Itinerant Philosophy: On Alphonso Lingis

BobbyGeorge, TomSparrow

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What is this? I have asked for this.
Relax, friend, we need to read it.
I will though, take the moment to say I miss talking with you. And hope you get a job in the vicinity.
Therefore...

Mementos

Lakshmi
Thanksgiving, 2011

Dear Tom,

Three years have passed since you first asked me to write about Al Lingis and his correspondence with friends over the past forty years. Sixteen years have passed since Wolfgang Fuchs and I gathered together the first 20 years of Al’s letters, with the intention of providing a sourcebook for researchers. *Letters from a Nomad Philosopher* (mss) compiled over 200 letters written between 1973 and 1995. Right now it sits on the floor before my fireplace, scattered around me in folders with headings like Flesh, Fun, and Friendship; on People and Philosophers; Birth and Death. It sits before me now much like the final exams that were spread around the floor in front of fish tanks and wall-to-wall bookshelves at Al’s house in State College, 1972. As a graduate assistant for one of his big introductory classes, we were grading, holding pass or fail thumbs like the young Caesars we felt to be. Only then, as I recall clearly, when we would utter disgust at a piece and move it towards a would-be-fail pile, Al’s hand would dart forward and intercept. A few quick searches and he would find a passage to read us, and surround its reading with evocations of tenderness, liveliness, loveliness, and looking up at us staring at him blankly utter something like “brilliant, don’t you think?”

I have never forgotten that occasion. These utterances came as epiphanies to me—sudden and momentous hammer blows upon my way of thinking about things and people in terms of grades, of arrangements into piles, categories, and pigeon holes. To this day whenever I find myself before a situation calling for a sharp judgment, one usually bearing nasty outcomes, if I just pause enough a little voice will arise in my mind with a lovely refrain that dissembles any tension of the moment: “brilliant . . .”
Many others have been affected by Lingis over the years. Stellar observations can be found in the lovely homage compiled by Alex Hooke and Wolfgang Fuchs *Encounters with Alphonso Lingis* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003). An exceptional take on his own books can be found in Mary Zournazi’s interview with Lingis for Radio Eye in Australia (1999) [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/radioeye/Foreign9.htm]:

I don’t think I have a policy statement on writing, but I do have some feelings. I have thought that the task of philosophical writing is to address yourself to some reality and for it to be in your own terms . . . I think I felt that very intensely the first time I went to India – when I went to Calcutta to stay for several months. I was afraid of Calcutta and it had the reputation of a city dreadful at night. I arrived in the evening and as soon I booked into a hotel I immediately always went out . . .

I somehow had always felt—it was an idea that I found in Nietzsche—that suffering does not exceed human capacity . . . and that is something I verified in a very personal experience with my mother’s dying. It was an almost unbearable thing to watch, but she bore it with great strength and courage—and that made me believe that one does have the strength. But months later in Calcutta, the last night I was there, I took another midnight walk—I wept, really wept.

Lingis would write of death in many of his works, culminating in the big book *Deathbound Subjectivity*, the subject itself often introduced by the deaths of his mother, colleagues, students, more often presaged new friendships.

One day in Mahabalipuram, I felt death come for me. I had been bereft, in a single day, of the robust stren-
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gth that once climbed the cliffs to see the cave-temples of Ajanta; within a few hours a microbe that had entered my veins through some prick too tiny to locate had drained all my strength . . . In the ten days that followed . . . I got sicker . . . Then one night I awoke from a fever to find my rib-cage rigid, my compressed lungs wheezing and choking . . . then I felt myself being lifted . . . by a small figure of a man clad only in rags. He took charge of me. He came with a cart, hoisted me on it, dragged it through the bush, located a rickshaw from someone he roused in the night, pedaled me through the jungle road, found a boat in the village by the sea, roused the owner, and laid me on it, then paddled it through the sea whose waves roared about us . . . He dragged me to the clinic in Madras. Then he left without saying a word. I would never see him again, no letter from me would ever find him.

A youth from Nepal who rowed through the storming sea with a stranger, and departed; this seemed to me a kind of nomadism radically different from the nomadism our inordinate excesses of individual value and commodity values makes possible . . . The further one goes one finds oneself only the more in oneself, the more wearied with the weight of oneself. The true nomadism is rather that which drives one, when one goes far, not to find, on each new shore on which one arrives, someone with whom one shares a language, a belief, or practical concerns, but to find someone with whom one shares nothing, the stranger, and, reduced to the solitude in which one has been mired by contracting an existence of one’s own, one is delivered by the carnal arms of a stranger. If one starts with this access to the other, outside of all contracts, one will then hear the thoughts and see the perspectives and glimpse the visions of another land, without
the inevitable deviation and misunderstanding and parody, the unending Western recoding. One would know *depaysment*, one would find oneself *elsewhere*.¹

I remember that first trip for Lingis to India. I received an Aerogramme, and later a photo—writing on the back; the first of many to follow over the years.

Verily, brilliant indeed! I had written him seeking advice about my own all important dissertation back at Penn State. He unmanned my logic with a snapshot. Eventually these photo journalistic entries would become full-blown 9X12 glossy photos accompanying his annual end-of-the-year New Year greetings letter. Many would preface chapters in his books, mirroring the encounters with the strangers that sustained his journeys.

Tom, I write you 39 years later. I have carried those letters. They sit now before me, each one alive with dormancy. Whether it is a thought about a person or place, a shark or volcano, a simple sentence or diatribe, something would erupt with brilliance.

Introducing us to his essays in *Abuses*, Lingis said

These were letters written to friends, from places I found myself for months at a time, about encounters that moved and troubled me. . . .

The letters were almost never answered, maybe never read. Nowadays people only write letters to record requests, transactions, and detailed explanations, or to send brief greetings; when they want to make personal contact, they telephone. Conversation by telephone communicates with the tone and warmth of the human voice, but what has moved one deeply can only be shared through language when one has found the right words. Finding the right words takes time. . . .
It is hard to share something only with words on a silent page. As the places and encounters reverberated in my heart, I found again and again they had not been said with the right words. What I wrote about them finally became too long to send to anyone. I will again find they have not been said with the right words.²

WE are ALL Friends in his Letters. I have always been another address. My first letter from Lingis came in 1973, written from Nice where he was raving about Deleuze who had just published his essay on Nietzsche entitled “Nomad Thought” and the urge to de-codify codes of dominant culture. Lingis certainly has followed this call to Philosophy, this impulse to cross borders; the scream to hammer them with tuning forks. He travels to places sometimes familiar, most oft strange; to peoples even farther by cultural bounds, yet near in common human grounds. Where grandeur and absurdity dwell together: in this world. Here, the letters are perhaps more direct and immediate than the published works. The letters bespeak first encounters, words written to give friends the excitement of having seen and experienced something firsthand. They are first attempts at making intelligible what nomadic Lingis perceives before the codes of conventional wisdom obscure.

A year later he wrote:

Nice, 11-22-74

chers amis—Michigan it is. The winter desolation, white serene, death, the gaping black hole before which being agonizes turns out to be made of tiny white crystals, each one different, sterile, infinite beauty. I’m afraid the hope we had that you would be shaped, by education, by grades, by judgments, by
sanctions, into a Heideggerian *de l’obsérance stricte* is going to flicker out, in that vast uncontrollable solitude. Wherever is Albion? The old Swedes with the prairie-dog eyes, knuckles color of barley, each one an Attila grimly reaping the yellow horizons? Lutherans, performing, as spiritual exercise, biological necessities in wooden back shacks while abominating the pope in Rome? Their sons in wooden benches in front of you, in rough jeans, the acrid smell of horses, hot horse muzzles, first masturbation in a stable, against the leg of the roan filly? Their daughters, nails unpainted, but hands still colored with the juice of boysenberries and black currents [sic]? Firm, pulpy breasts, big tits, not like your California nymphs, inconsistent with their heads full of theosophy. Here the purple colors of German sin, Faust and Luther, being replaced, these days, just with health, with those big tits and the Northwest air? My God, you sure as hell are out to teach them! You are going to educate yourself, wonderfully, I'll wager passing down to them all the diamonds in your course syllabuses. Plato–Johnstone–Nietzsche–Kandinsky—what is wanting? What is this indefinable lack, that something missing, that I nonetheless sniff at while reading through your class syllabuses? Sade, I suppose, or better the really sick Austrian Sacher-Masoch, Reich, Cioran, Genet, the factor of evil, sickness, the cancer on reason, the stinking effluvia. You will, coquettishly, answer that it is you yourself who will introduce that dimension. (Better, you should shrug your shoulders at the sick Rivieran who is writing to you, and look out at them, health, vigor, courage, endurance, confidence, the aching balls in those blue jeans, the big tits.) And you say they’re rich yet! Old man driving bulldozers across forests, ten thousand bushels of barley or rye in the silo, three
hundred black angus steers? As one who woefully has never been able to leech to any degree worth mentioning off students, and in fact have only once had one who was a genuine millionaire, himself. Yet what profession is more akin to state of mind, in that willingness to listen to, but not believe, everybody’s story, bringing up the big words that flatter, that being in the street, where the men who do business with life are, that adding, at each visit, that little riff about love and eros and all that is de rigueur—what profession is more akin to that of the philosophy professor than that of the common harlot? Tant mieux si les clients sont riches . . . I am now full of projects—the top ones are to get with it on my real life-destiny, my real vocation, just now lucidly, fully recognized: to spend my life to make Levinas known. So, I am thinking about a small book, in completely accessible language, explaining what he has seen about eroticism. Then, scholarly, treatise-format, a study of temporality in Heidegger and Levinas. For Levinas, I recognize now, has a completely new idea about the internal format of present, past and future (the presence of the present, the passing-away of the past, the surprise of the future), as well as about temporalization itself, the synthetic unity that forms there, which he no longer seats in the concept of existence. This is very new I think.

To praise Lingis, to adulate, is sheer sycophancy. I plead nolo contendere. I am simply a flatstone, an altar upon which to worship; or to cut up dead fish. To criticize, to dispose, is sheer idiocy. Have you been there? The eros of Khajuraho, hallucinogenic nights of Borneo, Ulan Bataar, Mali, San Salvador, Cusco; the ice hotel, Pattaya transvestite bars? All of these on their New Years? This feature of his writing both attracts and frightens something in us. His descriptions have
both their allure and their horror. Maybe that’s why his letters are attractive: safely morphed accounts from the simulacrum. In a letter to Georges Brandes Nietzsche wrote “To my friend. George! Once you discovered me, it was no great feat to find me: the difficulty will be to lose me.” If you find Lingis he will charm you. If you take him seriously, he will disarm you. Either way you could become obsessed, possessed; then again dispossessed and consumed. Does it matter? Isn’t that akin to the advice Zorba the Greek gave to [his] boss: “a man needs a touch of madness, or he never dare cut the rope.” Reading a letter from Lingis is a good start. Reading several letters might suck you in. As Nietzsche invited, “Either we have no dreams or our dreams are interesting. We should learn to arrange our waking life in the same way: nothing or interesting”3 (Gay Science #232).

I leave you to your own readings. Here are a few of the early letters. I append scanned versions of a couple aerograms, mostly to highlight the precision and the economy of Lingis as typist. By 1988 he had a laptop when traveling and the scale of the letters became epic.

Shanti,
David

I have something new to send people like you, Dave, people running
jubilantly over the memory of their birth—your birthday was 27—
and it is Chomsky’s latest: De l’inconvenient l’inconvenient d’être né. And it
is Chomsky’s latest: De l’inconvenient l’inconvenient d’être né. And it
really is about just that, not a trace of irony in the title, no last
chapter letting shine a few starbeams in the abominable of the desec-
atation. Those hundred narcotic pages of considering that that chemical
accident, one’s birth, was in fact the first cataclysm restructures
a solitary witness without goals and purposes, the Buddha
human history—and that includes the Buddha. It has discredited me most deeply.
On the one side, by all in me that
is inclined to deeply agree. On the other side, by the irrationa-
nothing to think long and hard about birth, and before birth, that void
of me—as absurdly as, these last three years, my studies around
Blondlot and Heidegger about death.

Methinks for our practical lives: to rend all of Nietzsche’s horror
distribute against Frege, in order to dig out the germ of truth in all
that: the sex virulence of the action. For every involvement in the
“pedagogy” or teaching people can only become that all those years
spent in dividing between the “full devotion to teaching these
people” and the pursuit of my own manuscripts: there are no eages,
no questions, no nonverbal therapists: there are only actors.
Impostors. From now on: Integrity, shall henceforth only read
manuscripts in classrooms. So I trade this year’s resolution to
you.

Xploration of your life: I hope that “job hunting” becomes in fact
occupation-finding, destiny-finding. Heidegger wish.

Am I one would be I hope it becomes not another role, another
no more, but another life into which you will be reborn (Converting all
up to now, feeling all the pain) with only
the pretense existence up to now, feeling all the pain) with only
the pretense of having to kill it as inane as the cobra ever
need to bear off its own skin.

Am I one would be I hope it becomes not another role, another
no more, but another life into which you will be reborn (Converting all
up to now, feeling all the pain) with only
the pretense existence up to now, feeling all the pain) with only
the pretense of having to kill it as inane as the cobra ever
needs to bear off its own skin.

Remembering Nietzsche: Que signifie aujourd’hui pour nous une
existence philosophique? N’est-ce pas presque un moyen de tirer son
épine du feu? Une sorte d’aventure? Et pour celui qui vit de la
sorte à l’écart et en toute simplicité, il est vraisemblable qu’il
indique le meilleur chemin à suivre pour son propre conscience.
Ne lui faudrait-il pas avoir expérimenté certaines manières différentes de
vivre pour s’autoriser à parler de la valeur de la vie? Brus,
ne devons qu’il faut avoir vécu de façon totalement “antiphilo-
osophique”, selon les notions reçues jusqu’alors, et surtout pas en pa
paris et expériences vécues. L’homme des expériences les plus
vertes, qu’il condense en des conclusions générales: ne faudrait-il
pas qu’il fit l’homme le plus puissant?—

I shall now interrupt this letter to eat some turkey shank stewed
in orange juice, à la Shire.

A former premier and foreign minister, Yama Sambo, entertains some
friends on a languid afternoon at a farewell meal at his home.
He is going to Bangkok the next day, he explains, on a plane the
United States is using to evacuate its official personnel, Foreign
service, the UN mission, as well as UN personnel, and diplomats.
A former Cambodian premier does not seem to fit any of these cate-
cories but a career of his household explains that he has become the
head of a household in Haiti, Sir. The NYT wires.

We should be reading Hegel, we are for once in a systematic
history. How can one decide how one is going to distribute the time of the a
morning without being haunted by emptying planes of orphans, heroes
who are flying single planes on dictator’s palaces, a destiny of a people
being violently restructured, in poison gases, rapids, violent
births and much, much blood.

In a week or two I shall begin to write a text about the time of a
 destiny, that trajectory that arises in the cosmic chemical accident
Of course I know too that it's more fun to just climb into a sideshow, you not
knowing a word of Bengali, lick your finger, test the wind, sway your shoulders,
point, giggle, and be off; eventually you will find a pad. One always does, but
if when you get to Chittagong it's the middle of the night or you've got the running
clay, I could recommend, Dave, the Shaikat. Because of the mirrors. Because of
the narcolepsy of the sparrows. They just look to me like English sparrows, the
ones we have back in America. I suppose they toppled along somehow on the ship
that brought Colonel Cox and Brigadier Billions to Bengal back in the days of the
nabobs. Don't ask me how they got so narcoleptic. But the Shaikat is full of
them, due to the mirrors, there's one in every room.
And the thoughtfulness of the staff. Just about an hour ago there was a godawful
screaming down the hall like a stuck pig. I went down to have a look. A couple
of middle aged Germans, with bloated white faces that looked like if you struck a
pin in them the pus would spurt out and dribble down their sweet scented polyester
wrapping; an official from some branch of the UN here to collect statistics, proba-
bly or a representative of a pharmaceutical firm from Munich. The Frau was trembling
in Auschwitziarch terror and der Mann was heroically jolting the steel tip of his
umbrella in a hole in the plaster. A mili dio Franz managed to get out. A sort
Oh, the manager said soothing and conciliatory, Mr. sweet smile simmering over his
rows of even gleaming teeth. He live there.
Life is brief, Dave. Why muddle around and why not just move over to where the
fun is? All moral philosophy comes down to that. As I haven't been to Yemen or
Mongolia or Albania I can't really say that the folk there have more fun in Chittagong
than anywhere, but certainly they have more fun than in most places. Be sensible,
ask yourself what is the point of killing more time looking into Michigan City
and then Detroit?
I wouldn't be the thinking man, the educator, the researcher I am, Dave, if I
didn't ask myself, self, what is the secret of all the fun they have there in
Chittagong?
As far as I've come up with I see idleness. I never see such a lassitudinous bunch.
About 5PM the black of the night begins to pale and the first crow begins to
matter, and then they start. They seem to talk almost continually, every one of
them. When you are talking to them they keep on talking, and then when it is their
turn they shout. The tongue is the sole powerful muscle in their otherwise eneined body according to the UN statistics Banga dash
is, if one except the exceptional plight of Kamarupa, the absolute bottom in the
deterioration sweepstakes; the average Bangladeshi dines on $20 worth of goods
per annum, and 80% of the children are in a state of acute malnutrition. Their
tongues are like those of cobras; they get in too or three times as many words in
a breath as the most languidest whispers. I had a little contest yesterday with
the waiter and found that he could say 'Shimpanama meddy' before I finished with
'fish.' What the hell are they talking about? I have no idea, I don't know the
language. But since you might as well say that nothing is going on in this country
there is nothing really new, then not being anything in the way of progress,
industry, publicity, and since all these illiterates are not really reading
exchanging views about Keynesian economics, foundation in Hollywood or Russell's
transcendental ideologies, I can only assume that most of it is bullshit. And a life
dedicated primarily to the formulation of bullshit at high velocities is, any sage
philosopher will affirm, fun.
I see that over again each time I step out of the Shaikat, I, the ongutat.
The poster at the embassy in Bangkok said 'Visit Bengal Dash Before Tourists Come'
That is, apparently the only ones they could think up. No really funny, probably
I thought at the time.) I, the ongutat step out of the front door of the
Shaikat. There is a buzz in the street, sideshows step in their trunks, collide,
the great gray own suddenly rear on their Launches like kangaroos. Tender young
cows scream and flee into the shits of their fathers. Then aged hound dogs dart.
Of course I know too that it's more fun to just climb into a rickshaw, you not knowing a word of Bengali, lick your finger, test the wind, shrug your shoulders, point, giggles, and be off; eventually you will find a pad. One always does. But if when you get to Chittagong it's the middle of the night or you've got the running clap, I could recommend, Dave, the Shakhit. Because of the mirrors. Because of the narcissism of the sparrows. They just look to me like English sparrows, the ones we have back in America. I suppose they tagged along somehow on the ship that brought Colonel Cox and Brigadier Billions to Bengal back in the days of the nabobs. Don't ask me how they got so narcissistic. But the Shakhit is full of them, due to the mirrors; there's one in every room.

And the thoughtfulness of the staff. Just about an hour ago that was a godawful screaming down the hall like a stuck pig. I went down to have a look. A couple of middle-aged Germans, with bloated white faces that looked like if you stuck a pin in them the gauze would split out and dribble down their sweat-soaked polyester wrappings; an official from some branch of the UN here to collect statistics, probably or a representative of a pharmaceutical firm from Munich. The free was trembling in Auschwitzish terror and her man was heroically juggling the steel tip of his umbrella in a hole in the plaster. A tall, thin man managed to get out. A man.

Oh, the manager said soothing and courteous, his sweet smile simpering over his rows of even gleaming teeth. He live there.

Life is brief, Dave. Why puzzle around and why not just move over to where the fun is? All rural philosophy comes down to that. As I haven't been to Yemen or Mongolia or Alabama I can't really say that the folk have more fun in Chittagong than anywhere, but certainly they have more fun than in most places. Be sensible, ask yourself what is the point of killing more time looking into Michigan City and then Detroit?

I wouldn't be the thinking man, the educator, the researcher I am, Dave, if I didn't ask myself, self, what is the secret of all the fun they have here in Chittagong?

So far what I've come up with is its stoopility. I never see such a loquacious bunch. About 5PM the black of the night begins to pale and the first crow begins to matter, and then they start. They seem to talk almost continually, every one of them. When you are talking to them they keep on talking, and then when it is their turn they shut. The tongue is the sole powerfully, even titanically built muscle in their otherwise emasculated bodies (according to the UN statistics Bangla Desh is, if one except the exceptional plight of Kamputha, the absolute bottom in the destination sweaters). The average Bangladeshi devours of $90 worth of goods per annum, and 80% of the children are in a state of acute malnutrition. Their tongues are like those of cobras; they get in too fast and three times as many words in a breath as the most long-winded wisemen. I had a little contest yesterday with the sailor and found that he could say "Chameypoma shabiy" before I finished with "Fish." What the hell are they talking about? I have no idea, I don't know the language. But since you might as well say that nothing is going on in this country there is nothing really new, this not being anything in the way of progress, industry, publicity, and since all these illiterates are not really saying exchanging views about Keynesian economics, fabrication in Hollywood or Kassar's transcendental idealism, I can only assume that most of it is bullshit. And a life devoted primarily to the formulation of bullshit at high velocities is, any sane philosopher will affirm, fun.

I see that over again each time I step out of the Shakhit. I, the excommunicating. (The poster at the embassy in Bangkok says "Visit Bangla Desh Before Tourists Come" that is, apparently the only ones on they could stick up. No really, hurry, probably I thought at the time.) I, the excommunicating, step out of the front door of the Shakhit. There is a hum of the street, rickshaws stop in their tracks, collide, the great gray even suddenly roar on theirunches like kamputha. Tender young cows scream and flee into the skirts of their fathers. Seen aged bulldozers dare
one another to rush up and jeer at me. Everybody waits holding his breath to see what the orangutans will do. I reach in my shirt pocket and put on my sunglasses.

Thirty or forty volleys are immediately raised shooting two or three hundred phonens before another breath is needed. Great hilarity breaks out in the street, the bull, the jokes, scattering, tickling the gut into spasm, the sun flashing like prairie fire on all those big toothy grinning mouths.

I've tried, though. To keep a low profile, stiff upper lip, it's not me you see all decked out in white silk longings with a sequined cupolace and an ascot from Pierre Cardin. I bought everything I wear right here in Chittagong. This morning a young man strolled in front of me stark naked, his dinkdong flapping on his thighs, and yet it was me they were all looking at so abashed.

the men, of course. Bengal they is a Muslim country. Women are not allowed on the streets, like Jews. If they really have to go out, say to the doctor, they cover themselves with black. Garbo should come here, instead of trying to hack it in New York. Oh well out of sight out of mind I said. Time to get over the Hangover clap. Except that now it turns out that the clap is over but I still pee blood every fifteen minutes. I go to the doctor practically every day since I can afford it. He charges me 20 takes—about $1.15—for a consultation. Today's theory was biharala. I told him I have been convoluted about not wading in fresh water streams. But apparently turning on the tap and brushing your teeth amounts to the same watersmalling thing in these latitudes.

Now, though. You don't have to tell me a thing. I know all about you, every detail. About the new ideas you put on the table at the Merleau-Ponty circle. About how your book keeps getting bogged down in your formulation. About the dopey one in the third row who had to give an A to last term. About the new bank of must you have switched to. About how the football coach kicks you off two or three times a week, and how you Shepard his first string through at the end of the term. And you call
Letters :: Bogota

from: Bogota, 3/4/94

Just arrived tonight here in Columbia and turned on the tube as I unpacked and heard the Generalísimo who is running in the elections declare that four years ago, when the Liberals took over, there was terrorism and subversion in only half of the country; now it has spread to every district and province. And what a wonderful Supreme court this country has! The very day I arrived they declared any kind of criminal prosecution—and even rehabilitation programs—for the personal possession and use of cocaine, heroin, hashish, marijuana, etc. to be against the Constitution!

Here is what I wrote this last day on Te Pito O Te Henua. But oh! it’s long, what I wrote. When I get a thick letter I think it’s going to be tedious and a chore and some kind of requirement to answer. So do believe I am quite sincere dear Dave in saying please do not sacrifice a moment of satori, idle frolicking, cunt or ass fucking under the feeling you should read this! At the first hint of tedium throw it aside. I am only sending it to you just in case it may give you pleasure.

Te Pito O Te Henua, the Naval of the World, is the most isolated island there is, 3,600 kilometers from the South American coast, 2,000 kilometers from the nearest inhabited island, tiny Pitcairn where the mutineers from the Bounty settled with their Tahitian women. A pebble in the vast Pacific, it is 14.5 miles long and 7.8 at its widest point. the result of three major volcanic rises from the ocean floor (6 million, 1 million, and 600,000 years ago) and filled in by secondary volcanic cones, it is low and entirely grass covered. Long ago covered with tropical forest, it has long been treeless, and today only a few planted eucalyptus groves stand here and there to flutter the trade winds that constantly blow eastward. From the top of any of its rises, one sees the ocean all around and the curvature of the earth. Above the vastness of the sky is still more limitless. The island is a crust of volcanic cinder against which the ocean beats and sprays. There are no bays, no rivers, and no coral reefs about the island. Three volcanic craters contain lakes of rain water. Most of the surface is strewn with black chunks of jagged lava. Here and there are expanses of built-up topsoil, reasonably fertile and reasonably free of chunks of broken lava. The entire population of the island have been settled in the one village Hanga Roa. In this season, the rains are beginning with intermittent rain and drizzle and so the island is green. Tourists come—only some 4000 a year—in the dry season and for the “Easter Island Week” when they put on a “native” show. On my plane there was the inevitable group of Japanese tourists I occasionally saw in the days that followed seated in their bus with their Japanese guide, and a few stragglers as solitary as I; when we happened to arrive at the same site, the one turned away to contemplate the horizon until the other left. I stayed in a room in the house of a very old couple who spoke hardly any Spanish.

A living organism, out of the energies it assimilates from its environment, generates forces in excess of what it needs to adjust to its environment and compensate for the intermittent and superficial lacks that evaporation and fuel consumption produce in its dense and self-maintaining plenum. The discharge of these superabundant forces are felt in excremental impulses—in passions. But the environment itself is full of free
Itinerant Philosophy

and nonetheological energies—trade winds and storms, the oceans streaming over three-quarters of the planet (since the earth is porous and all the oceans interconnect, said Borges, each human has bathed in the sacred waters of the Ganges), the continental plates that float and creak and grind together, the cordilleras of the deep that explode in volcanic eruptions, and mile-deep glaciers piled up on Antarctica that flow into the sea and break off in bobbling ice mountains. How can the passions of penguins, of albinores, of jaguars, and of humans now lift the eyes beyond the nests and the lairs and the horizons? How can these passions not sink into volcanic rock and the oceanic deserts?

When one is there one has the impression one will stay indefinitely. The harmony of low volcanic cones and gentle grass cover under balmy skies opens about one like a benevolence. Along all the edges the island drops in sharp lava shards whipped by the ocean; beyond there is the featureless ocean and skies. There are a thousand of the giant statues, set on low stone altars on the edge of the sea facing inward, and some 15,000 other archeological sites—remains of dwellings, petroglyphs, caves.

But it is nothing like visiting a vast open-air museum, inspecting the details and decoding the significance of a thousand works of art. All the giant statues were hurled from their altars since the Christians arrived. All the smaller statues and carvings were removed by tourists and collectors; the tiny museum has only copies. Thor Heyerdahl's account of his plunder is in Aku-Aku, the single most sickening book I have ever read. (Worse still than the woman missionary who told me in Irian Jaya she broke into a Papuan sanctuary and danced on the altar.) Only in four sites have the statues, mostly broken, been re-erected in recent times. The statues, called Moai, erected over a fourteen-hundred-year period, were remarkably uniform, all very stylized busts of legendary ancestors. Out of a thousand, but three are vaguely female. Mostly one walks, since the grassy harmony of the island is so hypnotizing, and at a site one rests and enters a kind of empty reverie over the crumbled altar and the broken statue fallen face forward over the rubble. When one comes upon one of the four restored sites, there are five or seven statues on them, remounted back together if possible, very worn by the wind and the elements and the centuries. The head is as big as the chest, and there are no lips; the hands are minuscule, long fingers traced in relief over the abdomen. The head, very flat, is really just a face, turned slightly back, with strong square jaw, thin tight lips, but with huge empty eyes and strong nose with wide-open nostrils carved in a spiral. The eyes are not, like the eyes of the Buddha, turned downward compassionately on the people below. They look inward to the island, but the ocean is already visible on the other side of the low grassy width of the island. The depersonalized faces of the legendary chiefs who 1500 years ago sailed 4000 kilometers to land on that edge of crust. Stern, heretic, rigid, uniform, they certainly impose a severe order on the inhabitants, and anthropologists say early Polynesian society was very structured. But surely, in their enormity—one is estimated to weigh 300 tons—and in their eyes fixed expressionless and unbenevolent upon remoteness beyond the horizon, they did not serve to impose that structured order on the Polynesian fishermen who lived there, but demanded that order be structured for sacrifice for them. To the wanderer among them today, this stern millennial look ordering one to
remote and empty distances rules one's every, increasingly aimless, step. Huge empty
eyes fixed at horizons beyond this island and no doubt beyond any visible horizon.
With their jaws designed by geometry, their thin tight lips, the only animation on those
faces is their strong splayed nostrils, pulling in the forces of the winds.

The "mystery" of this island kept up by anthropologists seeking grants, travel writers,
and tourist brochures was created by the Westerners who come upon the island, saw
the statues and saw the islanders, and concluded the present-day islanders could not
have created the statues; they were the work of a lost civilization colonized from the
Inca of Peru, Egypt, Greece, the lost continent of Mu, or Outer Space. Inevitably, two
missionaries came to label the people cannibals. In reality linguistic studies have
shown kinship of their language with that of the Marquesas, 4000 km to the east, and
carbon-dating has established settlement of the island around 500 AD. Almost at once
they erected giant statues; one gigantic one has been recently set upright on its altar has
been dated at 690 AD. They were carved and completely polished at the quarry of the
Ranu Rakak volcano then transported across the island and the eyes then carved
when they were erected on their altars. How they were transported remains
unexplained; the island had neither trees nor vines that could serve as cords. Recent
experiments with sledges or hoistrams only proved the statues would have been ground
down by the rubble on the way. There were no pack animals—indeed no mammals at
all on the island—and there were no wheels invented. It is possible that they were
actually carried on the back of hundreds of assembled people, then somehow set
upright. The red top-knots were all quarried inside the Puna Pau volcano, then
somehow rolled out and finally somehow hoisted up on the statue; many weigh 15
tons. The method used to fit together the sides of separately carved stones remains as
perplexing as that of the walls of Quero. They clearly had very advanced navigational
science, navigating by the stars and knowledge of sea currents and observation of birds,
and must have gone on to the South American continent, since their staple food, the
sweet potato, has never been found growing wild anywhere but there. But their
stonework, despite Heyerdahl, could not have come from the Inca, since their culture
completely lacks all distinguishing South American cultural features such as pottery,
weaving, or metallurgy. They wore no clothing and instead completely covered their
bodies with tattoos. They lived on the edge of the sea and fished and cultivated gardens
of sweet potato, taro, and bananas. They are thought to have maintained a population
of 15,000. They alone, of all the peoples of the Pacific, invented writing, rongo-rongo,
partly phonetic and partly ideographic, on wood tablets. Each year these tablets were
read by the chief to the whole people lasting several days in every inhabited spot of the
island, and the tablets regularly copied before they showed decay. This writing, and the
history, cosmology, and science it contains was lost when missionaries destroyed all but
24 pieces which had been taken out of the island by plunderers and when the chief,
the sages, and all able-bodied men were rounded up by Peruvian slave-traders in 1862 to die
in the guano mines.

The volcano Ranu Rakak rises out of flat landscape near the edge of the sea. The
 crater walls are very steep, from the top one sees the azure sky reflected on the lake
within and the blue ocean beyond. All but three of the thousand giant statues of the
island were quarried out of the distinctive yellowish basalt of the crater wall. Starting with the face, then the abdomen was carved and polished, working with stones of a harder basalt, until it was attached only by the rib of the spine. Recent experiments have shown it would take at least a year for a team of men to carve a small-size statue. When it was finished—save for the eyes—it was released and slid down the mountain and set upright. Those that were carved inside the crater had to be moved out of it through a passage that was cut in one side of the crater. Today there are 394 statues at all stages of completion. Perhaps 75 are fully completed at the base of the volcano; these have been covered up to the neck by the erosion and landfall from the mountain of the last 200 years. A half-dozen lie face down on the way to their final locations. Heyerdahl dug around them to expose them; they have since been covered back up to preserve them. In Cairo, in the Museum, I saw all the mummies were torn out of their tombs, stripped of their flowers and gods, and laid out in plain wood cases under glass with their faces exposed; on the walls an American scientist had put his x-ray photos of their skeletons and the urn containing the entrails of Queen Hapshetsut was split open and brightly illuminated. Ranu Raraku is a quarry of works in progress. Should we now dig out these statues and erect them on the rebuilt altars? Philosophy too is a work in progress, cut short each time by death. Should we complete the 10th Symphony of Mahler, the working notes for Merleau-Ponty's The Visible and the Invisible? I spent two full afternoons completely alone among them, save for a hawk soaring above. Waiting for my death.

After living and developing their grandiose civilization for 1400 years on the Naval of the World unknown to the world, Cod, or themselves, the islanders were discovered by Dutch captain Jacob Roggeveen in 1722. Captain Roggeveen named the island Easter Island, shot dead thirteen and wounded many more of the inhabitants who welcomed him, and left the next day stocked up with foodstuffs. In 1770 Captain don Felipe Gonzalez arrived, landed two priests and a battalion of soldiers who advanced in procession to the center of the island, named it Isla de San Carlos, forced some natives to sign in their rongo-rongo script a Spanish document addressed to King Carlos III of Spain asking to be annexed by Spain, and left the same day. In 1774 Captain Cook arrived for a day, sent his men to search the whole island, found only 100 men and no women or children, forced the men to load up baskets of their potatoes for the scurvy-infected ship, and left. Upon opening the baskets the sailors found the people had filled them with stones, with only a covering of potatoes. In 1786 the French warship under le Comte de la Pérouse stopped on the island, and stayed 11 hours; the cave where he landed is honored today with his name. An unrecorded number of pirates, whalers, and sealers also came on the island; one recorded one was that of the USA sealer The Nancy, whose captain set out to capture the natives for slavery on his Juan Fernandez island base. He was only able to capture 12 men and 10 women. After three days at sea, he united them; they all leapt overboard and drowned. He returned to the island to round up more. A whaler the Pindos rounded up women to take with them; they were finally shot and thrown into the sea on a drunken night: syphilis and leprosy ravaged the island. In 1852 an Armada of seven Peruvian ships commanded by Captain Aguirre lured out the people by spreading piles of cloth and foods on the beach; he was able to capture a thousand men, shooting at those who fled by land or sea, and took the
captured into slavery in the guano mines of Peru. 18 more ships came in the following year. The French administrators of Tahiti and the English protested; the Peruvian authorities agreed to repatriate the slaves. Only 100 were still alive; of these 85 died on the return voyage, and the fifteen who landed were infected with smallpox which decimated the island. A Catholic missionary was brought in, the people converted, the remaining statues overthrown, the rongo-rongo tables burnt, and the family collections of heiroglyphs, statues, and wood carvings, said not to be the work of demiurges, were destroyed. The missionary also brought in tuberculosis. In 1872 French writer Pierre Loti arrived on a warship, they hurled one of the remaining statues down to break the head which they loaded on the ship; it is now in the Musée Tropézien in Paris. In 188 Chile annexed the island, rounded up the now total population of 111 in a coral at Hanga Roa, and allotted the rest of the island to sheep ranchers. Few Chileans were interested; it was the British who bought all the concessions and turned the island over to 70,000 sheep who denuded the island of its shrubbery and at the grass to the roots. Too far for economic transportation, they were eliminated in recent years and replaced by horses and cattle. In 1934 French anthropologist Alfred Métraux did the first cultural exploration of the island; the Chilean government was persuaded of its tourist possibilities and in 1935 made most of it a National Park. In 1986, after the explosion of the Challenger, the US NASA program built an airstrip for recuperation of satellite descents into the Pacific.

Somewhere half-way through grade school I brought up a linguistic problem to the teacher. She (and the textbook) called the Roman civilization a great civilization. Its greatest period was the period when its military domination was over the greatest number of lands and peoples. When its empire shrunk, it was said to be in decline. This vocabulary continued to be used in history class after history class throughout my schooling, and in museum after museum I visited since. The great religions are the world religions. Civilization is intrinsically tied up with military and economic expansionism. The euphemism is competition—without competition there is no artistic, literary, or religious advance. (Without grades, prizes, honors, there is no philosophical achievement.) My first trip was to Florence, where I was beset by the evidence that all its artistic, literary, and musical achievements coincided with its richest and most rapacious century; as soon as that was over, it could only sigh in mannerism. Today it is rich through tourism, but without political expansionism its artistic and literary culture is comparable to that of Oklahoma City. Now that France has lost its empire, there is no more philosophy there. Culture is the glory of a civilization—and that glory is the glint of advancing swords and missiles. The frantic theories of Thor Heyerdahl and the others striving to prove that the sculpture and the walls on Te Pito Ó Te Henua were imported from the Incas, from Egypt, Greece, India, or China are based on the conviction that an isolated culture always declines.

I crisscrossed Te Pito Ó Te Henua many times, over this crust of volcanic cinders covered with grass, ending up inevitably at the emptiness of the featureless sea and the curvature of the earth under the unending flow of wind and sky. The small flowers one sees in the grass one sees everywhere. There are no coral reefs swarming with fish to attract sea birds and sea mammals. The few sparrows and small hawks one sees are
recent imports. No rodents or lizards scurry through the chunks of lava. There are no cliff formations like fortresses; only the harmonious low cones of volcanoes extend a million years ago. The 15,000 people who lived here for 1400 years did not divide up into rival clans; the ruler continued the hereditary line unbroken from the founder Hotu Matua's and the thousand giant statues that surround the rim of the island show only a gradual stylization over a thousand years. The passion that built this civilization was not driven by competition. It was passion—a nose for conservative, economic, or rational but an excessive drive to erect 300-ton statues of completely depersonalized faces with eyes looking out into the featureless emptiness. This passion worked with volcanoes and the wind and the ocean and the sky.

Orongo is an extinct volcano; its crater lake is a perfect circle a mile wide. On one side of the crater the land continues in a cliff a thousand feet over the sea. Where the cliff meets the volcanic crater is the sacred precinct of Mata Ngarau. The boulders are covered with petroglyphs—1785 have been counted. On the very edge of the cliff there are 47 dwellings. From above they form clusters of round grass-covered circles. The walls of these circular dwellings are made of unhandled sheets of slate laid flat and corbelled. The entrances are at ground level, just two feet high and so narrow one has to lift one side of one's torso to crawl inside. Inside they are covered with paintings. They are the residences of the priests of the birds. Below in the sea there are two islands, one a staghorn rising abruptly out of the sea, the second a stone outcropping. They are the nesting places of the migratory terns, the manu-tara. Each year when the manu-tara returned, the tangata-manu, the birdmen chosen in dreams by the priests at Mata Ngarau were paramount throughout the island, not so much ruling as descending upon its settlements in orgiastic raids.

The bird culture is a late dominance of an aboriginal stream of this civilization. The founding king Hotu Matua who had set sail with the original colonizers in the fifth century was surely led to this minuscule island by birds. The colonists had brought with them poultry, which remained their only domestic animal. They had also brought with them their Marquesas deities, which were gradually supplanted by Makemake, the god of the bird culture. But for 1400 years the culture was structured, heretic, under hereditary rulers. It was in the 17th century, when the island became prey to plunderers from the outside, the millennial-old temples overturned, the people hiding in closed volcanic caves at the first sight of any foreign ship on the horizon, that this period called "anarchy" by Western writers came about. The ancient hereditary kings (ultimately all to die in slavery in Peru) were replaced by men whose prowess naked in the raging sea marked them to be temporary sovereigns. But their sovereignty was not an administration of a structured society that no longer existed; it was a pure celebration of a power that was proud, orgiastic, and violent. Not a panicky totalitarian culture bent on preserving its sedentary economy from the depredations of yet more rapacious agents of the mercantile societies of the Dutch, English, French, Russians, and Peruvians, but, in the ruins, the liberation of a totally different kind of culture. Culture of force, daring, pride, violence, and eroticism. Culture of birds.
Got some news of you dear David from Walt and Dorothea at the SPEP meeting—that you have purchased land and will build on it! How wonderful. They also told me how much they loved your partner. You will have ever more energetic and creative hours. I think of your new friends happy to come help, and your naive American friends coming in greater numbers for extended visits.

A friend came up with the idea that now is the time to extend NATO and the European economic union to all countries and seriously build world government. I was very struck with this idea; it is actually doable. But meantime the grotesque image of the richest country in the world pawning the poorest with missiles costing two million each.

I am leaving tomorrow for China—and on United Airlines: one does have to seek out excitement. The meeting itself is wonderfully ridiculous: Beijing University is hosting the “First” International Phenomenological Conference, on the occasion of the centenary of Husserl’s Logical Investigations, and we invitees are limited to speak but 20 minutes. Imagine the absurdity of flying to the other side of the planet to talk 20 minutes and flying back. But of course 20 minutes is all anyone could endure listening to raps on that book; indeed the speakers themselves could not endure the boredom of talking more than 20 minutes about it.

Global warming has brought us summer weather till now; today feels like August. I have acquired a pair of poison arrow frogs, of course, I put in the bedroom next to the bed, and a sting ray. And for the garden a pair of ruffed grouse and a pair of Edward’s pheasants. These are endemic to Vietnam only, and were discovered by brit Reginald Edward, since the Vietnamese were too stupid to have noticed them. They are extinct in Vietnam, wiped out by Agent Orange, and survive only in captivity. So I am delighted to offer my little garden as a sanctuary for this supremely endangered species.

In Uzbekistan I finished a book, rather of the genre of Abuses: I am calling it Trust. I do so like that word, and also the experience.

Cordial wishes for happy days on the range! Love A
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How could I not be thinking of you dear Dave, peering around at the tracks left by the Xiongnu, Kushans, Huns, Sogdians, Ghaznavids, Karakhanids, Khorezmshahs, Mongols led by our friend Chinggis Khan, The Golden Hordes of Batu and Ord, the Middle Horde of Chaghatay, the Third Horde of Ogedei Khan and of course Kublai Khan, and then Timur (not Tamerlane), the Oyrats and the Zhungarians—all galloping down from your sister land of Mongolia to do what they did best: terrorize, loot, pillage, plunder, rape! What times they had! What, after all, would you do, were you a nomad with nothing to do all day but keep an eye on your horses and sheep and goats getting fat over grasslands stretching as far as eye can see, and in fact stretching from China to Hungary, and along came a Khan out of Mongolia who said hey man leave us go terrorize Beijing, loot Delhi, Pillage Bagdad, plunder Damascus, rape Constantinople—could you, dear Dave, resist, say: Oh shoot boys I think I'll hang around with these here sheep and goats, maybe next summer?

And you dear Dave here's hoping you are having great times over in sister Montana, may it be the best of all summers!

It has been a wandering summer for me, I now see in the spirit of the great Central Asian nomads. Started in Athens for a first look at the Parthenon, then to Jerusalem for a look at the doings of War Criminal Ariel Sharon, then to the Red Sea to dive and to see my first manta ray. The book says they attain a wingspan of 22 feet and can weigh 7 tons! The mum gives birth to a single pup, who is 1 meter long at birth and 10 kilos. The one we saw was maybe 6-7 foot wingspan so must have been a kid. Of course to keep one in the house, I will have to extend my basement tank in tunnels under the adjacent property lots. Project for the fall.

Then to Cairo to spend an hour alone in the second biggest pyramidal, just opened to, but not yet known to, the public. And to spend a night mindfuckedly ecstatic watching the dervishes whirl. Then to Petra in Jordan, where the Nabateans filed through a crevice in the continental plate and carved the rock walls with hundreds of facades without rooms behind, making the mountain itself into a gigantic palace.

Then to Turkey, and to Santurfa and to the cave there where, on March 19, 2100 BC, Abraham was born. I knelt in the cave and washed my face with the sacred spring that flows from there, and then stroked about the ponde full of carp which Abraham as a kid sprang into life by whooshing a stick in the water; the whole place arcaded in white with a mosque of the most exquisite classical taste. But I kept thinking: Hey 2100 B$fuckin$C: that's a hell of a long time ago! How do we know that the kid that was born in this cave is the right Abraham—the one who huffed and fucked and puffed out Jewry? How do we know it's not that other Abraham—the one that also got born in a cave, also tended his father's flocks of sheep and fucked his father's goats, then decided it would be more
glamorous to be an artist, took up painting using goatblood and jism, went down to Damascus where like Van Gogh never sold a single one of his paintings but indulged in the bohemian life of artists and died of acute alcoholism—"that Abraham?"

And for the last month in Uzbekistan, wallowing in the awesome gorgeousness of the stupendous mosques, medressas, caravanserais built in the age of Timur in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, where the Silk Road camel caravans from China joined the yak caravans coming over and down the Himalayas laden with jewels and spices from India, before heading on to Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo and Rome. The Russian Tsar finally annexed the region in 1868, while the British were expanding their empire up from Indian into Tibet and Afghanistan. But the folk here have not forgotten those glory days! The way you can tell who in the street is Russian and who Uzbek is that all the Uzbeks, as soon as their teeth reach maturity, have them completely crowned in gold. A young lad would not have a chance of dating an eligible chick if he did not have all his teeth capped in gold. And a chick gets her teeth all gold capped for her engagement. Land of the golden smiles! Down the street, there is a four-foot-high vulture on a leash. I feed him kebabs.

And, in Samarkand, the tomb of Daniel, the Biblical prophet, his remains brought here by no less than Timur himself, to lie next to the lion's den, scene of Daniel's biggest triumph. His body has been growing a half inch a year, and so the sarcophagus is 18 meters long. So it is good for 1368 years—Timur was a forward looking man!

In my copy of The Utterances of Amir Timur, the Little Gold Book of course, we read:

I distinguished between two types of advice one coming from lips and the other from the depth of heart. I lent a willing and favorable ear to what the lips said but it was only what I heard coming from the heart that I kept in the ears of my heart.
from: Jayapura, December, 1988

Dear Zoltan—Upon returning to Bangkok from Ho Chi Minh City I had the pleasure of a day eating fish-intestines and fondling transsexuals with Karim, thinking of our buddy you, who is preparing to join us paging through images of the deep and sucking your milk from a rubber cock. It is of course you who bond us together, and then Karim went on to scout the bay of China for you and I your advance man to Jakarta. For Heideggerians we are, Daseins who exist by hurling ourselves into the future from which meaning comes, that meaning which is not form but possibility. Here is our first report...

Your old man wanted to take you from the cradle directly to Huntsville with the commendably Heideggerian but mistaken idea that the future, and meaning, lies in NASA but of course expecting to have the right direction pointed out to one by family is antediluvian, and it is Karim in rural China and I in Jakarta who have credibility.

Rural China, and not the ersatz Wall-Street-and-Hollywood, that the television cameramen shoot in the immediate vicinity of their five-star hotels in Shanghai to satellite back to ABC and NBC for use in 14-second sound bites on the world they report on. They don't stray out there in rural China; they would never find their way back. Karim, the most clairvoyant of the futurist Daseins we know, was gracious enough to have sent me a report on rural China edited by Serres a full year before his departure for it. Rural China, consisting in minuscule picture-puzzle pieces of paddy, where there is not yellow-clay clod of surplus-value mud, to speculate with, not a single frog or grub or weed that are just spectacle: everything is eaten. Not a square yard spared by the hunger of the peasant; the lotus is eaten, tuberous roots roasted, leaves boiled, flowers sauteed, seeds ground and mixed into the rice-flower dough. No hedge rows left in thickets for wildlife; the paths are the tops of the walls of the paddy fields. They lead the peasant from his house to his fields and back again. Beyond that, they meet with paths of the next village. If during his lifetime he goes further than his fields, it will be to the next village to bring back a wife. There are no thoroughfares, no highways leading the peasant beyond and outside. The end of civilization history; nomadism, migration is totally abolished; if the peasant were to wander or migrate it would be only to another village with lanes that likewise lead from the house to the fields and back again. Here civilization, the sedentary existence, is exclusive and accomplished already several thousand years ago, before the West began its provincial, brief and temporary, experiment with linear history. Here rationality is realized, in the total occupancy of all the space, in the total usage of all the resources, in every dod of clay, every weed and every frog surviving only because it has a purpose, the universal and necessary purpose of serving as alimentation. So that the peasant who exhausts his body resources today working in the fields will be able to return to the fields tomorrow, so that he will reproduce other peasants like himself to replace him at these fields. Rural China then is both the End, the goal and the terminus, of Rational History, and the termination of history in Eternity, an Eternity in repetition that was put in place before linear history began.

It is rural China that gives you the vision of the future and end of provincial Western linear history, whose linear phase is provisional and transitory. The view
your old man thought to give you by taking your cradle to porch with a view onto the
NASA launching pads is a myopic one; you would see only the young men with the
right stuff marching like pioneers and conquerors into the space capsules, and you
would see the linear trajectory of the take-off in a blast that dazzles out the light of the
sun. You would not see that this line quickly curves out into a circle that orbits upon
itself indefinitely.

Your old man would of course smile if he read this, this idea that rural China is
the future and goal of Western linear history. “Another far-fetched fantasy of that
nostalgic Lithuanian peasant Lingis,” he would say, blinking myopically. As we kids
understand, one really cannot expect a kid to get reliable guidance from his old man.

Anyhow it was the citizen Karim that went to rural China and the peasant Lingis
that went to Jakarta to scout the future for you.

On the simpleminded argument that the future will be urban and not rural,
intellectuals like your old man go to London, Paris, Rome. There they look at a few
streets of old buildings recycled into restaurants and boutiques, go to a museum to look
at some 15th century alterpieces and to an opera house to listen to some 18th century
court music.

But it is the new cities of the third world—Mexico City, Jakarta, Calcutta, Manila,
Bangkok—where urbanization has to be understood. 10% of the Thais now live in
Bangkok; 12% of the Javanese in Jakarta. It is there that the total rational occupancy of
the land is realized (the real estate value of the land within the Tokyo city limits is
greater than that of the land of all rural Amerika).

The cities of the future are the interminable labyrinths of rural China where the
clay walls of the paddies are solidified in cement cubes and where the paths are
electronic leading the citizen without leaving his computer terminal to the adjacent
and equivalent computer terminal. Fed in bytes which permit him to reproduce
himself with other computer-operators to replace him when he dies.

Your old man would of course smile if he read this, this idea that to become
Jakarta is the future and goal of London, Paris, Rome, New York. “Another far-fetched
fantasy of that Lingis from a marginalist and provincial place like Lithuania,” he would
say. “Every knows that if one were ever to actually go to third world cities one would
get engulfed in swarming masses of lumpenproletariats as soon as one stepped out of
one’s hotel.” Really one cannot expect a kid to get reliable guidance from his old man.

It is true that if one went to London, Paris, Rome (places where nobody can get a
philosophy job these days with howevermany and however laserprinted
recommendation letters), one would meet only computer programmers. Whereas
third world Cities are distinctive in that one is forced to recognize by the fact that one
cannot help being engulfed in swarms of them that they are vast social factories that
produce lumpenproletariats.

But the third world lumpenproletariats shall inherit the earth.

And if you, dear Zoltan, are to Heideggerianly be a Dasein existing by receiving
meaning from the future, it will be necessary for you to become a third world
lumpenproletarian. This will have to be done by actually meeting third world
lumpenproletariats and learning all the future things directly from them. It cannot be
done by learning the merely negative, privative definitions of third world proletarians
from the old man and his books. Happily, you have kids like Karim and me to do some preliminary scouting and advancing reporting to you.

One will never learn all their dialects, and they never know anything but the same few phrases of Pidgin. Verbal communication then has always the same content and is exhausted in the first five minutes.

In those five minutes one reaches the state the contemporary Western sciences and technologies of communication will leave us in fifty years. For what is happening now is that all possible messages are formatted electronically in codes that can be instantly transmitted on every computer terminal, all possible secrets (of celebrities, politicians, priests) are beamed by satellite everywhere in the planet and flashed on public buildings in letters ten stories high in all the Times Squares of the World. There will be nothing further for one citizen to communicate with another when they meet their conversation will be limited to repeating the same stock phrases "How are you? Where are you from? How do you like Jakarta?" which exhaust conversation with a third world lumpenproletarian now.

But after this five-minute conversation in esperanto English, one lingers on, to learn and to enter into the language of the future, that of third world lumpenproletariats. Not the language of humans which is only of humans, of their egos, the desecrated spoor excreted by their egos, that language of their sordid and greedy secrets now instantly projected on the walls of buildings in the Times Squares.

This language is the nocturnal voice of third world Cities. In the mucky slums of Jakarta as the sun sets the frogs begin, a din of rumbles, heavings, explosions, emanations of sultry humus where the frogs extend their proximity to one another in a sonorous environment without messages. As third world Proletariats pass one another they resonate their proximity with such rumbles, heavings, explosions, incantations. Utterances of frogs, insects, birds, mice, bats, cracking coconut trees and shifting bamboo thickets, cascading or dripping waters, winds.

Voices of the sea and of the winds, language of the resounding universe, of which the human throat and respiratory tubes are but a channel.

Another thing one will learn from third world lumpenproletariats is how to dress. Nothing arouses their contempt more readily than coming to them costumed in the fake-proto of backpackers. No third world lumpenproletarian can relate to a whiteman from Huntsville who hasn't shaved this morning, who doesn't bathe at least three times a day, who is wearing a shirt with yesterday's sweatstains in the armpits, who is fat and balding. (Rich whitemen dress down, third world poorpeople dress up, was the way I formulated it in a maxim for the usage of practical judgment to Bob and Denise in Bangkok.) Rich whitesmen from Huntsville do not present their selves to one another; they parade before one another with a body-armor of their "soul," their characters, their professions, their educations, their histories, their jobs, their achievements. It is that informed APS journalist, that Penn State football player, that intertextual deconstructionist, that department chairman they encounter. With third world lumpenproletariats it is the dark henna-dyed gleaming eyes, the sinuous islander, the mustachioed macho Salvadoran, the sassy-assed Jamaican, the Siamese slum kickboxer you encounter. In Bali, the very land of the bare-breasted women, there is everywhere posted the stern warnings against tourist nudity, a whitewomyn who goes skinnydipping, a white male who is seen on a motorcycle without a long-
sleeved shirt or in shorts is immediately arrested. That has nothing to do, in that Hindu-animalist land, with any Judeo-Christian sexual hangups; it is simply that they just can't stand the sight of how ugly we are.

The lower down you go in the eases of India, the more the women are covered with jewels, diamonds on their nostrils, gold chains hanging from the septum of their noses to their ears, silver cobras around their ankles. Nothing is more difficult than to buy a t-shirt for a rickshaw puller friend, so exacting is his taste in color, fabric, cut, design; they would certainly never wear any of the beach clothing their wives sew up for the tourists. I have found, from experience that the only method is to go with him to the market and restrict yourself to paying for the one he has selected.

Among whitesmen their wealth in things, their education, their professions, their jobs free them. Among third world Proletarians beauty liberales. The beauty of a woman frees her from her village, will one day free her from the brothel, frees her from the man who wants to own her, frees her unwanted children, frees her from the interdictions of morality and religion and from the police. The macho splendor of a man frees him from responsibilities and judgment. Freed him from wealth, education, professions, jobs. It is a physical, corporeal beauty, that frees one to be without rival, to be in competition with no other image than one's own...

The most important, the most inconceivably difficult, the most ecstatic-hurt-into-the-future a Dasein can find among those transsexuals-of-the-future is the staggering, electrifying plunge into a relationship with others that is one of pure lust.

All parents instinctually know they have no more implacable enemy than pure lust ("the dirty old man"); all the educational institutions that function in loco parentis are brainwashing centers of the disciplinary archipelago which format in a complete ethical-metaphysical-cosmological ideology designed the block out like a virus on the RAM of a youth's cerebral circuitry pure lust (cf. the recent hysteria generating "sexual harassment penal procedures"). For out of lust comes all understanding. It is pointless to leave one's cubicle and computer terminal in the space capsule being manufactured for you in Huntsville if you go with your set of educated ideas, information, skills, profession, all those plastic credit cards that reformulate all the rapiants and dongs and rials and ijas into dollars and cents. You will never see the culture of the lumpenproletarian slums of Jakarta; you will only record on your own meter sticks, balances, and stop watches the pluses and the minuses, in fact the minuses.

It is when alone, hot, sweating, unable to sleep, unable to reach anyone back home on the phone to talk with, unable to read, unable to think, you are reduced to a lustful body turning in the night, that drives you out into the night, it is then when, finding yourself in the arms and criteria of a third world lumpenproletarian, nameless, any profession or none, any age or gender, that your body, your glands, your orifices, craves for, it is then that, finally, you will be in the spiritual condition finally in which it will be possible to advance with love into the language the other loves, the dress the other loves, the gestures the other loves, the human bonds the other loves, the myths and the idols the other loves. In short, to discover his or her or his/her land and history and culture.

Things of course no kid ever could hope to get through to his old man and old lady.
Hey did you catch it ever there dear Walt? Lucky man you are, that you have a real ace reporter who recognized the kind of news you want to hear and can fly it to you by macaw express. Stop the presses, this is the BIG ONE. HERE IT IS, MAN, FROM ON THE SPOT AND RIGHT ON THE DAY:

!!!!!! THE PRISON BREAK! !!!!!!!! OF THE CENTURY! !!!!!!!

Inaugurated in 1986, the Castro Castro Penitentiary was presented as the pilot maximum security prison of Latin America. Video cameras and motion detectors observed every square foot of the cells and corridors. The cells could be opened only with an electronic system similar to that installed in the latest federal penitentiary in Miami. It was named for Miguel Castro Castro, director of the El Fronton penal island, assassinated by the Sendero Luminoso as he was leaving his home, after the great police massacre of Sendero Luminoso prisoners in 1986. The Penitentiary was laid out in panoptical architecture, about a central watch-tower. It was designed for 700 inmates. Yesterday it contained 3800, most of them guerillas captured in the civil war raging for the past ten years in Peru.

Today, July 9, there are 48 less. Victor Pelay Campos, "Camarada Rolando," head of the MRTA, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, and 47 others, 9 of them women, of the same organization have escaped (among them the commando that had killed 16 policemen and the terrorist that had planted the bomb that blew up the Kentucky Fried Chicken right in the heart of Lima). Pelay had been captured and imprisoned 17 months ago and was to have been sentenced today. He was the most important insurgent the army had captured in the ten years of the civil war.

The escape is surely the most spectacular in history.

Some two years ago, a young couple, Victor and Rosa Vargas, and their niece Sonia, rented a small half-constructed building located about a quarter-mile from the penitentiary. Vargas had a blue Dodge pickup truck, and left daily at 4:30 in the morning, loaded with construction sand from the site. Like so many structure in this slum area, his building was half-collapsed, and Vargas often unloaded building materials, when he returned. Other men sometimes came with him and left late; the neighbors assumed they were helping him on construction after working hours. The adjacent building was a small diner, where police from the Penitentiary came to lunch. Rosa, attractive and submissive, often sat in front of the house, and praised their flirtations.

The stupefied police today discovered that below this house a tunnel of some 800 meters was dug into the core of the Penitentiary. The entrance was found under a wardrobe. From there the tunnel descended 30 feet, zigzagged around underground sewer and power conduits, descended to 50 feet under the penitentiary wall, to open last night in the toilets of the cell block where the MRTA inmates were incarcerated. since the subsoil here is gravelly, the walls and ceiling of the tunnel were made of concrete.
Engineers studying the construction estimate that the materials alone had cost $200,000. They also affirm that only expert topographers could have designed the tunnel that it arrive exactly at the cell block to which it was destined. It was illuminated throughout, with electricity, tapped from the penitentiary power lines themselves. It was even air conditioned, equipped with walkie-talkies, oxygen tanks and masks, emergency resuscitation equipment, and contained large quantities of food. Engineers believe it must have taken a year to build, and 500 cubic meters of earth had to be removed daily.

In the early morning a commando of three entered the tunnel and made their way to the cell block of the MKTA. The women were in a separate building. Polay was in the maximum security cells on the third floor adjacent to the prison command post itself. To reach the others once freed, he would have had to cross five guard posts. Only two guards were killed. The 48 inmates descended the tunnel and emerged into a waiting stolen police van, where they changed into police uniforms, and were driven to a Cessna waiting in a gorge outside Lima. It took off for a recently earthquake-devastated zone of the Upper Huallaga. Discarded film boxes showed police they had even videotaped their escape.

The government immediately ordered the most massive manhunt ever launched in the country; within hours more than 20,000 were detained. The country was put on red alert; borders were sealed. As of now no trace of the escapees. But in the heart of Lima a government bus was stopped and incinerated by a commando of the Sendero Luminoso—on Avenida Tupac Amaru. The message, as always, as left to the army and public to decipher; the Sendero Luminoso never signs or leaves explanations when it attacks.

Tupac Amaru was the Inca who led the massive rebellion against Pizarro in 1536. The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement was founded in 1964 with a raid on the National Museum of Huaura that captured the sword and the other San Martin used in proclaiming the Independence of Peru in 1821, and with an occupancy of Radio Independence, which forced the reading of its program on the airwaves. This movement split from the Sendero Luminoso, pledging itself to strict accord with the Geneva convention with regard to sparing innocents and noncombatants, and the treatment of captives. While the Sendero Luminoso is principally based in the Upper Huallaga mountains, the Tupac Amaru’s zone of action is in the cities. And its actions have been characterized by its spectacular effects. It began with several attacks of the US Embassy in 1884. It exploded a bomb within the Ministry of the Interior. Last October it captured the director of Panamerican Television, whom it liberated with orders to show on television a video prepared in which he is shown negotiating for the government the purchase of Mirage planes.

Victor Polay Campos, 39 years old, is the son of one of the founders of the now-ruling APRA party, a classmate and even, while in Europe, a roommate of President Alan Garcia. One of his sisters was a senatorial candidate of the APRA party in the recent election. It was while a student at the Sorbonne in Paris that he became disillusioned with APRA politics and returned to Peru to found the MKTA.

 Drugs and Violence!