statement! I must admit that in the background the secret desires for Ma’s admiration pursued me almost everywhere. Certainly, they pursued me in Torah study.

But now they are gone. I no longer have the secret motivation. Ma, as a lid, a cover, a michsei (ceiling, in Hebrew, but coming from the root word chsei meaning to cover, to hide).

Losing this old inner motivating lid is another example of internal success in my fight against lids; it is another victory in my struggle to run wild on every lawn I can find.

However, such a victory gave me yesterday’s headache. It’s better this morning. Awareness in general is slowly driving away the demons.

I Am Different Today

I am different today.

One way this difference is expressed is through my buying and selling of stocks.

Bernice tried to crush my new enthusiasm for the stock market and the belief that I can finally win. This brought back terrible and sad memories of all past efforts to dampen my enthusiasm.

Through therapy and my own personal stock market crash, plus years of dealing with abandonment and loss, I have developed qualities of detachment and patience.

This is the crucial difference between now and my stock market entries a few years ago.

I now see how difficult it is to buy and sell stocks successfully. I have seen and experienced its new dangers.

I have had no upside for years.

The present upside elation I feel will now be tempered by memories of abandonment, loss, and near financial ruin. Even as my stocks go up, I cannot, should not, and will not forget the downside ruin I experienced. At any moment, it can happen again. I know I am walking on the edge. However, I have developed new qualities of care and “realism.” I will bring them to my stock market and financial travels.

But I don't want this care and “realism” to dampen my spirit of effort, adventure, enthusiasm.

Have I really changed? Is there a difference? Have I actually developed new qualities and levels of detachment and patience? Can I actually believe all this?

I'll have to work with this new found image of myself, these new strengths and qualities. Through usage and over time I'll have to develop confidence not only in them, but in whether I have or “own” them.

The stock market is one of my training grounds. It is here I will test and develop my new found skills.

Bernice's voice reflects the discouraging voice of my mother. “Calm down, stop, you can't do that, you can't make it, you can't run wild on this or any lawn.” Terribly sad and killing memories of the past live and are deeply embedded in all the present cells of my body. Becoming aware of them, and thus routing them out, is my present and even my life time task.

My job is to kick discouragement and negativity in the ass!

My job is to fight for enthusiasm!

What better place to start than the elusive, slippery world of the stock market.

I'm really very shaken up by this.

More than success by making money in the stock market or any place else—although this would be nice!—my main task is to fight the voice of discouragement and fear, presently typified and personified in the fearful attitudes of Bernice, and formerly imposed upon me (soaked into two-year-old and onward self) by my frightened mother!

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Running Wild With My True Monetary Self

It is so hard to face this disdain, hatred, and “disgust” she has for the newly discovered, running wild, true monetary me.

Even when it makes money in the stock market it gets no kudos. Instead, I am knocked as a gambler who will never pay his debts.

True, I am a gambler. Certainly the entrepreneurial and artistic aspects of my life and life style are a gamble. I'm gambling on my talent, ability, and skill to somehow stay alive as an artist, to somehow survive financially on my own terms. The gamble is worth it. Otherwise I wouldn't do it. Forget about understanding or acceptance by others. When my wife calls me selfish, I agree. I am selfish. I believe in divine selfishness. Only through it can the true self be found, developed, and polished to the highest degree. Then, like the warm rays of the sun, its brilliance will shine on everyone around it. Thus does divine selfishness bring light and happiness into the world.

So I believe; and so I act.

Forget about my wife understanding or ever accepting it. It is both incomprehensible and unacceptable to her. Perhaps, nay probably, she will never

understand or accept this true, running wild aspect of me. This may be sad. But it is true.

How can I live without this support? More easily than I used to. More important is: I have not only discovered but learned to love my true running wild self! It is indeed the most important, exciting, expansive, and shining aspect of me. Staying in touch with it brings me true happiness and fulfillment. No one can give me this but me. I am starting to take the offering.

Sadness "Saves" Me

I wonder if the (my) sadness "saves" me from the intensity of the excitement.

Thus excitement must be a kind of pain or discomfort that, if too intense, I want to "escape" from. One way I can escape is through sadness (is by manufacturing a sadness.)

In this way, sadness acts as a personal tranquilizer. Paradoxically, by quieting my mind, calming me down, relaxing my muscle tensions, and making me more peaceful, such sadness can make me "happy."

Thursday, June 7, 2001

Guitar Excitement

Pick up the guitar with First Excitement in mind. Translate the First Excitement into Guitar Excitement (modulated, understood, and partly managed by the sadness factor).

"Wrong" notes make it real.

I have never played this way! So emotional and free! With focus on the stomach excitement rather than the audience! I'm letting "wrong notes" slide even while knowing that playing a few makes it real!

Doesn't the sadness (through the form of missing her, lacking, abandonment, loss) come from the excitement of singing Pastures of Plenty so beautifully and well?!

I've been using her, the Shekina, the Divine form, The Her in her myriad forms as my excitement manager. Perhaps with this realization I don't have to "manage" my excitement in the old way anymore (through lids); perhaps I can have both: the her and the excitement!

Saturday, June 9, 2001

Good Posture

Not a pain in sight.

No drive either, of course.

Can't I find something wrong to drive me on?

Yes!

Poor posture. I didn't stand up straight at the opening night of the GROW folk dance weekend class. I can't believe it. Me? After all that focus and posture work in front of the mirror? In spite of it, I took a guarded step back into crouchhood.

Constant Vigilance Is The Only Answer: Watch my posture!

Thank God I've found something wrong! Now I can be driven on again. Perhaps not the highest or worthiest of goals, but not bad either, Good posture, great posture! These are nevertheless, positive values.

Hey, Jim Gold, are you kidding? Don't demean it: Good posture is one of the highest values achievable.

On all levels it feels wonderful.

1. Physically, it looks and feels wonderful.
2. Mentally, it looks and feels wonderful. It coordinates all my energies.
3. Spiritually, it unites the base and upper forces into a straight-line goal of

strength. Good posture represents power in the present.

4. It is self-pride in action. What is self-pride but pride and recognition of the God within, the ego humbly worshiping the inner Prince of Power and Strength.

Good posture is the Prince, nay, the King Of All Positions! Its proud power represents, in physical form, the proud power of God on earth, of the Mighty Energy surging through our veins.

The proud power of good posture runs my mad shoe weekend!

Sunday, June 10, 2001

Recording

I felt no pain on Eli the Elephant day.

“Record it,” they say. “Make a children’ record.”

I say it, too.

Motivation is the key.

Am I motivated? Should I be?

Well, why not?

But, I can find no reasonable reason to record it. But I can find no reasonable reasons why not.

Perhaps motivation is beyond reason.

Honor, fortune, immortality, approval, love from others, all these and more are no longer sources of motivation. Neither are fear, pain, discomfort, hard striving, and worry.

If all this is true, then for what reasons should I be motivated? Again, isn’t this beyond reason?

No question I feel I should record these; no question part of me wants to do it.

Maybe it is a question of timing! Up to now, the time hasn’t been right or ripe. Fruition is the key: a time to reap, a time to sow.

Look at New Leaf Journal. Publishing time finally came after seven years. It was

and is a long slow process and project. Also, I am doing it with another: Barry.

Perhaps I should record all my songs, and print them, through and with another.

A recording engineer, a producer.

But who?

If I can find the who, the when will come; so will the how and why.

Gone public means not only bringing public my inner voice but finding and doing it with and through another – or any another – or others.

They will emerge.

First comes the slow inner decision to record.

But on a deeper level, I have no choice.

I am at that point now!

Who are my angels along this new path?

Joe Pallo, DiBella Music, Dina and Tom, and others: recording engineers and potential pointers to producers.

Sunday, June 17, 2001

Micro-management

I've been fighting against being micromanaged all my life.

"Put the nail there, put your finger here, put the shovel there, pay off your debts, dump the garbage, do the dishes. And do it all when I want it, on my schedule. Never mind yours. Never mind what you want. That is totally besides the point. Besides, I'm a liberal, and I know what's right. And I know what's right whether you think you know what's right or not. I micromanage (really mis-manage) everything from private life to government. I'm a control freak in disguise. But I won't say that. Rather than look at myself, my style is always to micromanage others, and to blame them if they don't do things my way."

Well, these are the mothers I have been fighting all my life. That's why it is

harder to get totally mad and frustrated with Bernice. Although the above could and are exactly her words, my long-range hatred of this controlling, push-and-put down attitude are more related to my mother. Sure I married many if not most of the attitudes of my “mother” but nevertheless, the “mother reflection” I married is not my real mother. My real mother is the control freak living inside my mind who is now reflected in the control freaks I see, deal with, and fight against outside my mind.

Therefore, I am very angry! I feel like the lid is about to pop, my internal cauldron about to explode. This used to be totally directed against Bernice. But it is no longer; I see that she is a substitute trauma, a reflection of my traumatic mother experiences within. Now that I am aware of this, even though I rant and rave at her, deep down I nevertheless always realize I am still fighting the phantom of my control freak, micro-managing motherly past.

This does not lessen the pain of my present struggle. It only makes it “more bearable.”

Basically, I want to do things my own way. If I don't, life is not worth living. Micromanagement by others is a living, spiritual death, the death decreed by God for idolatry.

What I am really furious about is how deeply in my soul this micromanagement has been planted, how it controls the handling and attitude towards so many details of my life. I am constantly under the internal gun. Then someone externally comes along, a control freak like Bernice, and pushes my internal button, and I explode at her. But I am aware she is not the root cause. Mad as I get at her (and perhaps I should, in order to “practice standing up for myself”), she is nevertheless an aggravated reflection of the root cause.

Still, I have to practice awareness, standing up for myself, and strengthening my fight against micromanagement in the present, in my present situation.

I have so many situations in which to practice: Money, garbage, dish washing, and gardening are only a few.

Such micromanagement drains my fun, cuts my energy, destroys my running wild on the lawn joy center. I will not let it! Never, never, never! It is a do or die situation.

I will keep my eye on the prize: namely, the joyful sparks that come from managing my own money in the way I like, and thrilling to the sparks of fun that so often spring from it (especially when the market goes up, I get a check in the mail, make a sale, have a large folk dance class, etc.). Or when I dump the garbage, do the dishes, even take care of the lawn or fix things around the house "at my own place, in my own time, when I am ready, etc."

Unless there is a fire in the house, or some life-threatening situation suddenly emerges, there is no reason for me to act otherwise. Besides, when these situations come up, I am still deciding to "manage" or act on them in my own time. Only on these timings, such as a life threatening fire in the house, Bernice happens to agree with me.

I am living in a cauldron of anger over all the details that have been micromanaged in my life. Through lack of awareness, and the inner strength that I lacked because of lack of awareness, I succumbed to this micromanagement. True, I did it with hissed, inner resentments, and many retreats into the inner artistic chamber beauty of my room, but I did it nevertheless. No wonder the outside world became such an unfriendly place.

So today's new micromanagement awareness is making me furious about the way I lived my past life.

But those days are over. The raging steam of my hissing is being used to harden the cement that is being laid down on my new path.

I am freeing myself for having fun in all the details.

Gold New Leaf Journal O5.

The Exclamation Point Life!

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So ends a new leaf.