

3 Byzantine Stories
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The Number 1.99999 Repeating

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.725 — .784 — .757 — .725 — .679 — .799

.740 — .735 — .751 — .789 — .724 — .713

01—We hadn't been there ninety seconds, because it was right as we walked in the backyard of the high school graduation party that her cousin approached us and, without the slightest hesitation, asked my girlfriend right to her face—Did you bring my tupperware with you? It took perhaps longer than I care to confess to fully recognize what exactly it was she was referencing. Oh, the oxtail, I reflected, a second or so later, as I recalled there being a beautiful, wood-covered, piece of glass of tupperware sitting in our refrigerator for over a week, incubating an oxtail dish that had, unfortunately, totally expired—it was so far gone I was hesitant to even open the top of the tupperware container, despite the fact the top of the container was a beautiful, wood finished piece. There was no doubt in my mind that this oxtail was, at that point, not just completely expired but essentially a type of meat soup, a type of liquified corpse, which of course disgusted me severely. Cleaning it out struck me as a grotesque idea. I can't say for certain, but it's more likely than not that I threw it into the trash—tupperware, wood top, and oxtail. 'Oh, so sorry, I'll definitely bring it back soon!' she said, and I glanced at her and attempted to decipher if she had any idea the tupperware and the oxtail were both long gone, that both now sat in a garbage heap, a pile of trash somewhere, at the bottom of a public dump, still filled with decayed, grotesque oxtail, and that her cousin would never again own the privilege of placing her leftovers into that piece of tupperware with the beautiful wood cover. That tupperware was finished. Having said that,

even the finest piece of tupperware—how precious is it really? Couldn't we replace it for five dollars or less? My thinking at the time was yes, that the tupperware was entirely fungible, yet as soon as we stepped foot into this high school graduation party her cousin inquired about the tupperware—as if this tupperware perhaps belonged to some sort of rare species of tupperware, perhaps a species of tupperware on the verge of extinction, perhaps this was some kind of one-of-a-kind tupperware I nonchalantly tossed into a pile of trash. Some people have massive amounts of respect for tupperware, but I've never been one of them, it always eluded me why anyone would invest more than one dollar into a piece of tupperware, personally. To my mind, if a piece of tupperware, no matter the level of craftsmanship, is priced above one dollar, then it's an overpriced piece of tupperware. It's just not an item I've personally ever viewed as an investment of any kind. In my mind, plates and bowls are relatively worthwhile investments, while tupperware is essentially a capitalist ploy to increase the profit margin on plastic bags—to convince people they shouldn't only invest in plates and bowls, but also invest in the highest quality plastic bags (tupperware), that in theory they'll use again and again, but in practice they'll lose incessantly and constantly have to replace.

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03—How else can we explain Kierkegaard? The secular philosophers talk our ears off and more often than not say nothing beyond what their thesis advisors demand to be printed, I thought, vociferously drinking this bottle of Soju, while the apex of the theological philosopher truly enacts the notion of philosophizing with a hammer? Yet, in our era, it seems we more or less dismiss all philosophers who choose to believe in God, I thought. Is it then possible, I thought, drinking my Soju, vociferously, that because the theological philosophers have been essentially shunned from the modern academy, that the mere mention of God is anathema to the modern academy, that because the theological philosopher has been holistically banned from partaking in the modern so-called academy, our modern organized educators, that they've therefore managed to maneuver outside of the stifling bureaucracy of the university—and actually engaged with original thought? Should we consider that possible? That they echo early Christian theologians, persecuted by pagan Roman authorities, who created elaborate frameworks that formed the *sui generis* metaphysical foundation of early Christian thought, a *sui generis* synthesis of the canonical Gospels with Neoplatonic thought, that our modern theologians, almost regardless of denomination, prosecuted by the atheist university bureaucrats, are working within

perhaps similarly radical frameworks? After all, secular academic philosophers are loath to speculate on much of anything in our era. In their place we have theoretical physicists who employ complex mathematics to prove the susceptibility of complex mathematics to almost any type of sophistry. Frankly, I've never respected mathematicians, I should admit that much upfront. I suppose, in my own way, I've always viewed mathematicians as essentially charlatans. I view the art of mathematics as not only decadent, but I also view the concept of number as an essentially metaphysical domain. The mathematician's formulas are always derivative of the numerical axioms of metaphysics—it's always struck me as entirely possible that numbers are an impossibility. That the introduction of the decimal point, of the fraction, essentially sank mathematics right in its place, in my eyes at least. Of course, I'm at bottom a disciple of Palamas, for certain, I was inadvertently baptized as a disciple of Palamas, of course, I fundamentally disagree with this modern idea that we can comprehend everything in a purely intellectual fashion, this notion that there's, in practice, no limit to the human intellect. I find that idea to be one of the most absolutely absurd. Sure, of course, we can read, say, Parmenides and, while it's impressive, it's also entirely absurd, and I personally enjoy it immensely, but on those merits. I'm not sure I'd base my scientific thought on it. I'm at least less than certain it'd become the cornerstone of my secular intellectual pursuits. Parmenides is one of the perfect works of absurdist fiction written in any language—and if we indeed made it a cornerstone of our secular intellectual pursuits, then at least we'd need to recognize our absurdist origins, as Dionysius rightfully does. Yet we've employed Parmenides for centuries as a fundamental commentary on allegedly rationalist notions. Allegedly rationalist notions—is this not what we find ourselves steeped in, more

or less night and day? When I comment on metaphysics I do so in a consciously absurd fashion, because I recognize the limits of language, the limits of language that at bottom are incapable of communicating metaphysics in linear and/or rational fashions. It seems somewhat obvious that there's a nefarious literalism at play here, I think it's safe to say that. Ever since grade school I was positive that I stood in the presence of a nefarious literalism. Even as a young boy, instinctively, I knew numbers were, in all likelihood, impossibilities, and that my systematic education was highly susceptible to, if not entirely complicit in, a nefarious literalism. The education of my youth didn't exactly encourage audacious thought.

04—In any case, we can't compose metaphysics in a rational sense, can we? Isn't it always in a between-the-lines sense that we compose metaphysics, in winks and nods that we write metaphysics, because we can't write metaphysics in a linear and/or rational fashion? We take far too much at face value. Our literalism is intentionally or unintentionally nefarious. Because the reality is nearly nothing can be taken at face value. Do you really believe the greatest minds of Antiquity intended to be taken at face value? The Byzantines read Plato the same way we read Dostoyevsky, whereas we read Plato the same way the Byzantines read the Gospels. Perhaps both are absurd. Now, sure, I'm without a doubt, from a certain vantage point at least, a disciple of Palamas, I won't attempt to deny that, but we can't take everything Palamas put to papyrus at face value either. Although Palamas understood the shortcomings of Antiquity better than even the most progressive modern scholar, I'd be the last one to say I take everything the saint wrote at face value, because I'm far from a literalist. The modern scholar, insofar as he keeps his faith in

rationalism, will most likely never come to terms with the nature of Antiquity—is that fair to say? He'll read Parmenides and take everything literally, and in taking everything literally he'll inevitably take everything idiotically. Isn't it the case that the theologians are the greatest skeptics among us? We view faith as poison as we retain fanatical levels of faith in our sensory organs. We peruse a variety of empirical studies that vivisect the grotesque fictions of our sensory organs—did you know it's now speculated human beings didn't see the color blue until the latter BC centuries at earliest? All around us our sensory organs excrete evidence of their utter unreliability, yet we view faith as idiocy while retaining this fanatical notion that our sensory organs can and should and must be trusted—which is why we're not quite radical enough. The modern age retains radical faith in its sensory organs in a more fanatical fashion than any historical religion known to man. Nothing can be taken at face value, that much we should agree on, which brings me to this, a true fly in the ointment, so to speak—how is it you arrive at a postulation of an essence you cannot know? This is the question, is it not? How does the mathematician reach the postulation numbers are actual and distinct? How is it possible, given human capabilities, to distinguish the number two from the number one point nine repeating (1.999999...) in practice? How is it possible to distinguish two from one point nine repeating? How does mathematics attempt to lay any claim to physical space—to attempt to claim the ability to leave the theoretical—when it's impossible for us to distinguish the number two from the number one point nine repeating (1.99999999999999999999...), in practice? It seems impossible for us to know that the number two is in fact the number two, and not the number one point nine repeating (1.9999999999999999...), and if we're unable to know the number two

is in fact the number two then how could it be possible to assert that mathematics has any value outside of the purely theoretical? By instinct perhaps we feel as though the number two is the number two, and the number one is the number one, yes, the mathematical axioms may feel correct—yet the fact remains that we lack the perceptual faculties to distinguish two apples from one point nine repeating (1.999999999...) apples. When we speak of the Essence of all things we don't speak any differently—with the exception that our philosophy of an unknowable Essence seeks to put a strict limit on knowledge based on instinctive assumptions, whereas the philosophy of mathematics attempts to indefinitely expand our knowledge based on nothing more than an instinctive assumption, the instinctive assumption that we can successfully distinguish two apples from one point nine repeating (1.999999999...) apples.

05—There's no doubt that we're in the midst of something essentially mysterious, that when we discuss the essence of life we think we can make sense of it all, that we're on the precipice of making sense of ourselves and our surroundings, yet there's still little doubt we remain in the midst of something essentially mysterious when we begin to think clearly. Thinking is perhaps the most mysterious act of all. Thinking, which we generally believe translates material and immaterial experience into language—into modes that are communicable. Thinking, which attempts to take something such as consuming a juicy pear, an experience that ultimately is confined to personal experience, and extrapolate it in a communicable format to the general populace. Sans thinking, consuming a juicy pear would be something confined to the private sphere—with thinking it's then presumably allowed to enter the public domain. There is, in fact, no

remaining public domain sans thinking—and there's in essence no thinking sans a public domain. Assuming we consume a juicy pear, thinking Wow, this pear is juicy, but refuse to write it down, to verbally express it to our peers, then the thought Wow, this pear is juicy remains in the purely immaterial realm, it's existence purely speculative, both the thought and the physical experience remain essentially purely speculative. It's only when the thought Wow, this pear is juicy enters the public domain that it becomes, perhaps not real, but at least apparent in a more material manner—it's verified as a real experience and subsequently verified as a real thought. I too consumed a pear, and wow it was also quite juicy! There's no doubt we're in the midst of something essentially mysterious here.

06—It was just a few months ago, I dreamt an older female engaged me in a liaison, perhaps a sexual liaison—at first she was an older black woman, but then she became an older white woman, and, as she was white, as we sat in an automobile, I entered a hotel room to pay ninety two dollars for our room for the night, then I returned to the car. I was wearing a business suit and she wore business casual attire, there were two small dark, indecipherable forms sitting in the backseat, and she told me she had to go south of the Missouri now, and I replied You mean south of the Mississippi, right?—yet, even setting aside our geographical concerns, her statement struck me as something I already knew, that I knew she was leaving for good, and that her leaving would mark a new start for me, so to speak. When I woke up I felt as though, in an intensely odd and impalpable way, my entire life had followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy—in a profound manner I felt this, I was wide awake in bed, gazing at a wall thinking my entire life has somehow tracked the tenets of the Eastern Orthodox, that this dream was equally

corporeal to any waking experience I've had, and now, months later, I remain curious with regard to the identity of this multi-racial figure from my dream, who it seems engaged me in a sexual liaison? Despite affirming the mysterious nature of what we're in the midst of, I've never been a believer in angels and demons, so to speak—yet this figure from my dream, it seems to me, shared many characteristics with historical reports of so-called angels and demons. Of course, assuming it's one of the two, which one of the two is it? An angel or a demon? Who were the dark, nearly formless figures in the backseat of the car? A person engages me in a sexual liaison, but at first is black, but then becomes white, then tells me she now has to go quote-unquote south of the Missouri, I correct her, and then I wake up with an intense feeling my life's somehow followed the tenets of Eastern Orthodoxy—then, this dream's intensity sticking with me for weeks and even months on end, I question if the figure from my dream was perhaps a being of some metaphysical sort, perhaps an angel or perhaps a demon. I question whether perhaps an angel or perhaps a demon entered my dream to, in a quite serpentine way, point me in the direction of something—perhaps Eastern Orthodoxy. And I question if this is in fact possible. At almost any other time in my life I would have considered it an impossibility, something totally ludicrous, I'd have considered it an embarrassing absurdity to even suggest it. Whereas previously I would have sat and said I considered it to be an embarrassing absurdity and utter impossibility, now, for one reason or another, I actually consider it an embarrassing absurdity to find it utterly impossible.

07—Yet let me explain my thoughts on this issue just a little further, if I may? Because my thoughts on the topic expanded significantly just

recently, as a matter of fact. It was just last Saturday, at a backyard cookout where I sat at a nice enough glass table next to a bottle of potato vodka imported from Poland, I was drinking the potato vodka from Poland in a small plastic glass with water and ice, and the potato vodka was smooth, quite smooth actually, when the person sitting across from me made a remark—he said that he just bought half a dozen pre-rolled blunts from a state-sanctioned dispensary, that he was planning to step on the sidewalk and light up one of these blunts, have a puff or two to relax, to which he offered me a puff too, if I wanted one. Well, as it so happened, at the time, despite my general ambivalence to marijuana, I considered it a decent idea. I figured I'd have one puff or two, tops, that maybe it would relax me. I figured, at the time, that a puff or two, tops, would have a minimal to moderate effect—yet when I went out to the sidewalk with this person to take a puff or two from his state-sanctioned blunt I'd discover that this weed retained a potency that perhaps I'd never encountered before.

08—The blunts were exquisitely rolled and tasted delicious, the first hit went down fine—yet as the blunt passed for a final time, against my better judgment, deep down acknowledging that the one hit was the correct amount of hits, that any subsequent hit would be a wholly superfluous hit, I decided to take a second hit, where immediately following my exhale I coughed vociferously. I coughed vociferously then just moments later time began, much to my surprise, proceeding in a highly abnormal manner. I found myself at a family cookout, and time was proceeding in a manner that struck me as entirely abnormal. I was lounging in a nondescript lawn chair, except now I found myself unable to experience the procession of time in our rudimentary, temperate manner. I jumped between disjointed scenes. People began

speaking and it was almost as though a person hit fast forward on their speech. Then the speech would slow just momentarily. Additionally, I seemed entirely restricted from perceiving how people were perceiving me, I felt like I was extremely high, in fact I knew I was extremely high, and it wasn't exactly the most appropriate venue to be that high—at a family cookout—yet I was restricted from perceiving how high I seemed to the outside world. At times it felt like I'd gained access to a cue that suggested everyone knew I was extremely high, yet this notion, that everyone knew I was extremely high, remained unproven, impossible to prove, it seemed. Because people would at times seem to be treating me as if I was hardly high at all, despite the fact that I could no longer experience time in a purely linear fashion. Essentially my own actions became entirely foreign to me—more than just being extremely high, I became disconcerted at the thought of what actions I could possibly be taking that caused the people around me to cease to view me as extremely high.

09—The only actions of my own I was still aware of were actions that seemed to me to be of a person clearly extremely high, so how could these actions be seen by rational actors to be coming from a person who was still experiencing time linearly? This was, at the time, a question sans an answer. In short, it wasn't simply that I ceased to experience time in a normative fashion—it was the fact my exterior surroundings seemed to continue to recognize I passed through time in at least somewhat of a normative fashion. This was disconcerting, because one would assume, if you left the confines of normative time, that the people in your vicinity would recognize this fact—that you exited normative time. But in this case it was almost as if, yes—I was no longer present, I was experiencing time in an entirely asynchronous

fashion, yet my surroundings still found me to be there, for the most part. I was, to the best of my perceptual faculties, existing in at least two places at once. At the family cookout, where most people were either slightly high or not high at all, and then also in a separate iteration of time, where I was jumping from period to period, indiscriminately. There's little doubt now that time, as we're exposed to it, is only one of several iterations, yet how many iterations are there? It seems impossible for us to say—perhaps iterations is the wrong mode to discuss types of time. It's entirely possible, in fact, that time perceives us inasmuch as we perceive it. Yet once we acknowledge this fact, that time has many iterations of producing itself, that time may in fact perceive us rather than us perceive it, then we can no longer blindly state that our dreams are just dreams—because it would seem to me that if time, in fact, takes many, if not infinite, iterations, then our dreams could in fact be entirely real, that they may just exist in different iterations of time. Our dreams could be entirely real experiences, just experienced in separate iterations of time.

10—Of course, rationally speaking, not that we should speak rationally, but rationally speaking we could question the merits of adhering to Eastern Orthodoxy generally. Of course we could reference the case of Chrysostomos Kalafatis, the Metropolitan of Smyrna, who unceremoniously had his beard ripped off by hand, his eyes gouged out, his nose and ears cut off and was subsequently masqueraded around the very city where he acted as a Metropolitan until he died from his injuries, from having his eyes, nose, and ears removed, all of this during the height of the Greco-Turkish war—as it seems safe to say that Eastern Orthodoxy, to some extent, didn't fare Chrysostomos well in the end, at least from a materialist point of view. It's a small sample

size yet it's compelling to an extent, and of course the sample is substantially larger when we consider the plight of the Orthodox population of Anatolia as a whole. The truth is the Orthodox haven't fared incredibly well in the Near East over the past, give or take, one thousand years or so, we could even say that following the path of Eastern Orthodoxy has perhaps been extremely fraught with peril in certain regions of the Eastern Mediterranean. We shouldn't speak rationally or logically, yet if we were to take the case of, say, for example, the concept of The One, the being that conceptually precedes being, that exists in all aspects of time, but also fundamentally must exist outside of time, to a certain extent we would almost need to entirely reconstruct our conception of time to even remotely be able to conceive of a Being of that nature. Not to say that we could ever conceive a Being of that nature in its essence, yet to even approach a conception—if logic leads us to a First Principle that exists within and outside of time, then our conception of time is essentially absurdist. We would need to reconstruct this conception of time as something we exist exclusively within, that contains us in a linear fashion, that perhaps perceives us in a so-called linear fashion, because if we are in fact extensions of this One who must by necessity exist both within and outside of time, then there must exist a portion of us, as extensions of the One, that experiences time in this fashion, which is of course an essentially absurdist manner of conceiving of time.

11—I can't think of a thing more absurd than conceiving time in a solely linear fashion. It seems just—I don't know—totally ridiculous to assume time proceeds in a purely linear fashion, that time wouldn't proceed in whatever fashion it chooses, that time, eternal as it is, would need us to perceive it, as opposed to vice versa, or even to assume that

time proceeds at all, that, if it chose to proceed, that it wouldn't proceed in the fashion of, say, adding percentages as opposed to integers. I engaged in a sexual liaison with an older female, who at first was black, then became white, then informed me that she had to go south of the Missouri, after I'd paid ninety two dollars for a hotel room for the two of us, as we sat in the medium-sized sedan, with two small and formless dark beings sitting in the back. I partook in the smoking of a sizable blunt that a friend of mine purchased from a local dispensary, and after taking a mere two hits from this blunt I found myself inadvisably high at a family function, experiencing time in a spurious fashion, in a fashion where I was, on the one hand, apparently present at the party, yet simultaneously engaging passively in a form of time that wasn't present at the party—so I suppose it to be possible that at the time I existed at two places at once. Yet as foolish as this may sound, we should note that even Dionysius said, and I quote, 'it may be said to be praising God for his foolishness, which in itself seems absurd and strange, but this foolishness uplifts us to the ineffable truth which is there before all reasoning.' Because it would stand to reason that if reason itself is incapable of ascertaining these so-called divine notions, then perhaps it's only idiocy that remains capable of comprehending these historically divine notions, of time, of being, of placement, of First Causes.

12—Perhaps what we need is a rigorous idiocy. It's entirely possible, as I'm now thinking about it, that with regard to these notions we should employ nothing except a rigorous idiocy, that reason and sound logic have absolutely no place here, in the realm of metaphysics. That in order to wrap our minds around these ideas, like being in two places at once, of being both within and outside of time, of time being

essentially non-linear as much as it's essentially linear, of time perceiving us as much as we perceive it, that we must become more idiotic than we've ever been, that if we continue to attempt to pass ourselves off as intelligent—well, we'll continue to flounder in the stochastic breezes that ripple around these concepts. Sans idiocy, these concepts will continue to exist in a shroud of mystery, not that they can ever be known fully, that's unlikely, it's more or less impossible, but if we employ the proper amount of idiocy, of rigorous idiocy, it's possible that the mystery these concepts are shrouded in could be ameliorated to a degree. We conceptualize a First Cause, a One, a concept that may, in fact, be necessary for our species to exist, at least socially, it very well could be the case that we can only exist logically with this idea of First Cause or One preceding us. Otherwise, sans First Cause, sans a Beginning, we hardly have an argument for linear time, and if we're deprived of a logical argument for linear time, then how can we make sense of anything? It's impossible to make sense of anything, in the traditional sense, sans linear time. If time fails to proceed linearly, at least for us, if we're hopping and skipping willy nilly in the fabric of time, in purely nonlinear manners, then nothing can make sense for us. We're literally senseless. Sans a First Cause, we're literally senseless. Time means nothing. Time, it seems to me, is something that one can only investigate idiotically.

13—Or am I just being silly? Am I simply succumbing to a specific type of silliness, as I'm apt to do from time to time? Most, it should be noted, who know me know me to be prone to succumbing to silliness from time to time? Am I being melodramatic by extrapolating my intense impression following my waking up from my dream, am I melodramatically extrapolating that impression just a little too far by

implying this female, who engaged me in a sexual liaison, might have been an angel or a demon? Yet on the other hand I should note this, it was actually quite some time ago, so long ago in fact that I was practically, now that I think of it, more or less an adolescent, despite being a fully grown man. At the time I was looking for apartments with my father—the first apartment I'd lease on my own, and we were downtown, the two of us, looking at an apartment I didn't realize at the time was rent-controlled, meaning arbitrary caps were placed on the income of the tenants in order to retain eligibility, which of course was the reason why the apartments were such a great deal. Luckily enough for me my salary at that time was insufficient and paltry, so I still managed to qualify for the apartment despite the rent control requirements, had I waited the time necessary for one to become available, but, while I did add my name to the waitlist, I didn't wait the time necessary, because I signed a lease on an apartment three miles north of downtown less than a week later. I was standing in a quarter-empty parking lot in an area of downtown where no less than half a dozen privately owned parking lots sat side by side by side, all with reasonable short-term rates. This particular area of downtown, at that point in time, was a fruitful area socially—there were a plethora of vibrant bars and restaurants, also side by side by side, that myself and others enjoyed frequenting, that were routinely packed from afternoon to evening. Now, by comparison, if you walk through that same area of downtown, by my count, more than half of those bars and restaurants are shut down for good. Whereas I used to frequent that part of downtown, hopping between two or three or four venues, having a fruitful experience socially—now it's almost as if that area of downtown has aged right along with me. As my social activity has waned, at least with regard to hopping from bar to bar, the activity of

this section of downtown has waned as well. As I've become less likely to pop out on a Wednesday afternoon to two or three or four places, this area of downtown has been unable to sustain businesses that used to thrive on people popping out on Wednesday afternoons, hopping from two or three or four places.

14—There are, in fact, hardly any bars or restaurants that are still open on the block. There's been a gargantuan For Lease sign on the largest venue for years now, and the places that should be open for business on a late weekday afternoon are no longer open for business on late weekday afternoons, whereas in previous years every bar and restaurant on the block would have been bustling with businessmen, eccentrics, and alcoholics, now these same venues don't even open their doors until later at night, if at all. I've walked through that block multiple times hoping to pop into just one old bar or one old restaurant for just one drink, and I've discovered every single bar that's stayed in business on that block closed to customers at that time. A bar in a business district really has no excuse for not being open by four pm on a weekday. It's absurd for a bar in a business district to be closed for business at that time, yet that's exactly what's happened to this block, it's now a dead block, it's a block that's more or less officially deceased socially. In any case, years ago, when I was looking for my first apartment with my dad, standing in a quarter-empty parking lot on this very block, I sent a text message to a younger girl I used to flirt with—although we never engaged in a sexual liaison, but there was perhaps a shared interest for a short period, perhaps we both came to the conclusion engaging in a sexual liaison, although tempting, was ill-advised, that for once in the course of human history people should refrain from engaging in any sort of ill-advised liaison, so we developed

a friendship of sorts. It was a shallow friendship, as most friendships that result from staved off sexual liaisons tend to be, these are of course the most shallow and insipid friendships imaginable, they're interminable and asinine, but this particular friendship was rewarding in its own way. So sure, around this time, in this parking lot, I sent her a text message to no reply, and I knew then, somehow or another, instinctually I suppose I knew that I wouldn't get a reply, that the friendship had run its course, that it's purely shallow and insipid nature was abundantly evident to the two of us, and that the other party, this younger girl, had taken it upon herself to sever the friendship once and for all. I've ceased to communicate with her since, yet despite the ultimately shallow and insipid nature of this friendship, despite the fact we never crossed the line, so to speak, for some reason I felt a sort of nonsensical deep hurt, a painful longing of sorts, rooted in essentially nothing, standing in that parking lot, knowing I'd never hear from this person again, who I had no physical relationship with and who I had an entirely shallow and insipid emotional relationship with.

15—It wasn't that long ago that I was reminded of this text message randomly, I'd nearly entirely removed this person from my memory, just as years prior she'd similarly removed me from her memory, and I felt an odd pang in my stomach as I recalled this text message. Wasn't the entire point of turning away from engaging in these sexual liaisons to avoid such pangs? Don't we all just inveterately assume that pangs in our stomachs almost exclusively result from sexual liaisons? And don't we all then avoid sexual liaisons purely in attempts to avoid pangs in our stomachs? Yet in this case, a person I maturely avoided engaging with sexually, and vice versa, of course, who I instead developed a

completely shallow and insipid friendship with, ended up causing me a pang in my stomach, all because I sent her a text message to no reply, knowing the ankle deep friendship we'd harbored had run its course and come to a conclusion. My point in all this is that the first objection the average person would raise to identifying the being in my dream as an angel would be the fact the two of us engaged in a sexual liaison—yet what I've just described suggests that perhaps there's no difference in our relationships with people, that we can't discriminate between relationships based on whether or not a sexual liaison occurred. That perhaps distinguishing relationships based on whether or not they feature a sexual exchange has been a gross error on our part. That perhaps we shouldn't a priori assert that angels don't engage in sexual liaisons with us. Because it's entirely possible they do, and that there's really nothing wrong with an angel engaging us in this type of liaison, sexually.

16—So we can't rule out entirely the possibility that this being—despite engaging me in a sexual liaison, in a small plethora of racial forms—was still, in fact, an angel pointing me toward the fact my life, in large part, followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy. The mathematician, attempting to infinitely extrapolate the massive assumptions that are real world integers, is, in essence, a complete charlatan. For eons we've assumed sexual relations taint relationships, that once a sexual line is crossed, then the relationship will be irrevocably tainted, yet we've never considered that tainting can and will occur even sans sex. Yet perhaps we're making too much of the alleged distinction between angels and demons as well. That just as perhaps we've made too much of the distinction between sexual and non-sexual relations, we're now making too much of the distinction

between angels and demons. It should be noted that even Dionysius noted that pure evil, if it were to exist, would immediately cease to exist, because everything that exists is derivative of the One, which is incapable of producing pure evil, and that even relative evil is simply a function of pursuing aims inappropriate to a being's proper function, that even demons are only demonic in their distance from the One, not in a sense of representing pure evil, because were they to be pure evil they would cease to exist. Essentially, this view purports that there's no fundamental distinction between an angel and a demon, just a difference in the appropriateness of their aims. Whereas an angel pursues the aims appropriate to it, in the proper proportion to its being, a demon pursues the aims more or less inappropriate to it, straying from its proper proportions.

17—Now as it regards my dream, a being took multiple racial forms yet retained the same essence, much like our dual yet monist formulation, and then there were two dark and formless beings in the backseat—perhaps signifying the evil that's impossible to exist, that is stripped of being as soon as it becomes so-called pure evil. So perhaps these two dark formless beings were the non-existent iterations of myself and my companion, possibly an angel. Now this being, perhaps an angel, or perhaps a demon, who took multiple racial forms, eventually informed me, in this car with the two small shapeless forms sitting in the backseat, that she had to go south of the Missouri, to which I corrected her: Don't you mean south of the Mississippi? Yet we should now consider that perhaps my correction was, in the context of the dream, entirely incorrect. By employing the phrase South of the Missouri this being was perhaps directly implying that there are no neat distinctions—that duality is an illusion, that this idea that a state

can be neatly divided by a Mississippi is a misguided approach, that this being, whether an angel or demon, in fact wouldn't emerge on some other side precisely because there is no actual other side, there's only a separate relative place. And when I woke up, I felt as though my life had always followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy, but in this embrace I was accepting the non-dual nature of our existence inasmuch as I was accepting anything else. I embraced Eastern Orthodoxy after engaging in a sexual liaison with a being who took multiple racial forms, who left me to settle, not south of the Mississippi, but rather south of the Missouri—and opposite of the both of us were two small dark forms who completely lacked Being, signifying the impossibility of pure evil. My dream appropriately reproached this idea of true duality, of pure good and pure evil, replacing this absolute duality with a relative duality within the One, of which all Good and all Being originates, both in transcendence and immanence. I then reconciled myself with this being that went south of the Missouri—and perhaps this being wasn't leaving me as much as guiding me, giving me hints not on where to go, no, she wasn't saying where I should go or stay, she was instead guiding me on how to read a map.

18—Even Dionysius stated outright, 'One says of God, the cause of all good, that he is "inebriated"'—and with that in mind, against my better judgment, I poured myself a nice glass of vodka last Saturday before my girlfriend and I dined out, knowing all too well that we planned to go to the bar prior to our reservation, for a cocktail. My significant other agreed to act as our designated driver for the night, and I'd spent the entire week abstaining from every consumable item except water, coffee, hearty grains, and frozen vegetables, and I felt as though I deserved a nice, inebriated night. I said to myself You know

what?—you’ve rigorously denied yourself pleasure this week, and you deserve a night where you go out and get white girl wasted. So I imbibed a cocktail before the cocktail, and when we arrived at the bar, waiting for our friends to meet us, we tried to prolong the cocktail and make a perfect segway into the dinner—unfortunately, I’d finished my cocktail first, and incorrectly assuming I had another ten to fifteen minutes before our friends arrived, so I ordered a second cocktail, yet as soon as the second cocktail arrived our friends also arrived, and then we were sat at the table where, needless to say, we immediately ordered a nice bottle of red wine. So rather than savoring my second cocktail at the bar and then beginning our bottle of wine, I was concurrently finishing my second cocktail while also starting our bottle of wine. Before I knew it I was thoroughly drunk, I became enthusiastically inebriated, and I felt as though I deserved it—I felt as though I deserved to be inebriated, to comment upon a small handful of topics that I probably should have remained silent about, to babble about and upon a potpourri of issues that perhaps would have been better left unaddressed. But sometimes it’s important to do things solely out of abundance, to become completely inebriated, to lose all touch with coherency and restraint, and to engage in a completely misguided conversation purely out of abundance. The First Cause, no matter what form we give it, no matter how its extensions may or may not communicate with us—is if nothing else superabundant.

Catching Up With Old Friends

A.

ADAM: You know, Larry—how can I say this without coming off like a total prick? I don't know, I just can't help but notice that, over the last decade in particular, there's just been a precipitous drop in the quality of local news. It really makes you wonder what sort of events could be occurring locally that we have no idea about, it makes me wonder what could be happening in our localities when a murder now consists of nothing more than a poorly constructed sentence, just a grammatically horrendous single sentence. That's the entirety of what they write about murders now, just a single sentence, usually a small consortium of words that's both entirely uninformative and grammatically putrid. A person was shot on Indiana Avenue no further details are known at this time. This is what they write. It's quite audacious, really. More often than not bylines are also omitted—a single sentence by, ostensibly, a collective Staff. How can the violent murder of a human being be deserving of just a single sentence? A person's life ends in a vicious fashion and an entity known as Staff writes the following: A person was murdered on Indiana Avenue no further details are known at this time. Yet if I download just one of the litany of social media apps available for no cost on my cell phone I'll find seemingly no limit to the inane soliloquies penned by aspiring writers, I'll find seemingly infinite reports on the most arcane minutia, on hyperbolic nano-aggressions of the belly button, dissertations on the proper prepositions a person should employ given their political orientations, yet a brutal murder just a mile from my apartment is confined to a single, grammatically putrid sentence. A person dies violently, and no one cares. I should almost say that there would be

more dignity in the local news just omitting mention of the murder entirely. Which begs the question—how much longer will we have to wait until the reporting on local homicides ceases completely, how much longer will we have to wait for the day to arrive when murders occur on the streets around us and not a single person reports it, when it's no longer discussed. Whom among us can't spare a paragraph for a bodybag?

LARRY: Whom among us indeed.

ADAM: People are being murdered on Indiana Avenue, they're being murdered on Carolina Avenue, and they're being killed on Michigan Avenue, and our local news organizations seem to have succumbed to an inability to relay more than a single sentence about it. How is that possible? What's more important to the residents of the Avenues of Indiana, Carolina, and Michigan than the knowledge of not only whether or not people are being murdered on their streets but the details surrounding potential motives, weapons, suspects, and, if necessary, more in-depth analyses of the criminal organizations operating in the area. Shouldn't this be the highest priority of a local news organization? The sad fact of the matter is, Larry, that it wouldn't even be appropriate to speak of a drop in the quality of the local news, because there's hardly enough substance to these reports to levy a serious critique. How can you critique reporting that, for all intents and purposes, no longer exists? You can't even find a restaurant review anymore locally. How in the world am I supposed to know where to eat? I can't possibly afford to taste test every restaurant that opens its doors in the city. The local news, it's recently occurred to me, for all intents and purposes, no longer exists. In the era of Reality TV, in an

era where I can turn on a television set and watch dozens of programs where people cook in a medium where I'm restricted from both scent and taste, in an era where I can log onto a computer and find millions of people watching adults play videogames—localities have essentially ceased to report on themselves in any meaningful way. Local news agencies can no longer be bothered to investigate the cases of people violently killed in our streets. You now have to get your local news from decentralized, individual, sources—assuming you still have friends and speak to people, which almost no one does. No one speaks to each other. People sit right next to each other and text one another.

LARRY: So much so I almost feel as though you should be texting me this instead of speaking it to me.

ADAM: Like I was telling you about Tel Aviv on the Water the other day. You could never get that type of information from the local news, because they no longer run restaurant reviews, because there are no longer upstanding critics of local restaurants that provide pertinent information to the general public about their options with regard to eating out. Because, needless to say, just as I told you previously, I wasn't about to wait in line to get into the new Tel Aviv after we were denied entrance that past Tuesday—when there wasn't a single person on the patio, because at that point, to me, it was a matter of principle, as I felt as though I'd made my thoughts on that doorman abundantly clear, I wanted absolutely nothing to do with that doorman going forward, I'd rather get drunk under a bridge than attempt to get into Tel Aviv again. In fact, I couldn't wait for Tel Aviv to close, and it would inevitably close, so I could laugh in that doorman's face when I inevitably saw him out elsewhere, in fact, I couldn't wait to see him out

at a bar, out of a job, no longer wearing a ridiculous suit while working on the Providence River, the Providence River filled to its brim with quarter-empty Capri Suns pouches and bass with bad teeth, no longer employed to inform innocent people Sorry, but you can't wear sneakers in here. Sorry! Also, on the weekends, for the patio, make a reservation. Thanks! There's no reason to ever go to Tel Aviv, in my opinion. Their condescension regarding dress code is the worst I've encountered. I still can't wait to see that doorman out at a bar, out of a job, while I wear sneakers and laugh, not necessarily at him, but laugh in a way that strongly implies I'm indeed laughing at him, jobless, now drinking away his sorrows in a bar where everyone is wearing sneakers. And right after that, I don't know if I told you, Larry, that night, we went to meet up with Philokalia at Pasha, and she gave Jamal a container of leftover shrimp cocktail from work, and, suddenly famished, I ate all of the shrimps in the middle of the parking lot at Pasha and, afterward, I threw the doggie bag into the bushes, where it would stay until at least the following Thursday. Jamal witnessed the doggie bag four times in a row on his way to work, and while chewing the shrimp in the parking lot, while making liberal use of the cocktail sauce, I noted the sauce was saving the meal, that the shrimp itself was a little dry, and I wondered if its arid quality was the reason that Philokalia gave it to Jamal in the first place.

LARRY: You know, Adam, forgive me for my digressions, because I don't disagree with you in the least, but the fact of the matter is that the more I age the more I begin to believe there are traits to blood that modern science can't quite comprehend—that maybe even spirits from the distant past echo in the blood biologists tell us runs through our veins. I had a dream earlier this month that an older female who took

multiple forms—who, for lack of a better word, engaged me in a sexual liaison—calmly told me in a car with two small but indecipherable dark forms in the back, after I paid \$92 for our hotel room, that she would be permanently relocating to quote-unquote south of the Missouri. And I took this matter-of-factly, replying You mean south of the Mississippi?—like I knew this had to happen, and I woke up with an intense feeling that my entire life somehow unintentionally followed the path of Eastern Orthodoxy, that this dream was just as concrete as anything I would experience in my waking life.

ADAM: You know, Larry, it's interesting you mention sexual liaisons, but of course we should note that love, by its very nature, is always going to abut upon not only the horrific and repulsive, but also the inherently absurd. In fact, love is perhaps best defined by its inveterate absurdity. The sexual liaison of your dream certainly seems odd, but is it? Is it any more absurd than any relationship either of us have navigated? It's easy to experience a sexual liaison in a dream and deem it absurd, but is it—at least when compared to the median liaison, which is almost always inherently absurd? I think you're spot on in taking the sexual liaison of your dream seriously, then again, even speaking of your love is entirely absurd, and commenting upon your happiness is only done by the near suicidal. No one existing in a happy state or even a near happy state speaks in public about their happiness—the last thing that crosses any of these peoples' minds is stating how happy they are. No one who exists happily states how happy they are, and there's nothing more antithetical to being happy than stating how happy you are. Saying aloud I'm happy only evinces how deeply you've been torn apart, and what often tears two people apart who have become companions, in my experience at least, is difference in necessary

opinion—necessary opinions that people can hardly speak of without making themselves entirely absurd. There's no doubt that two people under any circumstance will almost never share all opinions, in fact even on most opinions any two people will almost certainly, if not disagree, then not agree completely—however, in a relationship there are necessary opinions they must agree on, otherwise there will be, in all likelihood, non-stop tumult. For example, to take an extreme example, at one point in my life I was moderately to deeply involved with a woman who was married. It was unfortunate that she was married, and it was even more unfortunate that we began, for lack of a better term, a sexual liaison—however, while I felt as though she should cease being married, she remained ambivalent as to whether or not she should continue being married and that, to my mind, is a great example of necessary opinion we held diverging opinions on. You see, the fact we fundamentally failed to see eye to eye on whether or not she should continue to be married became quite the issue, it caused nearly endless tumult, but as it would so happen, in my own absurd way, I wasn't even entirely certain why I thought she shouldn't be married. I was in no position to take care of her financially, and she wasn't in a position with particularly promising career prospects, yet for some reason I felt as though the fact she was married to a man who desperately wanted to take care of her financially was an affront to my character, that the fact we weren't together, financially ruining our lives with one another, which of course would certainly have concluded with both of us despising one another, that this was unacceptable. I wasn't willing to accept the fact that she chose not to ruin both of our lives—I saw her refusal to ruin both of our lives as essentially an affront to my character. On some level I knew I had little to no interest in actually getting married, yet the fact she was married seemed to me to

be some kind of slap in the face. I was offended that she remained married to a man who wanted to take care of her financially, despite the fact I was in no position to take care of her financially. But isn't what I've just described the characteristic of love par excellence, despite being inveterately absurd? Having said that, in the end, of course, I told her that, sure, maybe I didn't want her to be married, maybe I'd love it if she were single, but putting my feelings aside, the fact we'd inadvisably engaged in a sexual liaison, well, didn't that fact alone make a coherent argument against the continuation of her marriage? Forget about me for just one second, I said, completely disingenuously I said Just forget about me for one second—if you're engaging in sexual liaisons while married, are you not just poisoning the well, so to speak? The integrity of her marriage was of course acutely compromised by my presence (that is, if you believe our liaison to be her only liaison, which is of course questionable in itself), but in a sense I had nothing to do with the integrity of her marriage—you could argue that if it wasn't our liaison it would have been another liaison, that I was simply a stochastic component in an inevitable liaison. But eventually she did get divorced, and coincidentally enough she also took my advice and completely forgot about me. And rightfully so. To continue to recall me would have been terrible for the two of us, yet it also wasn't the easiest pill for me to swallow, being forgotten so acutely. Extremely emphatically. I don't think I've ever been as emphatically forgotten as I was by this particular formerly married female. Of course you can tell someone to leave you behind, to forget all about you, that they'd be better off without you, but you never expect them to actually take your advice. Never in a million years do you expect them to actually believe you're being sincere, that you would ever want them to forget about you. Because nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, when you tell

someone to forget about you, you expect them to praise you for it, to tell you that they would never forget about you, how could they forget about you—you, the person who's asking to be forgotten? The people who request to be forgotten are almost always never forgotten, except in my case, where I asked this married woman to forget me, and she granted my request.

LARRY: But that's love, is it not? It's entirely unfair, wholly irrational, yet entirely commonplace.

ADAM: I can't imagine anyone disagreeing with that statement.

LARRY: And not only that—because these irrationalities go far beyond the intensities of love, beyond even the mundanities of life, because they even seep into our basic conceptual templates. For example, I love coffee. You know this. I'm an ardent lover of coffee—this is common knowledge, yet it's recently occurred to me that I even love the double ff, double ee consecutive ending of the word Coffee, that, in fact, it wouldn't be a stretch of logic at all to assert that the grammatical makeup of the word Coffee has induced my love of coffee nearly as much as (if not more so than) the physical effect of drinking coffee. Yes, it's recently occurred to me that you hardly ever see two consecutive letters used consecutively in quite that manner, and I've considered this combination to mark a particular apex of the English language, a language which by and large I find mundane and contemptible. Two f's followed by two e's—is this not beautiful? You speak Greek and every sentence you utter sounds mellifluous and poetic, whereas you speak English and it takes years of studying the intricacies of syllable structures to even approach the poetry of a $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$

ένα σούπα, of a είναι όπως είναι, of a το κουτάβι δεν είναι γάτα. Is it wrong that this linguistic effect of coffee should comprise a large portion of my love of coffee? Is that off-base in any way?

ADAM: Larry, I would be lying to you if I said you weren't making perfect sense to me right now.

LARRY: I can only relay my experiences as I experience my experiences.

ADAM: Larry, listen—your irrationality has never been something that offended me personally. But can we be honest with ourselves?

LARRY: We always have.

ADAM: Because before we can proceed any further we should make an important distinction—before anyone accuses either of us of being anti-science, of being prototypical Byzantine mystics. Because I know you wanted to discuss the nature of the totalitarian today, and truly there's nothing more that I wish to discuss—the topic is apropos and urgent, there's nothing more relevant for the two of us to discuss. But I feel as though I need to begin with one important caveat. Because there's a very particular distinction we need to make here, in my mind, and that's the strict separation—not that they're strictly separated—of theoretical science and empirical science. Because today it's too often that we speak of science in this very vague sense, with the two terms co-mingling indiscriminately, as if scientists are infallible creatures that can never be questioned theoretically, that to question science theoretically is to become a modern cretin, as if scientists are modern deities that we should all bow in front of in absolute awe, as if all

science is created equal in the eyes of God, who is also Himself a Scientist (theoretically). It's the syllogistic theoretical science that, in my mind, needs to be denigrated—and denigrated significantly. In fact, there's hardly an extent I would deem too far when it comes to denigrating this syllogistic science, as it seems to me to be the source of the majority of the self-important idiocy we find in our world today. Syllogistic theoretical science, it only proves 'things' in 'theoretical' fashions, and there's no fashion more questionable than a theoretical fashion. If, for example, I told you that A is in B and B is in C, and that therefore—in theory—we can postulate that A is in C, then I would sound entirely logical, you would trust me, you would mention to your parents that you have this beautiful friend Adam, and he's incredibly smart, and his handsome logic is sound enough for ten men. But it's entirely possible that if we one day visited C and searched C extensively that we would find absolutely no trace of A, that the case was in fact that only a small piece of A was found in B, that B was huge, and the piece of B that was contained in C had absolutely nothing to do with A—and that by stating A is in B, B is in C, ipso facto A is in C was the most insipid statement we could have possibly made when it came to the case of A, B, and C. For example, we know the population of Greece consists of human beings, we know the population of Greece tend to live longer than other populations—a fact which sparked the American obsession with the so-called Mediterranean diet—but we also know the population of Greece smokes cigarettes like chimneys with excessive body hair, so it would be entirely logical from this data to conclude, syllogistically, that smoking cigarettes extends the life of human beings. After all, if human beings (A) contain the population of Greece (B), the population of Greece (B) consumes endless cigarettes (C), and the population of Greece (B) exhibits long life (D), then our

conclusion writes itself. A contains B, B consumes C and exhibits D, so it follows logically that if A also consumes C then it should also exhibit D, since B is contained in A. Yet empirically this conclusion is of course absurd. If human beings smoke like chimneys they'll live longer than average lives. So when we speak of science what is it exactly we're speaking of? Are we speaking of physical data that's been collected, that to the best of our sensory organs is true and valid, or are we speaking of gross extrapolations, based on syllogistic IF/THENs that have been overextended, overused, and under-critiqued?

LARRY: I don't disagree, but I also need to confess something to you.

ADAM: Does it have anything to do with theoretical science?

LARRY: Not particularly.

ADAM: Which is entirely fine.

LARRY: Because I feel as though I need to add an essential caveat of my own, before we begin.

ADAM: I would be devastated if you didn't proceed immediately.

LARRY: There's a politics to metaphysics, is that fair to say?

ADAM: The only thing unfair about saying there's a politics to metaphysics would be disagreeing that there's a politics to metaphysics, if you stated there's no politics to metaphysics, only that would be unfair.

LARRY: Would it be fair to say this politics—the politics of metaphysics—is not just nonsensical, but also grotesque.

ADAM: I'd have no choice but to agree with that statement, Larry.

LARRY: So then I think we'd both tend to agree that there's an impalpable character to sincere metaphysics, yet an entirely palpable character to analytical politics. And the palpable politics prods the impalpable metaphysics into inauthentic palpability, knowing full well that the metaphysics will perish if forced to become palpable. No metaphysics can withstand the force of palpability. This is true to the best of our knowledge, that there's an analytical politics that vehemently suggests that if we exit the realm of the analytical—of the theoretical—then we enter a world of chaos, because once we leave the world of the analytical, then schools and bureaucracies become essentially nonsensical. That without this rigid analytical framework we'd no longer have schools and bureaucracy—and then we'd be lost for good. But of course we would counter that the fading away of these systematic schooling systems, these grotesque hierarchies of so-called knowledge, that the attenuation of the bureaucratic construction of knowledge wouldn't be the worst thing to happen to the world, and more importantly that this attenuation wouldn't ipso facto usher in a world of so-called chaos. Because we should be clear—the attenuation of the analytical is distinct from the annihilation of the analytical. This perhaps even bears repeating, that the attenuation of the analytical is something entirely distinct from the annihilation of the analytical.

ADAM: The attenuation of the analytical is without a doubt distinct from the annihilation of the analytical. I agree completely.

LARRY: And while the analytical attempts to annihilate the metaphysical, while the analytical bureaucrats have made the annihilation of anything instinctual and metaphysical their priority—we, by contrast, have no need to annihilate the analytical, we simply wish to attenuate the analytical, knowing full well the metaphysical will perish if the analytical isn't attenuated. All we seek is a co-existence between the analytical and the metaphysical, the recognition that both concepts are necessary.

ADAM: Because as it stands the analytical bureaucrats—by conflating the attenuation of the analytical with the annihilation of the analytical—essentially, in turn, seek the annihilation of the metaphysical.

LARRY: Just a few weeks ago, it was actually unfortunate, I had a loogie of mucus stuck in my throat while sitting in traffic, so I rolled my window down and spat the loogie but completely missed the window, and the loogie landed on my window buttons. I wiped my viscous spit with my fleece sleeve, and the person in the car adjacent definitely witnessed the whole thing. When I got to the gym the Stairmaster I mounted fortuitously displayed an NBA playoff game on the empty treadmill that sat in front of said Stairmaster, and it was all perfect, everything had fallen into place perfectly—I was watching the NBA playoff game I'd wanted to watch while also at the gym—until an older gentleman mounted that specific treadmill, despite the fact there were eight other treadmills open. Needless to say, soon enough I

realized my decision to go to the gym was completely misguided, and it almost goes without saying that three of my friends were working out at the gym, and it almost goes without saying it would have been rude not to say hello and chat for a couple of minutes, and it almost goes without saying that they inquired if I was around that night, and, of course, I was totally around, but I cut the conversation with all three of them just a little short, I truncated the conversation with all three of my acquaintances, because I wanted to get home and watch the remainder of the playoff game, but, at the same time, I had no interest in mentioning my reasoning for leaving so swiftly, obviously because I felt as though the question of why I was at the gym in the first place would have been raised had I shared my imbroglia, that if my main priority was watching a playoff game currently being played, then why would I choose to go to the gym during the exact time of the game? The fact of the matter was I had no rational reason as to why I needed to leave the gym in such a rush, as it was apparent the playoff game couldn't have been all that important to me—if I voluntarily chose to go to the gym while the playoff game was in the midst of being played. I felt a little awkward on my ride home, I instinctively felt as though certain elements could never be reassembled, that at one time, these elements were ostensibly in place, assembled appropriately, that they had to have been in place at one time, in perfect harmony, with inscrutable geometry, but it was doubtful these elements could ever be put back there, into place.

ADAM: Larry, it's at these exact moments—

LARRY: that this type of impalpable metaphysics makes itself known to us. It's only during moments such as these, nonsensical moments

such as these, that we can truly begin to explore these types of impalpable metaphysics. Sans nonsense, metaphysics can never truly be explored, we should admit that much, shouldn't we? That there's a direct correlation between nonsense and metaphysics. That the analytical jargon of the Theoretical Scientists leads us to something that's nonsensical yet grotesque, while this contrary process leads us to perhaps something that's nonsensical yet metaphysical.

ADAM: Everything is without a doubt entirely nonsensical. A man gets murdered on Indiana Avenue, and the local reporter writes A man has been murdered on Indiana Avenue no further details are known at this time. This is submitted, I assume, to an editor and is published as is. Which is nonsensical.

LARRY: You attempt to enter Tel Aviv on the water, on the disgusting Providence River, and a pompous doorman denies you entrance solely on the basis of your footwear, which albeit isn't of the highest quality yet by no means is of an unacceptable quality. This is nonsensical. To mandate that dress shoes should comprise the sole form of footwear in an establishment on a river as grotesque as the Providence River is grotesque in itself. It's nonsensical, yet it's also grotesque. The entire notion of dress shoes is antiquated, yet wearing dress shoes on the Providence River is antiquated but also grotesque. Have any of us ever met a person wearing a pair of dress shoes on the Providence River who wasn't a fascist totalitarian at heart? An objectionable human being in summary? Who wears dress shoes on the Providence River with the exception of these summarily objectionable human beings? Dress shoe mandates on the Providence River seem to me to evince nothing if not intolerance and fascism. What can we say of this increasing propensity

of our era to utterly disregard tolerance of opposing viewpoints—to lunge without thought at anything totalitarian and then to scream screeds asserting the only justice is anything totalitarian?

B.

ADAM: Of course, but Larry—I believe you said you also came over because you had something specific that you wanted to tell me.

LARRY: I did.

ADAM: Well, I don't want to take up your entire afternoon just shooting the breeze here, I wouldn't feel right about that—is the vodka any good by the way?

LARRY: You know, I was a little unsure if I'd like potato vodka, but it's actually very smooth.

ADAM: It's made in Poland, I would assume that's probably why.

LARRY: The fact of the matter is I only drink vodka if it's made in the Eastern bloc. But, to your point, in a general sense, yes, I wanted to touch on totalitarianism and genocide, but it's also true that I had a specific story I wanted to tell you, I've been meaning to tell you this story for some time—but, to be fair, it's definitely totalitarian-adjacent.

ADAM: Do you remember Demo Demises by any chance?

LARRY: Of course. Alcibiades' nephew.

ADAM: You know, I was actually a tad flummoxed, as before you arrived I just randomly remembered the time, I'm not sure I ever told you this—speaking of stories we've been meaning to tell each other—that we were at Dana's up the street, and we were sitting there, Demo with a small stain on his Transformers t-shirt distraught, and I just couldn't help but reflect on how I'd been glancing at the exact same rotting porcupine corpse on Route 146 for over a month on my rides home from work, how the porcupine corpse was taking so long to decay, how it to this day hardly looked decayed at all when Demo said, sitting in the corner of the bar, looking at the guy from across the bar, I wanna beat the shit out of that guy, and we could do it, but the only downside is, after he woke up, I'm pretty sure he'd have us both killed, to which I replied, leaning into the corner of the bar, looking at the guy from across the bar, I don't know, I wasn't that offended when he told me to go fuck myself. It was a major turning point in my life, no longer taking offense at a grown man telling me to go fuck myself. Even prior to discovering the guy could ostensibly have us murdered if we beat him up, I remained surprisingly unoffended that he told me, unsolicited, to go fuck myself and had no interest in resorting to physical violence. At the time, I was in the midst of playing pool with an attractive grandmother, the most attractive grandmother I'd met to date, and she was defeating me handily, to the extent it should have been embarrassing, but much like being told, unsolicited, to go fuck myself I was surprisingly unconcerned about it, I wasn't embarrassed at all. Having lost the game of pool handily, I had to buy the grandmother a beer, but that was fine, the days of being ill-tempered and petty, hot headed and cheap, they were clearly behind me, it was almost as if, those days, they never existed. The grandmother told me, for the third

time that hour, I physically resembled an immature guy who dated one of her friends, and I said That's impossible, I'm actually incredibly mature, as I witnessed, out of the corner of my eye, Dave Broccoli swirling two handfuls of barbecue wings into the pan of party pizza, placing the barbecue wings like pepperonis onto the party pizza—and I thought That's why he isn't losing any of the weight he wants.

LARRY: That's so typical of Demo, isn't it—always calculating his odds of being killed in cold blood.

ADAM: I can't think of anything more typical of Demo than impersonally calculating his odds of being killed in cold blood.

LARRY: A man is murdered on Indiana Avenue and a pseudonymous summary is posted to the local news that reads A man was murdered on Indiana Avenue no further details are known at this time. Demo Demises sits with a small stain on his Transformers t-shirt and calculates the probability of being murdered if he beats up a man who told him to go fuck himself. You, Adam Metropolis, find a sort of inner peace in the process, jubilantly playing pool with an attractive grandma, perhaps attempting to fornicate with this nice looking grandma, no longer concerned with grown men telling you to go fuck yourself, unsolicited, right to your face.

ADAM: In any case . . .

LARRY: Moving on . . .

ADAM: As you were saying . . .

LARRY: Yes. As I was saying. Or as I was about to say before I came over and we started drinking vodka, before we began digressing on issues of totalitarianism and being unsolicitedly told to go fuck ourselves. It was only nine months ago to the day, Adam, a truly horrendous day if I've ever had one, but just to be clear, don't get me wrong, I had a great time at this wedding, but at the same time I felt a historical anxiety, a dark foreboding, and in retrospect I would feel a slight disgust with the procession of time. I've had a long-standing issue with the procession of time, and I'm not entirely sure why that is. The fact is the procession of time is often a process that I find reprehensible. I find myself saying things to myself like Well ten years ago this month, or It was about a year and a half ago the last time I ate cheese—I say things like this to myself all the time. I'm always reminding myself of epochs that have passed by, noting the changes that I feel have taken place, but of course, my particular interpretations of the changes shift just as quickly as the perceived changes. Things change, but my interpretations of these changes also shift, and they shift as quickly as things themselves change. So when things change, even the change itself exists in a state of flux. So what I view as the major change of X from five years ago, well I'll view that change to X entirely differently when X is six or eight or ten years in the rear view. My interpretations of changes shift just as quickly as the changes, which of course essentially degrade the changes into nonsense, if a change can't even be perceived in a static fashion, then our entire consciousness reverts to a sort of absurdity, or at the very least it reverts to a gross fabrication. Yet, having said that, I still attended this wedding. It was a lurid affair yet also a beautiful affair. If I remove myself and my personal opinions and my instinctive skepticism and my

intimate history from the equation it was a quite beautiful occasion, one of the few weddings I've attended that I can honestly say seemed authentic and actually heartwarming to an extent. My point is, of course, that social relations are essentially totalitarian. That our insatiable thirst for new technology, this insane push for infinite progress on the technological front has turned all of our social relations into totalitarian regimes. It's impossible to disassociate yourself from people, Adam. You have to be a complete asshole to disassociate yourself from anyone you've ever met in our era, and I can truthfully note that if I lacked the ability to be a complete asshole I'm not sure where I would be in life. It's not an exaggeration to say I might be dead. But you'll say, Larry, there's no way that social media is that bad, that you almost perished because of it, that's an exaggeration. But it is, in fact, not an exaggeration at all to say that if I lacked the ability to become a complete asshole and disassociate myself from the majority of my peers I'd probably be dead. I'd have perished, almost without a doubt—and I don't feel as though I'm being hyperbolic in the least. These tenuous associations are not only nauseating, they act as progressive weights on our shoulders—they're not only nonsensical, but they're also grotesque. With the advent of social media it seems as though the second you hit puberty every individual acquaintance you make becomes an interminable relationship, if you're employed at a business, then almost every last one of your fellow employees become interminable acquaintances. People you went to school with?—interminable. You attend grad school?—interminable acquaintances. You frequent a bar, and someone asks you if you have a so-called social media handle?—interminable. In our era, the instant a person learns your name you've acquired an interminable acquaintance, and if you actually become friends with someone, then just forget it

Adam, because in that case it will be easier to accumulate thousands of dollars in high interest credit card debt, it'll be easier to expunge that debt from your record than to terminate a moderately intimate friendship. It's not hyperbolic to suggest that terminating a friendship in our era is a thoroughly exhausting process—unless you have the ability to be a complete asshole. And as it pertains to sexual relationships, well, it's hard for me to believe that it's much of an exaggeration to suggest that if you've ever engaged in a sexual liaison in the social media era, and this liaison terminates sexually, then you'll essentially have to spend weeks removing yourself from the Internet entirely. I'm unsure of how a person could adequately function in the aftermath of the dissolution of a sexual relationship in the social media era without spending weeks removing him or herself from the Internet entirely. I think this may be the sole functional method of going about it, disappearing completely. How could I log onto a social media website and receive updates regarding the cookouts a person I used to have sex with is attending this weekend? To engage in that type of activity would be an act of utter insanity on my part—to keep tabs on the cookouts persons I used to have sex with are attending, I don't understand how that's something that's even regarded as acceptable in a modern society, yet as it stands it's actually encouraged, it's in fact recommended. People are encouraged to log onto websites that keep them up to date on all of the cookouts people they used to have sex with are attending. Every time we engage in a sexual relation we've essentially signed up for a lifetime of weekend updates. Did you know the person you lost your virginity to is going to the Hamptons for a series of small yet opulent get togethers next weekend? Adam, the girl you got to third base with nine years ago in an alley behind an upscale sushi venue on a frigid winter evening is throwing a wonderful little

party for her three nieces this Sunday. Yet even if you scrub your full name and date of birth from the Internet entirely, this will only terminate a fraction of your relationships, while a decent portion, perhaps even a considerable portion, of these relationships will remain essentially interminable because of the Text Message. The Text Message began as a convenient way to message friends and families, yet almost immediately transmuted into a duty that extended to twenty four hours per day, seven days per week, a duty almost exclusive to people you hardly know. I once had a friend of a friend, a person I'd only generously refer to as an acquaintance, send me that read YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT because I didn't reply to a text message until the following morning. This is the true nature of the Text Message as I understand it. It's a form of communication that only logically ends with one party typing in all caps to the other YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT.

ADAM: There's more than a morsel of truth to that statement.

LARRY: A text message exchange will remain interminable until one party types YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT—or something equivalent—to the other. For a text message exchange to end any other way almost seems absurd to me. Even if you rid yourself of social media, you'll still find yourself subject to the Text Message, which can barrage your phone at any time, on any day, and always requires a reply. How could you not reply to a text message, Adam? Ignoring a text message will at some point be deemed a felony, and I wouldn't be shocked if eventually it becomes a capital offense. To ignore a text message in our era is viewed as one of the cruelest acts a person can perpetrate on another. I've had people continue texting me, causing

catastrophic damage to our relationship in the process, because they quote-unquote didn't have the heart to ignore me. When I would have been the first to admit that I should have been ignored outright, without hesitation, if anyone on the planet deserved to be ignored it was myself during this particular time period. I deserved to be ignored, and I also needed to be ignored. Ignoring someone is at times the most humane act available to us. In fact, sending a text message and expecting a reply is completely inhumane. It's at least the more inhumane of the two. In past eras people met each other once and never saw one another again, and they thought to themselves But what if I saw that person again? Oh my God, what if I could just run into that person one more time? Just one more time? One more time is all I'd need! They extrapolated these seemingly effervescent possibilities in their imaginations and dreamed of a day when they'd meet again, and their dreams would come true, and their lives would be improved immeasurably, just by bumping into this one person just one more time. That's all they needed! Perhaps the absence even haunted them. These fools! These naive imbeciles! They never realized how humane their form of communication was and how totalitarian their dreams would become in practice. Now we're always bumping into one another—just one more time. Just one more time, Adam. And everything will be different. Yet these effervescent possibilities have transmuted to lurid realities. The problem is you can't just artificially select that Just One More Time from a voluminous sequence of petty interactions—that Just One More Time quickly becomes amplified to an extent that's suffocating. Books must occasionally be burnt. Friendships must occasionally cease. Text messages must occasionally be ignored. A world where every book has a place on a shelf, where every friendship lasts a lifetime, and every text message receives a timely

reply was the utopia of past generations but has become the apex of the totalitarian in practice. It's literally subjugated our generation. No one thinks beyond the Text Message in our era. We've been subjugated by text messages and acronyms and smiley faces and animated clips and catching up with people we don't even know. We can no longer think. We've almost completely lost the ability to think because we never cease text messaging each other. The assumption of previous generations was that if communication became ubiquitous then that One Person that passed them by would be the person to pop back up, but that assumption in practice couldn't prove more false. That person is married now, living in a gated community with an opulent spouse they don't hate but don't love, and they're entirely content with their lives. They've lost themselves in material things, and they couldn't be more satisfied. For every person you wish would just pop back up, there are hundreds waiting in the wings who you want nothing to do with. To believe that assumption, that your One Person will be the one to pop back up, is tantamount to believing Nigerian princes want to Venmo you millions of dollars online, it's tantamount to believing Russian models with stock photos and broken English are the ones direct messaging you asking if you'd be interested in anal sex this Sunday. Everything humanity views as an ideal in theory ends as a catastrophe in practice. Everything that sounds good sitting in a coffee shop, or drinking vodka with a good friend, will inevitably turn into a brutal form of chattel slavery in practice. So I was invited to this wedding. What if everything lasted forever, Adam?—what if divorce was abolished? We hear this and instinctively say That would be great! And then we enter a cage. We enter a cage where an acquaintance from fifteen years ago, a nice enough person we got drunk with three times, sends us a text message and asks us how's it going, and we have to reply.

Yes, I was invited to this wedding. We feel nearly criminal if we don't reply to this text message. But of course the last thing we'd ever want to do is reply to this text message. Because there's nothing to discuss. It's not out of hatred, that's a misconception. It's purely out of a lack of things to discuss. There's nothing to talk about with an acquaintance from fifteen years ago. I was invited to a wedding, this is true. We don't want to continue seeing the faces of people with whom we have nothing to discuss. This is why I've always preferred the company of complete strangers to acquaintances. How many hours of our lives can we spend discussing impertinent things with impertinent people? How many hours until this type of behavior kills us, perhaps not literally but perhaps figuratively. But also perhaps literally. Sending text messages to people should be considered the criminal act, yet, as our society is currently constructed, ignoring text messages is considered a borderline criminal act. I was invited to a wedding a few months ago. It's impossible to avoid people, and why should I? I love people. But in small doses. I love complete strangers. People I'll make a single benign comment to in a coffee shop and never see again. These are my people, Adam. This idea that the person who taught me the meaning of Arabian Goggles and Cleveland Steamers when I was nineteen years old should still be privy to what I'm Up To, should still inquire as to What's Going On, over a decade after we spent a modicum of time together—discussing Arabian Goggles and Cleveland Steamers—is almost unfathomable to me. I'm not sure there's a better word to describe it than totalitarian. So, yes, I suppose I did come over here today to discuss totalitarian regimes with you. So, yes, I was invited to this wedding, and I was asked to take part in the wedding party. That's how it began. I sat at a vegan bistro with a long-time friend who I'd gradually grown increasingly distant from, not in a malicious way,

because it wasn't in any way malicious, but in an actually really friendly fashion, our friendship had been waning, but in a friendly manner. Our friendship had essentially perished, but perished in an amicable way. We were totally affable, yet no longer friends. I sat at the bistro, and I knew he was getting married, because he'd told me he was getting married, via Text Message, and I had an inkling that perhaps he'd ask me to be a part of his wedding party, but at the same time I heavily discounted this inkling simply because in my mind we were at best tangentially friends, we hardly ever hung out anymore, so I'd just assumed that he'd ask a group of people he'd grown closer to to be a part of his wedding party. He asked me to be a part of his wedding party, and I gladly obliged. I didn't feel great about it, but I felt well enough. It wasn't a big deal, and I was flattered and also happily obliged. At this point in our lives, what's a wedding? It's nothing. It's essentially akin to meeting up for a cup of coffee. A person in my social milieu is tying the knot? I'll take a medium black coffee on ice—it's similar in kind. You see, Adam, the issue with this wedding wasn't the wedding itself, not at all, it wasn't my friend, who I'd grown apart from in an amicable manner, not at all, that wasn't the issue. Because we were still affable.

ADAM: Of course—you weren't exactly great friends, but you were affable enough.

LARRY: I couldn't have said it better myself, Adam—the issue wasn't the wedding at all, not in the least, because the wedding was truly a beautiful event, the issue I instead found myself confronted with was all of the people who were invited to the wedding, just a potpourri of people I truly never thought I'd ever see again. A sort of dark

foreboding, a historical anxiety, a disgust with the procession of time overtook me as soon as I entered the rehearsal area, and that was only the beginning, because once at the actual wedding the people I never thought I'd see again grew tenfold, I was inundated with people I thought I'd left behind for good, who I truly believed, up to that point, that I'd never have to see again, who'd been put in the rearview in a permanent fashion, and this historical anxiety grew twentyfold, if the people I never thought I'd have to see again grew tenfold, then my historical anxiety grew twentyfold. By the end of the wedding I was overcome with an acute disgust with the procession of time, I despised the procession of time, because now, after having caught up with all of these people from my past, I realized that—now more than ever—I'd never see any of these people again. I had a great night with people I hadn't seen in years, that prior to the wedding I was almost positive that I'd never see again, and at the end of the night I thought to myself On what occasion will I ever see any of these people again? A resounding Never! echoed from the furthest confines of my soul. People I used to be close with, who I'd gradually grown so distant from that I became certain I'd never see again—I just spent an entire night with all of them, and now I'd never see any of them again. I'd never see any of these people again, I concluded to myself. I thought I'd never see any of these people again, then unexpectedly I saw all of these people again, and I had a great night with all of them, and now it's almost certain that I'll never see them again. Now I had to put them back into my rearview for good. Now, after having just removed them from my rearview for good I'd have to arduously place them back into my rearview, again for good. This is the problem with people. They never sit still. We can never place them in a static position. We think they're in our rearview for good, and then they pop back up again. Then they

disappear forever. But this wasn't the worst part—not even close, Adam. And don't get me wrong, it was a great night, my historical anxiety was acute, I despised the procession of time through the entirety of the ceremony, but the worst is yet to come. It was terrible. Abominable even. But I had a magnificent time, and I wish my old friend the best—I truly wish him nothing but success and happiness, because he's a sincere person, and he deserves the best. Nothing but the best is nothing short of what he deserves. And I hope he has it. The best. I haven't seen him since the wedding, which may be somewhat of a faux pas on my part, but how many people can we realistically see, Adam? Again, sometimes it's necessary to be a complete asshole, not out of any ill-will or vitriol, but out of personal necessity, because there are times in your life where being a complete asshole is the only mode of life that will manage to make your life a continuing possibility. People perish from less. All the great souls have understood this. Christ understood it. Are you under the impression Christ was a nice guy, Adam? Because he wasn't. Christ was a complete asshole at times, but only because he had to be—his divinity made him an asshole, and that was, frankly, by design, in my humble opinion. How much longer must I suffer your race, Christ said, and who could blame him? Who's worse than us? I was sat at a table with my current, for lack of a better term, love interest, my lover, my romantic link, my beau thing, and we get along great. I really can't say enough about her, she's a beautiful soul and a sincere person, and we were intended to be placed with two other couples in the corner of the venue. Now I could have taken a modicum of umbrage with our placement in the corner of the venue, but I chose to forgo the taking of any umbrage. I took the high road. One of the couples my, for lack of a better term, girlfriend and I were requested to sit with was a distant cousin of mine who I more or less regularly keep

in contact with, and I thought the night would be significantly buoyed by his presence, that he and his wife would be a necessary buffer between myself and the other couple, who I despised and also despised me. Yet when I walked into the rehearsal dinner my old friend asked me about this distant cousin, had I heard from him at all? I said no, and it wasn't a lie. Hundreds of times a person has asked me if I'd heard from so and so, and hundreds of times I've replied no, and hundreds of times that answer was a bald-faced lie, but in this instance my old friend asked me if I'd heard from my distant cousin, and I replied no, and it was the whole truth. Well, my old friend said to me, he just text messaged me and said he can't make it. The wedding? I replied nonsensically, and he confirmed. I couldn't help but laugh. What a complete asshole, I thought. I admired my distant cousin's audacity immensely. It's probably why we've remained friends—rebuking a wedding invite, via text message, the day before the wedding, what an absolutely beautiful use of the text message, a true asshole move. Rebuking a wedding invite via text message the day before the wedding is, of course, essentially equivalent to sending someone a text that reads YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT, which, as I stated previously, is really the only way a text message can end. This decade plus text message between my old friend and my distant cousin was finally concluded, appropriately so in my opinion, by my distant cousin, in so many words, sending my old friend a text that read YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT. I had to chuckle to myself, despite the fact it was entirely inappropriate and cost my old friend at least a few hundred dollars. At least that's my estimate. At the same time my distant cousin now placed me in the completely unenviable position of sharing this table with a couple I hadn't seen in years, who I despised and also despised me. But I couldn't help but respect my distant cousin's audacity. Whatever

esteem I held for my distant cousin before this wedding, I held considerably more esteem for him after it. My companion and I sat at the table in the furthest corner of the venue, and the discomfort was palpable. Two people I hadn't seen in years, both of whom I despised, both of whom despised me, now we shared a sole table in the furthest possible corner of this venue, with no buffer, save for our mutual disgust. No one likes being lied to, Adam—I don't want to go too deep into the whole ordeal, the entire history of how two people who, at one time, were people I considered relatively close friends, who I spent considerable time with, how it came to be that we now all mutually despised on another. But this isn't all that uncommon. It's perhaps true of people on average that they're not exactly meant to become that close, that a healthy distance is almost always necessary, that people growing into great friends is more often than not a social death sentence. The human being is the social animal par excellence, but we might not be the intimate animal par excellence—we might not be the close friend animal. Most definitely not. We might, in fact, be the coffee shop animal. When people become close it often happens that, sooner or later, they end up despising one another. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say the majority of intimate relationships end in hatred. It wouldn't be inaccurate to say I can be temperamental at times. That wouldn't be inaccurate. But at the same time it wouldn't be inaccurate to say that my temperament is usually at least somewhat justified, that my temperament, though volatile, is more often than not rooted in logic. The utter illogic of the world pushes my temperament to its extreme volatilities. When the male portion of this couple I despised started attending bars with all of us wearing the highest quality of sportcoats, when he started coming out wearing the fanciest of clothes, yet routinely left the bar before the tab was issued, yeah, I

guess you could say that it bothered me a little bit. It bothered everyone, but of course I was the only person to directly address the situation. To inadvisably address the situation. It wasn't advisable, because how can a person possibly broach that topic, a person who routinely eschews paying his portion of a tab, from a social standpoint it's more or less impossible to address, but I found it necessary to address. And for that audacious broaching of that unapproachable topic this person despises me to this day. The male portion of that couple, to this day, hasn't forgiven me for boldly broaching the taboo topic of his utterly selfish and absurd spending habits, showing up to a bar in the finest linen, ordering multiple adult drinks, several light beers, and then expecting me—wearing a five dollar sweatshirt, shamelessly patronizing the slave labor of East Asia simply because I couldn't afford both a nicer sweatshirt and a night out for drinks—to pay for all of it. Maybe rightfully so he despises me. What person in their right mind would broach that topic? I had no real issue picking up the tab for him from time to time, but to come out to the bar wearing the finest sportcoats, the highest quality leather loafers, to point out these audacious and gaudy garments to everyone, and then to routinely leave the tab to everyone else's wallet, well, I wasn't going to stand for that. I chose to broach. Maybe that's my fault. It's possible that I'm a born crusader of sorts. That I inveterately choose to broach topics others would never consider broaching. Yet in any case, I relayed my thoughts to this person on his spending habits, and I let him know about it in a way that accurately expressed my disgust—frankly, we almost came to blows because of it, right in the bar where we were ordering beers, and given the fact this male portion is on a light day about twice my size it was without a doubt fortuitous for me than we didn't. Having said that, I don't object to being beat up from time to

time, because I've been beat up on a number of occasions in my life, and it's never particularly bothered me. As an adolescent I was beat up quite a few times, and it never bothered me. In some ways being beat up—it can make you feel alive. In some ways being beat up is a blessing. It never rubbed me the wrong way, personally. Yet while the male portion of this couple, to this day, despises me because I accurately expressed my disgust with his grotesque spending habits, I've never for a day of my life despised him for his spending habits, despite the fact I find them grotesque. His spending habits disgusted me, but I never despised him for his spending habits. Quite the contrary, I despised the male portion of this couple for an entirely different reason—for a reason that, in my mind, goes far beyond spending habits. I never understood in my youth how things work. It was only as I began to experience human relationships in an empirical manner that I was able to investigate the essentially stochastic nature of human relationships, the tiniest moments in a relationship, details that are perhaps in most cases beyond our sensory capabilities, how these moments control our relationships. At any given time our conscious knowledge of our relationship is obscured by stochastic processes we can hardly comprehend. *Μυστικός* means both mystic and mysterious—there's no division between the two. It would take a lifetime to transcribe the stochastic processes that dictate a single hour of our lives. We look at other people at a remove and say These people are insane, they're making mistake after mistake—while all the while we're equally insane, making equal if not more egregious mistakes, wholly unable to consciously grasp ourselves at a remove. Our entire lives consist of us acting in essentially insane manners while looking across the street at people at a remove and deeming them insane. All with little to no sense of irony. The male portion of this couple I despised was the type of

person to bloviate on friendship and loyalty—he bloviated on friendship and the fabric of his linen shirts—yet when it so happened that a person I was romantically involved with at the time was masquerading around a mall with another man, right around his wife, right around essentially everyone but me, well, this bloviating male portion of this couple chose to stay completely silent. After bloviating about friendship and honor and loyalty he ruthlessly chose to let me look like a total jadrool to an entire mall. For which I essentially despise him to this day—perhaps not even so much for remaining egregiously silent as much as perpetually bloviating on friendship and loyalty, then failing to perform even the bare minimum of true friendship when a situation arose that required just a bare minimum of friendship. Perhaps not even so much for failing to exhibit any characteristics of true friendship, but perhaps it's just for the endless bloviating that I despise him. I despise bloviating. Sure, sexual interaction—well, it's certainly a biological function, and it's difficult to hold infidelity against anyone. How can you? Infidelity is so common it's impossible to hold it against anyone ad infinitum. I don't condone infidelity, but I recognize its pervasiveness, its pantheist tendencies. I acknowledge the pantheist tendencies of infidelity. But making me look like an total jadrool to an entire mall is another matter entirely, walking around a mall with another man, among people who all know me, so everyone can become fully aware I'm essentially being ruthlessly two-timed, so everyone knows but me—that's something I simply can't forgive. It's a tough pill to swallow, Adam. Which is of course the reason why I despised the male portion of this couple, grotesque spending habits aside. The male portion of this couple knew I was being two-timed—in public—that essentially an entire mall of imbeciles were laughing behind my back, and he did absolutely nothing to intervene. The bare

minimum eluded him. Whatever the least amount of effort he could have exerted to intervene on my behalf, he did less. Not that he had to intervene directly. Not that he had to even tell me explicitly, but to not even give me a nod, to tell me in so many words, to not do even this, to refrain from exerting even the bare minimum of effort on my behalf, and then immediately resume bloviating about friendship and loyalty and honor was even more disgusting to me than going out wearing the finest linen, then shamelessly leaving your five Michelob Ultras on my tab. Which is why I despised him. He despised me because I asked him if it was possible to take a brief hiatus on paying his bar tabs. I despised him because he bloviated about friendship and loyalty for a decade then sat idly by while an entire mall had an extended chuckle at my expense. So we sat with this couple at the furthest corner of the wedding venue, inundated with people I truly thought I'd never see again, and this couple had the audacity to love my new girlfriend. It was abhorrent. But I was of course equally abhorrent, because, in this instance Adam, I chose not to broach. I didn't broach their absurd behavior in the least—instead I chose to take the road of social decency. They loved her so much. She was so great. They insisted we all hang out sometime. Oh, you know this recipe? Teach me sometime! And of course I replied Oh yeah, let's definitely hang out! Because I love that recipe! Let's put something on the calendar! It was grotesque. Of course there's been zero communication on either side since. We sat at a table for hours and bloviated on and on, interminably. You know what? We should all hang out! We need to hang out! Soon! Let's put something on the calendar! Wow, this recipe sounds pretty cool! Can I have your number? Text me sometime! A grotesque masquerade. A grotesque masquerade that, in my opinion, was the direct result of the Text Message. The interminable nature of every modern relationship. Modern scientists

claim eternal life may be possible, yet haven't we already found it? Our acquaintanceships extend multiple lifetimes already. Nothing can ever die. You text message someone YOU'RE A FUCKING CUNT, and then you exchange recipes the next week. Put something on the calendar! We've discussed at length about the hurtling of our country toward the totalitarian, but I think it's clear to the both of us now that we've missed the mark entirely—because we now exist exclusively within the totalitarian. To discuss the totalitarian as something that's impending, unfortunately, is to miss the mark entirely. We'll exist forever like this. We'll put something on the calendar next month, Adam. I have a great recipe for zucchini pancakes!

Theories of the Western World

.706 — .758 — .733 — .731 — .730 — .734 — .757 — .731 — .723 —
.690 — .670 — .723 — .739 — .688 — .768 — .763 — .726 — .770 —
.722 — .681 — .793 — .767 — .749 — .737

01—As a matter of fact, I was just telling Demo as we walked up to your flat, I've been just a tad preoccupied of late with a night I actually just remembered today, from years ago actually, completely non-descript, entirely inconsequential at face value, yet it was a night that nonetheless, now thinking it through, is essentially indicative of my true character. It was a night, via pure instinct, I allowed my true colors to show, and of course I was ashamed at first, who isn't disgusted at first sight of their true colors, but as the years have passed I've come to the conclusion that there's actually nothing a priori wrong with my true colors—actually, if anything, it's quite the contrary. My true colors, of course I can't change them, but even if I could I wouldn't. Because even though my true colors require a prerequisite, a perhaps unappetizing prerequisite, a prerequisite that, yes, that I loathe certain people for no reason. But even though that may in fact be the case, I believe it's actually proper to loathe certain people for absolutely no reason, with no justification whatsoever, that hating people sans pretext is in fact entirely necessary, and I may even leap further and state outright that these certain people, whom we loathe sans pretext, may actually deserve this intense loathing and unprovoked hatred, but let me begin, please. Because to begin with, it was an era where I found myself spending an inordinate amount of time at social events that I loathed—I loathed both contemplating my future attendance of these events and then my actual attendance of these events. People, ultimately, have no couth—to this day, for example, I often find myself

present at social gatherings where a quote-unquote vegetable plate, along with a vegetable dip, is presented as an hors d'oeuvre, and I'm almost always a little let down by the quality of the celery. At that particular stage in my life, in fact, the era I'm speaking of, I'd reconciled myself to the fact that I had intrinsically higher standards than most when it came to celery, cucumbers as well—I analyzed produce with an acuity, frankly, most of my peers would never achieve. Having said that, to this day the majority of hosts in our country have next to no couth when it comes to serving celery or cucumbers. Forced to attend a so-called post wedding brunch just a few months prior to the events I'm about to relay, I was appalled at the quality of cucumbers served—a cucumber, above all else, should be refreshing. A piece of celery, ideally, is similar to sipping a fresh glass of ice water on a zesty summer day. The source of this regrettable degradation in the quality of our celery and cucumbers undoubtedly stems from America's overreliance on dip.

02—Dip, in our era, has literally and figuratively become the hors d'oeuvre, it's become culturally acceptable to utterly ignore the quality of the celery and cucumbers, two of the most refreshing yet delicate vegetables known to our species, at social gatherings because it's assumed consumers' attention will be focused almost solely on the dip. Yet it's precisely the dip that negates the nutritional benefits of the celery, as well as the cucumbers. Americans no longer consume vegetables—they consume vegetables with dips and sauces that obliterate all possible nutritional benefits of a vegetable. These dips and sauces annihilate the intrinsically refreshing essences of our vegetables. Guests attending these parties could relieve themselves all over these quote-unquote vegetable plates and not miss a beat nutritionally—they'd probably even fail to notice a difference in taste,

with the amount of sour cream currently found in the median American dip. During this era of my life, almost every week I would spend two to five minutes in the produce section arduously selecting only the finest celery stalks and most concrete cucumbers, touching all the cucumbers indiscriminately, with no regard for the customers who inevitably would touch these same cucumbers after I'd finally made my selection—because, to this day, there's nothing more deflating than a stalk of celery gone flat by mid-week, yet there's nothing more uplifting than a freshly chopped stalk of celery, and the same can be said for cucumbers. Yet, as so-called Greek-Americans, none of us should be surprised at this state of affairs, with a vegetable dip masking the refreshing essence of the genuine article, so to speak—and this brings me to a much larger point, a more grandiose issue, if you'll allow me to digress just slightly before I begin my anecdote, the anecdote I've admittedly been obsessing over for weeks now, which will inevitably, I believe, become the crux of my argument here. Because there's endless discussion today with regard to our so-called world, our alleged Western world, but it's imperative we define our terms with rigor as opposed to carelessness—because it's too often that we throw terms into the ether willy-nilly. In short, it's entirely possible we're confusing extension with interpretation as it relates to our Western world. There's endless talk of this Western world, but let's be specific, this Western world is, in fact, little more than an Anglo world, it's not simply a nondescript Western world, it's also an actual Anglo world—our civilization, so to speak, is nominally considered Western, nominally considered Graeco-Roman, yet there's a barbarism at play here, there's a nefarious vegetable dip burying the genuine article here.

03—In actuality, the Western world is little more than a misnomer for the Anglo world, which is essentially the American world, and the Anglo world, in actuality, is not an extension of Graeco-Roman Antiquity, no, it's simply an interpretation of that world—and even then that interpretation was a purely subsequent interpretation, an interpretation in response to an interpretation. Because the primary interpretation of Antiquity came from Constantinople and Antioch and Alexandria, in the so-called Byzantine world, and only then did this Anglo world indulge in a subsequent interpretation of the Graeco-Roman Antiquity, based on the Byzantine era's interpretation but also of course based on their interpretation of the so-called Byzantine world. This should be understood, that the Anglo world, in a very tangible sense, is little more than an elaborate vegetable dip itself, a subsequent interpretation, and it's perhaps the most pervasive iteration of so-called vegetable dip our planet has yet to see—beneath it we discover the genuine article, the primary interpretation, so to speak. As for us, within this Anglo world we remain more or less glossed over, a sub-optimal fit over here and sub-optimal fit over there, as Diamanda Galas aptly put it: America is fixated on multiculturalism yet remains remiss with regard to Middle Eastern cultures, which include Greek cultures—but how is this possible? Yet we should note, we should finally admit to ourselves that the modern center of the Anglo world, America, for all of its melting pot mythology, has never assimilated, not quite, because instead it's simply annihilated—in America we love discussing ethnicities, people wear hyphens like name-tags, but all of these ethnicities are at bottom false ethnicities, just as the so-called modern Greek, the Hellenic baboon, is a fictional ethnicity, all of our other ethnicities are essentially fictional ethnicities, they're ethnicities at best as simulacra, and, subsequently, what's inevitably true but will

remain perpetually untouched upon is that there is no real race or ethnicity within America with the exception of the Anglo. Everyone is Anglo in America, this is obvious. Every person in America, insofar as they've adopted American hyphenations, is essentially Anglo—as Catholicism washed over the third world, the third world became essentially Anglo, the Puritanism of North America mixed with the Catholicism of South America and resulted in a milieu where everyone is essentially Anglo. Magic Johnson, at bottom, is essentially Anglo. Endless ethnicities have been properly identified, systematically assimilated into this Anglo-American framework, and subsequently annihilated, and we peruse their coming-of-age narratives, penned in the classic New Yorker style, and we think to ourselves, “Wow, that’s nice, what a nice little coming-of-age story, I never knew Vietnam was so nice in Autumn—” when the reality is these people have been essentially annihilated.

04—The coming-of-age narrative of the Vietnamese immigrant tickles the recesses of our soul, yet it never occurs to us that this Vietnamese person, writing in the classic New Yorker style, has been essentially annihilated. We marvel at the ethnic traits of coming-of-age narratives penned in the classic New Yorker style, yet these ethnicities are entirely fictional, they've been essentially annihilated, just as we, the Hellenic baboons, have also been essentially annihilated. The Vietnamese-American who penned your favorite coming-of-age story is, in fact, entirely Anglo. The so-called Orthodox, the last of the so-called Byzantines, remain unassimilated and therefore unannihilated, perhaps only because they've clung to their metaphysical distinctions—through varying crusades and occupations, various capitalisms and communisms they've clung to their

metaphysical distinctions, to the metaphysical framework of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In any case, this Anglo world is no extension of Antiquity, it's no New Rome, because its interpretations have inevitably been filtered through the so-called Byzantine, through the Second Rome of Constantine, But for the Orthodox, Christ symbolized the true, verified immanence of God, to correspond with the transcendence of God—just as the so-called Socratic Idea was at once transcendent and immanent, just as Love as an Idea was out of reach in-itself (in its transcendence), yet interactive in a relative sense (in its immanence), God was now the same, not transcendent or immanent, but instead transcendent and immanent. God as an Essence was unknowable, unapproachable, and wholly transcendent, yet, through Christ, God was proven to be wholly immanent, in addition to being entirely transcendent, God's Energies were Energies we could approach and interact with, to become one with God, even momentarily, was deemed a possibility. Christ was brilliantly grafted onto centuries of Greek thought in a system that found its expression from Alexandria to Antioch to Constantinople, yet the subsequent Anglo interpretation, by restricting God and Person to the intellect, the conceptual to the transcendent, essentially ushered in the secular atheism that's become our monoculture par excellence. This subsequent Anglo interpretation was markedly different—because now to be transcendent and immanent was now deemed decadent and oriental. The so-called Byzantine interpretation envisioned a God who, through His superabundance, was both wholly immanent and entirely transcendent, whereas the Anglo interpretation viewed that interpretation as both wholly decadent and entirely oriental, the Anglo interpretation, just as the Hebrew God banished Adam and Eve from the Kingdom of God, subsequently banished God from the Kingdom

of Man, to His eternal transcendence. No, the so-called Greeks never killed their God because they never stopped merging with their God. The Greek world never chose to kill their God, they never murdered their God in cold blood because, in this Greek world, within this silly Byzantine milieu, to kill their God would be akin to committing suicide.

05—Whereas the Anglo world divorced itself from the Energies, became the transcendent world par excellence, and left itself no choice but to kill its God ruthlessly and expeditiously. The transcendent world par excellence almost ipso facto becomes the secular atheist world par excellence. Transcendence divorced from immanence is the primary formula of the secular. The Western world is the Anglo world which is nothing more than a subsequent interpretation rather than a primary interpretation. In America, everyone is Anglo, Vietnamese immigrants write coming of age stories that are nothing if not holistically Anglo, transcendently Anglo. And we sit, portrayed as absurdly Hellenic, as Athenian baboons, yet of course we have perhaps that “Byzantine look,” our musk is perhaps Byzantine, yet the Byzantine, we’re told, was wholly decadent and entirely oriental and no longer exists. The Afro-American Man is the Anglo Man, Larry Bird in addition to Magic Johnson are both essentially Anglo, the Italian-American Man is the Anglo Man, the Greek-American Man, despite playing the role of Athenian Baboon, is also essentially Anglo. The Greeks, ultimately, have sunk themselves, which is why they’re no longer even Greek, we can’t blame anyone more than ourselves, we were placed in an impossible position between East and West, and we acted in an impossible fashion, and now we’re no longer even ourselves. But how did we get onto us anyway, the Greeks—have I gone overboard

here at all? Am I exaggerating at all? It's definitely possible, yet I feel completely appropriate, I actually feel like, if anything, I'm being too reserved, that if anything I'm actually lacking in hyperbole at the moment. I feel like, right now, I'm actually being too kind, that if anything I'm being a tad too reserved. I feel as though there's vitriol that I still owe, that I own considerable debt, and it's all vitriol, that there's no choice but to pay it back to the general populace of this country. It's possible that I'm filled to the brim with vitriol, it's possible that I owe all this vitriol to the general populace. It's almost as if I'm leaving loads of vitriol on the table. The Anglo world lectured us that the authentic Greeks made anal love to teenage boys, and then when Greeks moved past penetrating high school aged men in the rear-end, when they instead subscribed to the metaphysics of the Patriarch of Constantinople, it was only at that point that Greek culture became depraved and decadent. Wholly oriental. This is what I've been personally taught by the Anglo so-called scholastics—and that I can tell you is absolutely no exaggeration.

06—Only the Greeks would accept two sets of ancestors of this sort then shrug their shoulders and go get drunk at a saloon. That's what I did. It's just audacious, that's what it is. If nothing else I respect the audacity, because I actually have the highest respect for the audacity of the Anglo world. Our ancestors have spent hundreds of years in obscure mountains, forbidden to read or write, while the entire Anglo world has spread this misinformation about us, this slander, this character assassination, so it's no wonder pedophiles run rampant in every Western polity—look who comprise the idols of the West! The Athenian with the beautiful boyfriends traversing puberty, as if these were the only Greeks, as if there were no other Greek eras, as if the

alphabet became obsolete after Antiquity! But I digress. In any case, before I enter into this whole anecdote I should say this—namely, that I was at a restaurant across the street from my apartment for a small gathering just the other night, my good friend's cousin was in town, and she and her father invited me to an informal dinner across the road from my apartment, so I decided it would be a little rude for me not to go, considering I lived within spitting distance of this restaurant, within minimal walking distance, and had nothing else to do. I essentially had to go but also had no issue with attending. In addition, I was aware the meal would in all likelihood be paid for, and although I didn't particularly think highly of the restaurant across the street, I knew there was at least one decent meal, or maybe even two decent meals, that I could order and feel relatively satiated. Personally, I was a big fan of the Spicy Maki Platter, where you received eighteen pieces of tuna, salmon, and yellowtail sushi for just sixteen dollars. It's a great meal, and because of the economical price-point you don't feel like a complete asshole ordering it on someone else's tab. In any case, we arrive, my friend and I, perhaps we're actually lovers, but I don't want to go into a great deal of detail about my private life here, we might even live with each other in my apartment, but I'm not going into that now, we're in love with each other in a way that just feels profound, that's possible, but in any case we're there, at the restaurant, when my friend's cousins from out of town arrive, and almost immediately the conversation turns to the much discussed COVID-Nineteen vaccine, and being wholly sober as well as extremely hungry I decide to have no part of it, I don't mention anything about nonlinear distributions, the inherent dishonesty of all large governments over the course of human history.

07—I choose to refrain from mentioning Elliot Abrams receiving a fifty dollar fine for trafficking crack cocaine into every black community in America in the Nineteen-Eighties, I choose to refrain from mentioning any of this, as it wasn't the right time to discuss nonlinearities and Elliot Abrams, this was my conclusion at the time. I wasn't going to get caught up in the nature of probability distributions and Elliot Abrams' fifty dollar fine for selling large swathes of crack cocaine at the behest of the first Bush administration at that time. It would have been uncouth, ill-advised, as well as completely inappropriate. But in keeping my mouth shut I felt just a momentary tinge of agitation, in hearing these opinions I inveterately disagreed with, in refraining from uttering the phrases nonlinearity distributions and Elliot Abrams I became slightly agitated, the only antidote to my agitation would be to say the word nonlinearity aloud, which I had no intention of doing. I couldn't bring myself to say the word nonlinearity, and I had absolutely no intention of uttering the phrase Elliot Abrams at this restaurant, I couldn't do either without embarrassing myself, and I knew it. The fact of the matter is when an opinion I disagree with is expressed within my general proximity, and I act socially appropriately and refrain from sharing my true feelings on the matter, then I often feel this tinge of agitation, as if I was put on this Earth for the sole purpose of behaving inappropriately and expressing my honest opinions, no matter the cost socially. Instead I found myself glancing intermittently at my friend's older cousin, just shamelessly speculating on his racial makeup—which I hate. I've been on the receiving end of this despicable behavior, and I'm sure you've experienced similar, and I despise people who just shamelessly speculate as to my racial makeup, I'm sure you despise them just as much, yet sitting across from this distant cousin of my friend, my lover perhaps, I

sat in this silent hypocrisy, I sat there and shamelessly, continuously speculated on his racial makeup to myself, going so far as to take specific facial features into account and speculate on a geographic area of origin. It was grotesque. But that's unfortunately what I found myself doing in place of sharing my sincere opinions on nonlinear probability distributions and Elliot Abrams distributing crack cocaine to the black communities of the United States in the Nineteen Eighties—but of course no one can mention nonlinear distributions or Elliot Abrams selling crack anymore.

08—Governments have lied to us almost without pause since the invention of the nation-state, in just America alone we've seen the large-scale oppression of African-Americans over the course of centuries, the state-sanctioned poisonings of African-American communities with crack cocaine, of lower class Caucasian communities with prescription pills, we have pop stars named Little Xanax, millions of children in this country fantasize about abusing prescription narcotics before they go to sleep at night and the FDA, a regulatory body with ample funding for regulating just this sort of behavior, apparently thinks nothing of it. We have one pop star named Little Xanax and zero pharmaceutical executives who've been prosecuted for producing this lurid state of affairs, and that's just scratching the surface in America, confining our inquiry to a single side of the Atlantic we haven't even mentioned the Turkish occupation, the genocides of Pol Pot, Hitler and the National Socialists, the Gulag, the famine of Mao, or the preponderance of other occupations, genocides, famines, and general debauchery which have occurred all across the globe more or less incessantly—yet now the United States government informs its citizens without a trace of irony that a fast-tracked vaccine

is beyond reproach for any and everyone, with no long-term empirical evidence available, and if we question that then we're essentially excommunicated from decent society. We've become charlatans par excellence if we dare mention the nature of nonlinear probability distributions, if we mention the fact that Elliot Abrams was fined fifty dollars for selling crack, if we utter the phrases nonlinear probability distribution or Elliot Abrams was a crack cocaine dealer we've apparently become fascists in this country. So I had no inkling of the racial makeup of this man sitting so innocently across from me, and eventually I just said to myself—you're disgusting, this is grotesque, take out your smartphone and dick around on that, for the sake of Christ Himself, just please remove your smartphone from your pocket this second. So we order our meals. My friend, who I may or may not be in love with, who orders right before me, orders the Spicy Maki Platter, so we both end up ordering the exact same meal, the Spicy Maki Platter, and I just shot her a look, I looked at her like Are you kidding me? We could have at least discussed this before the waitress asked for the orders, now we're ordering the same exact meal back to back.

09—But then I think to myself Well, if she doesn't eat all eighteen pieces, which she won't, then I'll at least have the option to snag a sushi piece or two if I'm not completely full after my eighteen. I guess I can be a bit gluttonous when it comes to sushi, but I also—in true Greek Orthodox fashion—tend to fast for significant portions of the day, so by the time dinner arrives I'm always prepared to stuff my face. I've read modern medicine is beginning to recognize value in this fast and feast regimen of eating, that the body perhaps functions more efficiently when it's deprived for a period of time. But in any case we

both order the Spicy Maki Platter, and her dad, who's sat next to me, orders a shrimp noodle dish that has no appeal to me, not that I care, because I had no plans on sharing the meal with him, and when this shrimp noodle dish is served his initial reaction is Wow, this is big—and it is, it's huge. The portion is immense. And the noodles, it should be noted, are thick—it would be nearly impossible for one person to finish a plate of that magnitude, save for the morbidly obese, in just one sitting. So immediately, and only with the best of intentions, because her dad is one of the most well-intentioned individuals you'll ever come across, her dad starts to offer me some of his dish, and initially I refuse not only because I find the dish unappealing but primarily because I'm eating my own meal. But this changes eventually. Famished as I found myself, I obviously finished my meal not only before anyone else at the table but considerably prior to anyone else at the table cleaning their plate—I'm sitting there with a completely clean plate while everyone else is at most halfway through their meal. And my friend is hardly eating her Maki Platter at all, instead she's busy munching her cousin's General Tso Shrimp, yet her dad, of course meaning well and noticing my empty dish, for the second time asks if I want some? No, no thank you, I'm full, I say, not thinking at all. Without a single thought in my skull I reply that I'm full—yet in retrospect what else could I say? How can you refuse a bite of someone's meal, especially on a second offer, without saying you're full? It's probably the only acceptable excuse, feigning fullness, but now I've placed myself in a bit of an imbroglio, because her dad thinks I'm full, but I'm actually the furthest possible thing from full—because sushi never fills you. You finish a plate of sushi and the first thing you think is I could go for a little more sushi.

10—Eighteen pieces of fish-filled sushi and I'm not even remotely close to full. All my thoughts revolve around consuming more sushi, of which I see plenty, because my companion, my lover, is barely even touching her Spicy Maki Platter. So now I'm trying to devise a method of clandestinely sneaking a few pieces of said sushi into my mouth without my companion's dad noticing, not that he would care, but just on principle. I already inhaled my meal, eighteen pieces of fish-filled sushi, and now I'm claiming, to my friend's father, that I'm full, but then remorselessly consuming the sushi sitting next to my plate? That just wasn't a palatable option in my mind at the time. I wanted to avoid that scenario if possible. Yet as I'm concocting a plan to surreptitiously extract this foreign sushi into my mouth my friend's cousin takes her fork and starts eating her sushi—potentially my sushi. I'm watching my friend's father struggle to finish his gargantuan shrimp lo mein on my left, then watching my friend's cousin methodically eat each leftover piece of this Spicy Maki Platter on my right. Then I look across the table and begin shamelessly racially speculating again, just to momentarily get my mind off this whole Spicy Maki-lo mein imbroglio. As the meal concluded there were two or three sushi pieces left, my companion says Have one, and I shake my head, realizing the entire endeavor, this mission to obtain more Spicy Maki, was doomed to failure. I considered asking her to take the pieces home, but no—this urge for more Maki is misguided, I thought, it's already doomed to failure, it's too late for that. The Spicy Maki Platter was delicious, but to take home the leftover sushi wasn't a palatable option to me at the time. And a funny thing occurred, I actually began to feel full as everyone else began to conclude their meals—despite remaining hungry immediately after finishing my eighteen pieces of sushi, by the time everyone else concluded their dinner I, somehow, no longer felt hungry,

despite eating nothing in the interim, for the above said reasons. But, in any case, onto this anecdote—so it was a few years ago at this point, Horatio was probably there, it was a more or less nondescript night, absolutely nothing of note was occurring, and I think all of us were at that point questioning why we were even out, why we weren't at home sleeping like young children.

11—We were at the Dean Hotel on Washington Street in a dark back bar called the Magdalena Room where nothing much of note was going on, nearly nothing of note was ever going on within the walls of this hotel bar, never mind in the back room, which was dimly lit in an almost abrasive way and usually at half capacity at best. But maybe that's what the venue intended, maybe the main goal of the venue was abrasive iterations of dim lighting and half capacities. In any case, I'm with a few friends, Horatio may have been there, and two well-to-do Anglo girls are there, and one of us—not me—attempts to co-mingle with the two Anglo girls, and a conversation ensues. One of our friends is without a doubt aiming to engage in consensual sexual encounters with these girls in the near future, at least if the encounter goes according to his plan, however, his plan is about to go unexpectedly awry, things are in no way about to go according to his plan, and, inadvertently, I'm about to ensure his plan is foiled in an irreversible manner. Not in the slightest are things going according to his plan, and I'm inadvertently about to be the cause of the foiling. Inevitably both girls live in the plush part of the city, they don't have jobs, or they have jobs they clearly received due to statuses of being young and opulent, they inevitably begin to discuss the various properties their families' own, in San Francisco I believe, perhaps some other outrageously opulent areas of the US, maybe even overseas. I forget the

specific locales, I actually paid little to no attention to anything either of these Anglo girls said, there were a few locales where their fathers' owned this property or that property, they'd summer here or they'd summer there, but it was all opulent in any case, some area where only the most egregious dickheads live. It didn't particularly offend me, yet their tone was condescending in a way that almost made you believe they viewed you as an equal, which infuriated me. When people inveterately believe themselves to be superior, yet still have the audacity to condescend as if you're almost equals, it's infuriating. As it so happened, I'd been studying an extended documentary on the internet at work that afternoon, it was a slow afternoon that afternoon, regarding the mating habits of dolphins, in fact this video went into great detail regarding the specific mechanics of how dolphins perform sex, and I proceeded to share this information regarding the specific mechanics of dolphin sexual intercourse with the group.

12—Apparently this was a bit of a faux pas on my part, Demo—it was clear these young females, although innocent enough, were just of a separate class, and they believed it, and they knew it, and they had no respect for the well verified intelligence of dolphins and their sexual mating mechanics. It was true to them that they were superior—their ancestors were having pebble wars and eating medium-rare squirrel, while our ancestors were writing extensive commentaries on metaphysics and enforcing complex systems of taxation, but in our current milieu they were both undoubtedly of superior stock to anyone else in the room, especially myself. That much could not be disputed, and I don't dispute it to this day. Yet to discuss the intricacies of dolphin intercourse was, in their eyes, something revolting, something for lack of a better word classless. It was essentially a Marxist anecdote,

noting specifically how dolphin penis penetrates dolphin vagina in the Magdalena Room that night. I grew up inundated with Anglo-Saxons, Demo, and I know when I'm being viewed as an Other, in fact I know it instinctively, it's something that essentially runs in my blood, and this was a particularly egregious case. And it became particularly egregious following my monologue illuminating the mechanics of dolphin intercourse. I may have made a few subsequent off-color comments once the conversation was clearly going completely downhill, once this discussion was clearly irreparable. I probably raised my voice to an inadvisable decibel level. But in any case I came to despise these two innocent young females. And in retrospect, if I'm holding myself to the highest standard of honesty, I despised them at first sight. The second our friend—Horatio may have been there—made the acquaintance of these two females I immediately despised them. Instinctively I knew the three of us could never be cordial, that perhaps the sacking of Constantinople in Twelve Oh Four still divided us in an immutable manner. I believe in the perpetuating characteristics of blood, Demo, I don't care what the scientists say. Spirits are always among us and where better to bury themselves than within our bloodstreams? If the spirits of ancestors are buried anywhere it's without a doubt in our bloodstreams. If the tortured souls of our mutilated ancestors are buried anywhere in the world it's within our bloodstreams, Demo. From the second I saw these two innocent, decent-looking girls I despised them, and I never questioned it. Instinctively I knew discussing dolphin boners would be abhorrent to these innocent young females, and I relayed the anecdote without hesitation.

13—The second their faces filled with disgust at my anecdote I was satiated. If they walked into this room right now I'd immediately start to, yet again, discuss the mechanics of dolphin intercourse. Dolphins are highly intelligent mammals—why shouldn't we learn, in-depth, about their mating habits? It seems entirely logical to me, even now. Yet we should be honest with ourselves, we shouldn't mince words, we shouldn't cower to euphemism, because everyone is Anglo. Maybe I haven't made that abundantly clear yet, but we're all essentially Anglo, we contain residual amounts of the Hellenic, we're direct descendants of the so-called Byzantine, the *ρωμιοςύνη*, but essentially everyone is Anglo, us included. You may sit here and propose that, say, Puerto Ricans are somehow distinct from the median white, when in actuality Puerto Ricans are Anglo. But Dominicans are different, right?—no, Dominicans are actually Anglo as well. Afro-Americans are incredibly Anglo, in fact. The Portuguese are definitely Anglo, they're the apex of Anglo, the Spanish are also totally Anglo, and the Italians are as Anglo as anyone, Filipinos—we can't deny their essential Anglicism, because we're all essentially equally Anglo, wherever Catholicism and its metaphysics has spread, the Anglo world without a doubt has followed, wherever the sordid metaphysics of the Catholic church has planted its roots, Anglicism has proliferated unabridged. Anglos, Franks, Venetians, Italians, the Germanic tribes, we shouldn't lose much sleep in distinguishing these terms, because they're all subsets of each other essentially, we shouldn't lie to ourselves about that. These terms encompass the entire world and for that reason subsequently mean essentially nothing. We all attempt to quarry groups of people off by the tint of their skin, the shapes of their eyes, the contours of their noses, the thickness of their lips, when the reality is everyone is essentially Anglo. Michael Jordan is incredibly Anglo. As are Larry Bird

and Shaquille O'Neal. Caitlyn Jenner is nothing if not Anglo, and the Kardashians are the spitting image of Anglicism. The world is incredibly complex, but at times it can be divided evenly into two—the Anglo world and the so-called Greek world, which no longer exists.

14—The world is incredibly complex, but at certain times it can be easily split down the middle, at times the world reduces to essentially two dimensions, in some ways the world only exists two dimensionally, the schism between the Catholicism that overtook the world and the Orthodoxy that eventually became more or less extinguished, maybe that's one instance of binary simplicity, the idea of a God who wants to hear your petty sins, who wants to speak with you and have some type of relationship. A personal relationship with God—it's the most absurd thing. It's essentially atheism. There's only one end-game to believing the alleged Creator of the Universe wants to hear about how you stole a bag of Lays chips from your University convenience store as an eighteen year old—the only end-game to that sort of metaphysics is atheism. It's ruthlessly dualist but also delightfully atheist. If you truly believe God wishes to speak with you about the young man you viciously threatened with violence when you were only nineteen years old then you're essentially an atheist. That's how we could best describe it. An idea that the experience of God is summarized verbally, and that all spiritual experience must defer to an intellectual understanding of it—we're all Anglo now. Of course I despised those two innocent Anglo girls, because I saw myself in them—in so many ways I've become an innocent Anglo girl just by dint of living in the world in a continuous fashion. Why haven't I retired to an obscure mountain somewhere, to become *ρωμιοσύνη* again? But that's why I have no qualms about despising certain people for no particular

reason—because, at bottom, we’re all essentially Anglo. Yet, if we’re being honest with ourselves, it’s only the homeless who truly recognize the absurdity of our alleged individualism—a poor guy sleeps in the street, and we act as if he murdered a man. Someone falls on hard times, begins drinking heavily, probably does a decent amount of drugs, he loses his job, his home, his wife leaves him, he’s reduced to begging people on street corners for dollar bills and sleeping in alleyways, and we act as if his hardship is an inconvenience for us—we’re offended at his poverty. I’ve experienced more malice directed at bums in the past decade than any previous decade I can recall, the malice toward bums seems to be increasing in this country at an almost exponential rate.

15—They view it as a severe affront to their liberty that a bum—who sleeps in alleys and remains parked essentially at death’s door day and night—should ask them for spare change. Our society abjectly fails people, and people with alleged moral standing within our society can hardly be bothered to even witness a bum, to gaze at a bum for a brief period of time, if they’re forced to even minimally interact with a bum they view it as a sort of sacrilege. Viewing a person sans a domicile is considered an affront to good taste. But who wouldn’t toss a couple extra back if they no longer had a home? There’s no doubt that to some extent we—all of us—have failed these people in some way that’s probably material. It’s one thing to be down and out—but to be on the street drinking a half-filled Coca-Cola bottle filled with illicit substances, asking strangers for money, clearly only partially aware of where you are, that should, frankly, be shameful for all of us. Anyone can become a crack addict. If the history of crack in this country has taught us anything it’s that anyone can become a crackhead. We’re all

capable of becoming crackheads, given the appropriate circumstances. The whites of America laughed at the blacks of America during the crack era, as the United States government pumped crack into black neighborhoods, only to, decades later, find entire lower-class white communities turned into junkies, backed by the United States government, backed by the pharmaceutical companies, who indiscriminately tossed heroin equivalents at any lower-class white with a sprained ankle that went to their physician. An entire generation of white junkies emerged seemingly overnight, the laughter of whites cackling at crack cocaine undoubtedly resounding in the background. Yet just as the black population of America essentially had no choice but to become black crackheads, the white population of America has similarly involuntarily transformed into white junkies. Pharmaceutical companies have attained multi-billion dollar market caps almost exclusively by turning poor whites into white junkies. Yet no one wants to deal with white junkies while they're drinking wine and having appetizers. The servers and the customers converse about what steps the city should take to counteract the white junkies and the black crackheads who invade the lines of sight of people who've driven tens of miles to stuff their faces with calamari and mozzarella sticks and jalapeno poppers, to drink craft beers and suck down wine spritzers. These people just can't get enough trans fat, and they hate bums. These people spend hours a day examining the intricacies of craft beer but completely lack the temerity to even speak with a bum.

16—It never occurs to any of these people that their own latent malice is directly responsible for the dilapidated state of their fellow citizens, that their complicity, their myopic and enduring idiocy has directly resulted in a state that's shamelessly produced white junkies and black

crackheads at alarming rates. It's a shame that the city isn't doing more, these people say without a trace of irony, and then they discuss the tangerine aftertaste in an overpriced craft beer. Do you taste tangerine at all?—No, I was getting a bit of a Bartlett pear aftertaste! The people who drink craft beer, it seems to me, despite their advantageous and calculated poses of liberalism, are the most unapologetically capitalist criminals we have in this country. I've never heard a craft beer enthusiast apologize for the idiocy of his calculated liberal poses. The craft beer drinkers instead maintain a transparent pose of benign liberalism, yet spend all of their time trying to detect the slightest trace of Bartlett pear in a Coconut India Pale Ale—as opposed to even attempting to help any of their fellow human beings. These people who support craft beer choose to buy brands that allegedly donate to Good Causes, they post to social platforms to make people they don't know aware that they buy The Socially Responsible Beers, knowing entirely well that all of these donations are essentially criminal, that none of this money ever reaches the people it needs to reach, which is readily apparent, because when they sit down to order said craft beer all they see are bums. Only a craft beer drinker would conclude the most efficient way of helping his fellow human being is buying more craft beer. The reality is none of us know what to do with bums, we're privy to no bum solutions, no solution to our bum problems, yet we know all of these bums are essentially Anglo. The white junkie and black crackhead are both at bottom entirely Anglo. We know how to produce bums, but we have no idea what to do with these bums once we've produced them. We produce bums shamelessly, and then even more shamelessly we shun these bums from acceptable society. You'll never meet a person at a restaurant downtown who used to be a bum. It's impossible for bums to re-enter into society, there's a wall, an

insurmountable wall that's constructed around every bum in this country, between the streets of a downtown and the restaurants of a downtown. A restaurant-goer can become a bum, but a bum will never again become a restaurant-goer.

17—The harsh reality is that there's little we can do for our fellow citizens who've reached such dilapidated states more than simply talking to them, and this is something anyone who's been in a dilapidated state knows to be profoundly true. The entire industry of strippers and whores, in fact, should be rehabilitated based on this point alone, because no one in our society gives the dilapidated person more time of day than the exotic dancer. It's undoubtedly true that, this century, the exotic dancing community has done more for the dilapidated person community than the Catholic church community. Because strippers and whores innately give the dilapidated person the time of day, any stripper worth her salt instinctively knows how to speak to the dilapidated soul, the dilapidated person just needs someone to listen to a sob story for a second of time, for someone to care for a fraction of an iota of their day, to pretend to care in a way that's not grossly condescending in the classic bureaucratic manner. Yet there's this misguided notion that the stripper only talks to customers, when in fact the stripper speaks to infinitely more potential customers than actual customers—the successful stripper, in fact, has no more than a small handful of customers that pay her bills—and, by contrast, it's these potential customers who are infinitely more likely to be dilapidated. The actual customer is more likely to be opulent and jovial, unrestrained and decadent, while the potential customer is almost always entirely dilapidated. Giving this potential customer the time of day is almost a religious act on the parts of the strippers and

whores. And it's for precisely this reason I have so much more respect for strippers and whores than I do for the median craft beer drinker. We believe craft beer drinkers are laudable members of our society, while we denigrate strippers and whores, but I actually find strippers and whores to be laudable members of our society, while I denigrate craft beer drinkers. There's only so much you can do for a guy who's become a bum on the street, one particular bum approached me on a second date in an alleyway and referred to the girl I was with as my wife, and I gave him ten dollars, but even that ten dollars wasn't sincere, that ten dollars was a disingenuous ten dollars, it was obviously for the benefit of the girl I was with. You need to speak to people in dilapidated states, largely because it's the only thing you can do that will, at bottom, have a palpable effect.

18—What happens to them will largely be fatalistic, it will be a matter of fate statistically speaking, but it's just utter cruelty to ignore them, to treat them as people who don't deserve the time of day, not even an iota of your afternoon, to complain to your waiter because a white junkie in your line of sight is ruining the Bartlett pear aftertaste of your ten dollar IPA. But this is what's happened to so many downtowns, these same downtowns I still go to, these downtowns that have my memories folded into them, maybe a decade or more folded into them—they've become inundated with craft beer drinkers. It's not the bums who offend me, no, it's the craft beer drinkers who offend me. It's the people who believe twelve dollars for a beer is an appropriate price to pay for a beverage. It's the people who think discussing the aftertaste of hops is an appropriate conversation to have in public. It's the people who believe strippers and whores are people we should look down upon a priori—it's the people who maintain all the socially

appropriate opinions but display all of the most cowardly tendencies. Our downtowns are being ruined by these people, who have the correct opinions on every issue—at bottom all these people care about is maintaining the correct opinion on any issue at hand. Our downtowns were once great places to grab a slice of pizza—filled with bums and strippers and whores—but now our downtowns are inundated with craft beer drinkers and fried calamari and mozzarella sticks and jalapeno poppers and people who have socially acceptable opinions on everything. It's disgusting really. But of course all rationalism is little more than absurdist propaganda. It's only via rationalism, an essentially Anglo concept, that we find ourselves within a prism where everything is Anglo, where every white junkie and black crackhead are equally Anglo. It's only when we attend the funerals of close friends who die absurdly young that we realize this, that all rationalism is little more than lurid absurdist propaganda. Only people who attend these funerals understand this from experience. We realize not just the absurdity of these conversations but the absurdity of ourselves—And even in my case, it was only a few years ago when a good friend of mine finally, after years of seemingly ceaseless suffering, gave in to late stage brain cancer. The entire ordeal was criminal, and to be clear I was probably one of the most criminal.

19—My social criminality has perhaps never been more acute than during this period of my life. My friend was diagnosed with late stage brain cancer and moved back in with his parents where, not long after, he suffered a seizure while driving, totaled his car, and was from then on forbidden to drive. So naturally, being a good friend, being actually a better friend to him than even a few of the friends he'd had for decades, a better friend at least in terms of time spent, I took it upon

myself to drive to his parents' house multiple times per week, after work, where I already had a decent commute, which wasn't an insignificant drive, to his parents' house, to hang out with him, to pick him up and then drive him to other places where we'd hang out for a reasonable amount of time, where afterward I'd drive him back to his parents' house. This was a difficult ordeal for my friend as you can imagine, and there were various series of ups and downs—had I been born into wealth I'd have done whatever he asked, but being a working stiff there was only so much that I could do, there were times he wanted to get an ice cream cone and I, unfortunately, had to do laundry. A young man with late stage brain cancer, essentially a death sentence, wanted to buy me a mint chocolate chip waffle cone, but I had to politely decline because I needed to wash my boxer briefs. In any case his girlfriend, who was younger than the two of us yet still young, dumped him not long after, and from this we concluded that apparently waiting for him to die was too much of a burden for her, which in retrospect I suppose is fair enough, not everyone has the patience to wait for someone to die, a terminal illness, for some people, can just be a bit too inconvenient, a tad too cumbersome. At the time, I didn't think much of it, my friend was fairly torn up about it, and who could blame him?—but, again, with the exception of consoling a person in a more or less generic way there's not much we can realistically do. We can tell our dying friend that his ex-girlfriend is a terrible person, a tawdry whore, that he deserves better, but the reality is there's nearly nothing you can tell a young person who, in all likelihood, will die a slow death, there's next to nothing you can tell him that will comfort him when his attractive girlfriend ruthlessly leaves him.

20—It's great to say, it's an appealing idea to think that we can arrive at the door of a dying young man and alter his life for the better, but it's significantly more difficult than you might think, in practice it's more or less an impossibility. You imagine at the time that you're saying something uniquely enlightening when in reality you're just mindlessly spewing generic condolences—generic condolences that are hardly of any help at all. Having said that, during my day-to-day routine I thought almost nothing of his ex-girlfriend, I left it at that, I thought she was taking the easy way out, there's no doubt about that, but I didn't necessarily curse her name in my personal time, I felt like it was her decision, and ultimately if she felt as though my friend wasn't the person she wanted to wait for, in a terminal sense, then I respected that as her decision, that there was little any of us could do besides respect her decision and speak poorly of her behind her back. I didn't think much of it at all actually until the following weekend when I was at a bar around closing time with a close friend, and I felt a tap on my shoulder, only to find this ex-girlfriend of my dying friend. She said she just wanted to say hi, and subsequently I said hello, yet only a few moments later I received yet a second tap on the shoulder. Now this ex-girlfriend's friend, who accompanied her to the locale, was standing in front of my person, and she proceeded to inform me that I was quote-unquote “kind of rude” to my dying friend's ex-girlfriend, that I could have said hello just a little more cordially, this friend of my dying friend's ex-girlfriend actually had the audacity to stand there and with in a state of sincerity speak these exact words to me, to proclaim that it was actually me, that I was the person who was committing the faux pas here, that I was the one just a little out of line, that my less than enthusiastic hello was the true affront to good taste here. Given the circumstances, my tendency toward the intemperate took hold of me,

and I informed them both of my feelings on the matter, that I perhaps informed them of my feelings in an acerbic manner, in perhaps the most acerbic manner I could imagine at the time. I let them know in no uncertain terms who I believed was committing the true faux pas at this bar, late in the evening, where we were all inebriated. In any case, just moments later I received an additional tap on my shoulder. The bouncer of the bar stood in front of me, rather apathetic, and informed me that I needed to leave the premises because “the girl over there,” quote-unquote, was claiming I physically hit her.

21—A girl who just dumped my dying friend said hello to me then had her friend verbally assault me for allegedly not being enthusiastic enough when I returned her reprehensible hello, then I subsequently verbally assaulted both her and her friend for concerning themselves with enthusiastic greetings as opposed to people dying arduous deaths, then she falsely accused me of physically hitting her in a public place. Luckily enough for me, this notion that a person punched a female in a venue densely packed at that capacity, yet managed to land a punch so clandestinely no one in the venue noticed, that no eye witnesses emerged was absurd to all parties involved, yet I still vigorously plead my case, because I'd never plead guilty when innocent, so I vigorously defended my name against what I correctly interpreted to be a total defamation of my character, against this tasteless character assassination, a legitimate assassination attempt, all—unbelievable as it may seem—as a subsequent result of me refusing to return an enthusiastic hello. An unenthusiastic hello nearly turned me into a seriously alleged felon, and as I'm defending myself vigorously, perhaps even excessively vigorously, the ex-girlfriend ambles over with her degenerate friend and admits that her claim was entirely fabricated,

that it had absolutely no basis in reality—and then the ex-girlfriend and her degenerate friend, the true Nazi of enthusiastic greetings, drive right off, admitting in so many words that they were in the business of assassinating the character of anyone who failed to say hello to them enthusiastically, that they equated a less than enthusiastic greeting with physical violence. The next morning I received a call from my sick friend, and as he addressed the situation from the previous night, it became relatively clear to me that he was, for lack of a better phrase, taking her side. In my mind at the time this defense of this person was synonymous with taking her side, which, as you can imagine, led to a bit of a falling out between us, as he found himself attempting to work things out with a girl who now hated every aspect of my being and vice versa. It was a bit of an imbroglio, because now I found myself essentially abandoning my dying friend as well. I gave his ex-girlfriend an extended harangue regarding her ruthless abandonment of my dying friend, then just days later I found myself also ruthlessly abandoning him. Eventually we'd see each other again, my dying friend and I, we'd spend limited time together here and there, of course, our friendship didn't cease completely, and it was fine, there was no bitterness per se, but our friendship, frankly, was obviously never the same.

22—His ex-girlfriend abandoned him, then she felt as though I gave her an insincere hello at a bar, then I disclosed my true thoughts on her character, her despicable character, her ruthless abandonment of my dying friend, then just days later I also ruthlessly abandoned my dying friend. It took quite a long time for him to die—he lost his sight, and he was almost entirely blind, he was admitted to hospitals in a terminally intermittent fashion, visiting with high-priced specialists that brought nothing other than utter financial ruin to his family, and

eventually he was enclosed in his bedroom from sunset to dawn to dinner, in his parents' house, an only child, abandoned by both his girlfriend and his good friend. Four years later I heard that he'd entered hospice, that he laid on his deathbed, and I arranged to pay him a visit the subsequent morning with my cousin, but he died overnight. Days later, his mother noted to a mutual friend that she'd prefer his impending funeral to be a small ceremony, that she didn't want it to be a big crowd, and I considered not attending before being ultimately convinced by a mutual friend to attend. Against my better judgment I attended the funeral, yet the second I saw my dead friend's made-up corpse in the coffin, the second I stepped in sight of the coffin, a bout of intense regret came over me, and I realized I had no business attending this funeral, that I abandoned my dying friend, and then I had the audacity to attend his funeral, essentially against his own mother's wishes—not explicitly against his mother's wishes but implicitly against his mother's wishes. There was no doubt his mother most likely would have preferred I not attend. There was no doubt, if pressed, she would have at least been agnostic vis-a-vis my attendance, which, considering her preference was a small ceremony, is tantamount to preferring my absence. Via the procession line, it was clear his parents clearly either didn't remember me or deliberately forgot me. In my seat I ceaselessly speculated whether they didn't remember me or deliberately forgot me. Me—the guy who used to always go pick up their son, what a great guy, I used to go pick their son up more frequently than even his childhood friends, I was such a nice guy, yet eventually of course I stopped coming around, I abandoned their dying son like we all eventually abandon the terminally ill, and subsequently his parents forgot about me, and rightfully so. It would have actually been distasteful for them to remember me.

23—The moment I witnessed, in my dead friend's father's eyes, that he either intentionally or unintentionally forgot my identity I knew attending this funeral was a grave mistake. I sat back down in my black fold out chair and said to myself This is the last funeral I'll attend, because attending a funeral is always a mistake, it's the most insipid mistake we can make. Attending a wedding may be a faux pas but attending a funeral is always an inane mistake. We all gather around, all friends and family, to gaze idiotically at a stiff corpse, then we go eat at a local restaurant—we all mindlessly stare at a dead body, then we have a nice meal. There's nothing more disingenuous than a funeral, and the most disingenuous funerals are those held for the young. An essentially interminable disease, but the medical professional made a significant fortune in the process. A career's worth for the working class, no doubt. They extended his suffering, the suffering of his family, the suffering of everyone around him, then allowed him to die. How many hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions of dollars, were spent, only to extend a man's suffering and still allow him to perish prematurely? But of course they still accepted payment, because you never get an A for effort in this country, unless you're a medical professional. It's only doctors who have the audacity to extend a son's suffering, watch him die, and still ruin the family financially. We think so highly of doctors in this country, yet it seems to me that doctors are greater charlatans now than they've ever been. But of course I attended the reception as well, where the disingenuous nature of the entire event really came into focus. The disingenuous nature of the entire ordeal naturally reached its apex at the reception, as it became just another social event. It's impossible to have an iota of respect for yourself or the society you participate in after attending an event of that magnitude.

Sitting in that black fold-out chair, staring at my dead friend's heavily made up corpse, it failed to occur to me then—I was too consumed with disgust for myself—but in retrospect my only conclusion from that day is just that, that rationalism is nothing more than the most lurid form of absurdist propaganda. We've constructed a rationalist Anglo world that hasn't consumed everything—not quite yet—but that still remains essentially objectionable, just as the mystic Byzantine world, its natural opposite, was, in its essence, also entirely objectionable. And the doctors who treat our dead friends, prolonging their suffering and buying homes in the Hamptons with the criminal proceeds, they're objectionable in every way.

24—And the people who assassinate our characters because they feel as though we're not enthusiastic enough when we say hello to them at bars, they're criminals of the highest magnitude. But we ourselves are just as objectionable as any of these actors, we're also criminals of the highest magnitude, we're perhaps the most objectionable. We astutely recognize our opposites as criminal because we exist as parts of the same criminal whole. We don't know how to deal with death anymore. We think our scientists and our doctors are progressing, that they'll eventually progress to a state where they'll once and for all understand death, once and for all when the sad reality is we remain at the apex of the primitive with regards to quote-unquote dealing with death. We're essentially an indigenous population when it comes to interacting with death. We're zealots of progress, and as such we're ill-equipped to interact with any sort of profundity, because we're suspended in progress, we're stuck waiting for our scientists and doctors to give us the word, to give us the word that they've finally gotten to the so-called bottom of death. Previous generations spoke profoundly in the face of

death, while our generation serves cole slaw and chicken parmigiana at funeral receptions, the images of corpses still fresh in our mind. Previous generations understood death in a profoundly general sense if hardly at all in a specific sense. We consume mozzarella sticks in the face of death, we eat jalapeno poppers in the face of death, we drink craft beer with idiotic tangerine aftertastes in the face of death. It's, frankly, only the homeless of our era who truly recognize the ills of the private sphere—'by examining the nature of sensible things, these people have arrived at a certain concept of God, but not at a conception truly worthy of Him.'