

Daily Life

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By

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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-1417-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1417-1

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INTRODUCTION

We exist as consciousness, and are always limited by that condition, which may at first seem *unlimited*, resourcefully mobile as it is, and infinitely extended, as it presents itself to us. The sense of limit enters in this way, that we cannot become aware of the unlimitedness of consciousness without event-incising into consciousness, without making a being move like shifting our leg or blinking our lids or pushing a door open for the dog; in short, inventing our way into consciousness. It is only as we enter consciousness that its vastness and mobility display themselves to us. That consciousness exists only as we generate it (or permit it) would seem to follow from the above perspective, yet even to formulate that which ‘seems to follow,’ here, is not easy. We need to understand just what we mean. Was consciousness not there before we ‘generated’ it, or permitted it? Was consciousness not there as a world condition, before our individual act of consciousness—the falling asleep or shifting our leg—generated our own conscious awareness? Is consciousness not part of the evolving totality of created being? Is consciousness not a ‘real thing’? Are we not simply beneficiaries of that conscious condition? Was there any place in which consciousness could have a life of its own, of which I could have an awareness, without consciousness having already disclosed itself as part of my consciousness which is searching for it?

The large-frame implications of thinking through what consciousness is, without at the same time *being* what consciousness is, constitute a portal to the present investigation of our condition, which I hesitate to call ‘philosophy.’ It is a seat-of-the pants philosophy. It is what we will be sort of doing, in much of this Volume 9, in the much that is about aspects of our mere presence to ourselves in being, and is about some of the accounts we want to make for ourselves, of the nature of that presence. I am referring at this point to what gets done in Chapters 1 (The Everyday), 4 (Diversity), 6 (The Ancient), 8 (Eating), 10 (Nyquil for Anubis), 12 (Two Nigerian Friends), and 13 (Walking). These essay chapters are markers for close address in what might appear the random collection of this book. These essays are all about just what is going on as they are going on, like episodes of *Seinfeld*. The essays are presuppositionless and about what was ‘going on,’ or today ‘coming down,’ at the moment they were given birth. They aspire to be that moment’s talk-talk, as it grappled to describe

itself, to parse and play with the language it employed even to be that talk-talk; they aspire thus and then they go down the garden path with a few of the themes that sprouted from the talk-talk. These might be themes like the relation between language and thought, the never-definable character of consciousness, the meaning of precision in language and thinking, or the afterlife as a completion being lived now. All these issues emerge from the everyday, in its mereness, and aspire to link to one another, at the end, as symptoms of the points where dimensions of the everyday coincide.

Then there are the texts which make up the other half of the present volume: Chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. These are shorter pieces of hay, culled from the author's repertoire of friends, habits, and world exposures, and should by book's end have found their ways into the larger mix. These *brins d'herbe* begin centimeters further into the life scrum than the presumptionless launches of our principal essays.

The majority of these intercalary texts devote themselves to interpersonal relations, a frontline disposition of the presumptionless seat-of-the-pants outflowerings that became the thought trees of the major essays. Interpersonal relations means largely cherishing conditions in which the swept-up soul finds itself caught in friendship, especially in Chapters 2, 3, and 13, where the everyday represents simply the presence people do with each other in the world, or, in Chapters 5 and 7, the things people emerge into a world to find out about one another—or, as in Chapter 11, the skills of *untereinandersein*, of being among one another, like the special habits and competencies that give us a leg up on the disorder of daily life. While the landmark chapters spring from the everyday, the less argumentative pieces that hide in the bushes along the way do their best to cast up a light by which the wayfarer can navigate.

THE EVERYDAY

The everyday takes place every day. Whether you are thinking about it being the everyday, or not, the everyday takes place...or does it? What reason could we have to think that the everyday takes place when we do not think about it? There might be a reason. Mightn't there be a thing called the everyday that *persists*, even when we are not conscious of it or thinking about it? Couldn't the everyday be some quality or essence that inheres in the nature of things, but that can't exist apart from those things? (Conscience?) Like the way the idea of commonsense behavior exists apart from all the instances of common sense behavior? It is, admittedly, hard for us to understand what that everyday (or commonsense or consciousness) thing could be that persists independently of our minds, that Platonic essence of a sort, in the present instance. The understanding process, by which we would determine whether a thing can exist independent of our minds, seems by its very exercise to assure the mind-dependence of what it becomes aware of. But perhaps we must, nonetheless, reserve to conditions like 'being Platonic essences,' the capacity to exist on their own, even if we all know them by seemingly making them dependent on us. Perhaps we should start out, provisionally, saying that the everyday *appears* to be a byproduct of our thinking about an everyday which appears to have an independent existence. You prefer not to start out that way? Rather not, but surely the everyday is a byproduct of our thinking about the everyday? Have we then quietly agreed that the everyday is a mental thing? Is that mental thing something created by our minds, or is it a mental thing that exists out there in the space where mental things exist? Wherever that is?

OK. We're thinking about the everyday, which is at least real because we're thinking about it, and thinking it. (We don't need further permission, do we?) Is thinking about the everyday different from thinking it? Thinking about it is intending it as an object of thought or even of action, for I could in thinking it 'try to make a change in the everyday' by 'changing my daily routine,' or by deciding to make my daily routine more generous or more self-centered. *Thinking the everyday*, on the other

hand, is thinking as though I were actually in or of the everyday. I'm thinking, it's thinking, we're a pair of thinkings. (We're doing our thinking together.) When we spoke of the everyday as a byproduct of our thinking, we can have meant both that we think about the everyday, and that we think the everyday. These would be different meanings of 'the everyday.'

An example of the everyday, in both the colloquial and linguistic senses, could be waking in the mornings, embedded in the sense of a new-old day, another day, beginning for us, or starting the car to go to work, feeling as you do so that you have done this starting-the-car thing forever, again and forever. Not that you feel oh shit the same old thing, for that may not be the case. Your mind may on such an occasion close around the thought that life is inherently self-renewing, is always there when you are there for it. The everyday, or the starting of the car in other words, is not by definition of this or that sort, is in fact *not* of this or that sort. It is though of a sort, and saying what that sort is is saying a lot about what being 'human' is. The everyday is of the sort that, like it or hate it, it is a resistance or it has a resistance. Is or has? Let's work with that difference for it is worth the effort, will lock into the meaning of human being, as I said. If the everyday has a resistance, it is that the waking in the morning to a new but familiar day bears with it a sense of ponderousness, of something to be borne. If I say that the new day *is* a resistance, *is* the everyday as resistance, I mean something that can be thought outward into a whole effort to learn to be here in life as your language.

I will build here on the sense of the everyday *as* a resistance, not forgetting to return to the whole idea of 'has a resistance,' where it belongs. As a resistance, the everyday, the sitting down to lunch, the going to the gym, the calling my daughter all have an increment, which we cannot see in them, which substantiates them and awaits us. That is the sense, that awaiting, that we need in order to move this discussion ahead. We didn't instinctively know what to call the expectant thing we are and do, we had forgotten how to make use of the once-robust word *soul*, and yet we knew that just being here was already an increment, more than we were. What awaits worked. We had been fumbling in the autobiography of our use of language to find accounts of how we seem to speak, to use

language, even before we learn language. (It was not a question of neural code anticipation, the way we are strung and thus the outworking of deep biology. It was a question of...well, it was a question of that thing we just above called an *awaiting*.) An awaiting bent over the coming of ourselves into ourselves which is the discovery of resistance. First we talked resistance, now we talk awaiting. We have created a loose end. It's this. Is it I or you who is feeling the resistance exercised from outside us, from before us? If so, is the awaiting also something outside us, which is awaiting us, like tapping its foot quietly while we get our shit in order? Or is it we who are awaiting? Are we, like, sucking in our breaths attentively?

When we await we discover a resistance. We are always on the inside of these accounts of negotiations in our selves. It is always 'I'm here feeling a resistance', or 'I'm in an awaiting', but shouldn't it also be, 'I'm starting the sentence this way'? Shouldn't it also be, 'there's a resistance—some guy out there is helping me to be by feeling me'? Or something like that, for the languages of speaking me by others are unprogrammed. That's about resistance and saying it. Awaiting can be put through the same hoops. When I wake in the morning I am in an awaiting. But I am in it because what-is is experiencing me as awaiting it. There I introduced the what-is that's going to be another proxy for the condition we're anatomizing. Getting that compound word in there should help to open this talk about resistance and awaiting, because it, what-is, is a slider term that can accommodate things coming forth from me and things coming toward me. But what-is was to hand for me from other people's talk and my version of their talk, and so I don't want to cushion whatever is edgy here too quickly. I want to know, which I do, when I think with what-is, that there is a platform on which it is possible to see the arrows of time and investment going both ways, past to future and future to past, but I don't want to lose the sense that I am cheating, when I take that *to hand* in hand, and sacrifice some of the sense of what I had at the beginning that I am boxed in being, just being here, craning out from this post, touching something precious which I can't name or define.

What-is was in a way already a red flag invitation. It came out of nowhere and felt good and easy. People have invented it for me. Using the expression makes a lot of small things, like awaiting and feeling resistance, seem easier to grasp. But isn't it easier to grasp what I'm trying to avoid, rather than what I'm trying to grasp? Am I not trying to at least seem to be inventing language as a launching-out move, even though of

course I know I am living millennia of phonetics and semantics just to write down a sentence here? Yes, admit it, I am trying to do that seeming-to-invent thing. But how can I even just seem to invent, when the making that a seeming involves is a making with inherited words and sentences? I want to be too primitive to be implicated by my history as language, and as you see I am getting no farther than pretending to tell it like it is. I just hear myself, sure I do, even though this writing is seeming like something I want to do en route, and need. I hear myself being so honest and precise it just hurts, but it just stinks because I hear it, sure, and know I am being overseen as I attempt to be default-level simple. I will get back to awaiting and resistance, because that seems a talking I really want to be close to, but for the moment I wanted to be outside that inside, not just on the other side of a dialogue where somebody's talking to me, but more than that, in the conceptual, in the platonic sphere, where a shadow of meaning moves. Moves like what? Can't say.

Honest old the everyday. It got away from me there. It wanted to let me occupy for a few lines the perception I've been educated to that there's a relief or a bailout for the weight of inducting events and objects. That bailout would be what things mean. Maybe I can earn the what things mean in an honest old-fashioned way, from the really inside, from that old awaiting. I stretch and awake to a new day which is the numerous days of my waking life all waking at once inside me. It's an everyday occurrence while I live. It's the old awaiting. I awake to an incumbency. Is that like saying we are always in some kind of to-do list? It's not that busy-busy a thing. It's that here I am boys, again, ready, an offering that has no interest in becoming a sacrifice, which is what can happen to an offering that is simply unguarded. It's a 'here I am, boys' that will become another 'here I am, boys' when I fall off to sleep again in sixteen hours and that will be the same kind of readiness but for something else at lunchtime in six hours. We are always awaiting what is about to occur, and though that may start to sound like something Samuel Beckett tweaked toward loss, I want to avoid any tweak at all, and strip my being-there of the everyday down to no tweak at all, just an into awaiting. I wouldn't go Beckett on you because I think the wonderful guy overlearned a trick, the Godot trick, and is content to replay, à la Krapp, until the cows come home. I'm into something much more, well, just being-here than that. I would like you to be able to say of me, after you repeat this which is called reading, that I

just disappeared on you because the way things are took me over as I was saying them and it was they who lasted.

Awaiting and resistance belong together. You can't await if there is nothing pushing against you. You can wait without that pushing but you can't await, for to await is to be in a presence and to be in that presence you must also be being yourself as resisted by what you await. The everyday is made up of occasions to await, to deal with resistance, and to move with the weight of things. There is no causality in what happens, there is what happens. There is not even what happens because just being here waiting inevitably replaces the kind of meaning chain causality establishes. The everyday is without meaning, for it is just a craning and a pushing against. Or rather the kind of meaning it has is more radical than that conjured up for it by David Hume in his critique of causality. The meaning of simply being here is locked past future and present as they hold one another in when I become a moment. There is an immense history on call, as there is an immense physics and biochemistry, when I turn my head in some everyday gesture like watching a bird's sudden flight, or noticing the way two eaves intersect in an urban eyescape. It is not that there is meaning, though there is a conversation that is the resistance the moment is being, and of course there is the awaiting as I am scrutinizing the dialogue pressed against me. There is not only a conversation, but there are the innumerable and various conversations the whatever it is makes me enter. Awaiting and resistance have many stories to tell, and they are the stories each other has to tell.

I am waking. It is 6:30 a.m. This scene is primal for me, wherever it occurs. The everyday is boxing me. I love the pressure of the robins, the crows pronouncing a rain threat, the mourning doves, my wife outstretched, half-waking, the quiet pulse of the heart. All that. A day in the offing. A day that eats all the days that preceded it and that will feed tomorrow and tomorrow. I can talk that way. I can think that way. But as I do so, writing that here, I realize how much my project, right here, is not to tell the story of the nature of life but to be that story as it lets such things happen to it as the happening of writing the story at the midpoint of resistance and awaiting. I could be pissing, eating breakfast, phoning, it is all the taking place between awaiting and resistance. The resistance is

always there first. It's not that this or that resists me—the keyboard keys or my fork or my belt or the clock ticking—it's that resistance is where and how I come into all these local being-there things. Awaiting is how I am inside that resistance, and I am aware, as I circle back on this awaiting, and mind the issue of the awaiter whom I am awaited by, and the resister that I am resisted by, that there is the spook of the transcendent nuzzling these words. Transcendent isn't a keyword trying to lead this talk, but is an oozed-out sound, I hope, that the sense of being sought and touched and blocked and seduced inside the life-box has tricked me into becoming, an effluence of my being-here. Nothing fancy or historically religious about this effluence and its foreign relations within the instant, nothing more than the horror (or is it delight?) of inherence and surfaces and ways in and out of the daily. Where I go or what I do matters but only as it checkerboards into the cosmic fits-here, fits-there that adjusts us forever and, talk about the adjustments from the other side, it's like Lucretius, hooks and swerves and impassive adjustments, but with a lot of stress on the far sides of the hooking operation, the other side that's making out with me while I'm waking.

Obviously I'm dogged by awaiting and resistance issues when carrying them through involves thinking at the same time about how the other side of the equation is dealing with its awaiting me or proving to be the resistance I feel as resistance. Clearly those issues, of 'thinking about the action from the other side,' are part of any upright standing into your selfhood in time. But that thinking about, is it not an abstraction as action, and not a taking it as it is in action? Didn't the way we started, yawning or whatever, just being there, undercut any abstract taking place? I don't want to write here about how we can be bedeviled by forming concepts instead of just touching your way forward in the dark room, because I know that the hog-tied schnuffling around I'm doing here is just an effort to be minimal and isn't the only parabola I can limn, or want to, and yet I do tire of the easiness with which I can settle aporias of mere existence by unfolding concepts. And that's why I hew hard wood right off the hand here.

I exist as awaiting. I exist as feeling a resistance up against things. Maybe I exist as other conditions of feeling the simple presence of the world. I

exist as sensing the world, smelling the earth after rain, dreaming about my childhood, in my old age. The whole thing's about being up against. That's what the everyday is. It's not great, it's not small, it's not even not great or not small, this everyday, it's just what it is. It couldn't care less about your failures or achievements, or even about your interest in giving an account of it. The everyday was there before you thought it being there, and it is absent when you think about it, or even write-think about it. Certainly the everyday is not ordinary, is not commonplace, for it has no characteristics, not even the characteristic of having no characteristics. When I walk downtown to the pharmacy, the everyday has always just taken place. When I come home to supper, the everyday is about to take place. The everyday is what is about to be and what has just been, as well of course as what is just now groaning, ugh ugh, to be said by yours truly who is in fact no person, as they say, but rather what in simple presence replaced this person.

This analysis of the everyday—is it philosophy? That is, does it raise and grapple with the fundamental questions of what life is and what it means? No. This analysis does not grapple with anything; in fact, I question whether this analysis is any kind of move in intellect, and not just simply a miming of the proto-condition of sensibility in the being-here. Is this analysis then a theology, or part of an outfoldable sequence of ways to discover the ultimate read-outs of meaning? Is being awaited being awaited by your maker; is living as resistance, and as being resisted, simply a guarantee of connectedness in a base level openness, that feels as though it might come apart? No; this move in language is so much more primal that either of these descriptions of it, that one might say the stakes are altogether more difficult here than those demanded by theology or philosophy. There is no one or no tradition to compete with in trying to formulate, there is no way to be wrong and thus no way to be right, and yet this is not poetry but a simple standing inside. It is thoughts about being nothing but yourself, crediting yourself with a ground-zero directness while being the recognition that you are being carried on the back of human time and all it has done with itself while you were the nothing.

The everyday is not the commonplace, or the routine, or the too-too anything. It is its own failure, because it had aspirations, and at the same time its own achievement, for it was itself what it was. Has the everyday, inside it, either the death or the continuation of itself? What it awaits, what resists it, markers of its mere-ness, offer no reason not to assume their own continuation, while promising nothing that is not what they always were. Nothing, in the everyday, is not as usual, quiet despite its noise, friendly or unfriendly. The everyday is also the day before yesterday and the day before that, while it is the future. You may pass below its threshold or exceed it, but it is always there the same, everyday. When you come to what seems to you the fork that chooses you, go this way or go that way, it passes that split and is itself what it was on the pre-side of that split. The everyday has no history, though history can be made in it.

To say that the everyday has no history is to concede once again that awaiting and resistance trump even the wristwatch. Before you look at the watch you are here, just turning your head, but doing so without thinking about turning your head, and all that to the extent that even without thinking about turning your head is already saying too much about the underlying move that qualifies as everyday. You were always not simply inside that move that you later call the everyday, but were so always were the everyday that even to speak of being inside that *always were* is to exceed any information you will ever be able to provide yourself. Resistance and awaiting, therefore, though conditions seeming appropriately to show you, are ontologically circumscribed on every side, in themselves in excess, if only because they are signs and not the signified, in excess absolutely, just too much for the assignment that has brought them into action—the assignment of showing what minimalists we are here. Miniaturizing ourselves, in other words, will even as such always be faulted by its bull-necked insistence on saying at the least what we are not, in our setting in being, and in saying that at the least we are neighbors to the barest pressures being here will permit to approach us.

The everyday not only takes place every day, but never fails to take place. God Himself is the everyday—and how could *He* fail to take place?—and guarantees the presence of the everyday, by being the farthest degree of what I can't say as I post between resistance and awaitings. God may be

what provides the static electricity resistance to my presence here, and may be what's awaiting me or what I'm awaiting, but God is deeper than that, is the 'not this, not that' which is the doing and acting I tap into on the rarest of occasions, at a turn here or a slip there. Those moments cut into the everyday, open its sense of itself. So that what started out as an inquiry into being-here on the minimal scale, a turn of the head here a moment of forgetfulness there, has at the same time proven to be an inquiry into the very source of my presence here. But is the source of my presence really where we've gotten? Am I squat-settled on the Aristotelian notion of first cause, and of me as the 'created' cause, when where I started was really an effort to make a little sound of just being here and then to pry out in every direction, softly and quietly so you would hardly notice except for the fact that I'm whispering it to you here? I didn't mean to be playing hardball when in fact I only wanted to play Little League, although perhaps, far inside and unworthily, thinking that Little League was the honest way to go.

Is the sense of being made, Aristotle's link in the causal chain, like the sense of just being here, being awaited, being resisting and resisted? I didn't suppose, and don't suppose, the two things are that similar. I'm more comfortable with the just little me sensing, I feel it's more honest, yet must it not contain openings outward into logical channels of exactly the size in which to place a major proposition about the Big Guy and the created? As I say that I have to ask about the 'must it not contain'? And about the honest bit. Without knowing quite what my bite is I think it tastes a little like Camus' *The Stranger*. I just thought of that. It feels accurate. That scene at the beginning where Meursault is at the coffin of his mother, and it is very hot, and the flies are buzzing and he is not moved by the situation. Isn't that the way I felt at the start of this, fumbling for an awaiting, touching a resistance, wasn't it like the minimal-to-self activity I used to do when I would touch one hand with the other and wonder both at the resistance within identity of the event and at the sense I was awaiting myself? Yet wasn't Meursault, in prison, struck hard by the sight of the sky from his jail cell window? Isn't there a place in a person where existing minimally and existing as a creature of God come together?

The everyday is where it all comes together. It is my default position. I go back to the everyday which takes place every day, which has taken place before I found it, and which shows no evidence of being able not to take place. The everyday is where I am identical to what made me, and that is the condition of immortality. Immortality, the absence of death, is exactly what I exist now as being, even in the slight movement of turning my head not to be absent from a bird's passage. It is not that I am absolved from sense decay, which is chewing my ears off as I keyboard, but that I am as I say that about sense decay living in the condition of freedom from loss, sharing my immortal condition with what is. There is no way that I can entertain my mortality without doing so in an act that has no mortality about it. The everyday, then, is the transcendence of the everyday. The simplest glint of sunlight on a pail of water was Boehme's event of being a discovery, of being on the far side of himself. Have I managed, then, to be the answer to the dilemma of how I can be both the son of the maker and the initiator of the entire sensing, knowing, feeling process that is the everyday in action?

Can we slip away, then, without even so much as a nod to that still-hidden sense of the everyday as the ordinary? For us, so far, the everyday has not been the ordinary but rather the default, or minimal, by hewing to which I manage to see the world in the grain of a sunflower. Sure, there was some furtive poetry served up in the spice of that primal self-account. But there is that even more everyday sense of that term everyday, and that is the routine or too familiar. Is that sense part of the everyday we have been tossing back and forth? The two senses, or terms, seem to part ways in the course of popular usage, and in the above I have been trying, obviously, to rescue a clean whistle for the idea of the everyday as precisely routine but establishment at the same time. I am not interested in the ordinary, or for that matter in the extraordinary, but only in the what it is that we are simply. And as you see, I have scooted from that platform to a description of other aspects of the being-world, awaiting and resistance and where they lead to. I have no desire to be pinned down and wouldn't know where to turn if I came out suddenly into a place that was fixed in a universe that was fixed.

There is, though, a clean well-lit place in every heart, where transparency is fatigue, and where the inevitability of this-then-that, that-then-this makes you yearn for freshness. There is a skin tag of boredom even on the body of awaiting, and especially on the body that does resistance, susceptible as it is to nudges of deceleration. Yet even when the machinery of time begins to grind, and times for the annual checkup grow thicker together, the priority of the in-your-face phenomenal refuses to yield its front place standing. You come before yourself as machinery, period, when you turn to other forms of accounting for being here, to, for instance, attempts from within yourself to account through material, to read yourself from a distance, as you might do at the other end of the long tube of scientific inquiry, whose glittering lens peers through a discipline like psychology or evolutionary biology or neurology, to rivet you to a backdrop of analysis. It is not, to be sure, that you see no promise of truth in this analysis, but that truth is not enough. Truth yields to its stronger brothers, joy and light, and steps back before the portals of radiance. Truth is perhaps getting it right, but truth is not itself right.

Does being in a situation, where you are, perhaps imply occupying a sense of truth which is different from logical conviction or locked tight philosophical argumentation? The everyday, inside of which we started, is equal to itself, implies and imports nothing, is a default position in contrast to which even the numerical system based on zero is flawed by the assumptions it makes. (For instance, the assumption that being a numeral at all is anything but a projection onto consciousness.) Has the everyday then no traits? Is it like that beauty to which the art historian Winckelmann compared the purest water from the center of the spring, *tasteless, odorless, transparent, cold*? And if so are we, in limning the non-features of the everyday, making out with the specter of the holy or the sacred? (Were that to be the case we should have acknowledged, hundreds of words ago, that we were quietly slipping this phenomenological text out there into the public zone, into the history of thought and feeling; which we have not done.) Or have we stumbled on a characterless so holy that to speak of it as awaited or resistant is already to have disqualified us from consideration, as guides in nothing? Can the everyday both 'abut on conditions'—resistance, awaiting—and be the *nada* here which abutted conditions serve to define?

Silence. Silence and the everyday. Silence is the on-running abnegation of saying something. Silence is having considered both the truth and the lie you can tell, and then having opted for neither. Silence abuts on no conditions—so can silence be another name for the condition of the everyday? The everyday may make noise, may not be silent in that sense, but may be silent in the sense of carried out eternally without proclamation or generation. In that sense the everyday is like the silence. Who after all can begin to measure the things he has not said, or not done, or not eaten? All these things with un- at the front of them are in a sense parts of the silence, the unsaid and undone. None of these things not said but participates in what we call the everyday, unless it be that the everyday is noiseless and draws no attention to itself.

The thing called writing. Take it in hand, an ochre crayon, a Bic pen, a quill, a keyboard, and move it. The moving it is nothing other than a thing you can do in the everyday. It may be true that you 'have something to say,' or 'a feeling to express,' but what is either except your impulse to write the shapes 'you have something to say'? You can keep going back behind—if that is the word—that impulse until you postulate an *ur*-impulse, a standing point from which you first began to want to write that 'you have something to say,' but then even as you are identifying that first impulse you are yourself assuming your inborn priority to the discovery of that impulse. This infinite regress, which is already implicit in the present of the writing act, before it has interrogated itself, is equally present, and in the same way, in the act of owning the everyday, of being here as a fundamental definer of you, and as thus *engagé* in the never self-exhausting process of recurrence, abutting. Writing and being-here, buddies in the presence, share the taste of infinite regress, which is in fact the presence of no movement at all. Writing can thus be characterized as a flamboyant gesture of the assuming of one's presence, while being one's presence, being-here, is writing which has not yet been carried out, but which is in no sense not fully there.

Writing then is as default and valence-free as being in the everyday? There are curlicues about writing, and it can be done badly. I'm talking writing that works, that gets the cotton straight to Khartoum or that makes us understand Rodolphe or that dissuades the Polish ambassador from closing

down the border. Where writing does that, works, it is like owning the piece of *existenz* you have leased when you bought into the invitation behind 'awaiting you' or 'resisting you'. Writing that works is the occupation of your being here, the acceptance of that being here as it replies to the early morning, once again realizing that you are here. Writing has no history, though it activates a history for itself at once, in the same way that being here has no history but is always an establishment. Writing and owning your being here have more than a casual relationship; no online dating for these two. None of the other arts than writing—arts such as music or painting or architecture—stands to owning your being-here in a relation so intimate that occupying the one is at the same time occupying the other. Why should writing be privileged to that extent, occupying an action role that shoulders directly into the taking place in being?

Writing is history-making, as is occupying the space of being here. History of course is always in the remaking, has always just been remade as you remake it. We memorialize the writing act in Egypt and Mesopotamia, which assured a self-awareness which is itself the basis of conscientious social relations. Neolithic guys had no past, but Sumerians and Akkadians, with their cylinder seals and wedge-shaped letters, had a past. Having a past is the condition for discovering the infinite repetition of the being-in-time self-awareness, and thus of the condition of resistance and awaiting. Are we not approaching the theme of an apocalyptic? Does not the *attente*, and sense of texture, in the mere being-here we occupy, master to it the entire dynamic of standing inside history? And if so, mustn't the actuality of history have its foundation in the everyday of the ordinary guy and gal? Must not the existence of history be the unfolding, in being, of our founding act of being here in the moment? Must not the existence of human history hang by the thread of the sleepy Atlas, who in turning over loafily, in the sun-filled morning bed, once more welcomes the day to his pillow?

FIFTEEN RELATIONSHIPS

The everyday is talk-talk, laying yourself out, being as exactly as you can what you say you are. It is a register of consciousness and a voice-tone, and it can come out through itself into a sunlight of expository rhetoric and clean well-lit insights. On occasion, as in the transition we write *right here*, the sunlight is one in which sunny things are seen, things held up to the light in relationships.

We all exist in multiple relationships. Even the hermit exists in relation to God, who defines him, but most of us, plunged into the stream of the food chain, swim through a sea crowded with our kind—the aunts and uncles and cousins and nephews, not to speak of the parents, children, social authority figures, schoolmates, lovers and partners, and onward into a normally endless landscape of lesser personae, who make up the colorful margins of the individual's social environment, the everyday of being-here in society.

Parents

My primary relationship was to my parents, on whom, until nearly the age of twenty, I was dependent for all the necessities of life, from food to love. I later tended to forget this dependence, because my parents gave me liberty on many fronts, so that liberty seemed to replace dependence, but the dependence was lifelong. However, the reciprocation of love was not lifelong, for as I aged I tended to forget my parents. They were not happy with ways I had of breaking behavioral norms, and I was not happy to add their disapprobation to my various self-inflicted life-difficulties. The result was that we drifted apart, or so I saw it. I was not called to my mother's death bed, nor did I see much of my dad in his last years, let alone 'review the past' with him in some end-of-life enrichment.

Children

I have five biological children. They are all dear to me, though the modes of mutual love vary widely among us. My parents created me, and thus sweated out my quietly turbulent life, while I created my own children, and devoted much anxiety to their life-development, especially to those

development issues to which I added my own obstructions. These children grow dearer to me with time, for I was not the coo-chi-coo paternal type, fled many a diaper, and only became a creative and responsive father as I aged. I now treasure my brood, whose growing-up processes inspire me constantly. I feel the world growing up around me on all sides. I will never be the grand patriarch, because I am all about growing myself, but I will try to lead the genetic pack in bearing the universe as it is given.

Mate

I have had three spouses. With each of them there were, as I see it, wonderful long patches of mutual discovery, and—in the first two, both of which ended in divorce—fatal failures in communication, trust, and common interest. A mixed bag? Life is long, the road complicated and unpredictable, and a loved and lovely person watching your back is priceless. While I know now what I could have done to ensure the survival of the first two unions, I don't know whether I had, at the time when it mattered, the savvy, reflective insight, and self-discipline needed to hold back the tides of dissolution. Had my first two marriages even been culturally embedded, in a relation between the families that were being joined, I might have found recourse in tradition to support my shaky relations. But I was on my own, where my time and my personality had put me, and I couldn't right the ship. The third marriage, which seems a splendor, had better remain thus! Even the oldest dogs learn the third time on the track!

Girl- or Boyfriend

Although fascinated with girls, from grade school on, I had little exposure to them—no sisters, almost no family-level interaction with the female, besides my mother—and thus a rich fantasy and soon masturbation-filled life of reaching from within toward some mysterious and luscious other, *la femme*. The challenge of dating, or otherwise formalizing a boy-girl relationship, was daunting to me, for it involved stepping out into a danger-fraught market. (It was easier for me to get married than to date.) Consequently I burned, while others experimented, and while burning gave myself no opportunity to stand back and study the firestorm of sexuality. Far from me, then or later, a cultural environment that absorbed the shocks of sexual development, and counseled organized guidance into the labyrinth of male-female relationships.

Cousin or Nephew

My cousin Charlotte and I saw each other only rarely, as we grew up, but I felt a boy-girl closeness with her—it's still there today—which I was not, during those growing years before marriage, able to feel with other women. Was it that we were 'related,' that is genetics provided a setting for easiness? (Had I been from a large extended family, would I have had many more chances, than I did, to meet the other sex on an easy basis?) Whatever the reason, Charlotte has remained throughout my life a valuable 'introjected voice,' one whom I can still hear as subdued interlocutor in the back of my head. Of unique pleasure to me, in this special relationship, is the privilege we give one another for teasing. The dear lady, for she is no longer a youngster, calls me 'an old gagoo,' while I have no hesitation in calling her a 'bag of worms.' Distasteful as these liberties may sound, from the outside, they are from the inside tokens of true freedom, and precious.

Student

Bob Kentor is a former student, forever my student, who has more than rivalled me as a professional achiever. There results, in our relationship, a blend of tutelage, ironic rivalry, and sharp intellectual-aural acuity. In thinking and writing I often inner-speak with Bob, imagining his voice as a comment on what I am trying to explain, rebutting him, playing the inner disc of our mutual admiration society conversation. It is in fact more complex than this. Bob knows about my private life and its vagaries, yet a certain student-teacher relation keeps this knowledge out of our discourse. Nonetheless, and there are such twists here, my knowledge about his knowledge makes ironies and references possible which would otherwise be empty. Of such involutions, I conclude, are constructed the introjections by which one person may become in part the internalized voice of the other.

Childhood Friend

If we live long enough, are lucky in our friendships, and 'keep in touch,' we are likely to end up with one or more friends who were our age mates 'way back when.' Ross and I hark back to an idyllic block on the southern outskirts of Urbana, Illinois, in the decade of the forties, which makes us a dying and sentimental breed. We talk occasionally by phone, and call up pranks, discoveries, fears that peopled our growing up among academic

families at the start of the Depression, and under the shadow of world crises of which we ‘knew nothing.’ Nothing needs to be invented in these re-establishings of history, for we are guardians of these primal truths: long walks around the dairy barns of the University of Illinois, hideouts in the bush off country lanes, pranks which still today seem like the center of the world.

Teacher

Everyone who has enjoyed the privilege of education is likely to have a favorite teacher. This will normally be a person who spoke to the desires and needs of an individual student at just the right moment, although some teachers are spellbinding enough to carry whole crowds with them, like the mediaeval genius Peter Abelard. Both the great teacher and the teacher who is at the right time in the right place, the world-opener for the individual, know from the inside what they have to say, have become their discourse, and at the same know how to put that discourse in a form immediately meaningful to the student. I still have a favorite teacher who reminds me, after all these years, that fireworks and even powerful thought are not required for highly successful teaching. Prof. Brodie was my Botany teacher in my senior year of university. Botany was an elective, and the course simply a way of completing my program. Brodie himself was a cheerful but undramatic Canadian, whose great virtues were enthusiasm and precision. The formula captured me, and my interest in Botany has remained keen to this day.

Spiritual Guide

Many people find spiritual guides from within the religious traditions in which they are raised; many simply find spiritual insight from significant people they meet along life’s way; many never find or want to find a spiritual guide. My own guide was a writer whom I never met, Simone Weil. When I read *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*, during my Classics Studies, I saw where the center of Homer’s power was, in dramatizing the intersections between violence and grace. I went on to read Weil’s *The Need for Roots* and *The Weight of Grace*, and grew more deeply aware of the challenge she and her life were laying on me. Her wartime self-sacrifice, in solidarity with the victims of WWII, was profound and simple, and served to model, for me, the power (quite beyond me, by the way) of a *devoted life*.

Police Chief

The first policeman I have known well is the Chief in our small Iowa town. Our children went together to the same daycare, and events—like Little League—have regularly brought us together. He is my kind of public servant, seriously protective, businesslike, and with enough inner life to do more than just his duty. Above all that, I *like* Jim. I like being around him, and standing on the corner for a few minutes shooting the breeze with him. But I am also aware, somewhere inside, that I am afraid of him. This is absurd. I have no criminal record, nothing to hide—except my flawed human condition—and yet being around him makes me think of whatever I have done that might make me suspect in his eyes. So how do I handle this unwarranted anxiety? I underline those anodyne topics—what my children are doing now, how my greyhound is, his and his wife’s summer plans—on which nothing inculpatory could possibly depend. This recourse to the bland takes the salt out of our relationship.

Doctor

I have never liked to visit my doctor, though I like my doctor in his professional role. I am afraid that my doctor will put his finger on the wart, or mole, or irregular heartbeat, that leads into the suggestion that ‘we should have that looked into, Fred.’ The uncertainty I bring to the whole visit convinces me that that ‘looking into’ will lead to no good. Should Doc send me home with a clean bill of health, I will feel terrific for a few days, then notice some new symptom that sets me worrying and considering a trip back to the clinic. Once, and only once, the Doc figured out how to free me from this cycle of anxieties. He told about his rheumatoid arthritis, and how it was cutting back on his activities, and some of his own worries about his practice. I was dumbfounded. Docs don’t talk this way. They don’t talk about their own issues. I left feeling great. I totally forgot the advice he had given me, about cutting back on my drinking.

Lawyer

My lawyer, as is common in a small Iowa town, has dealt with many aspects of my personal life, from divorce to a living will to property tax issues. Bill knows a lot about me, and I always feel good when I visit him. It is as though my personality is being reassembled by his kindly and astute good sense about how to live life—and death. The anxiety I feel

around the Police Chief, that he may stumble on some crime I have inadvertently committed, is reversed with my lawyer, who is there to guide and protect me from any peccadillos in my background. The only favor I can return, for his avuncular support, is to reassure him that I am voting Democrat.

Lover

I single out an extended memory, of a powerful and fantastic relationship which took place outside of a marriage. It started in the classroom, took wing to foreign lands, traveled fitfully in my own country, and for me stands outside and above the narratives of middle-class infidelity with which we comfort ourselves. C was a kobold, witty, irreverent, traditional, revolutionary, up for the new as receiver and giver, a sexuality tumbling over the mind, and yet—ah yes, the bitter truth—a figure cut out for a less impetuous, and more guiding, hand than yours truly. Two butterflies thrashing each other?

Grandmother

My grandmother was my boss and guardian during a summer in Hawaii, where she and her husband had moved upon retirement. It was my grandmother's job, in the absence of my mother that summer, to teach me handwriting—I was four. She was pretty tough, even to tapping my fingers with a ruler, when I failed to get a letter between the lines, or gave the letter D a wobbly back, instead of a straight military back. (Grandmother was, incidentally, also interested in straight posture, and made that clear to me with sharp shoulder adjustments.) Did I love this woman? Not exactly, yet to this day I not only try to follow her principles but, to my amazement, discover that I have accepted precepts from her that I would, probably, never have accepted from my parents. She took far more chances on disciplining me than did my parents, and evidently it was just what I needed.

Dentist

Like my doctor, my dentist holds the key to unlock suffering, or to release me with a clean bill of health. There is a big difference, though, in my relationship to these two specialists. If the doctor finds something suspicious he will refer me farther on down into the labyrinth of specialists. If the dentist finds something suspicious he is likely to be at

work on it either that same day or a week later at the same time. He's an action man, and he is surrounded by action equipment. When he enters the room toggled out in micro-vision space goggles I open wide, as told, and hold my breath to know what he will find. This ballet of emotions, which the mere presence of the dentist evokes, is far more pointed—if not more full of implications—than what I learn in the doctor's office. In the dentist's office, for all its 'contemporary sheen,' I am still a little kid of eight whose mother has taken him downtown for his first alarming encounter with 'the drill.'

