Creating a Humanist Narrative1

Howard B. Radest

1. Preliminaries and Reminder

Once upon a time, the Humanist would respond to our current dismay of culture by advancing a program of social action-i.e. the "liberal" agenda as in the struggle for the rights of children and women the civil rights movement, and earlier the abolition of slavery, the rights of labor, model housing and the rest. The modem situation however, asks us to resist the temptation to return to our old habits, merely creating a new agenda or re-creating the old one. Under present conditions, reform is all too easily transformed into yet another exteriority and even becomes an alibi for evading the personal. Of course, reform is stiII in point. But, we need to begin with the recovery of self. I must, in other words be present to the situation as an actual and particular human being, denying myself the protections of roles, agents and surrogates. I must become competent to undertake changing the world as a personal assignment.

It is misleading although satisfying, to rehearse over and over again the familiar litany of the doings and failings of exteriority-of the "system," of "technology," of "governments" of "they" in short. Even normative notions are afflicted by our habit of thinking at a distance. Thus, we stiII rely on legalist thought-structures in order to avoid accusations of sentimentality and ambiguity. "Rights talk" for example, remains a model for most other ethics-talk since it permits of clarity of definition, reference and precedent. To be sure, there are signs of discontent with the reduction of ethics to legalism. A reawakened interest in cultural and communal embeddedness is already evident particularly under the inspiration of modem feminism. In ethics, "virtue-talk" competes with "rights-talk." For example,

> ...Ronald Dworkin has recently argued that the central doctrine of modem liberalism is the thesis that questions about the good life for man or the ends of human life are to be regarded from the public standpoint as systematically unsettleable. On these individuals are free to agree or to disagree. The rules of morality and law hence are not to be derived from or justified in terms of some more fundamental conception of the good for man. In arguing thus Dworkin has, I believe, identified a stance characteristic not just of liberalism but of modernity. Rules become the primary concept of the moral life. Qualities of character then generally come to be prized only because they will lead us to follow the right set of rules. "The virtues are sentiments, that is related families of dispositions and properties regulated by a higher-order desire, in this case a desire to act from the corresponding moral principles," asserts John Rawls, one of the latest moral philosophers of modernity (p. 192) and elsewhere he defines "the fundamental moral virtues" as "strong and normally effective desires to act on the basic principles of right." (p. 436)
>
> Hence, on the modem view, the justification of the virtues depends upon some prior justification of rules and principles, and if the latter become radically problematic. as they have so also must the former...2

The voices of virtue and community raise a necessary caution. But, they also tend to look backward, representing in yet another way the hope of return that is characteristic of critics of the modem. Virtue ethics, for example, takes its inspiration from Aristotle and the middle ages; communitarianism, from a romanticized view of an America that is more mythic than historic.

I don't think that the Humanist is merely stubborn in insisting on the modern. For example, a sense of fairness and of the moral necessity of disinterestedness-both signs of a "rights-talk" way of ethics-are still valid as anyone who has encountered their opposite can report. Similarly, the freedom from oppressive community and the possibility of escape even to an "impersonal" society can be defended too. I need only consult the sense of relief I feel in the anonymities of the large city as against the intrusions of the smaIl town. FinaIly, the personal connectedness which is so much a theme of the critics of the modem fails to account for those larger connections when communities touch upon each other and when strangers discover that they inhabit the same impacted world as weIl as their particular lifeworlds.

There is, then, a continuing value to universality, cosmopolitanism, individuality, and social justice, all much maligned terms of the Enlightenment project. That side of the modem would be dismissed to our peril-something that becomes obvious once we imagine living in a world from which these were banished. And yet, these are necessary but insufficient. So today, the interesting effort does not dispense with universals and duties, but needs to be re- formed as one of personal response: how shaIl I respond and to what shaIl I respond? I need to understand that there is no such thing as to respond in general, no such thing as to be responded to in general. I am forced to the particular, to the actual, to the personal even as the way of sustaining convincingly the ideal and the sociable.

To reach to the personal is to teIl a story. Despite the fact that our renewed interest in myth and story takes a conservative turn, "narrative" need not always be backward-looking. I think here of utopian stories, of quest stories, of adventure stories, of victory-over-evil stories. Stories, in other words, can be regenerative and not merely reminiscent. The contemporary rediscovery, however, is driven back to the imaginary past as against the undesirable and actual present which in itself reveals the hidden politics behind its reference. The "golden age" is behind us and not ahead of us. But, tradition is not the same as traditionalism, Most of us recognize that human beings come on the scene in tile midst of histories and cultures that pre- exist them and that they develop toward the future precisely on the ground of the absorbed coIlective past. It is in this sense, that,

> People growing up in communities of memo!)' not only hear the stories that tell how the community came to be, what its hopes and fears are, and how its ideals are exemplified in outstanding men and women; they also participate in the practices-ritual, aesthetic, ethical-that define the community as a way of life. We call these "practices of commitment" for they define the patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the alive. And if the language of the self-reliant individual is the first language of American moral life, the languages of tradition and commitment in communities of memory are „ second languages" that most Americans know as well and which they use when the language of the radically separate self does not seem adequate. [3]

Stories finaIly are not just reminiscent and not just regenerative. To be a story is also to capture in dramatic form existential themes in human experience, themes that are woven around tensions between the light and dark sides of experience, like love and hate. justice and vengeance, friendliness and hostility. This is why the appeal of stories is a permanent feature of living and why too, today's dismay of culture pushes us to turn to stories as ways of holding on to personal life while exteriority threatens both.4 It is in the story that the personal is incarnated for transmission across space and time. And it is a story that is more convincing than an argument.

For example, in an article by Andrew Greeley, the point is made that despite Roman Catholicism's authoritarianism and sexism, Catholics remain loyal "because of the stories." As Father Greeley writes,

> Catholicism has great stories because at the center of its heritage is "sacramentalism," the conviction that God discloses Himself in the objects and events and persons of ordinary life. Hence Catholicism is willing to risk stories about angels and saints and souls in purgatory and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and stained glass windows and statues and stations of the cross and rosaries and medals and the whole panoply of images and devotions that were so offensive to the austere leaders of the Reformation....
>
> It may seem that I am reducing religion to childishness-to stories and images and rituals and communities. In fact, it is in the poetic, the metaphorical, the experiential dimension of the personality that religion frods both its origins and raw power. Because we are reflective creatures we must also reflect on our religious experiences and stories it is in the (lifelong) interlude of reflection that propositional religion and religious authority become important, indeed indispensable. But then, the religiously mature person returns to the imagery, having criticized it, analyzed it, questioned it, to commit the self once more in sophisticated and reflective maturity to tile story. [5]

Obviously, Greeley describes here what BeIlah caIls a "community of memory" and the memories of a particular life-world despite the claim of Catholicism to catholicity. He correctly, I think, teIls us why it is that the arguments against the Church could be agreed to and nevertheless that loyalty and faith could remain unchallenged. It would be a mistake-it is the Humanist's

mistake-to conclude from the Church's social policy or from its medieval ontology, that it must of necessity be dismissed from the company of sensible men and women.

At the same time, stories that merely recoIlect particular lifeworlds are not responsive to the actual human situation. In other words, the Humanist story must be species inclusive. After all, stories can transcend boundaries of time, space and culture and surely have done so. That at least we have learned from comparative anthropologies and comparative literatures. Stories, then, are both general and particular, have character and plot and yet touch upon universal themes and ideas. They are, in a nod to Emerson, actual and representative at the same time.

Response, I have said, is the modem clue to reconstruction. It is, of course, possible to describe response as the psychologist does or to attribute responsiveness to human nature as the ethicist does. But, these descriptions stiII leave us outside. In other words, response entails "I respond" and asks, "to whom?" I must find out whose voice I hear when I speak to you and when you speak to me In what foIlows then, I want to explore some possible themes of the Humanist story.

2. First Person Singular

"Once upon a time..." opens many stories. "In the beginning..." opens others. "I was born..." opens yet others. A story gets its mood and direction from its opening. With it, the setting, action and character, while implicit only, are already visible. Development, as it were, unfolds the opening, restates the opening in detail, and reveals the tensions which were only hinted at in the beginning. FinaIly, there is re-capitulation. The opening is restated, altered by the circumstance of development. In the end, if it is a good story, we are left wanting more, left with bridges to other openings and to other stories yet to come.

What then would the first lines of the Humanist narrative look like? I must start with the narratives of others for the story to

be Humanistic must be inclusive. So, its prologue--not in heaven but on earth-might be, "It is told of old that..." The Humanist story then is already revealed in the universalism and cosmopolitanism of the Humanist tradition much as the setting for Dante's Divine Comedy is revealed in the church and politics of Renaissance Italy or the polls and the gods are announced by the chorus in a Greek tragedy. But, in its 18th Century incarnation, universalism and cosmopolitanism were likely to be introduced without apparent voice at all as in "All men are created equal." The narrative was objectified, even hid itself as narrative in the guise of social science or political pamphlet. Or else, the characters and plot were only two-dimensional vehicles for criticism. Thus. Voltaire's Candide is an inverted morality play. David Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, follow the model of Plato's early dramatic dialogues but without the dialectic tenseness of the Socratic original. For all its "optimism," Enlightenment narrative carried its darker tones too. I listen to Mozart's Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute or The Marriage of Figaro. Betraying the seeming facility of the music and the seeming simplicity of the libretto are the themes of class and caste, of powerful and conflicted natural energies and of transcending human dreams. And that is why I return to Mozart over and over again. Of course, there are references of the moment too, e.g. to the Free-masons in The Magic Flute. There are challenges to the conventionalities of the day. For example, Don Giovanni was not acceptable without an added moralist epilogue pointing out the sins and merited punishment of its lead figure. Typically, the minuet, the sculptured garden and the uncluttered column conveyed the line and structure of 18th Century classicism. Even at its most rational and Newtonian, the Enlightenment project had its aesthetic as well as its ideas, its passions as well as its descriptions.

Unlike the gossip-filled and curio-filled histories of the past-Herodotus comes to my mind-the modern aesthetic evolved by opening up to the diversity of actual cultures, actual religions and actual politics already forecast in the insatiable curios-

ity of the Enlightenment. Of course, the habits of 18th and 19th Century Humanism, soon to be afflicted by a Humanism of the word, down-played the drama of this opening up to the world. Yet, enthusiasm broke through. For example,

> By introducing and familiarizing literate Americans with transcendentalist schools of Germany, France. and England, as well as with the mystic religions of the East, American transcendentalism was preparing the way for new developments in religious thought...
>
> A more tangible contribution of transcendentalism growing out of the same cosmopolitan awareness of contemporary European and Asiatic thought was the awakening of interest in the comparative study of religion...Although all of the free religious leaders of the post-Appomatox period displayed keen interest in the study of non-Christian religions, the works that best exemplify the importance of this interest...are Samuel Johnson's three volume Oriental Religions And Their Relation to Universal Religion, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson's tract, The Sympathy of Religions...6

Indeed, universalism and cosmopolitanism invited the mood of opening-up-to. Further, they invited the expectation that, like the sciences that could some day inspire its narrative, the stories to come would teIl of adventure into new worlds.7 The Humanist aesthetic was forward looking, hope-fiIled and hopeful.

The narratives of Humanist yesterdays had their heroes, to be sure, but the style even if on occasion biographical was not autobiographical. Only rarely, if at all, do we find the "confession"- Rousseau comes to mind-and even autobiography is "inteIlectual" autobiography. For example, John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* describes, among other things, Mill's relationship to his father, his emotional difficulties and his wife's femininity and feminism- surely occasions for passion. As a British coIleague wrote,

> Harriet Taylor (later Mill's wife) and Mill were even closer following Mill's severe breakdown in 1836, deepened by the later death of his tyrannical father, James Mill. The India Office gave him sick leave which he spent on the Continent...
>
> Mill continued to live with his mother, brothers and sisters, who were immensely proud of him, but never dared to mention Mrs. Taylor's name in his presence because he flared up with anger in case they said anything detrimental to her...

> 1848 was a difficult one for the Taylor's and John Mill. All three fell sick, their ill health continuing until the spring of 1849. Mrs. Taylor, unaware that her husband was suffering from terminal cancer neglected him in order to supervise a new edition of the "Political Economy" and Mill further revised her last chapter of the book....
>
> When she learned the truth about her husband's condition, Mrs. Taylor dropped everything to nurse him with immense devotion during his final months. That took precedence over everything else, much to Mill's dismay for he was utterly lost without her. She mourned John Taylor for the requisite period and in April 1851 she and Mill were married... [8]

But in MiII's autobiography, the tone is cool and the text is more likely to lead to an idea or political program than to a passion. Alternatively, the diary, the day-book and the journal were typical personal documents and disclosed the private feelings, dreams, and doubts that attend us all. But these self-reflections are revealed to us, an unintended audience for the most part, after their subject is long gone. Correspondence aUowed an exchange of "intimacies" as in Jefferson's letters to Maria Cosway[9] or as in the letters between John and Abigail Adams. But again, the style is restrained, hidden, and publication in any case is the work of a subsequent scholarship. Excepting Whitman, and, on occasion, Emerson, even love poetry and romantic novel, tend to be discrete and indirect, using metaphor as much to conceal as to reveal. I think of Henry James or Jane Austen. With obvious exceptions like Dostoyevsky or Kierkegaard who in any event were not Humanists, the novel teIls a story about someone else. In short, the "subject" is present-isn't he or she always-but at a distance and masked.

The drama of ideas, the utopian story, the myth of "everyman," the "realistic" novel, all of which appeared as the Humanist aesthetic do not reach to the need of the present. Today, it must begin with first person singular. Unlike the contemplative, however, Humanist subjectivity is not closed away into itself. As it were, the diary and the correspondence, once forms of personal and interpersonal expression, are now proj ected on the stage of sociability. For the Humanist, the intimate reveals itself in the presence of others.

I need to make clear, however, that this self revelation is quite different from the fashionable compulsion to teIl all and to know all, to "let it all hang out" as my California friends used to say in the 1960's. By beginning with the first person singular, I am not suggesting that the Humanist is interested in "true confessions" or in mere gossip. This pseudo self-revealing mode is typical of the current scene and, indeed, it sometimes seems as if nothing can remain personal at all. Confidences are published routinely and not just by political opponents. Indeed, "intimacy" itself has become a marketable commodity as witness the explosion of TV talk-shows and their exploitation of the foibles and disasters of human relationships. We even attach a moral imperative to self revelation. We have, as we say, a "right to know" just about everything about everybody. In a strange and sad way, nothing is hidden but the consequence is that nothing much is worth hiding.

More seriously, this "interest" in self revelation is not reaIly concerned with another human being at all, but with a momentarily fascinating object. In fact, we quickly grow jaded by revelation. Intimacy so conceived becomes boring and we look for the latest and most extreme expression of it in order to stay interested. Nor should this deterioration of intimacy, its transformation into a commodity, come as a surprise. It is indeed forecast by the ways in which exteriority intrudes everywhere, appears everywhere. Thus, ironicaIly, pseudo intimacy becomes an inevitable coroIlary of the move toward de-personalization It fits into the modem setting,

> To the degree that the economic system subjects the life-forms of private households and the life conduct of consumers and employees to its imperatives, consumerism and possessive individualism, motives of performance and competition gain the force to shape behavior. The communicative practice of everyday life is one-sidedly rationalized into utilitarian life-style; this media-induced shift to purposive-rational action orientation calls for the reason of a hedonism freed from the pressures of rationality. As the private sphere is undermined and eroded by the economic system, so too is the public sphere by the administrative system. The bureaucratic disempowering and desiccation of spontaneous processes of opinion- and will-formation expands the scope for engineering mass loyalty and makes it easier to uncouple political decision-making

> from concrete identity-forming contexts of life. Insofar as such tendencies establish themselves. we get Weber's (stylized) picture of a legal domination that redefines practical questions as technical ones and dismisses demands for substantive justice with a legalistic reference to legitimation through procedure. [10]

So intimacy is everywhere advertised and everywhere eludes us. By contrast, a Humanist concern for intimacy does not arise from a compulsion for exposure nor from a prurient interest in human perversities. The Humanist story is to be written in the first person singular in order to acknowledge the urgency of the personal-I respond to and am responded to. Indeed, just because of this urgency, I find myself resenting all the more the conversion of "f' into yet another "it" which is the way that pseudo intimacy is presented with the increase of what can only be celled exhibitionism.

Searching out the "who" I am and the "why" I am arises from the tension between my hidden self and what I do and what is done to me under systemic conditions. The very utilitarianism which turns intimacy into commodity also generates the discomforts that lead us toward the rediscovery of personality. Thus, the use of the first person singular is not only another stylistic device but in itself a personal response. The story is, quite literaIly, to be my Story in a world where personal stories are disvalued. Illustratively, given the evidence that tobacco smoke is deadly, a recent essay asked of those who headed tobacco companies, "How do they live with themselves?" It noted,

> If I had asked any of the Philip Morris executives directly, "How do you live with yourself?" each would have taken the question personally. None of these executives think of themselves as morally bankrupt, and I do not think of them individually in tl1at way either. What often happens to people who work for a large, immensely successful company, however, is that they tend to adopt the values of the company, regardless of its product. Loyalty supersedes objectivity.
>
> How good, smart, decent individuals manage to contribute to a wicked enterprise is a question that has been applied to murderous governments as well as to industries. The best answer, which isn't particularly satisfying, is that people in groups behave differently, and usually worse, than they do singly... [11]

It would be possible to read this description as an alibi and it is certainly true that the "system" is conveniently available to take the blame. At the same time, it is also possible to glimpse the actual tensions that, in greater or lesser degree, arise for us from an organized and massive public life. Else, why the retreat into a corporate culture? But tension and retreat, anger and anxiety are hidden behind a veil of objectivity. There is no Lear wandering madly over the moors, no Oedipus with bleeding eyes. Although these tensions may be suppressed and sublimated, however, they do not disappear but take form as a radical separation of "I" and "it," a separation that occurs within. Sooner or later, however, most of us realize that, to paraphrase Pogo, "it is me." In other words, the person who struggles to find a hidden innerness is the same person who acts out the role of exteriority. The first person singular is, therefore, problematic from the outset.

From classic times onward, "know thyself' has been a Humanist directive. In the present setting, however, this finding-out is more difficult than it once was. It is blurred by the ready availability of answers which look like and even feel like personal answers but which are not personal answers at all. For example, social roles like parent, child, warrior priest, etc. have been characteristic of all societies and cultures. But, in our experience, these roles have been objectified, presented almost as "job descriptions," and conventionalized in a peculiarly modem way. Even non-conformity is conventionalized in a new way. Of course, the "viIIage atheist" was a typical older model. But, as we notice when we explore the fascinating jumble of fashion or the strange noisiness of popular music convention is not merely exterior but has been exteriorized. Once again formula and routine appear. At the same time, these so-caIled personal answers-personalize your costume, your car, your apartment- are not reaIly personal. Consequently, inner life is troubled and sociability is accented by cynicism. The line between gossip and self-discovery is marked by this distinction between the personal and "personalizing."

"Know thyselC' was, of course, always a harsh directive. But, it is particularly difficult in the modem setting which plays the game of personalities. IronicaIly, our increase of psychological knowledge and our anthropological awareness of others has also made self reflection itself problematic. We learned the lessons of self concealment long ago, not as an act of choice--I want to hide--but as a fact of human nature and as a defense against intrusion. But now, we have also learned to mistrust reflection itself and to approach it as a misleading surface. For that reason, and in a radical departure from positivism, "interpretation"-hermeneutics-has gained respectability as a way of knowing the world and not just the Bible. Hans-Georg Gadamer sums it up,

> ...Psychoanalysis, for instance, is scarcely imaginable without Nietzsche's radical calling into doubt the testimony of human reflective selfconsciousness Nietzsche set the demand that one doubt more profoundly and fundamentally than Descartes, who had considered the ultimate unshakable foundation of all certitude to be explicit self-consciousness...
>
> ...The so-called critique of ideology called scientific neutrality into doubt. It questioned not merely the validity of the phenomena of consciousness and of self consciousness (which was the case with psychoanalysis) but also the purely theoretical validity of scientific objectivity to which the sciences laid claim. The clear claim of Marxism was to the effect that the theoretical teaching) of the sciences reflect with an intrinsic necessity the interests of the dominant social class. And one of the demands of Marxism...was to get behind the self-interpretations of bourgeois culture, which invoke the objectivity of science...12

Self-reflection, then meets with the situation of modern culture. The Humanist narrative in the first person wiII find hard going.

Given the difficulties of the first person singular, it is little wonder that the other-the second person singular-is problematic too. Thus, it is quite normal for us to convert the other into an object, to be unsure of what the other reaIly is, and to transform the other into an abstraction. After all, I select the world I inhabit from among the manifest worlds that I could inhabit and as I do so I select my feIlow inhabitants too. Now, I do not mean that I am necessarily aware of what I am doing. My selection is already prefigured in my development, my presence in world and

life-world, my iIlusions. Indeed, the very way in which I pose the problem and the language with which I try to talk about it is already caught in a situation not of my making by an "I" that is not of my making. Comparative study makes this very clear. Like most modem studies, it objectifies both observer and object as in anthropology's "participant observer." We cannot escape the message of a pluralism of cultures and life-worlds but we can and do avoid making this a matter of personal knowledge. In contrast to a land of text-book anthropology, for example,

> ...the Japanese make a less than sharp distinction between subject and object. In more formal terms, the various strands of the East generally have been described regularly as non-dualistic, or at least as less dualistic in their separation of subject and object. The Western traditions instinctively distinguish me, as subject, from the tree which I look at, and scientific objectivity has depend on being able to isolate those properties which belong to the object under investigation from those subjective properties of the investigator. By contrast, the Japanese emphasize immediate experience itself, and even as (supposedly) prior to the subject-object distinction...a Japanese walking in the woods may say, "lonesome." It is not said that she or he is lonely, or that one is lonely while walking in these woods, or that he or she is feeling lonely. It is neither an objective nor a subjective experience, but both, or perhaps something in between it is at least a subjective/objective awareness or even an awareness before the subject/object distinction has been made. Perhaps it is a more primal drinking in of the whole as one's entire world of the moment...13

Yet, for all my "science," it is still "my" world. The personal is unavoidable so my avoidance is itself an illusion. As WiIliam James put it,

> Out of this aboriginal sensible muchness attention carves out objects, which conception then names and identifies forever-in the sky, "constellations," on the earth, "beach," "sea," "cliff," "bushes," "grass." Out of time we cut "days" and "nights," "summers" and "winters." We say what each part of the sensible continuum is, and all these abstracted whats are concepts} [4]

At the same time, self-reflection, despite its ambiguity, tells me that I am an other for someone else. I too am selected and, no doubt, not as I would wish to be and not as I would do it of myself for myself. I understand then that no matter how near or far some other is to me, he or she is inevitably a stranger. And this, not be-

cause I do not know him or her but because the encounter between us is shaped by selections that are hardly available to reflection itself Not least of these is that the other that I am for another is not the other that I am for myself. The first person singular, then, announces a journey, the Humanist narrative is an adventure story, even a mystery story.

3. Villains

As with any mystery story, I try to uncover what was done and who did it and why. The mystery, I think, is solvable. And that, of course, is just the way the Enlightenment project approaches the world, as knowable and as solvable. But now, intelligibility becomes a metaphor for human action and not a description of the way the world is or a prediction about the future of the sciences. In other words, we have again moved to the subjectivities of temperament and perspective, to characteristics of the subject. We catch hints of this move in Nietzsche's description,

> ...Socrates represents the archetype of the theoretical optimist, who strong in the belief that nature can be fathomed, considers knowledge to be the true panacea and error to be radical evil. To Socratic man, the one noble and truly human occupation was that of laying bare the workings of nature, of separating true knowledge from ill usion and error. So it happened that ever since Socrates the mechanism of concepts judgments and syllogisms has come to be regarded as the highest exercise of man's powers, nature's most admirable gift. Socrates and his successors, down to our own day. have considered all moral and sentimental accomplishments- noble deeds, compassion. self-sacrifice, heroism. even that spiritual calm, so difficulty of attainment which the. Apollonian Greek called sophrosyne-to be ultimately derived from the dialectic of knowledge and therefore teachable.I5

When "intimacy" becomes a commodity, however, subjectivity becomes a commodity too. I experience the modem version of distance and come to believe the illusion that I am isolated from the world not only as observer and object are isolated but as consumer and consumer good are isolated. Neither classic confidence nor Enlightenment optimism about the known and the knowable are available either. Both are reduced to skill and "know-how." This relationship of isolations, of observer and object, consumer

and consumed, has the advantage of allowing me to engage in certain standard behaviors: description, measurement, manipulation. But the very success of these behaviors, of treating persons as objects of nosiness, discourages me. I am not so much forbidden to find myself or to find you but encouraged in the illusion that what I actually find is distinct and describable and above all in our time useful or titiIIating. Furthermore, with the ready availability of standard behaviors, I have no work of discovery to do; intimacy becomes only another skiII as it were. So it is that we talk about "office friendships," "business acquaintances," "significant others," "partnerships," "family structures," and all the rest of a vocabulary of distant intimacy, i.e. an intimacy without persons.

At the same time, intimacy is a feature of actual relationships-the mystic and his or her Other, the lover and his or her beloved, the parent and his or her child-but we lack a modem language for expressing it. Without language, however, experience sooner or later eludes us and sooner or later it is recast in the form that language permits. Typically, then, we struggle against a language that does not convey our experience and finally give it up as a bad job. For this reason, we experiment with the outrageous and shocking in drama, poetry, novel, portrait and music in a desperate effort to break into an intimacy without persons, to deny that distant intimacy is really truthful to our experience. Hence, the wild and confusing arts of the modem age which do make a point even as they stir our impatience. At the same time, language goes on shaping our reality and so distant intimacy comes to be what we take for intimacy although we also know better. We struggle against the inarticulate situation in which we find ourselves but our dumbness develops into a process of substitution. Exhausted, we surrender and yet cannot surrender. We do know better but feel helpless, disenfranchised. Symptomatically, we talk louder and louder about "empowerment" while feeling more and more powerless.

I always had to find out how to live in a world of strangers and in a world where I was even a stranger to myself. And I under-

stood that I would never really succeed in either task. So, the Humanist story is also a tragedy, not in the sense of pathos and misfortune but because being human includes the confession of hiddenness. I am a human being and just because of that fact, I cannot fully be or become a person. I respond then inadequately not just to another but to myself. I am always incomplete. Birth opens my story and death ends it but both are accidents and neither is aesthetically coherent. "Call no man happy until he is dead" said the Greeks who caught on very early. Living is interruption, happening. Connection, too, is arbitrary, unplanned. But today, connection is both more demanding and more elusive and, given our compulsion for control, the accidental is anathema. The world of strangers expands; the complexities of self grow; the masks that must be penetrated prevail. At the same time, our disquiet grows too, particularly as ways of connection become, paradoxically, both easier and more mysterious. So, for example, I have little trouble fitting-in to this or that situation-on the job, in school, in the club-and yet I fit-in by fitting-into. Traditional ways of connecting are themselves brought within the process of fitting-in. So, the transformation of friendliness and love and caring into modem technologies. "How- to-do-it" is the modern genre.

The media are filled with reports of the penetration of technique everywhere, in part, no doubt as a way of rationalizing, controIling, the accidental. Offers to sell technical skiII abound whether it be to "improve your love-life" or "win friends and influence people" or increase the return on your investment. Assumed is the notion that technique is neutral, indifferently applicable to business or classroom, to personnel policy or family relationships. The outcome of such technologies with "guaranteed" results is the transformation of personal relationships into object relationships and again, the first person singular vanishes. Early in our century, John Dewey called attention to this emerging phenomenon when he wrote,

> The "joining" habit of the average American, and his excessive sociability, may well have an explanation like that of confonnity. They too

> testify to nature's abhorrence of the vacuum which the passing of the older individualism has produced. We should not be so averse to solitude if we had, when we were alone, the companionship of communal thought built into our mental habits. In the absence of this communion, there is the need for reinforcement by external contact. Our sociability is largely an effort to find substitutes for the normal consciousness of connection and union that proceeds from being a sustained and sustaining member of a social whole.16

Increasingly absent, as technique is universalized, is the existential availability of persons to and for each other. Before the doing that is so central in our culture is being and being present. This sounds much too abstract. But I am making a reference that is, I think clear enough in our experience. For example, I am now working with several hospitals on issues of medical ethics and, among other things, we are trying to work through the problems posed by an overpowering medical technicism that tends to mask both patient and professional, to focus on the disease as if it were a disembodied entity. A necessary corrective is restoring human presence so that we move from what is "treated," a hand or brain or eye or liver, to who is treated and who treats. For this, "family" or "friend" or "loved one" stand as witnesses and reminders as can doctor or nurse or counselor or minister. Yet, we work hard to exclude the personal-by standard procedures' policies, rules, structures and roles. Presence is undervalued., even repressed. Specialization, for example, dissects the patient into organs, even parts of organs. Expert claims build walls around the sick. Roles encourage hiddenness and this is particularly tempting and understandable given the anxieties oflife and death and the need for seIf-protection that medical treatment must raise. Yet,

> Their variegated forms notwithstanding, familial and other intimate relationships are typically crucial for attaining or protecting much of what is widely valued about human beings and their projects. In this respect, well-functioning families are analogous to Rawls "primary goods": like basic liberties. a decent income. and self-respect, the significance of families stems in part from their being important to the successful pursuit of whatever more individualized conceptions of the good life a person may cherish. But only in part. Families aren't simply more or less efficient means to some independently specifiable good ends; they are also (at least oftentimes) valuable in themselves. On this point we have the testimony not only of our intuitions, which is not

> altogether to be despised, but also of reflection, which reveals something W1comfortably close to a paradox: if we think of families exclusively as of instrumental values we greatly attenuate their ability to produce that instrumental value.l?

The medical experience is not unique. The Humanist story, then, must struggle everywhere for the availability of persons to each other and toward forms of connection-to listening and befriending and loving and caring-not only against the natural condition of being human but against the cultural forces arrayed against these forms of connection. But, we cannot merely re-state traditional forms of connection-e.g. "family values"-inyet another exercise in nostalgia. Solitude, for example, departs Emerson's romance, and Kierkegaard's anxiety becomes sociable and not contemplative.

I think of the ways I have seen by which teachers struggle to get past the abstractions of grades, test results, and standardized descriptions. So, in describing a "non-traditional" classroom for children, a teacher writes,

> Candice knows that the challenge of teaching does not involve finding the "right" practice to apply to all situations, but finding ways to challenge the multiple views of her students. Our experiment, of course, proved to be a reminder of that and Candice found herself returning to personal and particular ways to help students collaborate. She does not passively stand by and let students "do their own thing," or coerce them into behaving as if they see the world as she does. She knows her job is to help students open the doors of learning and to do that she must find, for each student, the right keys that will unlock them. [18]

I think, too, of the arts of loving and surely any story must be a love story. Yet, it cannot be a love-story told only in the old way-Dante and Beatrice, Romeo and Juliet. If feminism and "gay rights" have taught us anything, they have taught us the richness of loving, the participations ofloving and the varieties ofloving. Love was always erotic and bodily and this does not change. Even acts of charity, of agape, had their sensualities, the actuaIly being present with and to the person in need. But, as AIlan Bloom writes,

> Isolation, a sense of a lack of profound contact with other human beings, seems to be the disease of our time. There are great industries of

> psychotherapy addressing our difficulties in "relationships"-that pallid word the very timidity of which makes substantial attachments impossible. One has to have a tin ear to describe one's great love as a relationship. Did Romeo and Juliet have a relationship? The term betokens a chaste egalitarianism; it levels different ranks and degrees of attachment. "Relationships" are based on "commitments," as in "I'm not ready to make a commitment." It is a term empty of content, implying that human connectedness can arise only out of a motiveless act of freedom. It is this contemporary condition that led me once to describe us as social solitaries. I meant by this not that we have attained the solitary self-sufficiency that Rousseau so vividly characterized and that Kant, looking to Rousseau, calls the very model of the sublime, but that we are lonely while living in society, with all the social needs for others yet lacking the ability to satisfy them.19

We notice, again, how language shapes reality, impoverishes reality. Under the modem condition, however, we know that loving is even more than it once was a "coat of many colors." We have discovered or invented ways of loving once scarcely acknowledged or imagined. And despite our temptation to moralism, we have legitimized their variety and diversity. Return to the past would be, then, as deadly as technicism. Not least of all, the transmutation ofloving into technique--psychological technique, sexual technique-moves us toward a neutralization, reaIly only a pretended neutralization, of love. A strange dualism appears. On one side is a neutrality of technique that, indifferently, applies between any human beings in a "relationship." Knowing that this is a lie, a wild but superficial passionateness becomes the partner of technique. And so, we institutionalize the "one night stand"-or at least we did until frightened by AIDS-convert loving into conquest, and again lose the subject. Against this cultural pattern-which does not ring true to us but in which we are trapped-loving loses its painful joys, is neutralized in yet another way.

Having reduced loving to momentary sensuality and sensuality to technique, we lose those other feelings-for ourselves, for others-which loving in its more generous incarnation affords us. Thus, NeIl Noddings reminds us,

> There is the joy that unaccountably floods over me as I walk into the house and see my daughter asleep on the sofa. She is exhausted from basketball playing, and her hair lies curled on a damp forehead. The joy

> I feel is immediate...This joy arises out of an awareness of the caring relation. It is not something in this moment that brings joy, even though my daughter is the direct object of my consciousness. Rather, it is something beyond the moment-a recognition of fulfillment of relatedness-that induces this joy.
>
> Must there be an object of joy? Suppose I am working in my garden or lying on the beach under a star!)' sky. A seedling uncovered beneath the mulch may trigger joy (as my daughter did), or a shooting star may induce the feeling; but, then again, there may be no particular object of my joy. There is a sense of well-being, but more than that. I am not focusing consciousness on myself, but am aware peripherally of myself-perceiving. There is joy experienced as a real quality of the world-not as a state resulting from an appraisal of my situation in the world.20

As it were, we "go through the motions," and now the motions are programmed, choreographed. If this sounds unreasonable, I can recall many a counseling conversation where I had the impression that my partners in the discussion were "counting coup" as a teen-ager might in a bull-session with his peers or going down a check-list of technical moves as an airline pilot might when taking off or landing. Uncertainty, always a fact of loving, is now shifted from the doubts that must appear when person encounters person to assessments of technical effectiveness, e.g. the achievement of mutual orgasm and the playacting that tries to re-assure the partners that he or she was indeed a "good" lover.

The other sides of loving are transmuted as well. Caring, concerning, taking the part of, respecting, accepting, conversing, being-with are technicized as well. Nothing reveals this more than the decay of the idea of friendship and the loss of friendliness. We regard each other with the skeptic's eye, even the cynic's eye. A vocabulary of manipulation marks that decay. Friendships are identified with utility as in political friendships and business friendships. When unconditioned, as some relationships can still be, there lurks in the background a question mark. "Am I being fooled; is this real; is there a hidden agenda?" Always rare and always difficult to sustain, even those friendships that do not look to utility become superficial or anxious. We teach the lessons of this transformation of friendship very early. I think of the many

teen-agers I have known and of the deep if not abiding friendships they make. Yet, we manage to corrupt these as weII by advising the young to make the "right" connections which wiII "payoff" later in life. School and university "alumni" industries exploit this transformation as fortes of academic marketing. As we say, "it's who you know" that makes all the difference. Sadly, there is more truth than iIIusion here.

The modern condition sustains this move. The world of routines is not a friendly place. Indeed, such a world cannot abide a friendly place, indeed ought not to be a friendly place. The market place, for example, values competition, ambition, advancement. And for these ends, self-interest and mobility are the key. Time, a requirement of friendship, is fiIled with busyness, distractions, and the common complaint is: I don't have time. Space is moved through, moved to and from, is not lived in or enjoyed as. The tyranny of the clock and the schedule is found everywhere. Sacrificed to this re-shaping of the human setting are those connections that do not pretend to utility. At last, ironicaIIy, the telephone becomes a strained way of sustaining friendship at a distance. Newer technologies like interactive television will only confirm us in our isolation. Distant intimacy has reached its end. The Humanist story has its villain.

4. Heroes

Any story must have it characters. Much as the problematic features of subjectivity, temperament, perspective and connection announce that the narrative goes against the mood of the world as it actuaIIy is, so too the character in the Humanist story goes up against the world as it actuaIIy is. In that going-against, the story becomes a struggle, a story of heroism, even a story of rebellion. Of course, the older and nearly forgotten Humanist narratives were stories of heroism too. Prometheus, in the earliest of Humanist stories, stole the fire of the gods. The revolutionary and the reformer stood against, stood up to, the world as it was. But the modem hero or heroine has a more insidious enemy. The en-

emy is within-that is the insight of Humanism's critics. But when they turn subjectivity into subjectivism they lose their point. From thi~ perspective, the obvious enemies of the modem age-fundamentalists, post-modems and new-agers-are only reminders of past struggles once again renewed. The battle with them is familiar, habitual, almost at times ritualistic. The modem battle, however, is located in the struggle for innerness and against exteriority, the struggle for an authentic sociability and against systemic realities. But, exteriority and systemic reality are, as it were, inside me. So, the battlefield is as much within me as it is out there in the world.

In exploring the character of the Humanist hero or heroine in the modem setting, the narrative becomes a story of ways of being for oneself in a world of pseudo-intimacies. Reincarnated, thus, is the ethical center of Humanism, now not as a discipline or as a rule or even as a cause but as a biography lived for the sake of and as a response to the way the world works against the ethical in the name of the proficient.21 The terms of moral character are familiar enough, terms like dignity, responsibility, magnanimity. Each is a mode of innerness, a way of being in oneself. At the same time each is a mode of connection, a way of being with another. Finally, each is a mode of existence, a way of being in the world.

Obviously, there are other characteristics that persist in response to the human situation. Experience is shaped by the "precarious" and the" stable" as John Dewey put it. Fear and doubt are unavoidable as are disappointment, failure and defeat. Experience is permanently shaped, too, by surprise and unexpected opportunity although this is too easily forgotten in the face of overwhelming sadness or horror. Temporariness as weII as temporality are elements of human being too. A sense of humor then, is a continuing feature of the humanist hero or heroine in any time and in any place. Perspective, a sense of humor, is ontological, not historical. And the very notion of heroism entails a certain freedom. Neither a puppet nor a stone can be heroic, can go against.

In facing against exteriority, however, dignity becomes a central theme. But now it is transformed from a moral directive into a feature of intimacy. It is in this sense that,

> Worth is a correlate of dignity. It delivers the message of self respect... When I conceive myself as a being of whom worth can be predicated, then through my motives, choices, and actions I am uniquely presented to the world. This presence is active, a presentation and not merely another name for the existence of an object When I frod that attribution of worth by another to him or her self, I cannot be indifferent to what that subject presents. Worth signals a special claim on my attention as dignity signals a special limitation on my action. Things may be treated as instances of categories, e.g. chairs, clouds, stars. We can even pretend a momentary blindness when we subsume persons under functional heading as when we deal with store clerks, toll takers, bus drivers, voters. But the attribution of dignity and worth tells us that we are using a "convenient fiction" and we forget that to our period. We may treat persons statistically as if they were objects, but only temporarily and in "fear and trembling."22

Once upon a time, dignity was a demand for respect, for non-violation. As we say, I suffer "indignities." This is surely a significant fact of the present. At the same time, a failure of respect worked to convince me of my unworthiness, i.e. that being dealt with as lacking dignity was justified. I was taught the lessons of humility, of obedience to my betters. On a grander scale, a theological scale for example, I was legitimately humbled. My freedom-another correlate of dignity-was an invitation to sin. My efforts were merely petty and indeed the misfortunes that attended my life were justified as "God's plan" even where, as often happened, that plan was unknowable. The Book of Job was its metaphor as God and Satan gamble over Job's piety although the game is "fixed" on all sides. Satan must lose and Job can't do anything to change the situation of which he must be ignorant in any case. Even where, in a final trial of his dignity, Job dares to chaIIenge the universe itself for its injustice, the reply is demeaning, self demeaning. Out of the whirlwind, God answers Job with a non-answer and an assertion of power. And in the end, Job accepts his situation and in that acceptance is saved. Piety is pictured as an act of debasement.

To that on-going struggle for dignity which marks human experience everywhere, however, we now add the current subversion within that moves toward near absolute mastery of persons by non-personal masters. Dignity, after all, presumes personal identity and this is precisely what is chaIlenged by exteriority, pseudo-intimacy and intimacy at a distance. As I am absorbed in roles and routines, I cease to be and I cease to be with. Much as I struggle against this non-being, I always lose although I go on struggling. I am indeed Sisyphus-there is always that same mountain to climb. At the same time, and this is the terrifying irony of the modem situation, I learn the rewards of surrender. Sisyphus, as Camus remarks, ironicaIly I think, is "happy." Indignity is an increasingly comfortable place to be. I am, as it were, invited to live in a cushioned slavery To insist on my dignity, then, is to be ungrateful, to ask for the pains of dismissal and the struggle sooner or later seems to me to be not only pointless but a social, political and economic disaster. As we say, we "get along" by "going along" as citizens, as workers, as parents, as students, etc. I am not I but "it" and "its" have no claim to dignity.

The temptation of the "it" is the obstacle encountered by the Humanist hero or heroine and it is a felt temptation. The battle, then, is felt too as resistance within, as overcoming, as asserting, as insisting. Even conquering the ordinary enemies of Humanism fails to do the trick. It is the inner life that is at stake and the real enemy is to be found there and only symptomaticaIly outside. Exteriority has indeed been "internalized" and so its expulsion is "internalized" too as a personal struggle. I do not want to overdo this imagery but I am, after all, sketching the lines of a story and so images and not arguments or programs are in point.

Of course, there are conditions and relationships that feed indignity and these must stiIl be combated in the arenas of political economy and other public institutions: the struggle for human rights, for a decent public welfare, for a good education, etc. Innerness and subjectivity do not call for me to close myself away inside myself. Indeed, that would only be another illusion. But I

cannot forget the fact that these conditions and relationships are implanted within, as it were, and so cannot be exorcised by a public victory except as that victory becomes part of the personal struggle. Dignity, in other words, moves from a legalist or religious assertion of the inviolability of the human spirit to a self-reflective assessment of who I am.

The question becomes, then, how shaIl I live as a dignified human being, Fortunately, for all that a cushioned slavery appeals to me, I am stubborn and contrary. Here and there in my experience I encounter myself as lover, as dreamer, as knower. For all that my inner life is shaped by powers not my own, it is never entirely captured. I break through, often without wanting to, which is both exhilarating and frightening. There is, in other words, a resistance in the human being and it is with this that the Humanist hero or heroine of our narrative is armed. There are limits, then, to violation no matter how skiIIed and comfortable and aIluring violation may be. In fact, the very things we despair of in each other-our contrariness, our refusal to agree, our annoying habit of doing the "wrong" thing, our "irrational" willingness to go against our interests is precisely the locus of dignity in the modern condition. In a strange way, therefore, terrorism, crime and insanity exhibit the darker sides of dignity. Thus it can be very dangerous. Exteriority has equipped dignity with destructiveness and so my stubbornness quickly becomes a weapon of Armageddon. Therefore, dignity is no longer a clear statement of moral status. It has become ambivalent as well.

The Humanist hero or heroine cannot evade this ambivalence. At the same time, dignity is not in itself sufficient and left by itself would produce a kind of Humanist insanity. Not for nothing is the "rebel" a figure of both adoration and anxiety. And not for nothing is nihilism welcomed as an invitation to an adventurism of egos run wild. Nor is this moraIly some literary game. For example, a description of the scene in post-Soviet Russia reports,

> These are the younger men and women who are rmding a way other than despair in the new Russia, and they are a remarkable group of people. The most important new skill they have is adaptability: they figure out how to get for themselves what they want faster and better than anyone else. What they do not have is any framework in which to place themselves or their own successes; nor do they have a clear sense of the responsibilities that success may carry. To Soviet Union was dominated by the rhetoric of ideology, until finally ideology itself lost its meaning. When you discuss democracy with the empowered members of the younger generation, they seem to understand it is a euphemism for capitalism. and capitalism they take to he a system in which everyone grabs for himself whatever will be most useful to him. Fifteen years ago, many of these people might have been battling against an establishment that they would have seen as evil. "Those heroic days are over," Art yom Trotsky says to me rather bitterly. "I wouldn't be living heroically if I were part of today's younger generation.23

The struggle for dignity is balanced by responsibility. Typically, responsibility has been understood as a relationship of obligation between persons or else between persons and some collective like the church, the state, the corporation, the family, or what have you. So, I am said to be responsible if I do what duty expects of me, if I meet my obligations, and if I am loyal. Responsibility is a feature of moral agency in which an inviolate "It" acts out moral relationships in accordance with some directive and in some kind of arena. At its most austere, obligation has been understood willing to do one's duty for the sake of duty alone. As Kant put it,

> [Thus the first proposition of morality is that to have moral worth an action must be done from duty.] The second proposition is: An action done from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be achieved through it but in the maxim by which it is determined. Its moral value, therefore, does not depend on the reality of the object of the action but merely on the principle of volition by which the action is done without any regard to the objects of the facility of desire From the preceding discussion it is clear that the purposes we may have for our actions and their effects as ends and incentives of the will cannot given the actions any unconditional and moral worth. Wherein, then, can this worth lie, if it is not in the will in relation to its hoped-for effect? It can lie nowhere else than in the principle of the will irrespective of the end which can be realized by such action, for the will stands, as it were, at the crossroads halfway between its a priori principle, which is formal and its a posteriori incentive which is material. Since it must be determined by something, if it is done from

> duty, it must be determined by the formal principle of volition as such, since very material principle has been withdrawn from it.
>
> The third principle, as a consequence of the two preceding, I would express as follows: Duty is the necessity of an action done from respect for the law...24

The legalism and non-personality of the Kantian good will, however, becomes under modem conditions a going through the motions, even if they are morally good motions. Duty today is not defined by Kant's "law," the law the moral person gives to himself or herself in consequence of the fact that he or she is autonomous and rational. TypicaIly, then, what began with the Enlightenment project as an effort to democratize ethical agency, to move morality away from authoritarianism, now becomes another feature of exteriority. We tend to look outside of ourselves to statute and code which is by no means equivalent to moral law. For example, "professional ethics" is identified with agreed to codes of professional conduct. Enforcement, where available at all, is a matter of punishment. Responsibility, then, is transformed into opportunistic motivation-not to be caught, not to be sanctioned-which was precisely what Kant, among others, was trying to avoid by excluding consequences from the moral assessment, i.e. by excluding "purposes...ends...and incentives." To be sure, the resort to the impersonal "will" and to the moral "law" invited this modem transmutation.

For the modern hero or heroine, then, responsibility must be returned to the self and in a step beyond legalism, must be a felt responsibility, a "sense" of responsibility as we sometimes put it. To be sure, this makes responsibility appear less dependable than either the outcome of obeying the maxims of a "rational will" or avoiding violations of a code of conduct. Yet, as our litigiousness must surely teIl us, neither maxim nor code work very well. TypicaIly, a "scandal"-say students cheating on examinations or lawyers admitting to perjury-momentarily stirs our ethical interest. We respond by strengthening the code, passing another law, increasing the punishments, even adding an "ethics" course to pro-

fessional training. When our interests shift, however, a new scandal waits in the wings. And the process is repeated.

A turn to innerness re-locates responsibility within character. This re-location forces an unintended tension. The hero or heroine of our narrative exhibits a sensibility in which dignity and responsibility conflict, not simply with indignity and irresponsibility but with each other. To the stubbornness which exhibits my dignity I counterpose the responsibility which recognizes the stubborness of others. The encounter is imagined in self-reflection and felt as interpersonal. Obedience, even to my own law-giving capacity, my autonomy, is replaced by accounting for as well as accounting to. Or, putting this another way, responsibility means that I must take account of my presence in the presence of other presences. I cannot assert myself as if I lived by myself. Responsibility then is a confession of sociability, a confession that shapes who I am and what I must do.

Unfortunately, dignity and responsibility, left in continuing and uneasy conflict with each other turn character into a battleground of ambiguities. The neatness of the past which took both as unalloyed moral goods surrenders to the modes of their expression under modern conditions, the threat of rebeIlion, the conventionality of duty, the obscurity of the "I." As with any moral ambiguity, moral failure is inevitable too and this is not so much a fact of the confrontation of good and evil but of the confrontation of good with good, of virtue with virtue. Always a difficulty of the moral life, that confrontation has now become typical. Hence it is that the moral dilemma is much more likely to be met in the modem situation than the moral crusade. Indeed, the effort to restore the latter, the fundamentalist temptation on all sides, becomes understandable precisely as a response to the pains of the former. Hence, too, the surrender through a relativism run wild of efforts to make moral sense when the choice between goods must force us to deny some good, in other words, to do evil. The "transvaluation of values" is not a play on words but a description of our experience.

Faced with the inevitability of moral failure as a precise consequence of moral good, another characteristic of the Humanist hero or heroine appears which mediates between dignity and responsibility. As against habits of indifference, self assertion and self-righteousness which are near epidemic, the narrative of innerness caIIs for going against our habits of judgment. its calls for magananimity. As C. P. Snow put it,

> ...I said previously that magnanimity is in action a simple virtue, but that its roots are complicated. One of those roots is love, or compassion, or charity, or brotherhood, whatever one likes to call the glue which binds us together. Another is that sense of reality which is also part of humor. And another, I think is a special sort of vanity: the vanity that makes us want to behave better than we naturally should. Don't be frightened of the word. We come from the earth, and the origins of human excellence are often a bit murkier than we expect. There are two opposing vanities which we have all noticed in ourselves: one is the vanity of self-regard-when we look into ourselves, fall in love with our own guilt and squalor, and are satisfied to stay in it. The other is the vanity which tries to make us better. In a book of mine, a character speaking for me says: "I want a man who knows something about himself. And is appalled. And has to forgive himself to get along.,,25

So much is conflicted, ambiguous, hidden that a certain gentleness and generosity of spirit is caIIed for. And, as we know to our sadness, we are hardly generous with each other. Of course, we may seem overly generous to ourselves except that anxiety, guilt, and superficiality suggest that this generosity does not serve. We "forgive" neither others nor ourselves. Not least of all, moral blindness serves as our defense and we demonstrate this blindness by our conversion of the moral into the behavioral, the operational, the loyal, and the technical. If, under a secular inspiration, failure is no longer equivalent to sin, it stiIl remains the fault least forgiven among us. Not to succeed-at whatever task is imposed-is to warrant dismissal whether in the classroom or in politics or in business. Again, our cushioned slavery makes failure-not to be "with it"' not to "make it"-tolerable only in the sense that dismissal does not entail the actual exile of being marooned or starved But not to succeed moraIIy is to be exiled in another way. It is to be thrust out of one's self and to make the final surrender to exteri-

ority. The story, finaIly, can be either tragedy or comedy. In the end it is probably both-and with no little touch of farce as well.

1 In this essay, I continue the theme that began with my discussion of "companionship," "doing good," "intimacy," and "reason." *(Humanism Today, 4:61-*77, 5 16-35, 6:100-124, 8:139-147, respectively). As a sequel to *The Devil and Secular Humanism* (Praeger, 1990), the text is based on Chapter 6 of my *Intimacy, Humanism With A Human Face,* (Praeger, 1996).

2Alisdair Macintyre, *After Virtue,* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, p.112 (References are to John Rawls, *A Th£ory Of Justice,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971.)

3 Robert N. Bellah, et aI., *Habits OfTh£ Heart.* New York, Harper and Row, 1985, p. 38.

4 It is not necessary to follow Jungian psychology (and metaphysics), e.g. ideas of "race memory," in order to appreciate the continuing and the permanent call of myth and story. Nor need we grow mysterious about the reasons. For an insightful, readable, and unpretentiously sophisticated view of the matter, see Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

5 Andrew M. Greeley, "Because Of The Stories," *The New York Times Magazine,* July 10, 1994,pAO.

6 Stow Persons, *Free Religion,* New Haven, Conn.,: Yale University Press, 1947, pp.22-23.

7 In this conlext, a turn to science fiction is in order. I think of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. I think too of Isaac Asimov and Gene Rodenberry. We might well benefit, in other words, from the seeds of an aesthetic tradition already evident in their treatment of the sciences.

8 Brenda Collums, "Four Ladies Of South Place," *Ethical Record,* Volume 99, No.7, July/August, 1994, pp. 19-13.

9 In the most interesting of these letters Jefferson creates an imagined dialogue between the "head" and the "heart," the struggle of the lover to deal with reasons judgment and passion's drive. See, *The Portable Jefferson,* edited by MerrH D. Peterson, New York: Penguin, 1975, pp. 400-412.

10 Jurgen Habermas, *Th£ Theory of Communicative Action.* Volume Two: *Lifeworld and System: A Critique Of FU/'l£tionalist Reason,* translated by Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1987, p.325.

11 Roger Rosenblatt, "How Do Tobacco Executives Live With Themselves?" *The New York Times Magazine,* March 20,1994, p.73.

12 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason In The Age Of Scie/'l£e,* translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990, pp. 100f.

i3 Robert E. Carter, "Becoming Bamboo: Languages Of Diversity," n paper presented at the Conference of the Association for Moral Education, Toronto, Canada, November 1992, pp. 3-4.

14 William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*. London, Longmans, Green and Co..: 1948, p. 50.

15 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth Of Tragedy*, translated by Francis Golffmg, Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956, p. 94.

16 John Dewey, *Individualism Old And New*, New York: Capricorn, 1962, pp. 67-68.

17 James Lindemann Nelson, "Taking Families Seriously," *Hastings Center Report*, Volume 22, Number 4, July-August, 1992, p. 7.

18 Theresa A. Thorkildsen, "Establishing A Moral Atmosphere In School: Don't Forget To Listenl," presented at the Conference of the Association for Moral Education, Toronto, Canada. November 1992, p. 13.

19 Allan Bloom, "The Death Of Eros," *The New York Times MagaziTU!*, May 23, 1993, p.27.

20 Nel Noddings, *Caring: A FeminiTU!Approach To Ethics And Moral Education*, Berkeley, University of California Press: 1984, pp. 137-138.

21 Modem moral theory, victimized by analytic dogma. has denied itself the benefits of experience, focusing instead on the uses of moral language and the logic of alternative meta-ethical groundings. There were, to be sure, advantages to be gained from this turn of ethical thought. We are more careful about our assumptions, about our communications than we once were although at times an overscrupulous concern for precision blocks the hunch, the intuition, the vaguer intimations of possible insights from which ethical thinking has always benefited. With the development of what is called "applied ethics"-in business, medicine, the law, moral education a healthy relationship between ethics and actual practice appears. Substantive moral discussion is now permissible in a way that it was not for a long long time. A new moral literature is beginning to appear of which "virtue ethics" is but one example. Another is illustrated in a review of Owen Flanagan's, *Varieties Of Moral Personality: Ethics And Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991).

> Flanagan believes that moral philosophy can profit from a fairly hefty infusion of scientifically sophisticated moral psychology. For good measure, he throws in learnings from the cognitive sciences as well. William James is his hero. Not since James, he claims, have we witnessed a major American intellectual who can preside with such authority over both psychology and ethics and bring them together with such insight. Instead, American moral philosophy since James has tended to ignore psychology. It has worked on the misguided thesis that ethics is autonomous from empirical considerations of any kind, including empirical psychological considerations about human mental functioning. Linguistic analytic approaches to ethics, moral rationalism of the Kantian variety, and theological views emphasizing revelation-all of these powerful traditions have downplayed the role of psychology in ethics...

(Don S. Browning, "Moral Psychology And Moral Philosophy: Theoretical And Professional Perspectives," *Religious Studies Review*. Volume 19, Number 4, October 1993, p. 317).

22 Howard Radest, "Companionship (A Metaphor For Humanism), *Humanism Today*, No. 4, 1988, p. 69.

23 Andrew Solomon, "Young Russia's Defiant Decadence," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 18, 1993, p. 51.

24 Immanuel Kent, *Critique Of Practical Reason*, Translated and Edited with an Introduction by Lewis White Beck, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1949, p. 61.

25 C. P. Snow, "On Magnanimity," *Harper's Magazine*, Volume 225, July, 1962, p. 41.