

Dear Readers,

Writers regularly suffer esprit d'escalier-- a sense of "I wish I'd said it succinctly." Though I've learned to compose my columns well ahead of time and tinker with changes or corrections before submitting to the editor, I still slip up. Such was the case with this weekend's column.

The Kinnell/Rilke comment sounds as if Kinnell admired Rilke for his miserable childhood, which couldn't be further from the truth. I should have said something like

[One of the poets Kinnell admired for musicality of phrasing was Rainer Maria Rilke. Like Kinnell's mother, Ms. Rilke rejected her son . . .](#)

On the "counselor" comment, word-count restrictions prevented me from adding the following detail:

[. . . merely taught me that most apples in the bushels of life, including that counselor and his nine children \(who used to brag about his wife's "eleven pregnancies"\) are anything but healthy.](#)

Being able to comment on each piece after it has appeared in print mitigates the discomfort somewhat; on the plus side, it prompts me to do better next time. Thus I am humbly grateful for the opportunity you afford me to examine retrospectively what I asserted without taking enough time to express clearly.

A Shakespeare scholar once commented that King Lear learned things about himself even on his death bed. Sadly, the death bed is a little late for self-knowledge, for it prevents the individual from applying newly-acquired insights to relationships that matter. I am currently re-reading *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*, on which I wrote once before. Among other things, the author speaks to our need for attaining an understanding of the self and thereby lessening our ignorance. Over the past five years I've repeatedly studied the slender volume; I should write on it again.

As you will discover next week, the column below segues into a commentary proposing that, as parents and social subjects, we ought to decide that each child to whom we give life is wanted and loved. Can we encourage others to decide similarly? Entire societies? One writer thinks we can--with the help of religious leaders.

WTE column of April 25, 2015. Editor's headline: "Help is here for troubled minds"
CST of April 26: "With work we can overcome pasts"

He said he hated his first name, which was his father's first name, who hated it equally. His mother had named him to spite the father, whom she blamed for a late-in-life pregnancy that Pasted in below, another personal essay, but one that will tie into a follow-up social commentary.. The couple already had two children, ages 15 and seven.

The speaker was my late husband, who became my ex-husband before he passed on. He never did use the name Hobart but substituted his middle name, Darold, a variant of Harold, the name of the couple's firstborn. I never asked how he learned his unwontedness. Did his mother let on when he was young? It's unlikely the father would have done so. The mother died when Darold was in high school.

Being unwanted may have compromised his immune system. Darold contracted polio at age six. I remember his father telling me how he and Darold's mother agonized over the question why their son was stricken in 1942—before the polio vaccine became widely available—when many other children remained unaffected. His father seemed convinced it was God's punishment for his transgressions, though I doubt getting his wife pregnant would have ranked as transgression in the father's mind. Rumors of his philandering circulated among his children, likely prompted by their mother.

"My mother did not want me to be born," begins a poem by Galway Kinnell, a remarkable writer who died last year at age 87. The poem observes that, because the mother was unable to love, she became exceedingly possessive: "When this more-than-love flowed toward me, it brought darkness," a feeling the writer equates with the desire to die.

When I knew Kinnell he was past middle age yet still seeking to mitigate "that enormous emptiness that seeks to be filled," a desolation that "washes the entire world empty." He mitigated by way of serial romantic encounters, the first victim of which was his marriage to Inez.

Kinnell's idol, Rainer Maria Rilke, was a German poet whose mother rejected him unmercifully. She had lost a baby girl the year before and hoped for another girl. Ms Rilke used to play sinister games with her son, dressing him in girl's clothing and calling him by girls' names because "that bad Rainer is dead."

I, too, lived through a childhood where the safety net of caring adults was all but absent. When, as parents of young children, Darold and I sought marital counseling, the therapist ventured that we were "two neurotics who found each other," i.e., two rotten apples in a bushel of happy and healthy coevals.

As we made ready to leave I inquired about his fees. Darold had set the appointment without obtaining a fee commitment.

“I was waiting for this,” said the good doctor. “Frigid women always express their fears in terms of money.” (In those days, labels like “neurotic” and “frigid” were commonly used against women.) I wanted to bail but Darold, transitioning from missile engineer to attorney, insisted we stick with it.

Eight months of “counseling” merely taught me that most apples in the bushels of life, including that forgettable counselor, are anything but healthy. Because children cannot distinguish whether parental rejection comes from spite or socially-imposed hardships (famine, social ostracism), finding myself in a war zone terrorized my early years. Actually this happens to combat troops also, no less than to the enemy to be harassed. Hence we sometimes pass to our children, without will or choice, complicated grief disorders that affect them later.

Diane Zimberoff and David Hartman are the authors of “Overcoming Shock: Healing the Traumatized Mind and Heart.” Soul murder, they state, comes from the “deliberate attempt to eradicate the identity of another person.” It results in spiritual shock or “trauma that comes from intentional abuse by those we trust and depend on.” Often that early trauma results in addictive behavior. Shock fuels addiction; addiction generates further shock states.

Through heart-centered hypnotherapy, group work, and with the help of supportive participants, these therapists seek to reclaim the lost child by walking the client back to early trauma or shock, thereafter to “reprogram” the psyche like a technician reprograms a hard drive.

Addictive disorders due to adult trauma can be healed similarly. The authors cite a 2008 study showing good results in treating PTSD in American soldiers at a combat support hospital in Baghdad. Compared with cognitive behavioral therapy and critical-incident stress debriefing, heart-centered hypnotherapy, proved to be the most effective. PTSD includes traumatic loss and grief that affects firefighters, first responders, 911 operators, victims of a serious accident, and survivors of rape. Some become sexually anorexic; others gorge on sex or food or alcohol. Still, recovery exists for suffers willing to change.