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WE'VE HAD A HUNDRED YEARS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE WORLD'S GETTING WORSE

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ames Hillman and Michael Ventura

Two men are on an afternoon walk in Santa Monica, on the Pacific Palisades. They are walking in a direction Californians always call north because it follows the coastline "up" on the map; actually, the coast bends sharply here and they're heading due west. That's worth mentioning only because it's the sort of detail that would interest these men, and, if it catches their attention, they'll talk about it, digress about it, and even attach a great deal of significance to it—partly just for fun and partly because that's how they are.

The two men began their walk on the Santa Monica Pier, with its rundown carnival air, where the affluent and the homeless pass among each other—and among Latinos from East L.A. and the new Central American ghettos; blacks from South Central; Asians from Chinatown, Koreatown, and the Japanese enclaves; pale whites from Culver City and North Hollywood; tan, svelte whites from West L.A.; old people of all descriptions and accents; and tourists from everywhere. The poor fish for food off the pier, though signs in English and Spanish tell them it's dangerous to eat their catch. The beach is often closed from sewage spills. But the ocean doesn't show its filth, it looks as lovely as always, and it's anywhere from ten to thirty degrees cooler at the Pacific than even just a few miles inland—so everybody comes.

The two men have walked the steady incline up the Palisades, along the cliffs overlooking the Pacific Coast Highway and the sea, and, at the far end of the park, where the cliffs are highest and there aren't so many people, they've sat down on a bench.

The men are James Hillman and Michael Ventura. Hillman is in his midsixties, tall and slender. Though born Jewish in Atlantic City he carries himself like an old-timey New Englander, with that Yankee sense of tolerant but no-nonsense authority—softened somewhat by the eagerness of his interest in whatever and, usually, whoever's around him. Ventura is in his midforties, shorter, darker, and scruffier than Hillman. He wears the kind of hat men wore in 1940s movies and a good but battered set of cowboy boots, and he gives the impression of trying to balance between these incongruities. Hillman is a psychoanalyst, author, and lecturer; Ventura is a newspaper columnist, novelist, and screenwriter.

Ventura carries a small tape recorder, and when he's with Hillman these days it's almost always on, even when they're walking or driving. Their conversation has a theme: psychotherapy. And it has something like a form: each man is to push the other not to make more sense but to get further out in his thinking. And their conversation has an ambition: that their talks and, later, their letters will make a book, an informal but (they hope) fierce polemic to give psychotherapy a shake. For they share the conviction that psychotherapy needs desperately to push past the boundaries of its accepted ideas; it needs a new wildness before it's co-opted entirely as just another device for compressing (shrinking) people into a forced, and false, normality.

They sit on the bench, Ventura puts the tape recorder between them, and Hillman takes off on what, these days, is his favorite theme.

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JAMES HILLMAN: We've had a hundred years of analysis, and people are getting more and more sensitive, and the world is getting worse and worse. Maybe it's time to look at that. We still locate the psyche inside the skin. You go *inside* to locate the psyche, you examine *your* feelings and *your* dreams, they belong to you. Or it's interrelations, interpsyche, between your psyche and mine. That's been extended a little bit into family systems and office groups—but the psyche, the soul, is still only *within* and *between* people. We're working on our relationships constantly, and our feelings and reflections, but look what's left out of that.

Hillman makes a wide gesture that includes the oil tanker on the horizon, the gang graffiti on a park sign, and the fat homeless woman with swollen ankles and cracked skin asleep on the grass about fifteen yards away.

What's left out is a deteriorating world.

So why hasn't therapy noticed that? Because psychotherapy is only working on that "inside" soul. By removing the soul from the world and not recognizing that the soul is also *in* the

world, psychotherapy can't do its job anymore. The buildings are sick, the institutions are sick, the banking system's sick, the schools, the streets—the sickness is out *there.*

You know, the soul is always being rediscovered through pathology. In the nineteenth century people didn't talk about psyche, until Freud came along and discovered psychopathology. Now we're beginning to say, "The furniture has stuff in it that's poisoning us, the microwave gives off dangerous rays." The world has become toxic.

Both men, watching the sun flash on the sea, seem to be thinking the same thing.

MICHAEL VENTURA: That sea out there is diseased. We can't eat the fish.

HILLMAN: The world has become full of symptoms. Isn't that the beginning of recognizing what used to be called animism?

The world's alive—my god! It's having effects on us. "I've got to get rid of those fluorocarbon cans." "I've got to get rid of the furniture because underneath it's formaldehyde." "I've got to watch out for this and that and *that.*" So there's pathology in the world, and through that we're beginning to treat the world with more respect.

VENTURA: As though having denied the spirit in things, the spirit—offended—comes back as a threat. Having denied the soul in things, having said to things, with Descartes, "You don't have souls," things have turned around and said, "Just you *watch* what kind of a soul I have, muthafucka."

HILLMAN: "Just watch what I can do, man! You're gonna have that ugly lamp in your room, that lamp is going to make you suffer every single day you look at it. It's going to produce fluorescent light, and it's going to drive you slowly crazy sitting in your office. And then you're going to see a psychotherapist, and you're going to try to work it out in your relationships, but you don't know I'm really the one that's got you. It's that fluorescent tube over your head all day long, coming right down on your skull like a KGB man putting a light on you, straight down on you—shadowless, ruthless, cruel."

VENTURA: And yet we sense this in all we do and say now, all of us, but we're caught in a double bind: on the one hand this is "progress," a value that's been ingrained in us—and if you think it's not ingrained in you, take a drive down to Mexico and see if even poor Americans would want to live the way most of those people have to live (the life of the American poor seems rich to them, that's why they keep coming); but on the other hand, we know that the things of our lives are increasingly harmful, but we haven't got Idea One about what to do. Our sense of politics has atrophied into the sort of nonsense that goes on in presidential elections.

HILLMAN: There is a decline in political sense. No sensitivity to the real issues. Why are the intelligent people—at least among the white middle class—so passive now? Why? Because the sensitive, intelligent people are in therapy! They've been in therapy in the United States for thirty, forty years, and during that time there's been a tremendous political decline in this country.

VENTURA: How do you think that works?

HILLMAN: Every time we try to deal with our outrage over the freeway, our misery over the office and the lighting and the crappy furniture, the crime on the streets, whatever—every time we try to deal with that by going to therapy with our rage and fear, we're depriving the political world of something. And therapy, in its crazy way, by emphasizing the inner soul and ignoring the outer soul, supports the decline of the actual world. Yet therapy goes on blindly believing that it's curing the outer world by making better people. We've had that for years and years and years: "If everybody went into therapy we'd have better buildings, we'd have better people, we'd have more consciousness." It's not the case.

VENTURA: I'm not sure it's causal, but it's definitely a pattern. Our inner knowledge has gotten more subtle while our

ability to deal with the world around us has, well, *deteriorated* is almost not a strong enough word. *Disintegrated* is more like it.

HILLMAN: The vogue today, in psychotherapy, is the "inner child." That's the therapy thing—you go back to your childhood. But if you're looking backward, you're not looking around. This trip backward constellates what Jung called the "child archetype." Now, the child archetype is by nature apolitical and disempowered—it has no connection with the political world. And so the adult says, "Well, what can I do about the world? This thing's bigger than me." That's the child archetype talking. "All I can do is go into myself, work on my growth, my development, find good parenting, support groups." This is a disaster for our political world, for our democracy. Democracy depends on intensely active citizens, not children.

By emphasizing the child archetype, by making our therapeutic hours rituals of evoking childhood and reconstructing childhood, we're blocking ourselves from political life. Twenty or thirty years of therapy have removed the most sensitive and the most intelligent, and some of the most affluent people in our society into child cult worship. It's going on insidiously, all through therapy, all through the country. So *of course* our politics are in disarray and nobody's voting—we're disempowering ourselves through therapy.

VENTURA: The assumption people are working out of is that inner growth translates into worldly power, and many don't realize that they go to therapy with that assumption.

HILLMAN: If personal growth did lead into the world, wouldn't our political situation be different today, considering all the especially intelligent people who have been in therapy? What you learn in therapy is mainly feeling skills, how to really remember, how to let fantasy come, how to find words for invisible things, how to go deep and face things—

VENTURA: Good stuff to know—

HILLMAN: Yes, but you don't learn political skills or find out anything about the way the world works. Personal

growth doesn't automatically lead to political results. Look at Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Psychoanalysis was banned for decades, and look at the political changes that have come up and startled everybody. Not the result of therapy, their revolutions.

VENTURA: So you're making a kind of opposition between power, political power or political intelligence, and therapeutic intelligence. Many who are therapeutically sensitive are also dumb and fucked up politically; and if you look at the people who wield the most power in almost any sphere of life, they are often people whose inner growth has been severely stunted.

HILLMAN: You think people undertake therapy to grow?

VENTURA: Isn't growth a huge part of the project of therapy? Everybody uses the word, therapists and clients alike.

HILLMAN: But the very word *grow* is a word appropriate to children. After a certain age you do not grow. You don't grow teeth, you don't grow muscles. If you start growing after that age, it's cancer.

VENTURA: Aw, Jim, can't I grow *inside* all my life?

HILLMAN: Grow what? Corn? Tomatoes? New archetypes? What am I growing, what do you grow? The standard therapeutic answer is: you're growing yourself.

VENTURA: But the philosopher Kierkegaard would come back and say, "The deeper natures don't change, they become more and more themselves."

HILLMAN: Jung says individuation is becoming more and more oneself.

VENTURA: And becoming more and more oneself involves a lot of unpleasantness. As Jung also says, the most terrifying thing is to know yourself.

HILLMAN: And becoming more and more oneself—the actual experience of it is a shrinking, in that very often it's a dehydration, a loss of inflations, a loss of illusions.

VENTURA: That doesn't sound like a good time. Why would anybody want to do it?

HILLMAN: Because shedding is a beautiful thing. It's of course not what consumerism tells you, but shedding feels good. It's a lightening up.

VENTURA: Shedding what?

HILLMAN: Shedding pseudoskins, crusted stuff that you've accumulated. Shedding dead wood. That's one of the big sheddings. Things that don't work anymore, things that don't keep you—keep you alive. Sets of ideas that you've had too long. People that you don't *really* like to be with, habits of thought, habits of sexuality. That's a very big one, 'cause if you keep on making love at forty the way you did at eighteen you're missing something, and if you make love at sixty the way you did at forty you're missing something. All that changes. The imagination changes.

Or put it another way: *Growth is always loss.*

Anytime you're gonna grow, you're gonna lose something. You're losing what you're hanging onto to keep safe. You're losing habits that you're comfortable with, you're losing familiarity. That's a big one, when you begin to move into the unfamiliar.

You know, in the organic world when anything begins to grow it's moving constantly into unfamiliar movements and unfamiliar things. Watch birds grow—they fall down, they can't quite do it. Their growing is all awkwardness. Watch a fourteen-year-old kid tripping over his own feet.

VENTURA: The fantasy of growth that you find in therapy, and also in New Age thought, doesn't include this awkwardness, which *can* be terrible and can go on for years. And when we look at people going through that, we usually don't say they're growing, we usually consider them out of it. And during such a time one certainly doesn't feel more powerful in the world.

HILLMAN: The fantasy of growth is a romantic, harmonious fantasy of an ever-expanding, ever-developing, ever-creating, ever-larger person—and ever integrating, getting it all together.

VENTURA: And if you don't fulfill that fantasy you see yourself as failing.

HILLMAN: Absolutely.

VENTURA: So this idea of growth can put you into a constant state of failure!

HILLMAN: "I ought to be over that by now, I'm not together, I can't get it together, and if I were really growing I would have grown out of my mess long ago."

VENTURA: It sets you up to fail. That's really cute.

HILLMAN: It's an idealization that sets you up to fail.

VENTURA: Because you're constantly comparing yourself to the fantasy of where you *should* be on some ideal growth scale.

HILLMAN: It sets up something worse. It sets up not just failure but anomaly: "I'm peculiar." And it does this by showing no respect for sameness, for consistency, in a person. Sameness is a very important part of life—to be consistently the same in certain areas that don't change, don't grow.

You've been in therapy six years and you go back home on Thanksgiving and you open the front door and you see your family *and you are right back where you were.* You feel the same as you always did! Or you've been divorced for years, haven't seen the wife though there's been some communication on the phone, but you walk into the same room and *within four minutes* there's a flare-up, the same flare-up that was there long ago.

Some things stay the same. They're like rocks. There's rocks in the psyche. There are crystals, there's iron ore, there's a metallic level where *some* things don't change.

VENTURA: And if those elements did change, could change, you would be so fluid that you would not, could not, be you. You would be dangerously fluid. Where would that thing that is you reside, if the psyche didn't depend on some things not changing? And this dependence on the changeless is far below the level of the ego's control or consent.

HILLMAN: This changeless aspect, if you go all the way back in philosophy even before Aristotle, was called Being. "Real Being doesn't change." That was one fantasy. Other people would say, "Real Being is always changing." I'm not arguing which one is right, I'm arguing that both are fundamental categories of life, of being. You can look at your life with the eye of sameness and say, "My god, nothing's really changed." Then you can look at it with the other eye: "My god, what a difference. Two years ago, nine years ago, I was thus and so, but now all that's gone, it's changed completely!"

This is one of the great riddles that Lao Tse talked about, the changing and the changeless. The job in therapy is, not to try and make the changeless change, but how to separate the two. If you try to work on what's called a character neurosis, if you try to take someone who is very deeply emotionally whatever-it-is, and try to change that person into something else, what are you doing? Because there are parts of the psyche that are changeless.

VENTURA: And that has to be respected.

HILLMAN: It has to be respected, because the psyche knows more why it resists change than you do. Every complex, every psychic figure in your dreams knows more about itself and what it's doing and what it's there for than you do. So you may as well respect it.

VENTURA: And if you, as a therapist, don't respect that, then you're not respecting that person.

HILLMAN: And it has nothing to do with *wanting* to change. Like the joke, "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" "It only takes one, but the light bulb has to really want to change." This light bulb that really wants to change still can't change those areas of changelessness.

VENTURA: The fantasy of growth, the fantasy of the ever-expanding, ever-developing person—which is a very strong fantasy out there right now, especially among the educated, and among all those buyers of self-help books—doesn't take changelessness into account at all, doesn't set up a dialectic between change and changelessness. So (bringing this all back to the relation of therapy to politics) this fantasy, fed by many sorts of therapies, can't help but make people feel more like failures in the long run. Which, in turn, can't help but increase the general feeling of powerlessness.

That's a pretty vicious circle.

HILLMAN: There's another thing therapy does that I think is vicious. It internalizes emotions.

Hillman looks down at the Pacific Coast Highway packed with cars going as fast as they can bumper to bumper.

I'm outraged after having driven to my analyst on the freeway. The fucking trucks almost ran me off the road. I'm terrified, I'm in my little car, and I get to my therapist's and I'm shaking. My therapist says, "We've gotta talk about this."

So we begin to talk about it. And we discover that my father was a son-of-a-bitch brute and this whole truck thing reminds me of him. Or we discover that I've always felt frail and vulnerable, there've always been bigger guys with bigger dicks, so this car that I'm in is a typical example of my thin skin and my frailty and vulnerability. Or we talk about my power drive, that I really wish to be a truck driver. We convert my fear into anxiety—an inner state. We convert the present into the past, into a discussion of my father and my childhood. And we convert my outrage—at the pollution or the chaos or whatever my outrage is about—into rage and hostility. Again, an internal condition, whereas it starts in *out*rage, an emotion. Emotions are mainly social. The word comes from the Latin *ex movere,* to move out. Emotions connect to the world. Therapy introverts the emotions, calls fear "anxiety." You take it back, and you work on it inside

yourself. You don't work psychologically on what that outrage is telling you about potholes, about trucks, about Florida strawberries in Vermont in March, about burning up oil, about energy policies, nuclear waste, that homeless woman over there with the sores on her feet—the whole thing.

VENTURA: You're not saying that we don't need introspection, an introspective guy like you?

HILLMAN: Put this in italics so that nobody can just pass over it: *This is not to deny that you do need to go inside*—but we have to see what we're doing when we do that. By going inside we're maintaining the Cartesian view that the world out there is dead matter and the world inside is living.

VENTURA: A therapist told me that my grief at seeing a homeless man my age was really a feeling of sorrow for myself.

HILLMAN: And dealing with it means going home and working on it in reflection. That's what dealing with it has come to mean. And by that time you've walked past the homeless man in the street.

VENTURA: It's also, in part, a way to cut off what you would call Eros, the part of my heart that seeks to touch others. Theoretically this is something therapy tries to liberate, but here's a person on the street that I'm feeling for and I'm supposed to deal with that feeling as though it has nothing to do with another person.

HILLMAN: Could the thing that we all believe in most—that psychology is the one good thing left in a hypocritical world—be not true? Psychology, working with yourself, could that be part of the disease, not part of the cure? I think therapy has made a philosophical mistake, which is that cognition precedes conation—that knowing precedes doing or action. I don't think that's the case. I think reflection has always been after the event.

They reflect on that a bit.

HILLMAN: The thing that therapy pushes is relationship, yet work may matter just as much as relationship. You think you're going to die if you're not in a good relationship. You feel that not being in a significant, long-lasting, deep relationship is going to cripple you or that you're crazy or neurotic or something. You feel intense bouts of longing and loneliness. But those feelings are not only due to poor relationship; they come also because you're not in any kind of political community that makes sense, that matters. Therapy pushes the relationship issues, but what intensifies those issues is that we don't have (a) satisfactory work or (b), even more important perhaps, we don't have a satisfactory political community.

You just can't make up for the loss of passion and purpose in your daily work by intensifying your personal relationships. I think we talk so much about inner growth and development because we are so boxed in to petty, private concerns on our jobs.

VENTURA: In a world where most people do work that is not only unsatisfying but also, with its pressures, deeply unsettling; and in a world where there's nothing more rare than a place that feels like a community, we load all our needs onto a relationship or expect them to be met by our family. And then we wonder why our relationships and family crack under the load.

HILLMAN: It's extraordinary to see psychotherapy, that came out of those nuts from Vienna and Zurich, and out of the insane asylums of Europe, talking the same language today as the Republican right wing about the virtues of family. The government and therapy are in symbiotic, happy agreement on the propaganda that we had from Ronald Reagan for so many years about family. Yet family, we know sociologically, doesn't exist anymore. The statistics are astounding. And the actual patterns of family life, how people feel and act in the families that still exist, have changed radically. People don't live in families in the same way; people *won't* live in families. There are broken families, half-families, multiple families, all kinds of crazy families. The idea of family only exists in the bourgeois patient population that serves psychotherapy. In fact, the family is largely today a white therapist's fantasy.

Why do we need this Norman Rockwell family, this make-believe ideal, that's so rampant now in politics and in therapy? I don't know what it's doing for the body politic, but I know what it's doing for therapy. For therapy, it is keeping an ideal in place so that we can show how dysfunctional we all are. It keeps the trade going; this would be Ivan Illich's view. We need clients.*

VENTURA: But even the Norman Rockwell ideal of the happy, self-sufficient family is a distortion of what families were for thousands, probably tens of thousands, of years. During that time, no family was self-sufficient. Each family was a working unit that was part of the larger working unit, which was the community—the tribe or the village. Tribes and villages were self-sufficient, not families. It's not only that everyone worked togther, everyone also played and prayed together, so that the burden of relationship, and of meaning, wasn't confined to the family, much less to a romantic relationship, but was spread out into the community. Until the Industrial Revolution, family always existed in that context.

HILLMAN: And family always existed in the context of one's ancestors. Our bones are not in this ground. Now our families don't carry the ancestors with them. First of all, we Americans left our homelands in order to come here, and we let go of the ancestors. Second, we're all now first-name people. I was just at a psychotherapists' conference with seven thousand people, and everybody had on their name tags. Everybody's first name was in large caps and the last name was in small letters below it.

VENTURA: And in the last name are the ancestors, the country, the residue of the past.

HILLMAN: It's all in the last name. The first name is fashion, social drift. One generation you have a lot of Tracys and

*Illich is such a beautifully radical thinker! I love his idea that therapy is an industry that has to find new sources of ores to exploit. Ordinary neurotics won't fill the practices, so therapy has to find new "mines"—geriatric cases, corporate offices, little children, whole families.

Kimberlys, Maxes and Sams, another generation you have Ediths and Doras, Michaels and Davids. You've got your ancestors with you in your psyche when you use your last name. You've got your brothers and sisters with you, they have the same name. When I'm called Jim, I'm just plain Jim, it has no characteristics.

To have only a first name is a sign of being a peasant, a slave, an oppressed person. Throughout history slaves had only first names. Now our entire nation has only first names. At this conference, the only people who had last names were the faculty—the twenty-five people that these other seven thousand had paid to see and hear. We had our last names in big letters and our first names in small letters. I asked about this and was told, "We don't want you people called James or Jim or Bob or Bill, we want you addressed as Mr. Hillman."

Therapy's no different here; it complies with the convention, too. The early cases of analysis, Freud's, Jung's, had only first names—Anna, Babette. It's supposed to show intimacy and equality—

VENTURA: —and anonymity—

HILLMAN: What it actually does is strip down your dignity, the roots of your individuality, because it covers over the ancestors, who are in the consulting room too. Worse, this way of talking concentrates all attention on me, Jim, my little apple, ignoring the whole complexity of my social bag, my racial roots. We ought to have three or four last names, all hyphenated, like in Switzerland or Spain, with my mother's family name in there too, and my wife's and my exwife's and so on and so on. No one is just plain Jim.

VENTURA: I'm too American for that, I *like* being able to leave some of that behind. Still, we should carry both our parents' names, at least—but not hyphenated.

You know, speaking of slaves: bosses and owners are almost always called Mister, but they have the freedom to address their employees by their first names. And among workers of equal or supposedly equal status, it's not unusual for a man to be called by his last name while women are almost always

called by their first names unless they're really heavy-duty. So we're also dealing with power when we use names. We're reinforcing certain kinds of authority and inequality.

But I want to get back to something: that to tout the ideal family is a way of *making* ourselves dysfunctional, because that ideal makes anything outside it, by definition, not ideal, i.e., dysfunctional. Without that ideal, we're just who we are.

HILLMAN: The ideal of growth makes us feel stunted; the ideal family makes us feel crazy.

VENTURA: We have these idealizations that make us feel crazy, even though we don't see any of these ideals in life. I feel crazy that I can't be in one relationship all my life, even though I look around and where do I see anybody in one relationship all their lives?

HILLMAN: I know people who've been married fifty years and more.

VENTURA: So do I, and one partner's an alcoholic, or one's played around a lot or been away a lot, they haven't made love in decades (literally), or one is a closet gay. These aren't abstract examples, these are people I know. Most fifty-year wedding anniversaries would look very different if you knew what everybody's covering up. Yet we keep measuring ourselves against these ideals.

HILLMAN: And psychology idealizes family in another, perhaps even more destructive, way: psychology assumes that your personality and behavior are determined by your family relationships during childhood.

VENTURA: Well, people grow up somehow, some way, and how they grow up determines their life, doesn't it?

There's an uncomfortably long silence between them. The oil tanker has gone over the horizon, but traffic is still backed up on the Pacific Coast Highway. A single-engine plane flying low over the Santa Monica Pier pulls a yellow banner wishing

somebody named Eliza a happy birthday. Farther down the coast, 747s take off from LAX one after another and do a slow banking turn far out at sea. The homeless woman has woken up (her eyes are open), but she hasn't moved.

Hillman clears his throat.

HILLMAN: The principal content of American psychology is developmental psychology: what happened to you earlier is the cause of what happened to you later. That's the basic theory: our history is our causality. We don't even separate history as a story from history as cause. So you have to go back to childhood to get at why you are the way you are. And so when people are out of their minds or disturbed or fucked up or whatever, in our culture, in our psychotherapeutic world, we go back to our mothers and our fathers and our childhoods.

No other culture would do that. If you're out of your mind in another culture or quite disturbed or impotent or anorexic, you look at what you've been eating, who's been casting spells on you, what taboo you've crossed, what you haven't done right, when you last missed reverence to the Gods or didn't take part in the dance, broke some tribal custom. Whatever. It could be thousands of other things—the plants, the water, the curses, the demons, the Gods, being out of touch with the Great Spirit. It would never, *never* be what happened to you with your mother and your father forty years ago. Only our culture uses that model, that myth.

VENTURA *(appalled and confused)*: Well, why wouldn't that be true? Because people will say . . . okay, *I'll* say, "That *is* why I am as I am."

HILLMAN: Because that's the myth you believe.

VENTURA: What other myth can there be? That's not a myth, that's what happened!

HILLMAN: "That's not a myth, that's what happened." The moment we say something is "what happened" we're announcing, "This is the myth I no longer see as a myth. This is the myth that I can't see through." "That's not a myth, that's

what happened" suggests that myths are the things we *don't* believe. The myths we believe and are in the middle of, we call them "fact," "reality," "science."

But let's say somebody looked at it differently. Let's say that what matters is that you have an acorn in you, you are a certain person, and that person begins to appear early in your life, but it's there all the way through your life. Winston Churchill, for example, when he was a schoolboy, had a lot of trouble with language and didn't speak well. He was put in what we would call the remedial reading class. He had problems about writing, speaking, and spelling. Of course he did! This little boy was a Nobel Prize winner in literature and had to save the Western world through his speech. Of course he had a speech defect, of course he couldn't speak easily when he was eleven or fourteen—it was too much to carry.

Or take Manolete who, when he was nine years old, was supposedly a very frightened little skinny boy who hung around his mother in the kitchen. So he becomes the greatest bullfighter of our age. Psychology will say, "Yes, he became a great bullfighter because he was such a puny little kid that he compensated by being a macho hero." That would be Adlerian psychology—you take your deficiency, your inferiority, and you convert it to superiority.

VENTURA: That notion has seeped in everywhere—feminism and the men's movement both depend on it more than they know.

HILLMAN: But suppose you take it the other way and read a person's life backwards. Then you say, Manolete was the greatest bullfighter, and he *knew* that. Inside, his psyche sensed at the age of nine that his fate was to meet thousand-pound black bulls with great horns. Of course he fucking well held onto his mother! Because he couldn't hold that capacity—at nine years old your fate is all there and you can't handle it. It's too big. It's not that he was inferior; he had a great destiny.

Now, suppose we look at all our patients that way. Suppose we look at the kids who are odd or stuttering or afraid, and instead of seeing these as developmental problems we see them as having some great thing inside them, some destiny that

they're not yet able to handle. It's bigger than they are and their psyche knows that. So that's a way of reading your own life differently. Instead of reading your life today as the result of fuck-ups as a child, you read your childhood as a miniature example of your life, as a cameo of your life—and recognize that you don't really know your whole life until you're about eighty—and then you're too old to get it in focus, or even care to!

VENTURA: But that's crazy. How can a child know what's going to happen?

HILLMAN: Our children *can't* know what's going to happen, because *our* children are not imagined as being Platonic children who are born into this world knowing everything. "The soul knows who we are from the beginning," say other theories of childhood. We're locked in our own special theory of childhood. According to us, a baby comes into the world with a few innate mechanisms, but not a destiny.

VENTURA: What you're saying rings a bell for me. There's a book of photographs called *As They Were,* of famous people when they were kids, and it's amazing how, at four or six or nine, Abbie Hoffman and J. Edgar Hoover and Franz Kafka and Joan Baez and Adolf Hitler looked just like—well, like their destinies.

HILLMAN: Why not? I mean, a tree is the same tree all the way through. A zebra is a zebra from the very first day.

VENTURA: Yeah, yeah, I like all that, I like it a lot, but—Hillman, how does a child know what's going to happen?

HILLMAN: Ventura—I don't think a child does know what's going to happen, I think that's far too literal. I think a child feels—

No, there *are* children who know what's going to happen. There was this great cellist, a woman who died recently—she was quite young. Jaqueline du Pré. I don't know what she

died of, but she was one of the greatest cellists in the world. When she was five years old she heard a cello on the radio and said, "I want what makes noise like that," or "sounds like that." She knew. It was there. And that's sometimes the case in genius musicians. They often know.

VENTURA: Actually, now that I think of it, it's not that uncommon with artists. I'm no genius, but from the age of nine I knew I was going to be a writer and I never made the least effort to be anything else.

HILLMAN: But let's not use those examples, they're too clear. Most people don't have those feelings; at the age of twenty they're still groping. But I do believe there are inklings, like little nubs on the edge of a tree. As the tree is growing—a young tree, let's say a little beech tree—it makes a little nub as it grows, and those nubs become branches, and eventually they become huge branches. I think a child has those little nubs. It doesn't know what it's going to be, but it has its inklings, it has its tendencies, it has its little pushes, its little obsessions.

VENTURA: And not only are these obsessions usually not honored, but many parents perceive them as frightening. "He should go out more, he's not seeing any friends." "She shouldn't be so serious." "How's he gonna earn a living if all he does is draw?" "That kid's not normal"—which usually means, "That kid's not easy."

I know a woman who barely went to any of her classes in high school, didn't deserve to graduate on marks, graduated purely on the force of her personality and because she was such an incredible leader and organizer. In her senior year she became head of the student council, organized practically everything that went on in the school. The first job she got after high school was a waitress in a restaurant. A year later she was the manager of that restaurant, a year after that the co-owner. By the time she was thirty she'd produced two movies and become an executive at one of the major film studios. The education being offered in high school was useless to her, but she got her own education there by exercising her business

and political talents as a leader and organizer. So it's not only artists.

The more I consider it, this kind of thing happens a lot.

HILLMAN: Our culture doesn't see it because not only do we have no theories to see it with, but these phenomena (which, as you say, aren't uncommon) undermine the theories we do have—theories we've built a very profitable industry out of and are part of our religious faith in history.

VENTURA: The more I think of it, you do have an image of what your face will look like. You do feel other people in you, who are older, and they talk to you—they talk to me, at any rate. I have a much older man inside me who talks to me every day, quietly, usually kindly, tolerantly, sometimes sternly when I'm really fucking up, always with humor. I like him enormously; he seems very much the best part of me. I never thought about him in this light before.

Hillman starts to speak.

VENTURA: No, let me go on while I'm thinking of it, another aspect of what I think you're getting at. I know several men who are, like me, in their forties, and they're starting to feel middle-aged in the flesh, and they say, "My body is betraying me." They even dye their hair and lie about their age. And I know women the same age, not Beverly Hills housewives or movie stars but women whom I never thought would do this, getting breast implants, tucks, that kind of thing—and I'm afraid for them, because they are deeply insulting the older people in them. And those insults are weakening the older people in them.

So when they finally turn sixty-five, when it's their sixty-five-year-old's turn to *be,* that sixty-five-year-old has been so insulted and weakened that he or she may not be able to do the job.

HILLMAN: You're saying it's not just nubs, that there's a cast of characters given. I think so too. I saw a drawing of a woman—she was about forty-four. It was a pencil drawing,

very touching. She didn't like it because it made her look too old. I said, "That drawing, that's the old woman who is waiting for you at the end of the corridor." They're there. Those figures are our companions, they're always around, and they need strengthening all the way down the line.

Michelangelo called that "the image in the heart."

I mean, how is it that we can become thirty-five when we are twenty-five? There has to be a form of being thirty-five that we put on.

VENTURA: So we are saying, "You don't know what's going to happen but you feel the people in you. That's how you're designed, if the culture or your family hasn't demolished that way of feeling when you're very young."

HILLMAN: The form of those people, the figures, are already there. You want to strengthen those figures as you go along.

Hillman pauses.

There's a lot of fear that there's nobody there. I think that's one of the great fears behind dyeing your hair or removing the lines around your eyes. "When I hit fifty I'm going to be empty, there's nobody there." Because what is that sense of being empty? It's because there's nobody there.

VENTURA: And if we've insulted the older people in us sufficiently and attacked them every time we, say, cursed an older driver—

HILLMAN: —or the person in front of you in the supermarket who doesn't put her money away quickly enough—

VENTURA: Every time we've done that we've frightened and diminished the old ones in us, and those figures shrink until maybe there *isn't* anybody there.

HILLMAN: There's another way we do it. Every time you go, "I haven't got time for the pain," every time you cover up your illness. Your illnesses are partly ways of developing the

older people. They're the ways of developing the knowledge of your own body. The illnesses tell you tremendous things about what you can eat and when you can eat it, what goes on with your bowels, what goes on with your balls, what goes on with your skin. The illnesses are your teachers, especially about aging. Devaluing the illnesses and suppressing them removes you from these figures.

We insult the inner people by what we do with our own weaknesses.

VENTURA: And as we get older we turn that around and we dislike young people.

HILLMAN: Oh yeah.

VENTURA: And when we attack young people, in the same impatient way we've attacked old people, we weaken our young selves *who are still in us,* the way the older selves were in us when we were young.

HILLMAN: Absolutely. We attack the younger people in us. As you say, the young ones who give us urges, send us fantasies. And so we no longer allow ourselves to feel or to imagine sexuality, we no longer allow ourselves to imagine risk—the incredible risks that young people take! They just do it! We don't allow ourselves to risk in the sense of abandon, letting go.

The great old people that you know were once masters of letting go, tremendous courage—and some still are, fearless in crossing the street, in walking out at night.

VENTURA: We especially reject and attack adolescents, can't stand being around them, because our own adolescence is so painful.

HILLMAN: The falling in love, the romance, the suicidal fantasies of adolescence—

VENTURA: And all those dreams you didn't live up to. And you can't say anything worse to somebody than, "You're being adolescent."

HILLMAN: Try, "You're just getting old."

VENTURA: When you're in your forties and you hit what they call midlife crisis, when you're going through a kind of adolescence again, because you're breaking a bunch of crusts —that's belittled. "Whataya goin' through, a midlife crisis?"

HILLMAN: You hit another at sixty.

VENTURA: And if you turn around and say, "You're goddamn right I am, and you'd better stay out of its way," then you're seen as nuts: "Boy, Ventura's losin' it." But what you're really saying is, "I'm molting."

HILLMAN: "I'm molting, and I'm at the beginning of something, and when I'm at the beginning of something I am a fool."

VENTURA: "The changeless thing in me is sitting quiet in the center of everything that's changing, and much is dropping away."

They sit quietly a moment. The people walking past their bench for a stroll, the drivers inching up and down the Pacific Coast Highway, the swimmers and sunners on the beach, the crew of another oil tanker now in view, and the Saturday sailors out in small boats are outside the little circle of their quiet. For the moment, these two men aren't even noticing.

VENTURA: Okay, so developmental psychology, the idea that everything I am now was caused in my childhood, at the very least leaves out far too much and may be misleading altogether. Yeah, but what about all that time and money I spent in therapy about being sexually molested and all that? It seemed important at the time!

HILLMAN *(laughs)*: Yes, it does seem important at the time. Well, what's all that about? If we're going to be vicious we're going to say, as Ivan Illich would say, it's a way of maintaining

the psychotherapy trade, which is a large business needing new raw material such as abuse, trauma, childhood molestation. And if you're a believer—which we are, unconsciously —in the myth of development rather than a believer in acorns and nubs, structure, or essence, then what happened back then must be overwhelmingly important. Now what about the fact that children have been abandoned, molested, and abused for centuries—and it wasn't considered important?

VENTURA: What about that? Weren't those cultures as advanced as ours?

HILLMAN: Come on, you don't believe that.

VENTURA: You're right, I don't. But a lot of folks do, and they go further to say that a significant part of the explanation for the socially, economically, and ecologically ravaged planet we inhabit is child abuse, hundreds of years of it. (Which doesn't wash historically, by the way. Forced sexual relationships have been with us since the dawn of time, if we can judge by ancient myths and fairy tales, and the ravaging of the planet has only been going on since the beginning of the Industrial Age two hundred years ago.)

HILLMAN: The fact that everybody is upset about the child is exactly the point I made before, that the archetype of the child dominates our culture's therapeutic thinking. Maintaining that abuse is the most important thing in our culture, that our nation is going to the dogs because of abuse, or that it's the root of why we exploit and victimize the earth, as some are saying, that is the viewpoint of the child.

VENTURA: And it's to be stuck in that viewpoint.

HILLMAN: I'm not saying that children aren't molested or abused. They *are* molested, and they *are* abused, and in many cases it's absolutely devastating. But therapy makes it even more devastating *by the way it thinks about it.* It isn't just the trauma that does the damage, it's remembering traumatically.

VENTURA: Therapy, in effect, aggravates *and* profits from the abuse by the way it thinks about it. But what does that mean, "remembering traumatically"?

HILLMAN: Well, let's say my father took the belt or the brush to me, or maybe he fucked me or beat the shit out of me again and again. Sometimes he was drunk when he did it, sometimes he just did it because he was a mean son of a bitch, sometimes he beat me because he didn't know who else to beat. And I go on remembering those violations. I remain a victim in my memory. My memory continues to make me a victim. Secondly, it continues to keep me in the position of the child, because my memory is locked into the child's view, and I haven't moved my memory. It isn't that the abuse didn't happen—I'm not denying that it happened or that I need to believe that it did concretely happen. But I may be able to think about the brutality—reframe it, as they say—as an initiatory experience. These wounds that he caused have done something to me to make me understand punishment, make me understand vengeance, make me understand submission, make me understand the depth of rage between fathers and sons, which is a universal theme—and I took part in that. I was *in* that. And so I've moved the memory, somehow, from just being a child victim of a mean father. I've entered fairy tales and I've entered myths, literature, movies. With my suffering I've entered an imaginal, not just a traumatic, world.

VENTURA: You've entered what tribal people might call the Dreamtime.

HILLMAN: Yes. Part of the Dreamtime.

VENTURA: That this happened to you not only in the day-to-day but in the Dreamtime, for all things that happen in one place happen in the other. "As above, so below," as the ancients taught. That this happened to you in the Dreamtime means: (a) that it's a mythological act, and (b) that it didn't happen twenty years ago; it's happening now, it always happened, it always will happen. Which isn't as depressing as it sounds.

This means its significance can always change. It's a place where literal life and mythical life meet. That's what wounds are.

And then there's: (c) the abuse is in the Dreamtime context of many, many mythological acts, some brutal and some beautiful, instead of being just the major myth of *your* act.

So there's a sense in which—

HILLMAN: It becomes more intense when it becomes less personal.

VENTURA: Right.

HILLMAN: More intense in the sense of how tremendously important it is. It's more important than *me,* in a strange way.

VENTURA: Because in the Dreamtime, in the mythological way of thought, it's joined with so many other events that are more important than me.

HILLMAN: Therapy tends to confuse the importance of the event with the importance of me.

VENTURA: I can hear a voice in me saying, "But this thing *happened,* it's not mythological, goddammit!" At the same time, as any journalist or cop can tell you, if you talk to several different people about an event they all witnessed or participated in, you'll have several different events. I know in my own family, if you ask me and my sister to describe our mother, you'll get two totally different mothers, and neither one of us is lying. Memory is a form of fiction, and we can't help that. So we are very much the creation of the stories we tell ourselves. And we don't know we're telling stories.

HILLMAN: We're not conscious we're telling stories.

I think Freud was getting at that when he said, "It's how you remember, not what actually happened." That the memory is what really creates the trauma. And everybody's been attacking Freud recently, saying that Freud was covering up, that he

wasn't admitting these childhood abuses really happened. Whether they really happened or not, Freud's point, which is so tremendous, is that it's what memory does with them that's important.

We don't know we're telling stories. And that's part of the trouble in the training of psychotherapy, that psychotherapists don't learn enough literature, enough drama, or enough biography. The trainee learns cases and diagnostics—things that do not necessarily open the imagination. So the trainees don't realize that they're dealing in fictions. That's not to say that things aren't literally real too—

VENTURA: —but that what you get in the consulting room is, has to be, someone telling a story. The form is a story. You're right, it's weird that people whose work will largely consist of listening to stories aren't taught anything, from literature and from journalism and even from court records, about how people tell stories.

HILLMAN: Regarding the abuse, the actual abuse in *early* childhood—what does the damage, besides the shock and the horror and all those other things, is that early abuse tends to literalize the imagination. It either literalizes the imagination or dissociates it into multiple personality, so that it's split off. And that *is* damage. But kids from thirteen to seventeen, say, seduced by their stepfathers (or who seduce them) that's a different quality of abuse, different from that of a three-year-old or two-year-old. There are different levels to this, but it's all been grouped into one thing, so that we get all sorts of people claiming themselves victims of molestation and identifying themselves as hurt children. Seduction in families, as you said, is a pretty old thing. It is not the same as brutally violating an infant. We have to keep some gradations distinct—

VENTURA: —because if we don't, we can't think well about it.

When those memories of sexual abuse started coming up for me—which happened like clockwork on my fortieth birthday—after about a month of car crashes and black holes, I went to a therapist. He was an old man, a Jungian. I was going on and

on about the abuse and about my mother, and he sort of smiled and said, "You know, what happened to you, it forged your connection with the soul's mysteries, didn't it? And that's what you write about, isn't it? Would you rather have been writing about something else?"

I was absolutely stunned that he said that. It didn't lessen my anger or my fear about my mother, but it jolted me out of looking at the experience as a child. I had to look at it from the point of view of how I've lived my life as an adult. Not that I've finished dealing with the great anger that came up toward my mother or toward the other people of my childhood and adolescence who tried to do the same thing to me, but—

HILLMAN: When you say, "I haven't dealt with," there's an assumption that that anger toward your mother is *supposed* to go somewhere. And I'm not going to assume that.

VENTURA: Well, this is an enormous assumption in our culture now, that this anger and rage and heartbreak are supposed to be *processed.* A word I hate, by the way—processed psyche, like processed food.

HILLMAN: Yeah, nice thin slices of yellow cheese. Put it in a package and label it.

VENTURA: But what are you supposed to do with this stuff if not process it? How the fuck are you going to "individuate," or even grow up, if you don't process it?

HILLMAN: Well now, what did Jonathan Swift do? He wrote the most incredible satires. What did people do in the Elizabethan and Jacobean vengeance plays? I mean, this stuff is tremendously powerful. What did Joyce do with his feelings about Ireland? What did Faulkner do with his feelings about the South? This kind of processing is really hard. This is the stuff of art. Rilke said about therapy, "I don't want the demons taken away because they're going to take my angels too." Wounds and scars are the stuff of character. The word *character* means, at root, "marked or etched with sharp lines," like initiation cuts.

VENTURA: Hey, we can't all be artists. We are not all Joyce or Jonathan Swift. Most of us are just working stiffs of one sort or another. What are *we* supposed to do?

HILLMAN: It isn't to be literal about artists. It is that there's a way the imagination can work with these powerful things. Artists are simply models of people who turn to the imagination to work with things. That's why one needs to read the biographies of artists, because biographies show what they did with their traumas; they show what can be done—not what they did but what can be done—by the imagination with hatred, with resentment, with bitterness, with feelings of being useless and inferior and worthless. Artists found modes in the imagination to process it, if you like.

Second thing is, you assume again with your question that you can't carry around unprocessed ore. Suppose you see these lumps as ore.

VENTURA: There's rocks in the psyche—"I got rocks in my head."

HILLMAN: Ore, rocks, that make for character, for the peculiar idiosyncrasy that you are. Just as you have physical scars, so you have soul blemishes. And they're rocks. And they are what you are. It's peculiar in our culture to believe that this stuff all gets ironed out. Is it a melting pot fantasy? Do we all try to be nice? In the service of this fantasy we abuse our own raw material.

I mean, you go to another culture and the people who are suffering, they're suffering from the facts of their existence. And by "another culture" I mean our own street culture—African American, Latino, and the rural poor, and that woman on the grass over there.

VENTURA: Yes, if you're an artist you *know* that stuff is your ore—you know that, and that's why many artists steer clear of therapy. They don't want that ore processed in the wrong way.

HILLMAN: The obsession that prevents it from being valued as ore is the obsession with processing, the obsession with smoothing it out. It doesn't become as damaging unless you think it shouldn't be there. That's what I mean about the therapeutic attitude hurting the actual potential of people. Because, as Ivan Illich would say, therapy wants to ameliorate the suffering in the ore. And our culture accepts the proposition that it must be ameliorated.

VENTURA: So if we're saying this is what therapy cannot, or should not, do, what *can* therapy do?

HILLMAN: Make—those—things—be—felt.

That used to be called lifting repression and bringing to consciousness. I'd rather say, Make those things be felt.

I see it as a kind of building of doorways, opening conduits, and making channels, like a giant bypass operation, throwing in all kinds of new tubings so that things flow into each other. Memories, events, images, all become enlivened. And our feelings about this ore become more subtle. Learn to appreciate it. That's one thing therapy can do.

VENTURA: So you're not saying to people, "Don't go to therapy."

HILLMAN: I'm saying to people, "*If* you go to therapy, watch out for the collusion between the therapist and the part of you that doesn't want to feel the ore." There are many ways to repress feeling the ore, one of which is processing it. The different schools of therapy have different processing systems, but *all* of them are fixers. From my angle, fixing what's wrong represses the ore.

VENTURA: "Processing" is often "repression" in disguise! That's really cute.

HILLMAN: "This hurts, goddammit, this hurts!" And the first move away from the hurt is, "What do I do about it? What do I take for it?"

VENTURA: "What clinical name can I call it?"

HILLMAN: "What's the treatment?" Those are all ways of dealing with "This hurts." But until one has been in the hurt, explored the hurt, you don't know anything about it. You don't know why it's there. Why did the psyche put it there?

VENTURA: "Exploring the hurt" sounds suspiciously like processing. "Working through"—

HILLMAN: —is the term that processing usually goes by. That's not what I mean by exploring the hurt. The question to be asked is, "How does therapy really work?" I'm not sure that therapy itself—that is, insight, understanding, recollection, owning your part of it, how you brought it about, seeing patterns, abreacting—

VENTURA: What does that mean, *abreacting,* in English?

HILLMAN: It means "getting it out"—I'm not sure that any of these working-through modes, which are supposed to be the modes of psychological processing, really do it. What I think does it is the six months, or six years, of grief. The mourning. The long ritual of therapy.

VENTURA: Ahhhhh.

HILLMAN: The dumb hours.

VENTURA: Going back and back and back, talking about this shit over and over, no matter what you happen to be saying or thinking, just going back and back to it.

HILLMAN: And one day it doesn't feel the same. The body has absorbed the punch. But I'm not sure that's because you processed it or got insights or understanding. I think that could happen also to the woman weeping in the church at the altar of Joseph.

VENTURA: Because you're sitting with it.

HILLMAN: Sitting *in* it.

VENTURA: In it. And being *in* it, in whatever form, is the exploration.

HILLMAN: You're in it for a while, then you're with it for a while, and then you visit it.

VENTURA: And then it walks with you instead of on you.

HILLMAN: And it may even go its own way.

VENTURA: And why isn't that processing?

Hillman is silent.

VENTURA: I'll tell you why it's not processing. Because you're not taking it and purifying it and making it into something else.

HILLMAN: You're not transforming.

VENTURA: Processing implies, "I can take this ore and make it into a plow. I can make it into a tool by which I can live more efficiently." And it implies that somehow, magically, if I do that then the ore isn't there anymore.

HILLMAN: "Either I can use it or I can get rid of it, but it's fucking inefficient to have it around where it's not usable but it's still there." This is what makes us, Americans, white Americans, psychological amateurs and innocents. We don't have enough stuff in the psyche, we keep getting rid of the ore! We're not psychologically sophisticated people.

I'd rather not say is it or isn't it processing. I'd rather say, "What happens if you call it processing?" And you described what happens, you either try to get rid of it or make it useful. So it's exploitative. The notion of transformation that dominates therapy: transform something useless into something useful.

VENTURA: A consumer's ideology. You're consuming your psyche, as both a consumer and as a carnivore.

HILLMAN: And also as an industrialist: you're making a profit out of it.

VENTURA: And the psyche doesn't like that. So what it says is, "Okay! I'll make you *boring*."

HILLMAN *(laughs)*: I was waiting for you to say something very different; I was waiting for you to say, "Okay, I'll send you another complaint!"

VENTURA: That's only if it still likes you—then the psyche gives you another chance with something new to deal with. If it's really disgusted with you it says, "I'll make you boring."

HILLMAN: So that you become processed cheese.

VENTURA: And you will be very well adjusted and even tempered, you won't "lose it," you won't have any extremes. And maybe you can even have a successful marriage with somebody as boring as you are.

HILLMAN: Usually, fortunately, that doesn't work, because the God of marriage doesn't allow that.

VENTURA: Right. The God of marriage is a very crazy God.

HILLMAN: The God of marriage wants a lot more.

VENTURA: And the psyche says to therapists especially, "I'll make you boring." That's what the therapists I know complain about.

HILLMAN: Oh, yes. The repressive atmosphere of therapy—

VENTURA: —repressive to the therapist—

HILLMAN: —that dictates psychology has to be respectable. This produces a terrible repression to the actual psychologist. We're not allowed in the street. We have to be careful,

pretty correct, not extreme or radical, and not mix it up with our clients and patients out in the world. And this slants our thinking toward white, middle-class psychology. As one good friend of mine told me, "The trouble with getting old as a therapist is that I can't grow into my eccentricity." Because what's expected of a therapist is regular hours, being on time, being a kind of square, reasonable person. *The therapist is unconsciously modeling the goal of therapy.*

VENTURA: The therapist is unconsciously modeling the *unconscious* goal of therapy.

HILLMAN: Well, that isn't my goal. The goal of my therapy is eccentricity, which grows out of the Jungian notion of individuation. Jung says, "You become what you are." And nobody is square. We all have, as the Swiss say, a corner knocked off.

VENTURA: It's not processing and it's not growth, 'cause that's the same thing, that's a consumer attitude toward life. So what the fuck is it?

HILLMAN: I think it's *life*. That's what it is. Meaning: going through life. Rousseau said, "The man among you is the most educated who can carry the joys and sorrows of life." Education meant the joys and sorrows of life. So do you want to call it education? That's pretty boring too.

VENTURA: Then there are all the words that the New Agers have made unpalatable, like *journey*.

HILLMAN: I tell you what I feel about it. I feel it's service. I feel it's devotion.

VENTURA: To what?

HILLMAN: To the Gods. I feel that these things occur, and they are what the psyche wants or sends me. What the Gods send me. There's a lovely passage from Marcus Aurelius: "What I do I do always with the community in mind. What happens

to me, what befalls me, comes from the Gods." And *befall* is a very important word, because that's where the word *case* comes from: *cadere,* to fall. And in German the word for a case is *fall.* So what falls on you is what happens to you, is the origins of the Greek word *pathos* too—what drops on you, what wounds you, what happens to you, what falls on you, how you fall, the way the dice fall.

VENTURA: You know, we keep circling the basic premise of American life, which has infected therapy, namely, "Everything is supposed to be all right. If things are not all right, then they're very, very wrong."

HILLMAN: So what happens to the pathos, the pathology of our lives, "that which can't be accepted, can't be changed, and won't go away."

VENTURA: You live it out.

HILLMAN: That becomes a devotion. A service. What else can you do?

A long pause.

What else can you do?

And that's human limitation. That's what the Greeks mean by being mortal: it's to be tragic.

VENTURA: So we haven't got a word to stick in here in place of *process,* and maybe we don't want one!

They laugh.

HILLMAN: Right. That's much better. We have no word to replace *process*—

HILLMAN AND VENTURA: —and we don't want one.

HILLMAN: This isn't about a process to do that.

VENTURA: Because it's part of the concept of process to find a word to replace it, and to hell with that. And we have no word to replace *growth,* either, and maybe we don't want one.

We're talking about living it out.

HILLMAN: Taking it on, too.

VENTURA: Taking the weight.

HILLMAN: Wait. Taking the weight is not taking the weight of the Man. That's been a big mistake. "I did my time." I'm not talking about serving the Man. That's where rebellion and subversion are important. I'm talking about serving the Gods.

VENTURA: How do you tell the difference?

HILLMAN: You can quit the Man. You can tell the Man to stuff it.

VENTURA: But the Gods don't go away.

HILLMAN: You can move to nirvana, but the Gods find out where you go.

I don't know if the Gods love you as the Christians are told, or even if they are very interested in what you decide to do and worry about, but they sure don't let you off easy. In Italy, editors called one of my books *The Vain Flight from the Gods.* You see, they get to us through our pathology, and that's why pathology is so important. It's the window in the wall through which the demons and the angels come in.

VENTURA: They don't love you but they don't let you get away. Sounds a little like family.

HILLMAN: "Called or not, the Gods will be present." Jung had that saying in Latin over his front door. Carved in stone. So we may as well serve. Willingly. That's how I understand the human will, it just means to do the stuff you have to go through willingly.

VENTURA: They don't love you but they keep on your case. Butch Hancock has a song where he sings, "She was a model of mercy, she never cut me no slack." If they love you, that's how they love you.

He pauses a moment.

By "serving the Man" you mean that being reconciled to the system, to authority, is very different from what you call serving the Gods. You can't rebel against the Gods—or you can, but that's just another step in the dance; but you'd *better* rebel against authority.

At least, that's what I mean. What do you mean?

HILLMAN: Look. Our assumption, our fantasy, in psychoanalysis has been that we're going to process, we're going to grow, and we're going to level things out so that we don't have these very strong, disturbing emotions and events.

VENTURA: Which is probably not a human possibility.

HILLMAN: But could analysis have new fantasies of itself, so that the consulting room is a cell in which revolution is prepared?

VENTURA: What?

HILLMAN: Could—

VENTURA: —could the consulting room be a cell in which *revolution* is prepared? Jesus. Could it?

HILLMAN: By *revolution* I mean turning over. Not development or unfolding, but turning over the system that has made you go to analysis to begin with—the system being government by minority and conspiracy, official secrets, national security, corporate power, *et cetera*. Therapy might imagine itself investigating the immediate social causes, even while keeping its vocabulary of abuse and victimization—that we are

abused and victimized less by our personal lives of the past than by a present system.

It's like, you want your father to love you. The desire to be loved by your father is enormously important. But you can't get that love fulfilled by your father. You don't want to get rid of the desire to be loved, but you want to stop asking your father; he's the wrong object. So we don't want to get rid of the feeling of being abused—maybe that's very important, the feeling of being abused, the feeling of being without power. But maybe we shouldn't imagine that we are abused by the past as much as we are by the actual situation of "my job," "my finances," "my government"—all the things that we live with. Then the consulting room becomes a cell of revolution, because we would be talking also about, "What is actually abusing me right now?" That would be a great venture, for therapy to talk that way.

VENTURA: Let's double back a second. You said, "Could analysis have new fantasies about itself?" What do you mean by *fantasy?* For most people that word's associated with "unreal."

HILLMAN: Oh, no, no. Fantasy is the natural activity of the mind. Jung says, "The primary activity of psychic life is the creation of fantasy." Fantasy is how you perceive something, how you think about it, react to it.

VENTURA: So *any* perception, in that sense, is fantasy.

HILLMAN: Is there a reality that is not framed or formed? No. Reality is always coming through a pair of glasses, a point of view, a language—a fantasy.

VENTURA: But if therapy is to take this new direction, have this new perception or fantasy about itself, it seems we need some basic redefinition of some basic concepts.

Hillman smiles, looks out into the distance. The light has changed, the sun will be down soon, and the breeze off the

sea is suddenly cool. The homeless woman is wrapping herself in plastic garbage bags, muttering something. The highway traffic below is moving smoothly again. The oil tanker's lights are on, and in a few moments it will be out of sight. And the lights of the Santa Monica Pier have come on, too, as sad as forced cheer.

HILLMAN: Maybe the idea of self has to be redefined.

VENTURA: *That* would be revolutionary. That would eventually change the entire culture, if it caught on.

HILLMAN: The idea of self has to be redefined. Therapy's definition comes from the Protestant and Oriental tradition: self is the interiorization of the invisible God beyond. The inner divine. Even if this inner divine is disguised as a self-steering, autonomous, homeostatic, balancing mechanism; or even if the divine is disguised as the integrating deeper intention of the whole personality, it's still a transcendent notion, with theological implications if not roots. I would rather define self as *the interiorization of community.* And if you make that little move, then you're going to feel very different about things. If the self were defined as the interiorization of community, then the boundaries between me and another would be much less sure. I would be with myself when I'm with others. I would not be with myself when I'm walking alone or meditating or in my room imagining or working on my dreams. In fact, I would be estranged from myself.

And "others" would not include just other people, because community, as I see it, is something more ecological, or at least animistic. A psychic field. And if I'm not in a psychic field with others—with people, buildings, animals, trees—I *am* not.

So it wouldn't be, "I am because I think." (*Cogito ergo sum,* as Descartes said.) It would be, as somebody said to me the other night, "I am because I party." *Convivo ergo sum.*

VENTURA: That's a redefinition of self, all right.

HILLMAN: Look, a great deal of our life is manic. I can watch thirty-four channels of TV, I can get on the fax and

communicate with people anywhere, I can be everywhere at once, I can fly across the country, I've got call waiting, so I can take two calls at once. I live everywhere and nowhere. But I don't know who lives next door to me. Who's in the next flat? Who's in 14-B?

I don't know who they are, but, boy, I'm on the phone, car phone, toilet phone, plane phone, my mistress is in Chicago, the other woman I'm with is in D.C., my exwife is in Phoenix, my mother in Hawaii, and I have four children living all over the country. I have faxes coming in day and night, I can plug into all the world's stock prices, commodity exchanges, I am everywhere, man—but I don't know who's in 14-B.

You see, this hyper communication and information is part of what's keeping the soul at bay.

VENTURA: Oh yeah. Very much so. But—maybe it's because I'm a writer, maybe it's the way I've trained myself—but I feel most myself when I'm alone.

HILLMAN: It's not because you're a writer or because you've trained yourself. That training began two thousand years ago.

VENTURA: How?

HILLMAN: That training is the emphasis upon withdrawal, innerness—in Augustine's sense of confessions, in Jerome's sense of hiding out in the desert. This is the result of a long discipline to sever a person from the natural world of community. It's a monkish notion. A saintly notion.

And there's a second reason you are convinced that you're more yourself when you're alone: because it's more familiar. You are in a habitual, repetitious rut. "This is me, because I'm in the same pattern"; it's recognizable. When you're with another person you're out of yourself because the other person is flowing into you and you are flowing into them, there are surprises, you're a little out of control, and then you think you're not your real true self. The out of control—that's the community acting through you. It's the locus that you're in, acting through you.

VENTURA: But if you let that go too much, then you're in Nuremburg Square with your arm up in the air. Or, closer to home, you're waving flags and yellow ribbons for reasons you don't even care about understanding. That's the community acting through you too. If the community acts through you too much, you don't exist. And when you don't exist, in this way, you open yourself up to possession by whatever force or idea or demagogue that seeks to possess you.

HILLMAN: Why do we use the image of the mob or of fascist conformity when we give up the self?

VENTURA: Because we've suffered so much in this century, and we're suffering now, from people giving up their individuality.

HILLMAN: That's true. Still, it's interesting that that's the only image we use. We don't use the image of a tribal society, where I still remain John-of-the-One-Leg.

VENTURA: That's true. It's an interesting, very significant detail that in the tribal societies, which we think have the least individuality, people have the most individual names. One-of-a-kind names that come from their dreams or their actions, which are rarely repeated or handed down because they're so individual. It's as though, because the community shares so much and because so much is handed down through the community, individuality is treated with more respect.

HILLMAN: In tribal life and religion there was often a place for people who were different—homosexuals, visionaries, hermits, people with special qualities or powers. This wasn't unknown in village life, either. Nor in the city life of the ancient Greeks. Not that these were perfect societies—

VENTURA: —since perfection is not a human possibility—

HILLMAN: —but we do have examples of the self-as-

community that aren't totalitarian and in which individuality is respected.

I won't accept these simple opposites—either individual self in control or a totalitarian, mindless mob. This kind of fantasy keeps us afraid of community. It locks us up inside our separate selves all alone and longing for connection. In fact, the idea of surrendering to the fascist mob is the result of the separated self. It's the old Apollonian ego, aloof and clear, panicked by the Dionysian flow.

We have to think about community as a different category altogether. It's not individuals coming together and connecting, and it's not a crowd. Community to me means simply the actual little system in which you are situated, sometimes in your office, sometimes at home with your furniture and your food and your cat, sometimes talking in the hall with the people in 14-B. In each case your self is a little different, and your true self is your actual self, just as it is in each situation, a self *among,* not a self apart.

VENTURA: And when you ask, "What about the person in 14-B?" are you or I respecting that person as part of the community or as an individual? Neither, if we choose to be totally cut off from them. And if they accept being cut off from us, they're not respecting us either, in any of our roles. We're talking about *neighbors,* after all. Yes, to ignore the fact that one is or has a neighbor is a profound form of disrespect, both to the other and to ourselves, and it's completely taken for granted now in our cities and suburbs. I take it for granted; I ignore my neighbors and I bet you do too.

HILLMAN: I think it's absolutely necessary for our spiritual life today to have community where we actually live. Of course, we have dear friends from thirty years ago who are living in Burma or Brazil now. And they're there for you when you're busted—in an emergency. But is that sufficient? For the maintenance of the world? It's definitely not. I think for the maintenance of the world that other kind of local community requires regular servicing. And that's a very unpleasant, hard thing to stay with, to realize how much service one needs to

perform—not for an old, distant friend, but for the people in 14-B.

VENTURA: How can therapy possibly deal with that? I mean, nuts and bolts.

HILLMAN: Part of the treatment of these difficulties is to look at a person's schedule, his notebook, her calendar. Because your schedule is one of your biggest defenses.

VENTURA: Treat my schedule?

HILLMAN: Treat your schedule. And I'll tell you, I have had more resistance in trying to treat people's schedules and change their schedules than you can ever imagine.

VENTURA: You'd get a shitload of resistance out of me.

HILLMAN: Do you ever ask your soul questions when you make your schedule?

VENTURA *(groaning)*: My soul just went, *"He fucking-a doesn't!"*

HILLMAN: The job then becomes how the soul finds accommodations within your day. Regarding dreams, regarding persons, regarding time off. Because the manic defense against depression is to keep extremely busy—and to be very irritated when interrupted. That's part of the sign of the manic condition.

VENTURA: Me and many of the people I know are often too busy to be anything but busy. Yes, it's manic, and we sort of know that. You're saying it's a defense against depression. If we go back to what we were talking about before and assume that the source of our depression is in the present rather than twenty or thirty years ago, then the question is, What chronic depression are we—as individuals, as a city, as a culture—trying to avoid by being so chronically manic?

HILLMAN: The depression we're all trying to avoid could very well be a prolonged chronic reaction to what we've been doing to the world, a mourning and grieving for what we're doing to nature and to cities and to whole peoples—the destruction of a lot of our world. We may be depressed partly because this is the soul's reaction to the mourning and grieving that we're not consciously doing. The grief over neighborhoods destroyed where I grew up, the loss of agricultural land that I knew as a kid—

VENTURA: —or the sense, in younger people, that those things are in the past, you've never known them and you're never going to—

HILLMAN: —all those things that are lost and gone. Because that's what depression feels like.

We paint our national history rosy and white and paint our personal history gray. We're so willing to admit that we're trapped in our personal history, but we never hear that said of our national history.

VENTURA: Or our civilization's history. Which in a reverse way is an indication of how much we *really* believe in the self as interiorization-of-community, because there's so much denial about the importance and the darkness of our national and cultural history. We wouldn't need to deny it so much if it wasn't so incredibly important to us. The strength of that denial measures a tremendous fear and loss.

HILLMAN: I think we've also lost shame. We talk about our parents having shamed us when we were little, but we've lost our shame in relation to the world and to the oppressed, the shame of being wrong, of messing up the world. We've mutated this shame into personal guilt.

Perhaps the way to begin the revolution is to stand up for your depression.

VENTURA: That *is* depressing. And there's so much to revolt against. All that ugly, money-driven, bottom-line thinking

that's the excuse for so much stupidity and cruelty. But you began by saying that things, objects, are not passive—that, through things, the world is fighting back. So?

HILLMAN: Look, any major change needs a breakdown. Chernobyl—it didn't seem to affect us in America, but in Europe people couldn't eat vegetables, couldn't drink milk; all the reindeer meat in Scandinavia was contaminated. This changes values immensely. Suddenly certain things are life giving and others are death giving. Money no longer matters to the same extent; there's no price tag on Chernobyl. So the change of financial bottom-line thinking comes about through symptoms. It comes about through poison. Valdez, Bhopal, Chernobyl have made everything there toxic, bad, poisonous—and it's beyond money. The threat of death gets us past the determination of value by finance. After catastrophes money no longer carries value. The nature or quality of soul of a thing would be the ultimate value. We would ask, Is this a good thing, is this a helpful thing, is this a beautiful thing? instead of, What's its price?

VENTURA: *That* would certainly be revolutionary. Changing the nature of that fundamental question—What's its price? —would change everything. And the consulting room *could* become a cell of revolution if therapy located our troubles more in the present and directed our attention to the world instead of only inside, because ultimately the question would have to be, What's its price? What's the real price we pay for how we live?

Ventura laughs suddenly.

HILLMAN: What?

VENTURA: Immediately my greedy little private self, the part that only cares about my relationships and would just as soon the people in 14-B mind their own damn business, that self leaps to the question: In this new revolutionary therapy, what about l-o-v-e?

HILLMAN: You know, there's a feeling about a good day —it's slow, and very much like being with a lover. Having a good moment at breakfast, tasting something—it has to do with beauty, this matter of love. And I think all the "work" at personal relationships fucks that up. That "work" is not aesthetic and sensuous, which is really what love, for me, is about. Aesthetic and sensuous, and a kind of joy. Love doesn't result from working at something. So the therapeutic approach to love, of clearing up the relationship, may clear up communication disorders, expression inhibitions, insensitive habits, may even improve sex, but I don't think it releases love; I don't think love can be worked at.

VENTURA: That's a distinction that our culture seems to have been busy forgetting for the last several decades—the distinction between "the relationship" and "love." To apply the word *aesthetic* to "the relationship"—that would make a lot of us blink hard.

HILLMAN: That's what love is about—aesthetic and sensuous. And when that aspect isn't functioning, the other person becomes a little bit of a camel, carrying so much weight through the desert of the relationship—your baggage, the other person's baggage. No wonder camels spit.