

ALSO BY M. SCOTT PECK, M.D.

PEOPLE OF THE LIE: *The Hope for Healing Human Evil*
WHAT RETURN CAN I MAKE? *Dimensions of the Christian*
Experience

The Road Less Traveled

A NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF
LOVE, TRADITIONAL VALUES
AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

M. SCOTT PECK, M.D.

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in the months since my colleague's wife lent me her book. They have always been happening to me. Some of them I recognize. Some of them I may take advantage of without even being aware of their miraculous nature. There is no way I have of knowing how many I have let slip by.

The Definition of Grace

Thus far in this section I have described a whole variety of phenomena that have the following characteristics in common:

(a) They serve to nurture—support, protect and enhance—human life and spiritual growth.

(b) The mechanism of their action is either incompletely understandable (as in the case of physical resistance and dreams) or totally obscure (as in the case of paranormal phenomena) according to the principles of natural law as interpreted by current scientific thinking.

(c) Their occurrence is frequent, routine, commonplace and essentially universal among humanity.

(d) Although potentially influenced by human consciousness, their origin is outside of the conscious will and beyond the process of conscious decision-making.

Although generally regarded as separate, I have come to believe that their commonality indicates that these phenomena are part of or manifestations of a single phenomenon: a powerful force originating outside of human consciousness which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings. For hundreds and even thousands of years before the scientific

conceptualization of such things as immune globulins, dream states, and the unconscious, this force has been consistently recognized by the religious, who have applied to it the name of grace. And have sung its praise. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound . . ."

What are we to do—we who are properly skeptical and scientific-minded—with this "powerful force originating outside of human consciousness which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings"? We cannot touch this force. We have no decent way to measure it. Yet it exists. It is real. Are we to operate with tunnel vision and ignore it because it does not fit in easily with traditional scientific concepts of natural law? To do so seems perilous. I do not think we can hope to approach a full understanding of the cosmos, of the place of man within the cosmos, and hence the nature of mankind itself, without incorporating the phenomenon of grace into our conceptual framework.

Yet we cannot even locate this force. We have said only where it is not: residing in human consciousness. Then, where does it reside? Some of the phenomena we have discussed, such as dreams, suggest that grace resides in the unconscious mind of the individual. Other phenomena, such as synchronicity and serendipity, indicate this force to exist beyond the boundaries of the single individual. It is not simply because we are scientists that we have difficulty locating grace. The religious, who, of course, ascribe the origins of grace to God, believing it to be literally God's love, have through the ages had the same difficulty locating God. There are within theology two lengthy and opposing traditions in this regard: one, the doctrine of Emanance, which holds that grace emanates down from an external God to men; the other, the doctrine of Immanence, which holds that grace immanates out from the God within the center of man's being.

This problem—and, for that matter, the whole problem of paradox—results from our desire, in the first place, to locate things. Human beings have a profound tendency to con-

ceptualize in terms of discrete entities. We perceive the world composed of such entities: ships, shoes and sealing wax, and other categories. And we then tend to understand a phenomenon by placing it in a particular category, saying it is such and such an entity. It is either this or that, but it cannot be both. Ships are ships and not shoes. I am I and you are you. The I-entity is my identity and the you-entity is your identity, and we tend to be quite discomfited if our identities become mixed up or confused. As we have previously noted, Hindu and Buddhist thinkers believe our perception of discrete entities to be illusion, or maya, and modern physicists, concerned with relativity, wave-particle phenomena, electromagnetism, et cetera, are becoming increasingly aware of the limitations of our conceptual approach in terms of entities. But it is hard to escape from. Our tendency to entity-thinking compels us to want to locate things, even such things as God or grace and even when we know our tendency is interfering with our comprehension of these matters.

I attempt not to think of the individual as a true entity at all, and insofar as my intellectual limitations compel me to think (or write) in terms of entities, I conceive of the boundaries of the individual as being marked by a most permeable membrane—a fence, if you will, instead of a wall; a fence through which, under which and over which other “entities” may climb, crawl or flow. Just as our conscious mind is continually partially permeable to our unconscious, so is our unconscious permeable to the “mind” without, the “mind” that permeates us yet is not us as entities. More elegantly and adequately descriptive of the situation than the twentieth-century scientific language of permeable membranes is the fourteenth-century (c. 1393) religious language of Dame Julian, an anchoress of Norwich, describing the relationship between grace and the individual entity: “For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin and the bones in the flesh and the heart in the whole, so are we, soul and body, clad in the goodness of God and enclosed. Yea,

and more homely; for all these may wear and waste away, but the Goodness of God is ever whole.”*

In any case, regardless of how we ascribe them or where we locate them, the “miracles” described indicate that our growth as human beings is being assisted by a force other than our conscious will. To further understand the nature of this force I believe we can benefit from considering yet another miracle: the growth process of all life itself, to which we have given the name evolution.

The Miracle of Evolution

Although we have not until now focused upon it as a concept, in one way or another we have been concerned with evolution throughout this book. Spiritual growth is the evolution of an individual. An individual's body may undergo the changes of the life cycle, but it does not evolve. New physical patterns are not forged. Decline of physical competence in old age is an inevitability. Within an individual lifetime, however, the human spirit may evolve dramatically. New patterns may be forged. Spiritual competence may increase (although it usually does not) until the moment of death in advanced old age. Our lifetime offers us unlimited opportunities for spiritual growth until the end. While the focus of this book is on spiritual evolution, the process of physical evolution is similar to that of the spirit and provides us with a model for the further understanding of the process of spiritual growth and the meaning of grace.

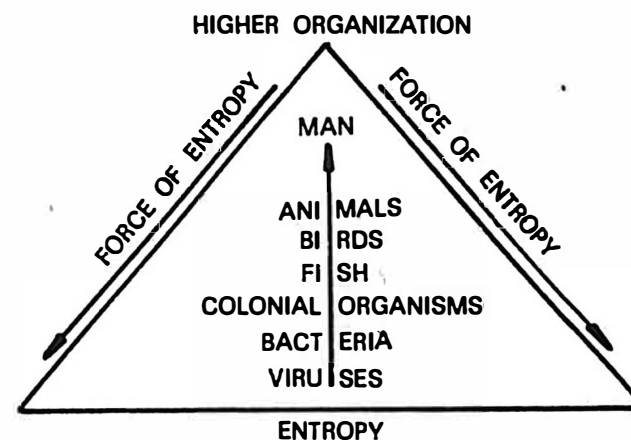
* *Revelations of Divine Love*, Grace Warrack, ed. (New York: British Book Centre, 1923), Chap. VI.

The most striking feature of the process of physical evolution is that it is a miracle. Given what we understand of the universe, evolution should not occur; the phenomenon should not exist at all. One of the basic natural laws is the second law of thermodynamics, which states that energy naturally flows from a state of greater organization to a state of lesser organization, from a state of higher differentiation to a state of lower differentiation. In other words, the universe is in a process of winding down. The example frequently used to describe this process is that of a stream, which naturally flows downhill. It takes energy or work—pumps, locks, humans carrying buckets, or other means—to reverse this process, to get back to the beginning, to put the water back on top of the hill. And this energy has to come from somewhere else. Some other energy system has to be depleted if this one is to be maintained. Ultimately, according to the second law of thermodynamics, in billions and billions of years, the universe will completely wind down until it reaches the lowest point as an amorphous, totally disorganized, totally undifferentiated “blob” in which nothing happens any more. This state of total disorganization and undifferentiation is termed entropy.

The natural downhill flow of energy toward the state of entropy might be termed the force of entropy. We can now realize that the “flow” of evolution is against the force of entropy. The process of evolution has been a development of organisms from lower to higher and higher states of complexity, differentiation and organization. A virus is an extremely simple organism, little more than a molecule. A bacterium is more complex, more differentiated, possessing a cell wall and different types of molecules and a metabolism. A paramecium has a nucleus, cilia, and a rudimentary digestive system. A sponge not only has cells but begins to have different types of cells interdependent upon each other. Insects and fish have nervous systems with complex methods of locomotion, and even social organizations. And so it goes, up

the scale of evolution, a scale of increasing complexity and organization and differentiation, with man, who possesses an enormous cerebral cortex and extraordinarily complex behavior patterns, being, as far as we can tell, at the top. I state that the process of evolution is a miracle, because insofar as it is a process of increasing organization and differentiation, it runs counter to natural law. In the ordinary course of things, we who write and read this book should not exist.*

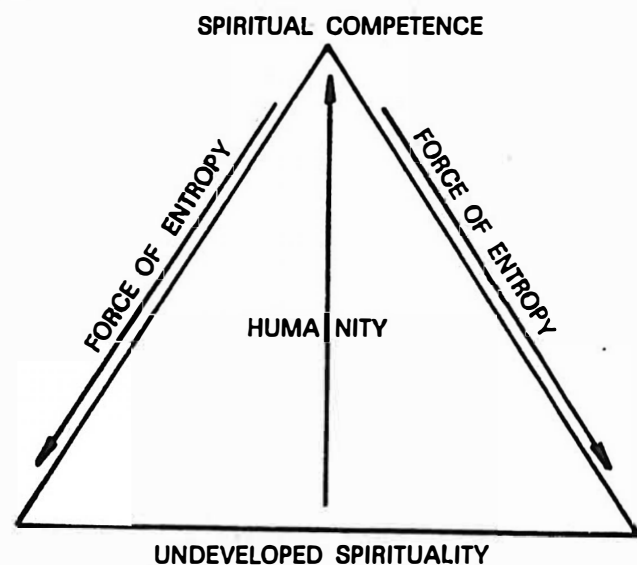
The process of evolution can be diagrammed by a pyramid, with man, the most complex but least numerous organism, at the apex, and viruses, the most numerous but least complex organisms, at the base:



The apex is thrusting out, up, forward against the force of entropy. Inside the pyramid I have placed an arrow to symbolize this thrusting evolutionary force, this “something” that has so successfully and consistently defied “natural law” over millions upon millions of generations and that must itself represent natural law as yet undefined.

* The concept that evolution runs counter to natural law is neither new nor original. I seem to remember someone I studied in my college days stating, “Evolution is an eddy in the second law of thermodynamics,” but I have unfortunately not been able to locate the reference. More recently the concept has been articulated by Buckminster Fuller in his book *And It Came to Pass—Not to Stay* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

The spiritual evolution of humanity can be similarly diagrammed:



Again and again I have emphasized that the process of spiritual growth is an effortful and difficult one. This is because it is conducted against a natural resistance, against a natural inclination to keep things the way they were, to cling to the old maps and old ways of doing things, to take the easy path. About this natural resistance, this force of entropy as it operates in our spiritual lives, I will have still more to say shortly. But as in the case of physical evolution, the miracle is that this resistance is overcome. We do grow. Despite all that resists the process, we do become better human beings. Not all of us. Not easily. But in significant numbers humans somehow manage to improve themselves and their cultures. There is a force that somehow pushes us to choose the more difficult path whereby we can transcend the mire and muck into which we are so often born.

This diagram of the process of spiritual evolution can apply to the existence of a single individual. Each of us has his or her own urge to grow, and each of us, in exercising that urge, must single-handedly fight against his or her own resistance. The diagram also applies to humanity as a whole.

As we evolve as individuals, so do we cause our society to evolve. The culture that nurtures us in childhood is nurtured by our leadership in adulthood. Those who achieve growth not only enjoy the fruits of growth but give the same fruits to the world. Evolving as individuals, we carry humanity on our backs. And so humanity evolves.

The notion that the plane of mankind's spiritual development is in a process of ascension may hardly seem realistic to a generation disillusioned with the dream of progress. Everywhere is war, corruption and pollution. How could one reasonably suggest that the human race is spiritually progressing? Yet that is exactly what I suggest. Our very sense of disillusionment arises from the fact that we expect more of ourselves than our forebears did of themselves. Human behavior that we find repugnant and outrageous today was accepted as a matter of course yesteryear. A major focus of this book, for instance, has been on the responsibilities of parenthood for the spiritual nurture of children. This is hardly a radical theme today, but several centuries ago it was generally not even a human concern. While I find the average quality of present parenting appallingly poor, I have every reason to believe it far superior to that of just a few generations back. A recent review of an aspect of child care begins, for instance, by noting:

Roman law gave the father absolute control over his children, whom he could sell or condemn to death with impunity. This concept of absolute right carried over into English law, where it prevailed until the fourteenth century without appreciable change. In the Middle Ages childhood was not seen as the unique phase of life we now consider it to be. It was customary to send children as young as seven into service or apprenticeship, where learning was secondary to the labor a child performed for his or her master. The child and the servant appear to have been indistinguishable in terms of how they were treated; even the language often failed to use separate terms for each. It was not until the sixteenth century that children began to be looked on as

being of particular interest, having important and specific developmental tasks to perform, and being worthy of affection.*

But what is this force that pushes us as individuals and as a whole species to grow against the natural resistance of our own lethargy? We have already labeled it. It is love. Love was defined as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." When we grow, it is because we are working at it, and we are working at it because we love ourselves. It is through love that we elevate ourselves. And it is through our love for others that we assist others to elevate themselves. Love, the extension of the self, is the very act of evolution. It is evolution in progress. The evolutionary force, present in all of life, manifests itself in mankind as human love. Among humanity love is the miraculous force that defies the natural law of entropy.

The Alpha and the Omega

We are still left, however, with the question asked at the end of the section on love: Where does love come from? Only now it can be enlarged to a perhaps even more basic question: Whence comes the whole force of evolution? And to this we can add our puzzlement about the origins of grace. For love is conscious, but grace is not. Whence comes this "powerful force originating outside of human consciousness which nurtures the spiritual growth of human beings"?

* André P. Derdeyn, "Child Custody Contests in Historical Perspective," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 133, No. 12 (Dec. 1976), p. 1369.

We cannot answer these questions in the same scientific way we can answer where flour or steel or maggots come from. It is not simply that they are too intangible, but more that they are too basic for our "science" as it currently exists. For these are not the only basic questions that science cannot answer. Do we really know what electricity is, for instance? Or where energy comes from in the first place? Or the universe? Perhaps someday our science of answers will catch up with the most basic questions. Until then, if ever, we can only speculate, theorize, postulate, hypothesize.

To explain the miracles of grace and evolution we hypothesize the existence of a God who wants us to grow—a God who loves us. To many this hypothesis seems too simple, too easy; too much like fantasy; childlike and naïve. But what else do we have? To ignore the data by using tunnel vision is not an answer. We cannot obtain an answer by not asking the questions. Simple though it may be, no one who has observed the data and asked the questions has been able to produce a better hypothesis or even really a hypothesis at all. Until someone does, we are stuck with this strangely childlike notion of a loving God or else with a theoretical vacuum.

And if we take it seriously, we are going to find that this simple notion of a loving God does not make for an easy philosophy.

If we postulate that our capacity to love, this urge to grow and evolve, is somehow "breathed into" us by God, then we must ask to what end. Why does God want us to grow? What are we growing toward? Where is the end point, the goal of evolution? What is it that God wants of us? It is not my intention here to become involved in theological niceties, and I hope the scholarly will forgive me if I cut through all the ifs, ands, and buts of proper speculative theology. For no matter how much we may like to pussyfoot around it, all of us who postulate a loving God and really think about it eventually come to a single terrifying idea: God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself). We are growing toward godhood. God is the goal of evolution. It is God who is the

source of the evolutionary force and God who is the destination. This is what we mean when we say the He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

When I said that this is a terrifying idea I was speaking mildly. It is a very old idea, but, by the millions, we run away from it in sheer panic. For no idea ever came to the mind of man which places upon us such a burden. It is the single most demanding idea in the history of mankind. Not because it is difficult to conceive; to the contrary, it is the essence of simplicity. But because if we believe it, it then demands from us all that we can possibly give, all that we have. It is one thing to believe in a nice old God who will take good care of us from a lofty position of power which we ourselves could never begin to attain. It is quite another to believe in a God who has it in mind for us precisely that we should attain His position, His power, His wisdom, His identity. Were we to believe it possible for man to become God, this belief by its very nature would place upon us an obligation to attempt to attain the possible. But we do not want this obligation. We don't want to have to work that hard. We don't want God's responsibility. We don't want the responsibility of having to think all the time. As long as we can believe that godhood is an impossible attainment for ourselves, we don't have to worry about our spiritual growth, we don't have to push ourselves to higher and higher levels of consciousness and loving activity; we can relax and just be human. If God's in his heaven and we're down here, and never the twain shall meet, we can let Him have all the responsibility for evolution and the directorship of the universe. We can do our bit toward assuring ourselves a comfortable old age, hopefully complete with healthy, happy and grateful children and grandchildren; but beyond that we need not bother ourselves. These goals are difficult enough to achieve, and hardly to be disparaged. Nonetheless, as soon as we believe it is possible for man to become God, we can really never rest for long, never say, "OK, my job is finished,

my work is done." We must constantly push ourselves to greater and greater wisdom, greater and greater effectiveness. By this belief we will have trapped ourselves, at least until death, on an effortful treadmill of self-improvement and spiritual growth. God's responsibility must be our own. It is no wonder that the belief in the possibility of Godhead is repugnant.

The idea that God is actively nurturing us so that we might grow up to be like Him brings us face to face with our own laziness.

Entropy and Original Sin

Being about spiritual growth, this book is inevitably about the other side of the same coin: the impediments to spiritual growth. Ultimately there is only the one impediment, and that is laziness. If we overcome laziness, all the other impediments will be overcome. If we do not overcome laziness, none of the others will be hurdled. So this is also a book about laziness. In examining discipline we were considering the laziness of attempting to avoid necessary suffering, or taking the easy way out. In examining love we were also examining the fact that nonlove is the unwillingness to extend one's self. Laziness is love's opposite. Spiritual growth is effortful, as we have been reminded again and again. We are now at a position from which we can examine the nature of laziness in perspective and realize that laziness is the force of entropy as it manifests itself in the lives of all of us.

For many years I found the notion of original sin meaningless, even objectionable. Sexuality did not strike me as par-

ticularly sinful. Nor my various other appetites. I would quite frequently indulge myself by overeating an excellent meal, and while I might suffer pangs of indigestion, I certainly did not suffer any pangs of guilt. I perceived sin in the world: cheating, prejudice, torture, brutality. But I failed to perceive any inherent sinfulness in infants, nor could I find it rational to believe that young children were cursed because their ancestors had eaten from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gradually, however, I became increasingly aware of the ubiquitous nature of laziness. In the struggle to help my patients grow, I found that my chief enemy was invariably their laziness. And I became aware in myself of a similar reluctance to extend myself to new areas of thought, responsibility and maturation. One thing I clearly had in common with all mankind was my laziness. It was at this point that the serpent-and-the-apple story suddenly made sense.

The key issue lies in what is missing. The story suggests that God was in the habit of "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" and that there were open channels of communication between Him and man. But if this was so, then why was it that Adam and Eve, separately or together, before or after the serpent's urging, did not say to God, "We're curious as to why You don't want us to eat any of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We really like it here, and we don't want to seem ungrateful, but Your law on this matter doesn't make much sense to us, and we'd really appreciate it if you explained it to us"? But of course they did not say this. Instead they went ahead and broke God's law without ever understanding the reason behind the law, without taking the effort to challenge God directly, question his authority or even communicate with Him on a reasonably adult level. They listened to the serpent, but they failed to get God's side of the story before they acted.

Why this failure? Why was no step taken between the temptation and the action? It is this missing step that is the

essence of sin. The step missing is the step of debate. Adam and Eve could have set up a debate between the serpent and God, but in failing to do so they failed to obtain God's side of the question. The debate between the serpent and God is symbolic of the dialogue between good and evil which can and should occur within the minds of human beings. Our failure to conduct—or to conduct fully and wholeheartedly—this internal debate between good and evil is the cause of those evil actions that constitute sin. In debating the wisdom of a proposed course of action, human beings routinely fail to obtain God's side of the issue. They fail to consult or listen to the God within them, the knowledge of rightness which inherently resides within the minds of all mankind. We make this failure because we are lazy. It is work to hold these internal debates. They require time and energy just to conduct them. And if we take them seriously—if we seriously listen to this "God within us"—we usually find ourselves being urged to take the more difficult path, the path of more effort rather than less. To conduct the debate is to open ourselves to suffering and struggle. Each and every one of us, more or less frequently, will hold back from this work, will also seek to avoid this painful step. Like Adam and Eve, and every one of our ancestors before us, we are all lazy.

So original sin does exist; it is our laziness. It is very real. It exists in each and every one of us—infants, children, adolescents, mature adults, the elderly; the wise or the stupid; the lame or the whole. Some of us may be less lazy than others, but we are all lazy to some extent. No matter how energetic, ambitious or even wise we may be, if we truly look into ourselves we will find laziness lurking at some level. It is the force of entropy within us, pushing us down and holding us all back from our spiritual evolution.

Some readers may say to themselves, "But I'm not lazy. I work sixty hours a week at my job. In the evenings and on the weekends, even though I'm tired, I extend myself to go out with my spouse, take the children to the zoo, help with

the housework, do any number of chores. Sometimes it seems that's all I do—work, work, work.” I can sympathize with these readers but can persist only in pointing out that they will find laziness within themselves if they look for it. For laziness takes forms other than that related to the bare number of hours spent on the job or devoted to one's responsibilities to others. A major form that laziness takes is fear. The myth of Adam and Eve can again be used to illustrate this. One might say, for instance, that it was not laziness that prevented Adam and Eve from questioning God as to the reasons behind His law but fear—fear in the face of the awesomeness of God, fear of the wrath of God. But while all fear is not laziness, much fear is exactly that. Much of our fear is fear of a change in the status quo, a fear that we might lose what we have if we venture forth from where we are now. In the section on discipline I spoke of the fact that people find new information distinctly threatening, because if they incorporate it they will have to do a good deal of work to revise their maps of reality, and they instinctively seek to avoid that work. Consequently, more often than not they will fight against the new information rather than for its assimilation. Their resistance is motivated by fear, yes, but the basis of their fear is laziness; it is the fear of the work they would have to do. Similarly, in the section on love I spoke of the risks of extending ourselves into new territory, new commitments and responsibilities, new relationships and levels of existence. Here again the risk is of the loss of the status quo, and the fear is of the work involved in arriving at a new status quo. So it is quite probable that Adam and Eve were afraid of what might happen to them if they were to openly question God; instead they attempted to take the easy way out, the illegitimate shortcut of sneakiness, to achieve knowledge not worked for, and hope they could get away with it. But they did not. To question God may let us in for a lot of work. But a moral of the story is that it must be done.

Psychotherapists know that although patients come to us seeking change of one kind or another, they are actually ter-

rified of change—of the work of change. It is because of this terror or laziness that the vast majority of patients—perhaps nine out of ten—who begin the process of psychotherapy, drop out of therapy long before the process has been completed. The majority of these drop-outs (or cop-outs) occur during the first few sessions or first few months of treatment. The dynamics are often clearest in the cases of those married patients who become aware during the first few sessions of therapy that their marriages are dreadfully disordered or destructive, and hence that the path to mental health will lie either through divorce or else through an enormously difficult and painful process of completely restructuring a marriage. Actually, these patients often have this awareness subliminally before they even seek psychotherapy, and the first few sessions of therapy only serve to confirm what they already knew and dreaded. In any case, they become overwhelmed by fear of facing the seemingly impossible difficulties of living alone or apparently equally impossible difficulties of working for months and years with their mates toward radically improved relationships. So they stop treatment, sometimes after two or three sessions, sometimes after ten or twenty. They may stop with some such excuse as “We’ve decided we made a mistake when we thought we had the money for treatment” or they may stop honestly with an open acknowledgment: “I’m afraid of what therapy might do to my marriage. I know it’s a cop-out. Maybe someday I’ll have the guts to come back.” At any rate, they settle for the maintenance of a miserable status quo in preference to the tremendous amount of effort they realize will be required to work their way out of their particular traps.

In the earlier stages of spiritual growth, individuals are mostly unaware of their own laziness, although they may give it lip service by saying such things as “Of course, like everybody else, I have my lazy moments.” This is because the lazy part of the self, like the devil that it may actually be, is unscrupulous and specializes in treacherous disguise. It cloaks its own laziness in all manner of rationalizations,

which the more growing part of the self is still too weak to see through easily or to combat. Thus a person will say to the suggestion that he or she gain some new knowledge in a certain area, "That area's been studied by a lot of people and they've not come up with any answers" or "I know a man who was into that stuff and he was an alcoholic who committed suicide" or "I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks" or "You're trying to manipulate me into becoming a carbon copy of yourself and that's not what psychotherapists are supposed to do." All of these responses and many more are cover-ups of patients' or students' laziness, designed to disguise it not so much from the therapist or teacher as from themselves. For to recognize laziness for what it is and acknowledge it in oneself is the beginning of its curtailment.

For these reasons, those who are in the relatively more advanced stages of spiritual growth are the very ones most aware of their own laziness. It is the least lazy who know themselves to be sluggish. In my personal struggle for maturity I am gradually becoming more aware of new insights, which tend, as if of themselves, to want to slip away from me. Or I glimpse new, constructive avenues of thought on which my steps, seemingly of their own accord, start to drag. I suspect that most of the time these valuable thoughts do slip away unnoticed and that I wander from these valuable avenues without knowing what I'm doing. But when I do become conscious of the fact that I am dragging my feet, I am compelled to exert the will to quicken my pace in the very direction I am avoiding. The fight against entropy never ends.

We all have a sick self and a healthy self. No matter how neurotic or even psychotic we may be, even if we seem to be totally fearful and completely rigid, there is still a part of us, however small, that wants us to grow, that likes change and development, that is attracted to the new and the unknown, and that is willing to do the work and take the risks involved in spiritual evolution. And no matter how seemingly healthy and spiritually evolved we are, there is still a part of us,

however small, that does not want us to exert ourselves, that clings to the old and familiar, fearful of any change or effort, desiring comfort at any cost and absence of pain at any price, even if the penalty be ineffectiveness, stagnation or regression. In some of us our healthy self seems pathetically small, wholly dominated by the laziness and fearfulness of our monumental sick self. Others of us may be rapidly growing, our dominant healthy self reaching eagerly upward in the struggle to evolve toward godhood; the healthy self, however, must always be vigilant against the laziness of the sick self that still lurks within us. In this one respect we human beings are all equal. Within each and every one of us there are two selves, one sick and one healthy—the life urge and the death urge, if you will. Each of us represents the whole human race; within each of us is the instinct for godhood and the hope for mankind, and within each of us is the original sin of laziness, the ever-present force of entropy pushing us back to childhood, to the womb and to the swamps from which we have evolved.

The Problem of Evil

Having suggested that laziness is original sin and that laziness in the form of our sick self might even be the devil, it is relevant to round out the picture by making some remarks about the nature of evil. The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest of all theological problems. Yet, as with so many other "religious" issues, the science of psychology has acted, with a few minor exceptions, as if evil did not exist. Potentially, however, psychology has much to contribute to the subject. I hope that I will be able to make part of such a

contribution in a later work of some length. For the moment, since it is only peripheral to the theme of this book, I will limit myself to briefly stating four conclusions I have reached concerning the nature of evil.

First, I have come to conclude that evil is real. It is not the figment of the imagination of a primitive religious mind feebly attempting to explain the unknown. There really are people, and institutions made up of people, who respond with hatred in the presence of goodness and would destroy the good insofar as it is in their power to do so. They do this not with conscious malice but blindly, lacking awareness of their own evil—indeed, seeking to avoid any such awareness. As has been described of the devil in religious literature, they hate the light and instinctively will do anything to avoid it, including attempting to extinguish it. They will destroy the light in their own children and in all other beings subject to their power.

Evil people hate the light because it reveals themselves to themselves. They hate goodness because it reveals their badness; they hate love because it reveals their laziness. They will destroy the light, the goodness, the love in order to avoid the pain of such self-awareness. My second conclusion, then, is that evil is laziness carried to its ultimate, extraordinary extreme. As I have defined it, love is the antithesis of laziness. Ordinary laziness is a passive failure to love. Some ordinarily lazy people may not lift a finger to extend themselves unless they are compelled to do so. Their being is a manifestation of nonlove; still, they are not evil. Truly evil people, on the other hand, actively rather than passively avoid extending themselves. They will take any action in their power to protect their own laziness, to preserve the integrity of their sick self. Rather than nurturing others, they will actually destroy others in this cause. If necessary, they will even kill to escape the pain of their own spiritual growth. As the integrity of their sick self is threatened by the spiritual health of those around them, they will seek by all

manner of means to crush and demolish the spiritual health that may exist near them. I define evil, then, as the exercise of political power—that is, the imposition of one's will upon others by overt or covert coercion—in order to avoid extending one's self for the purpose of nurturing spiritual growth. Ordinary laziness is nonlove; evil is antilove.

My third conclusion is that the existence of evil is inevitable, at least at this stage in human evolution. Given the force of entropy and the fact that humans possess free will, it is inevitable that laziness will be well contained in some and completely uncontained in others. As entropy, on the one hand, and the evolutionary flow of love, on the other, are opposing forces, it is only natural that these forces will be relatively in balance in most people, while a few at one extreme will manifest almost pure love, and a few at the other extreme pure entropy or evil. Since they are conflicting forces, it is also inevitable that those at the extremes will be locked in combat; it is as natural for evil to hate goodness as it is for goodness to hate evil.

Last, I have come to conclude that while entropy is an enormous force, in its most extreme form of human evil it is strangely ineffective as a social force. I myself have witnessed evil in action, viciously attacking and effectively destroying the spirits and minds of dozens of children. But evil backfires in the big picture of human evolution. For every soul it destroys—and there are many—it is instrumental in the salvation of others. Unwittingly, evil serves as a beacon to warn others away from its own shoals. Because most of us have been graced by an almost instinctive sense of horror at the outrageousness of evil, when we recognize its presence, our own personalities are honed by the awareness of its existence. Our consciousness of it is a signal to purify ourselves. It was evil, for instance, that raised Christ to the cross, thereby enabling us to see him from afar. Our personal involvement in the fight against evil in the world is one of the ways we grow.