

### 34. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

All these learned philosophers had contemplated the perfect social arrangement of human beings. Some had started with a society of chosen ones. Others had battled in the wild to tame the most lawless creatures. Even the supposed ends of all these utopias were different. The ideal state was sometimes thought of as total liberty. There were a host of other thinkers who found appeal in order. The architecture or the atmosphere were also considerations in the final design. I challenged all these world planners with my own model. I started out my ideal with Cody Brainerd. Here was a man who had been part of the hubbub. But he had been involuntary withdrawn from the mayhem. Now, in this room, his every need was met. And his guardians envisioned a future for him as well.

We all wanted him to wake up from his coma. But was this really all for the best. Now it appeared that he had no care in the world. He was still alive even if he did not seem to partake in life's pleasures. Wasn't it better to live without worry? I found comfort in my present situation. But it was all uncertain. I had no idea how long this would last. Cody had none of these trepidations. He just lay there in the bed. And time passed around him.

More advanced thinkers would argue that we should simply cut Cody off. If we could stop feeding him, and turn off any machines that might help prolong life, that would that be the best end for this creature. Ultimately, wasn't that the fate of all of us?

"Can he really know himself if he can't work?"

"Lee, it doesn't make any difference any more."

Lee felt it was central for his vision of life that Cody be revived.

"It's sort of a waste just to leave him like that."

"We're helping him. That's why you hired me."

He added, "I expect him to wake up. Otherwise, all of this would be a waste of time. It's a trade off. We give him our time now so that he can give back to us some time in the future."

Lee had it all worked out.

"We shouldn't help people if they can't help themselves."

"You are telling me that you want him to die."

"No, he's worthwhile. But if wasn't, it might not be worth the effort."

"You are talking like a supreme being."

He was adamant, "I just feel that I know."

I wondered, "Like Cody knows?"

"Down deep, I believe that he does."

I was afraid to interfere with Lee's plans. The more that he talked about Cody, the more that I was afraid that he might turn on me if I really disagreed with him. But he was hardly consistent. His belief allowed him to balance the contradictions.

I could tell from Lee's stubbornness that there was something that he was hiding from me. More than that, I knew that he was hiding something from himself. He wasn't the sort who wanted someone else pointing that out, especially someone like me. He needed me for the time being. So we kept up with our uneasy alliance. And he continued to want to influence what I did. He left me alone to do what I had to do. But every so often he would get a wild hare and feel the necessity to change things. So he'd engage me in these bizarre discussions. It wasn't as

if he was going to stick around to listen to me read to Cody. I played along as much as I needed to.

Maybe Cody really could taste things. In his mind, he was feasting on rare delicacies. Perhaps, he could still find delight in the flavor of a cookie. But there was little of nuance in his experience. He couldn't elect the sour with the sweet. He couldn't learn to accustom himself to unusual concoctions that had first disgusted him. There was barely any room to experiment. He had no latitude with which to refine his palate

I did my utmost to grasp what taste meant for Cody Brainerd. I was accompanying a baby in his learning process. He was discovering how to make judgements by balancing his own reactions with those around him. Enjoyment seemed to be his watchword. But he fit this in with his needs. Did too many sweets prevent him from ever satisfying his deepest hunger?

This repertoire of flavors seemed the basis of our communication. A Norwegian might be accustomed to a variety of salted fish. While a fast food junkie would be absorbed by his favorite burgers. Between the carnivore and the vegan, there might be only a thin line of connection. I had to learn to bridge these gaps. Even if a dieter had sworn off sweets, he would still have to stimulate his palate in other ways.

Taste was a marker for a deeper understanding. Some nutrients were essential to life. Bitter poisons or scalding hot food could all do damage. I wanted to sort out a clearer standard for judging the senses. Our impressions were not the thing in itself. They only beckoned us along the road. Of course, some people did live to eat. I couldn't exclude them from my overall picture.

I could flavor a necessary component to our diet in a different way, and it would still do its job. On the other hand, if Cody's favorite pizza was prepared in an unusual manner, he might reject it immediately. Taste was an essential element in our enjoyment of what we ate. Sometimes the whole things just seemed foreign to me. I could watch someone eat and be sickened by what they liked. My attitude could get so much worse. Why did I need to eat at all? I could will myself to health. I had my ideas. I had my books. But the pangs of hunger would still hit me abruptly at the end of the day. And a good sandwich would really hit the spot. I drank up my juice, and I was ready to go.

Cody was being fed by these tubes. But he needed to be restored by the bread of life. Was there a magic dinner that would bring him to life? If we were cooking down in the kitchen, would the aroma be enough to revive him?

In his mind, had Cody achieved flavors that were unknown to man. If flavor was a key element in the liberation of the psyche, then Cody was exploring the unknown. People used incense to aid in meditation. This process was not that much different. I wanted to figure out what was going on in there. I want to taste the delight.

I sought my own center. A rich honey seemed to radiate for me. I was being filled with this immense sense of enjoyment. I wanted more. The flavor enriched itself. Then it exploded. I was in heaven. Some cooks pursued such a paradise. They seemed to be well ahead of the philosophers in this matter. They appreciated the right blend of spices and temperature to unlock the true flavor. My mouth was watering in sympathy.

Had Cody been engaging all the basic reactions? Or would he have to learn the world anew. Perhaps Ella had a piece of pecan pie waiting to grace his mouth. Those flavor from

childhood were often what enslaved us to our past. Cody had the chance to begin again.

What would Lee think about these confectionary experiments? His fare seemed pretty Spartan. I was a gourmand compared to him. I couldn't imagine living without tasting my food. There was certainly a lot more to my life. But I was protective about my moments of enjoyment. At times, I was very careful about what I ate. I didn't want to just surrender to my appetites. Was that what frightened me about Rose?

If Cody couldn't tap into his senses, he existed as a dreamcatcher. He was creating a world in his mind. What kind of integrity did it have compared to the world that I inhabited? He had little idea what was happening around him. But he was lost in his imagination.

Philosophers did not have the same interest in dreams as other thinkers. They dismissed our internal cinema as bits and pieces of our conscious life. Even our psychological drives could be discounted as remnants of our animal nature. They sought to base thought on our logical nature. Cody didn't have this advantage. He had to make dreams work for him. But every story allowed for its complete contradiction. You could be injured one at one moment, and walking around another. How could dreams permit any sense of logic?.

If Cody was to survive, he needed to reach deeper into himself. It was important for him to find that consistent thread. His dreams represented his struggle to overcome his impairment, By itself, the mind could not transform the body

In his dreams, Cody achieved the health that was being denied him. His body sought a level of comfort that allowed him to recover. His dreams gave him the needed psychological balance. They brought a soothing resolution to the problems in his life. They were the great equalizer. Anyone could live in a great palace, or score the winning goal. The stars were the limit. People loved to talk about unusual dreams. In sleep, everyone was a movie maker. The consolation of wish-fulfillment was enough to help us overcome our worst fears.

If Cody was wandering around in a luxurious landscape, I could catch up with him. He's feel free to share with me as if I was a close friend. I was hoping on such an encounter. It gave meaning to our work. I just needed to figure out how to get inside.

The more that I read the books, the more that they offered me an imaginative space to explore. They helped unlock the mysteries of the psyche. It wasn't that different inside his mind. If I could push out further, we would both be in the same place. When I was finally able to enter his dreams, I would freak him out.

I wasn't there to entertain him. I needed to discover if I could redirect his efforts to help him get healthy. I was trespassing on holy ground. He led through the brambles of his dream world. I saw what it was like for him to be fully aware.

What could I do to influence him? He seemed to shy away as I came closer. Perhaps, he knew why was there. He wasn't ready to leave this place. It gave him too much comfort. He had tried to attain such peace. Now it was at his disposal. But if he became too accustomed to this experience, he would never be able to leave. We were nearing a point of no return.

I wanted to say something to him. But this was like one of my own dreams when I couldn't cry out. I hummed my words. I emphasized the guttural sounds. I worked myself up to speak. But my efforts only pushed him away. I wasn't coming any closer. He was running from me. I had become an intruder in his garden.

My presence pointed out a personality split that he was already facing. For all the gentle

waves of the dream world, there was also the dark night. And he had his nightmares along with dreams of revelation. Any attempt to pull him out of the dream only emphasized the more disturbing dreams. I couldn't make the sleep therapy work for me.

Was philosophy so fixated on its notion of order, that it couldn't penetrate the chaos of human experience? Like Cody, I valued my protected space. I looked at the horror of losing what I had become. I wanted to embrace the aesthetics of the philosopher. But the absurdity of their sublime left a gaping hole in their system. It made it impossible to impose an ethical view on the universe. How could philosophy account for Lee or June? They had turned knowledge into a prison of their own making.

A well known local faith healer made her reputation by bringing life to the faint of heart. The doubting Thomases were willing to try her patience. But she only has to grip the arm of one of these cynics, and they would immediately genuflect before her incredible power. Maybe it didn't take much to get these yokels quaking in their boots. Nevertheless, it was at least worth putting to her gift to the test. Could there be any scientific basis for her skill? Certainly, if an debilitated individual was confronted by the possibility of a miraculous recovery, the idea in itself might have a curative effect. And the power of suggestion was enough to lift your spirits and get those tired old muscles working. But I was skeptical that her magic touch could transmute objects or make things appear that weren't really there. And I was sure that she couldn't restore lost limbs.

The Brainerd housekeeper was convinced that Sister May would be the jolt that Cody needed. Lee wanted nothing to do with a folk remedy. No doubt Cody would test the limits of her ability. But Lee would make sure that she would never have the opportunity to work her magic. I wasn't sure how I wanted to come down on this issue. I was hardly a fan of superstition. And Sister May's dabbling with the supernatural hardly made her adept at being able to fix Cody's malady.

Ella appealed to me to help resolve the logjam. If we both could her sneak Sister May in the house, we could see for sure if it was the right thing for Cody. I didn't want to get caught in the middle of things. On the other hand, I didn't want to appear as stubborn as Lee. If I got involved, I didn't want my fingerprints on any of the operation. Despite Lee's training, the house was hardly a fortress. If we picked the right time of day, this would be a snap. But such over-confidence always made me afraid. And Lee wasn't some chump.

I did what I could to try to dissuade Ella. She was resolved to make it happen. I needed some way that I could not be part of that. It would be too obvious if I accompanied Lee on his errands into town. I was expected to be with Cody for a major portion of the day. So I wouldn't be able to maintain that Sister May had got in the house without my knowledge. I would be an accomplice under any circumstances.

I needed to consider what Cody would want. I couldn't see him going along with Ella's plan. But he was also the adventurous sort. He was more than desperate for some kind of rescue out of his present dilemma. I ran through all the details in my mind. I brought to bear my understanding of philosophical truth on the problem. I would have to test out Sister May on my own. But how could I do that? I had no real ailment that required healing. This was becoming too complex. I had enough to deal with. I hated complicating things with more trouble.

Despite my misgivings, I consented to check her out. I wasn't in for a circus. I just felt

that Ella wouldn't be satisfied if I didn't help her out. She drove me Sister May's house. It was a quaint little place. It felt like a gingerbread house, and I couldn't imagine all of us fitting inside. This should have been a warning.

"I want you to help my friend Cody."

Ella had already told her about what we needed.

"Are you ready for the change?"

I stared at some crochet art that she had framed on her wall. It seemed to mirror our efforts. We had come to this gingerbread house in the hopes of liberation for Cody. But May refused to grant us the necessary dispensation without making us run through these hoops. She wanted to know if I was worthy. I should have expected this. It was all part of her act. I had come here to check her out. But she wanted to take me through her own test.

We left Ella in the front room, and May brought me in her work room. It surprised me that the house had all these rooms. She was asking me questions. But she didn't give me a chance to respond.. She pretended that she knew all the answers herself.

"You're not living with your parents now."

I shook my head. Such knowledge wasn't all that extraordinary. Ella could have told her what she wanted to know.

She grabbed my arm and went into a trance, "Your mother's name is June."

I was sure that Ella could have told her that also. But it was freaky. I didn't need this charlatan act.

"What do you think you are doing for Cody? You can't help him."

"What do you mean?"

She continued to speak from her trance. She was definitely possessed. I was in the weirdest movie.

"You're doing this for your own gain. You don't really care about him."

I didn't need this psychic authority pulling at my arm. As she held on I could see all these flashes from my own life: school, Rose, Josh, the parties, my teachers. This was weird. I wanted to get out of here. She wouldn't let go.

"You know, little girl, that I know that you are an imposter."

"What are you talking about?"

"You're not who you pretend to be!"

And she was. I could hardly recommend her services for Cody. Lee would flip if he knew what was going on. It was strange; down deep, the two of them really weren't that different.

"Ella, this isn't going to work."

I told Ella about my encounter.

"I thought that she was real," she told me.

"I've heard about her type before. There was this one guy in my home town. And he would tell everyone things about themselves. Things that he couldn't have known beforehand. Then he'd make all these predictions about the future. Things that came true."

"People have told stories about May like that."

"I don't know if I could believe them. But she did scare me. She's very perceptive. Also, a big gossip. She probably knows every secret in this town. It's almost as if she's blackmailing

people with her knowledge.”

Was philosophy an antidote to May’s mischief? May made promises that really did affect her customers. Cody needed a jolt. May’s touch may have shaken him out of his coma. But her actions might have been a form of abuse. And I couldn’t allow that to happen.

How could we have ever sneaked her into the house. There would have been some trace that she had been here. That was Lee’s own clairvoyance. He ruled this roost. mind could not

I proposed a thought experiment for myself. I supposed that I was the one in a coma, Would I become so lost in my dreams that I could no longer make it back to my hospital bed. I continued on with my experiment. I was no longer in the room with Cody. I was in my college dorm room. The more that I thought about my present reality, the more appealing that it became. I sat on the bed and turned the page on my biology text book. I thought about our discussion in philosophy class. I had an essay to write. I supposed that I was in a coma. Would I have enough knowledge to take me back to the reality that I had escaped? Would I want to go back? I had reason enough to cherish my escape from June. Had Cody been moved by a similar desire.”

I was losing it. My classroom experiment had taken over my life. Cody? Who was Cody? I needed to call my mother, Rose. She was worried about me. May had really messed with me. I needed to get out of the dream.

The more that I thought about Cody, the more that he became real. I was again by his side reading. I wanted to peer deeper inside that brain. I observed his heart rate. I felt hypnotized.

I had assumed that Cody’s over-zealousness about his work had created his estrangement from Helen. In turn, she took this as her motivation to seek fulfillment outside of the marriage. I was never able to confirm my feelings. Could a philosophical analysis offer me any more insight into this matter? If we supposed for the sake of argument that the positions had been reversed, and Cody’s actions against Helen had been of a flagrant nature, would we have had a deeper understanding of the situation. In the proposed scenario, Cody’s rendezvous with another woman had gone public. As the focus intensified, Cody felt the need to deny that the liaison ever took place. The woman was slighted by his attitude. So she decided to make it a legal matter. She alleged that he forced himself on her. Helen was in a tricky position. If she believed the woman at all, then she would be forced to seek a divorce. However, the woman might simply be taking advantage of Cody’s social position. So she defended her husband. She hardly wanted to accept him back in the house. But she didn’t want to make it appear that he was guilty.

Against her better judgement, Helen attempted to put aside her suspicions. Every time he raised his voice, she began to question his account of the events. To contradict the woman’s side of the story, Helen maintained her support of Cody. Her defense became all the more extreme at a point that she started to really doubt Cody.

Helen recognized the turning point. She may have had reason to trust Cody. Now she was unsure. There seemed little that she can do ascertain the facts. Both parties were so committed to their position that each version equally plausible. The woman could be making it all up. But Cody looked worse and worse as the charges were reiterated again and again.

In the original scenario, Helen took it upon herself to pursue another man. This was where things became even trickier. Helen had no reason whatsoever to suspect Cody. But one

evening, he raised his voice a little more than usual. This seemed like a convenient pretext to let her mind wander. What if this was a sign of a much more severe streak of anger. He had always been able to restrain himself around her. But if he ever got a little testy, she would always give in. What if she had been a little more independent? Would he simply acquiesce?

In the incriminating scenario, it had stopped being a question of evidence. Helen simply let her suspicions take over. That was all that it took for her to begin to feel contempt for Cody. Perhaps, he had done nothing wrong at all. But once Helen allowed herself to doubt him, that gave her the licence to do whatever she pleased. He spent all day working. He loved what he was doing. She felt ignored. She was at home all day. All that she needed was an excuse. He glanced over at an appealing woman. That was her cue. There must have been something going on between them. She would find an appropriate moment to accuse him, Better still, she would keep matters to herself. She would simply gratify her own desires.

Whatever way I spun the events, I was giving him too much credit. Helen kept coming out as the bad person. And the incriminating woman commanded even less sympathy. Even in these fictional scenarios, Cody kept appearing victorious. He was able to make it seem that his actions were justified no matter what he did.

I had expected that philosophical analysis could untangle these alternatives. Philosophy wasn't all that great at characterizing human subterfuge. The more that Cody could deform the truth to serve his own ends, the more believable was his scenario. He had a novelist's skill at rearranging the details of what happened to suit his purposes. He was motivated by a principle of deniability. How would that fly against the notion of philosophical truth? Philosophers seldom confronted a nemesis who seemed to be tinkering with the picture as they were trying to put things in focus.

What was the connection between the speaker and the content of the words that he uttered? It wasn't as if meaning had a complete independence from the users of a language. Communicating was hardly the same thing as ordering from a cafeteria menu. You couldn't just point to get what you wanted. The special of the day could turn out to be the most foul mix of kitchen refuse. Any individual was wary of such verbal mixes. She could use her inflection to test the waters. The same sentence could be spoken in a thousand different ways. In various context, it could assume all kind of shapes. That didn't mean that we were always condemned to challenging the charming tales of a Cody Brainerd. But we needed to be aware of the fluid character of our words.

Some philosophers resented the dynamic nature of language. It was perfectly acceptable for them to obscure their intent behind an edifice of obscurity. But they wanted complete honesty from their interlocutors. Clearly, this reasoning gave the benefit of the doubt to state security operations. That was all part of the game. For those who thought of themselves as subversive, language could offer all kinds of alternatives. I too was ready to take my place in the woods to protect my sacred verbal rights.

With such tangled chains of intention, how could a listener ever make sense of the barrage? The slippery nature of words encouraged the user to stake her own claim that seemed to detach her from any connection to other people. How could such an instrument of social intercourse end up alienating its users from each other? Of course, there were ready-made scripts that could get us back in the human race. But they only left each speaker exposed to the scrutiny

of his fellows. Personal weakness seemed to be the price of initiation. If a speaker could admit to his hapless nature, then his listeners would be ready to accept him in their midst.

I realized that my model of communication was characterized by a sense of deep mistrust. I simply felt that personal vulnerability wasn't something to be traded on the open market. Many philosophers thought of themselves as invincible when it came to providing their own views of language. They assumed that every act was public. After all, didn't we all begin with the same collection of words and sentences. How could anyone have a thought that couldn't be understood by everyone else? Moreover, how could someone have a thought that could be hidden away from the public? This seemed like the foundation of contemporary law enforcement. And the citizens followed this philosophy in lock step. Despite the philosopher's efforts to construct a neutral view of language, his perspective was shot through and through with personal guilt.

I could hardly argue against the surveillance state to Cody. His alliance with Lee must have been based on the same basic principles. But Cody needed to see the foundation for his beliefs. If he purported to be defending freedom of expression, how could he believe that his view of knowledge could attain universality. The individual relied on these pockets of opacity to protect his rights. The notion of the civil warrant was based on just such a belief. Mere supposition on the part of the state was not sufficient ground for the authorities to search a domicile. Law required evidence. But the nature of evidence was becoming thinner and thinner. And the minute shifts of subatomic particles were becoming the basis for a host of contemporary judicial decisions. Such was the preemptive character of our security state. And Cody needed such presupposition to advance his own beliefs. No wonder gossip became so essential in seeding the eventual outcome. The audience would be miles ahead of the police forces. Guilt by association would be applied automatically and permanently. If enough citizens jumped to their feet in support, then law enforcement could do no wrong.

Hadn't philosophy sought an immutable object to give authority to its pronouncements? The philosopher's stone would allow complete transformation from one form to another. Lead could be shaped into gold. And a promising opportunity could be created out of thin air. Even if such alchemical fantasies were only a distraction from a deeper understanding of matter, they paved the way more sophisticated descriptions of substance. When the philosopher peered deeper into the nature of things, they started to notice more lingering constancies. Behind the variety, they observed a uniformity that could be explained by the application of force. The subject continued to believe that he could shape one object into another with his hands. Even if he could never realistically achieve the might to accomplish his goal, his imagination fixated on the desired end. All objects in the universe could be rolled out from this incredible wave that emanated from within.

If the seer could finally arrive at a permanency, then he had produced an infallible perspective about the order of the cosmos. Experimental data could support the more general parts of this theory. But the more profound connections were part of a metaphysics. It was one thing to be able to describe this substance. But it was quite another to apprehend its character within the mind. So the thinker learned to absorb all the features of his encounter with the measure of all things. The universe had been folded within itself, and he had learned to grasp the full significance of this twist.



It was particularly significant that single form remained invariant through countless changes over time. What was more remarkable was that the observer could track this experience. It took a special kind of skill to immerse the self within the overall process. In every variation the thing held to its nature.

Not only could a metaphysical substance resist all the transformations in nature, more importantly, the thing required a resilience that could ward off every threat to its integral structure. Indeed, if there was some way to record all these events that affected it, then the form would offer an extraordinary basis for predicting future events. After all every shift and turn of the universe had become embodied in this one thing. If its history could be rendered retroactively, it would also be able to yield information projectively. It could anticipate events to come. Fortune teller would appear to be tapping into something like this substance.

Serious philosophers were shocked by these claims. Even if substance could explain the precise movement of the universe, its discontinuous nature meant that no single individual could summon its full power no matter what they maintained. Philosophy was not the same thing as magic. There was some kind of rational element to its description.

Metaphysical substance was meant to submit to serious limitations. Even shot through the universe and replete with discontinuity, substance appeared to offer a consistency that provided all the promise of its more supernatural form. It took a meticulous rendering to line together all these disparate moments. Inevitably, such a view suggested a force that passed through these separate locations and attractively held them all together. Again, the philosopher echoed the claims of the clairvoyant.

Time was the metaphysical mystery. It repeatedly folded back onto itself. In this way, the individual was absorbed in the moment. Living in time, he sought a vantage point which could explain the chain of events. He wanted to escape his own time. It was not sufficient to wait for the future. He had to act accordingly. He pulled the future out of its sequence and made it part of his present. He understood that time had this distorted geometry. In its absurd form, it created the time line that was so familiar in actual experience.

Philosophy allowed us to explore lingering questions that we had about ourselves and the world. Some would have preferred not to dwell on these matters. After all did it really matter if I was living in a dream? Whether it was real or a dream, it was still my experience. And my pain hurt no matter what. My experiences with June appeared more distant with each passing day. Although there were still the residual effects, it all seemed less and less real. This was the beginning of my philosophical questions. Did the mind allow me rearrange the details of my life so that parts of my history ceased to exist. Pop psychology offered us techniques that made our traumas no longer matter. The philosophical gesture was a much more severe strategy. It provided us the opportunity to rearrange the universe in our favor.

What was the significance of an instructor in my search? My zest for the subject matter gave me the idea that I could do it on my own. I had the books. The concepts were already familiar to me. Nothing could hold me back on my quest. June had interfered enough with my mind. I didn't need someone else messing with me. But the books reminded me how self-serving were my beliefs. Escaping the self often meant creating a more refined self that could avoid scrutiny. While it appeared that I was observing an objective reality, everything that I touched still played tribute to the ego. This was only the beginning. The actual process would

take much longer. I would have to strip down all my vaunted defenses. I would have to remake the self.

This all seemed so difficult. How could the self undo the self? It was a total paradox. This may have been the reason that so many people looked for a teacher to guide them on the journey. I would submit. I thought about the importance of my instructor's personality in effecting this discovery. Again, if my intent was to observe an objective reality, how could the philosophy teacher influence that image. Here was an object of study that was meant to be completely impersonal. This was why so many philosophers emphasized the metaphysical. It seemed to be the furthest thing possible from human psychology. Physicists didn't grasp the world in terms of the big guy in the sky. They completely broke down matter to its most irreducible form. They did everything that they could to eliminate the imprint of the experimenter in the process. What did the universe look like millions of years ago? There were no humans around to shape its form. Wasn't philosophy a similar pursuit?

It made me wonder. At its most extreme, philosophy had little to do with a fashion show. It didn't matter what kind of shirt that you were wearing to read philosophy. The thoughts weren't supposed to change if you were wearing a flattering outfit. None of that was important. On the other hand, a close analysis of these thinkers revealed the degree to which their personalities were dominant in their thoughts. The connection between the teacher and the student became all the more prominent. He did what he could to become part of her experience. His perspective took over her thoughts. He invaded her mind. He played with her. The master blessed her thoughts. She was led to enlightenment.

I recoiled at the thought of his interference. He was in the front of the auditorium lecturing wildly with his hands in the air. He was tracing the waves of thought. I was getting carried away. I needed to separate myself from what he was doing, or I would become completely absorbed. I was losing my direction. I had come her to set the compass. But the teacher was interfering with what I needed to do. This gave me a new perspective on the discipline. The philosopher was unable to address his bias. I was in exactly the same situation as I had been with June. Like the philosophers, she understood how thought can be a potent tool in vanquishing the independence of other people.

I now recognized how the appeal of philosophy was due to a more frightening vulnerability on my part. I had used the tools to help me get out of myself. But I had only run right back into the same problems that had previously haunted me. I needed to do my utmost to set things right. But there was no easy solution. This was who I was. It was really more of a physical thing. Why did my body make me do these things that I didn't want to do? I recalled my time with Rose. I could feel myself slipping under the waters. I was becoming another person. My vulnerability stripped me naked. I was short of breath. I was helpless. I was being carried along by these feelings that I couldn't control. In Rose's case, she felt like this all the time. In her own weakness, she had discovered a power. For the time being, she would ride this wave. She felt invincible. But when she came down, there was nothing that she could do at all. She longed to return to her high. She ached all over. She wanted someone to hold her. She wanted to be fed by the ambrosia of the gods.

Separate from those experiences, I still felt that twinge inside. It was horrible. I did what I could to surround it. I didn't want to let that feeling out. But it was all about experiencing life.

It was being a kid in an adult world and realizing that no one was going to prop me up. And if I needed to stand on my own two feet, I was just going to be a sitting duck for every con artist around. I hated this based cynicism. My time with Cody had allowed me to see another world. Still, it was not enough. I wanted to perch myself on the top of a mountain and curse at the world. It was I against the gods. I was ready to pull down the lightening bolts and crash them on the ground. I wanted to break the hold of this feeling.

What was so elemental in all this? The unease seemed of a sexual nature. I was drawn by my curiosity. But I was held by my whole being. I would do things that felt right at the moment. And then they would send my world crashing to the ground. This was worse than feelings of love. At least, the hope was that the loved one could help in my rescue. But I was blessed with no such hope. I was on my own. That still didn't get rid of the feeling.

Rose had done her best to hang on. She'd pretend with some guy. All the while, that feeling would still remain. She couldn't get rid of it by pretending that she was with someone for good. It had nothing to do with him. What could philosophy make of all this? I supposed that I was attracted to a form of knowledge that appeared to be universal. It was like an invincible shield. But the stronger that I held this object, the quicker that it started to disappear from my hands. I was defenseless.

Again my nakedness reminded me of my exile. I wanted to be a part of something. But my satisfaction mocked me. No one could get rid of this feeling of nothingness. I wanted to yell out. I wanted to cry,

Cody offered me another view of the world. There was an unconditional nature to our partnership. I continue my commitment no matter what were my misgivings. This fortified me. I hadn't faced my own vulnerability for a while. Philosophy had just knocked me to ground. I was doing my best to right myself.

What was happening to the eternal lessons of the philosophers? I was reducing their teachings to the ranting of a helpless adolescent. I was naked before the very form of Being. The universe folded over within me. I reached out for a deeper salvation. Was this the beginning of thought? Did this idea precede creation? I was afraid to make my own psychology the watchword of search. But I had done everything to escape the self, and I kept returning to the same foundation. I could hardly congratulate myself. I wanted more from knowledge. Perhaps, science would guide me the way. Or there was not one sure path to understanding. I had had enough for one night.